



# INDIA OF THE PRINCES

*By the same Author*

#### TRAVEL

- KUFARA. *The Secret of the Sahara.* (Penguin Edition.)  
RED SEA TO BLUE NILE—a thousand miles of Abyssinia, with preface by Field Marshal, Viscount Allenby. (Penguin Edition, March 1939.)  
CONFLICT. *Angora to Afghanistan* (Cassell), with preface by Maj. General Sir Percy Sykes.  
EIGHT REPUBLICS IN SEARCH OF A FUTURE (Cassell), with preface by Viscount D'Abernon.  
FORBIDDEN ROAD—Kabul to Samarkand (Cassell).  
WOMEN CALLED WILD (Grayson).  
THESE ARE REAL PEOPLE (Herbert Jenkins).  
ADVENTURE (Cassell).

#### NOVELS

- QUEST (Cassell).  
ONE FLESH (Cassell).  
ORDINARY PEOPLE (Cassell).  
THE EXTRAORDINARY HOUSE (Cassell).  
THE GOLDEN VAGABOND (Cassell).

#### BIOGRAPHY

- EL RAISUNI—Sultan of the Mountains (Thornton Butterworth).







A B C D E F C  
At a royal marriage—seated left to right, the ruling princes of Danta A, Bikanir B, Kashmir C, Palanpur D, Jodhpur E, Porbandar F, and Jasdan C

INDIA  
OF THE PRINCES

*By*  
ROSITA FORBES

THE TRAVEL BOOK CLUB  
121 CHARING CROSS ROAD LONDON W.C.2

*First published 1939*

MADE AND PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY  
EBENEZER BAYLIS AND SON, LTD., THE  
TRINITY PRESS, WORCESTER, AND LONDON

## FOREWORD

**I**N writing these brief impressions of the Indian States which I have visited, as a traveller or as the guest of Indian or British friends, sometimes at the invitation of the Ruler or his Prime Minister, I have been greatly helped by the courtesy of the Librarians of the Royal Geographical Society and of India House.

To many writers I am deeply indebted for the information and interest I have found in their books. Among these I would specially mention:

Colonel James Tod—Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan.

Sir Walter Lawrence—The India we served.

Lt. General Sir George MacMunn—The Indian States and Princes.

C. W. Waddington—Indian India.

Reginald Reynolds—The White Sahibs of India.

G. B. Scott—Religion and Short History of the Sikhs.

Maj. General J. C. F. Fuller—India in Revolt.

Count Keyserling—Travel Diary of a Philosopher.

Gilbert Slater—Southern India.

K. M. Panikkar—Relations of Indian States with the Government of India.

J. A. Spender—The Changing East.

Yvonne Fitzroy—Courts and Camps in India.

E. L. Tottenham—Highnesses of Hindostan.

Baron Jean Pellenc—L'Inde S'entrouvre.

Colonel Blackham—Incomparable India.

## FORWORD

- Sir Sankaran Nair—Gandhi and Anarchy.  
R. Chowdbury—Ploughboy to President.  
E. J. Hatch—Travancore.  
C. E. Parsons—A Tour in Mysore State.  
Frazer—Golden Bough.  
W. J. Hatch—The Land Pirates of India.  
Sir Verney Lovett—A History of the Indian Nationalist  
Movement.  
Directorate Chamber of Princes, Special Organization—  
The British Crown and the Indian States.  
Sir M. Visvesvaraya—Nation Building.  
An Indian—Bridging the Gulf.  
Buist—Kathiawar and Goozerat.  
Sir William Barton—India and the Indian States (article).  
Times of India Press—Ruling Princes and Chiefs of India.  
The Sphere—Princes' Number, May 28, 1938.

I would also like to express my appreciation and gratitude to Colonel Tait, Publicity Director of the Indian State Railways for the assistance he has given me on my numerous visits to India; to Mr. Charles Eade for lending me my own articles; to Miss Margaret Thompson for years of kindly co-operation in raiding the files at Northcliffe House, to Miss Marjory Lyall of India House, and to all my hospitable friends, Indian and English, who have been more than kind to me from Travancore or Cochin to the North West Frontier and beyond it. For many of the photographs used in this book I am indebted to the Sphere and to the Indian State Railways. I am particularly grateful to Mr. Heitner and the "Princes' Number" for permission to reproduce the pictures of Indian State ceremonies.

ROSITA FORBES.

## CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I AN ASPECT OF FEDERATION - - -	11
II THREE PARTIES IN INDIA - - -	23
III INDIAN OPINION - - - - -	29
IV GANDHI AND THE INDIAN PRINCES - - -	39
V FABULOUS PATIALA - - - - -	50
VI KAPURTHALA AND THE SIKHS - - - - -	63
VII DHOLPUR - - - - -	75
VIII CHITOR AND THE RAJPUT JOHUR - - -	88
IX CASTLE OF DREAMS IN UDAIPUR - - -	102
X A NIGHT IN JODHPUR - - - - -	109
XI MORE OF JODHPUR - - - - -	118
XII JAIPUR - - - - -	131
XIII BIKANIR - - - - -	148
XIV DENKHANAL - - - - -	160
XV TIGERS IN DENKHANAL - - - - -	168
XVI "SEVEN NEW ELEPHANTS" - - - - -	178
XVII ALL WAYS IN COCHIN - - - - -	184
XVIII LORDS OF THE MANOR IN COCHIN - - -	195
XIX TRAVANCORE - - - - -	205
XX INTERLUDE AMONG THE TREE-FUGITIVES - - -	219
XXI HYDERABAD	} THE BIG FIVE - - -
XXII MYSORE	
XXIII BARODA	
XXIV GWALIOR	
XXV KASHMIR	
XXVI BHOPAL - - - - -	288
XXVII PILGRIMAGE TO HARDWAR - - - - -	301
XXVIII THE MOST BEAUTIFUL THING IN THE WORLD - - -	310



## ILLUSTRATIONS

AT A ROYAL MARRIAGE	-	-	-	<i>Frontispiece</i>
				<i>Facing page</i>
A BANQUET GIVEN BY HIS MINISTERS TO H.H. THE NAWAB OF RAMPUR	-	-	-	32
IN COOCH BEHAR, AFTER A SHOOT	-	-	-	33
FROM LEFT TO RIGHT, H.H. THE RAJAH OF PATNA, PRINCE BUJINARA, H.H. THE RAJAH KUMAR OF PATIALA, H.H. THE MAHARAJ RANA OF DHOLPUR				

### ERRATA TO PARTICULARS GIVEN ON ILLUSTRATIONS

*Facing page 52.*

should read: "From left to right, H.H. The Rajah of Patna, Prince *Bujindra* (sons-in-law of the late Maharajah of Patiala), H.H. The Raj Kumar of Patiala, H.H. The Maharaj Rana of Dholpur and the author on the terrace of the palace at Patiala.

*Facing page 160.*

should read: "Waiting to ferry the *Rajah* of Dcnkhanal's motor on a Tiger Shoot."

*Facing page 256.*

should read: "The Heir Apparent of *Baroda* sets out for the *Dassebra* Festival."



## ILLUSTRATIONS

	<i>Facing page</i>
SURA SUNDARI, THE HUNTING ELEPHANT BRINGS BACK THE SPOIL - - - - -	161
DRAGGING CAPTURED ELEPHANTS ACROSS A RIVER -	176
THE END OF THE KHEDDA—CAPTURED ELEPHANTS LEAVING THE RIVER - - - - -	177
WORKERS IN A COCHIN JUTE MILL—WOMEN OF THE SOUTHERN MATRIARCHATE WHERE THERE IS NO PURDAH - - - - -	192
SEA MUSHROOMS IN COCHIN HARBOUR—FISHERMEN IN DUG OUT CANOE - - - - -	193
THE OMNIBUS BOATS OF COCHIN - - - - -	208
A DRINK OF COCOA-NUT MILK ON THE WAY TO PERIYAR FOREST - - - - -	209
TREE FUGITIVES IN PERIYAR FOREST - - - - -	224
AFTER THE KHEDDA “KOOMBIES” AND THEIR WILD CAPTIVES WITHIN THE STOCKADE - - - - -	225
THE HEIR APPARENT OF BORODA SETS OUT FOR THE DOSSEHRA FESTIVAL - - - - -	256
RAJAH MAN SING’S PALACE AT GWALIOR - - - - -	257
A SADHU WHO HAS LOVED THE FLESHPOTS - - - - -	296
A SADHU ON HIS BED OF THORNS - - - - -	297
PILGRIMS ASSEMBLING ON THE STEPS OF THE SACRED BATHING POOL, HARDWAR - - - - -	312
PROCESSION OF A MONASTIC ORDER AT THE KUMBLI MELA PILGRIMAGE - - - - -	313

## AN ASPECT OF FEDERATION

**T**WO centuries ago, the great Moghul Empire of Delhi disintegrated. India was broken into a thousand pieces. Out of the chaos rose, by an unparalleled feat of history, the States and the ruling Princes of to-day. Excluding Burmah, the population of India approximates to 350 million. Of these, a quarter are subjects of the States. The area of the great Peninsula is about two million square miles, of which two-fifths belong to the domains of more than five hundred princely houses. The most important of these are linked by Treaty with the British crown.

Counting every small fief ruled by a semi-independent chieftain there are six hundred and seventy-five States. Among these only seventy-three of the Princes are entitled to salutes of more than eleven guns and to the prefix of Highness.

The two largest States are Hyderabad with an area of 82,698 square miles and a population of thirteen-and-a-half million, and Kashmir covering 84,258 square miles with a population of under four million. In the former, the Moslem Nizam, with a revenue of seven million sterling, rules over a people of whom approximately 93 per cent. are Hindus. In the latter conditions are reversed and a Maharajah of Rajput (Hindu) origin, with a revenue of two million sterling, governs a people, 90 per cent of whom are Moslems. Yet the disputes between these two racial religions are not nearly so violent in these Principalities as in British India.

## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

For in the States there is a definite national feeling which goes far to mitigate the differences of race and creed. While in the Provinces nationalism is largely a matter of politics.

To a great extent, it is the thoroughbred races, Rajputs, Sikhs, Dogras and Mahrattas who inhabit the States, but within their boundaries there are also a number of the most backward peoples like the Bhils, the Juangs and the Todas, and some criminal tribes.

The charters of the States are their Treaties, made with the Honourable East India Company and the British Government. In the case of a hundred and seventy-five major Principalities the suzerainty of the King Emperor can only be exercised through the Viceroy. With the five hundred smaller States varying degrees of control are vested in the Provincial Governments.

It is therefore impossible to class all the States under one heading. There can be no common ground between small chieftainships covering a handful of square miles, and sovereign Principalities such as Hyderabad, Gwalior, Mysore or Travancore, whose rulers are legally entitled to "unrestrained powers" of life and death over their subjects, who maintain their own armies, who make and enforce their own laws.

Logically, the Indian States should be divided into three categories. First would come those which enjoy complete legislative and administrative independence within their own borders, whose laws are supreme, so that from their courts there is no appeal, even to the Privy Council. In the second rank would come the Principalities who, with partial executive independence, exercise their legislative powers as well as criminal and civil jurisdiction under British supervision. In the last category there would be the preponderating mass

## AN ASPECT OF FEDERATION

of small States who have no Treaty rights and no legislative independence. Their positions were established by grants (or Sanads) and they should be differentiated from the other two classes of States, whose rulers are entitled to salutes varying from nine to twenty-one guns.

The status of the Indian Principalities within the Empire has been more clearly defined than their position with regard to each other, for it has been laid down, by King's Proclamation, that they must be consulted by the Viceroy in matters which concern their territories "jointly with British India or with the rest of the Empire". Accordingly, the Sovereign States, where Britain has no right of intervention in internal affairs, and even those where there are certain restrictions with regard to legislation and judicial authority, or residuary rights reserved, have acquired the inalienable position of more or less autonomous countries, not within the Indian, but within the British Empire. This status must, in effect, belong to all the Principalities until there is a satisfactory differentiation between those with subjects numbered in millions and those which should be treated as Feudal Estates whose Lords can claim certain honours and privileges.

The exclusion from the Chamber of Princes in Delhi of all but twelve representatives of the States whose rulers are entitled to less than eleven gun salutes, may hasten a satisfactory demarcation. For there has been too much confusion between full-powered Principalities and fiefs held under a grant from the paramount Power.

In no way are the Sovereign States ruled by the Government of India, with whom they have now gained the right to discuss such major policies as may affect them in the matter of defence and revenue. While the collective opinion of the Princes carries weight in British India with regard to

reforms, they have taken no part in the agitation for democratic or representative government. On the contrary, they are concerned with the continuance of a feudal system, mitigated on occasions by constitutional forms, under which the prosperity of their own people is in their own hands.

On the whole, whether they be conservative or progressive in matters of internal administration, the Princes take a broader and more intelligent view of defence than do the British India politicians and it is possible that the private armies of the States which have rendered invaluable services to the Empire, may provide the obstacle necessary to prevent political agitation fomented in the Provinces from degenerating into formless chaos.

Many of the leading States, such as Hyderabad, Gwalior, Mysore, Patiala, Kashmir, Jaipur, Jodhpur, and Bhopal employ a certain number of British officers, although there should be plenty of excellent Indian material developing within their borders.

If India, deprived of British protection, were to become the prey of invaders, the State troops, hardened by service abroad, would form a valuable second line of defence. Equally important, they might be able to keep peace, at least within their own borders, should Congress be able to induce "the golden age of Indian independence".

Among the Princes, there are several different categories. Those of most ancient race claim a legendary descent from the Sun, the Moon, and the Fire. Slowly and reluctantly, after incredible battles and appalling self-sacrifice, in which the women took part, such as these submitted to the Turkish or the Moghul conquerors. Later they transferred their allegiance to the gradually developing power of Britain, and by their pledges, given in some cases, to the old "Honourable East India Company", they have stood firm. Foremost

## AN ASPECT OF FEDERATION

among these are the Princes of Rajputana descended in unbroken line from the heroes of Chitor and Jeysulmeer.

Other Indian Rulers have as ancestors those famous Moghul Governors who established their independent States upon the fall of the last Emperor. Such is His Exalted Highness, the Nizam of Hyderabad, the Premier Sovereign of India, entitled, with the rulers of Mysore, Baroda, Gwalior, and Kashmir, to a salute of twenty-one guns, descendant of the "Kingmaker", the mighty Chin Chullak Khan Asaf Jah, last pillar of the Moghul Empire.

A third category includes the great Mahratta chieftains, the Gaekwar of Baroda, the Maharajahs of Holkar and Scindia, whose forbears were raiding barons, carving their Principalities out of the chaos following the collapse of the Moghuls. They fought the British as vigorously as they fought Hindu and Moslem over the breadth of Northern India, before circumstances forced them into alliances with their most powerful opponents.

Other Princes have been deliberately put upon their thrones by the British. After the first Sikh war the old Moghul-Afghan-Sikh Province of Kashmir was given to Gulap Singh, the Rajput Ruler of Jamnu.

Haidar Ali, a soldier of fortune of mixed Arab-Afghan blood, seized the original throne of Mysore from his Hindu masters and started the series of wars against the British, which his half-lunatic son, Tippoo Sultan, continued. During the last storming of Seringapatam this monarch was killed and the conquerors were able to re-impose the old Hindu dynasty which reigns to-day.

The last category of Princes comprises all the great landlords, the minor chieftains, and the feudal families, who, wishing to preserve the comparative autonomy they had contrived to assert when the Empire fell, voluntarily joined

## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

the British, demanding protection from their more powerful neighbours in return for their allegiance. In such fashion Patiala, Kapurthala, Jhind, Nabha, and some of the Eastern States, came under the general suzerainty of the Crown.

With so many different interests concerned, it is natural that the various treaties and alliances should differ and the obligations of the States towards Britain be as diverse as the needs which forced or led them into the Empire.

During the last forty years, East and West,—India and Great Britain—have been faced with a series of problems. The prestige of the East India Company perished in the mutiny. The old system under which the great link between the two countries was the satisfactory personal relationships between co-equal merchants came to an end. With it was swept away much of the friendliness and hospitality, the knowledge of each other's characters, lives and objectives that came from familiar everyday intercourse. After the Mutiny, the Army, to all intents and purposes, took charge. And under the shadow of what Congress India calls military occupation, the old friendly intercourse between tradesmen and merchants, Indian and English, was much restricted. Those days, perhaps, saw the birth of the tragic Indian inferiority complex which makes painful the paths of both peoples.

Queen Victoria's death in the middle of the unfortunate Boer War put an end to the stalwart era of imperialism. But the point of view which Queen Elizabeth inaugurated and Cecil Rhodes brought to a magnificent climax had been fostered by three centuries of success. It could not give way all at once before the shibboleths of political or national consciousness and the intricacies of self-determination. Moreover, the rulers of India continued to share with the

## AN ASPECT OF FEDERATION

peasants a personal veneration for Victoria. The Empress had taken her place among popular legends, scarcely less important than those of the goddess Sita, or the heroic Queen Dhargoontee, who died at the head of an army in the face of Akbar's troops.

To this day thousands and thousands of simple villagers believe that an immortal Victoria, still living and ruling in London, is solely responsible for the peace which allows them to drive their cattle where they will.

The dawn of the twentieth century put an end to what has been described as "the expansion of England"<sup>1</sup> and as our "predatory period",<sup>2</sup> but with the echoes of twenty years' criticism in our ears, and the tides of Congress eloquence beating against our convictions, it is only fair to remember what we have achieved in India.

For more than a hundred years we have given a continent peace, unity and justice, complete security of life and tenure. We have doctored, policed and educated. We have built 44,000 miles of railway, made a network of roads, combated famine, instituted modern services, among them irrigation works which are the largest in the world, and by Macaulay's famous and much resented Minute which made English the medium for instruction in the higher grades, we have offered every intelligent Indian the linguistic key to an infinity of knowledge that would not otherwise be available to him.

It is useless to deny the exactions of the East India Company, or the spoliation of Indian industries to ensure markets for Lancashire, but it is not fair to attribute the poverty of village life and the decay of its social and agricultural system solely to British rule. The cotton mills of

<sup>1</sup> Seely.

<sup>2</sup> Nicholson.



## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

Ahmadabad have proved as destructive to rural handicrafts as the import of manufactured goods from Manchester or Japan.

If Lord Brentford made the speech quoted in Reginald Reynolds's indictment of British Government:<sup>1</sup> "We did not conquer India for the benefit of the Indians. . . . We conquered India as an outlet for British goods," he expressed, I am convinced, a conviction that was already passing. During the twenty years in which I have known India, a wholly different point of view has arisen among Englishmen. Whether it has been forced upon us, or whether it has developed as a result of the war and the chaotic state of what we once regarded as civilization, I do not know. Of course, we have made errors. So has every other nation. So have the political parties opposing us. Inevitably, we shall all continue to make errors.

I think it was the Duke of Windsor who, as Prince of Wales, addressing Youth at the Albert Hall, said that never to have made a mistake would be to acknowledge that one had never been willing to try anything new or original. But whatever mistakes we have made, from too much education—yes, too high and not sufficiently technical or specialized a system for the needs of an agricultural or even a merchant people—to too little social intercourse, thus fostering the tragic inferiority complex which is now the chief barrier to mutual understanding between British and Indians, we *have* modified religious bigotry, put an end to invasion and pillage, to the exactions of raiding Mahrattas, to the brutal murders of the Thugs, to the wholesale starvation and disease that followed the Moghul, the Afghan, the Jat and the Sikh wars.

In 1833 an Act provided that no Indian should be de-  
"The White Sahibs in India."

## AN ASPECT OF FEDERATION

barred from holding any post in the Company's service. The Mutiny turned this reasonable provision into one of those "Scraps of Paper" referred to by post-war historians. More than a military revolt, less than a national rising, it has unnecessarily embittered relations between our races. Yet as early as 1861 Indians were admitted to the Legislative Councils, and thirty-one years later, additional powers were granted to such institutions. In 1909 the Morley-Minto reforms gave Moslems and Hindus separate electorates, emphasizing in this way the belief of both noble politicians that India could not adapt herself to the usual parliamentary system.

When, in 1918, Mr. Montague made his famous speech in the House of Commons, promising "the progressive realization of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire", he foreshadowed the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms which had the genuine intention of establishing parliamentary and consequently national government in a continent divided by religious as well as racial chasms, and by every stage of mental and physical development from Adam to Einstein, from the aborigines of the Travancore forests, whose only need is salt, to the polyglot Bengali lawyer, or the Pathan, inseparable from his rifle. Under the constitution visualized by the idealists of 1918, certain departments of Government were reserved for the Governors and Executive Councils. For a thousand years this system, called Dyarchy, has existed in the Isle of Man.

Between 1914 and 1919, India reversed the ethical situation. In return for security, in return for the personal service of thousands of unknown Englishmen who had worked, without hope or possibility of reward, solely for the good of their districts, their patients, or their pupils, she gave us her youth and her blood. Indian money poured into the

## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

Imperial treasury, Indian soldiers into the trenches. Led by her Princes, a sub-continent of Asia, largely feudal, fought with us for democratic principles and, I suppose, for the will o' the wisp labelled "Self-Determination"! Subsequently Indian politicians, even if they had not fought beside Sikh and Pathan, Gurka, Rajput and Dogra under the banners of hereditary rulers, demanded immediate self-government.

The Simon Commission and three successive Round Table Conferences proposed, after an infinity of deliberation which exacerbated Indian nerves, a Federation of self-governing States. Such, in brief, is the situation used by Congress India to-day as an anvil on which to hammer into shape a solution unpalatable to the royal States and indigestible at least to British imperialists.

In the confusion consequent upon the dissolution of the empire ruled in diverse fashion by Akbar, by the poetic Shah Jehan and by Aurungzeb "the Killer", the modern States took shape and were in turn, as I have said, conciliated, conquered, or saved from conquest by Britain. She guaranteed their integrity by Treaty in return for control of their foreign relations.

The question of Federation therefore placed the ruling Princes in a difficult position. If they refused it, as they had a right to do, the whole scheme would be rendered useless and British liberals would regard them as the executioners of democracy. If, on the other hand, they waived their Treaty privileges and entered the Federation without protection against superior numbers and interests entirely opposed to their own, they would be forced to submit to eventual absorption in a democratic system in which neither they nor their people had confidence and for which the majority of the latter were certainly not prepared.

In the end—a temporary end—the States accepted, in

## AN ASPECT OF FEDERATION

principle, the possibility of Federation, but they made it a condition that their individual treaties with the British Crown should remain in force and that the independence of their territories should continue to be guaranteed.

Therefore, at the present moment, apart from the necessarily different points of view of what may, provisionally, be labelled British and Congress India, there is a third and vastly important section of opinion about which too little is known. The States are a definitely autocratic group, comprising, I repeat, two-fifths of the land and one quarter of the population of India. Within the Federation, they would be, of primal necessity, opposed to the democratic group of provinces.

As titular director of these two divergent forces, the Crown, if it is to fulfil its Treaty obligations to the States, must not only retain a Viceroy in India, but must provide military protection, i.e. a force independent of the future Federal army, in case the Princes are attacked. On the other hand, since the Crown is ultimately responsible, it must interfere, as it has always done, in autocratic rather than democratic fashion, in definite cases of misrule. So the Federation will be already divided.

The Crown is supposed to be essentially democratic. How could a future Socialist Government make armed interference to support an autocratic throne against federated democracy? The position must become more and more difficult until, with opposing interests, the Federation becomes helplessly incoherent. The Princes, whom Kipling continually describes as "Friends of the English" and who, by sentiment, tradition, and personal interest, are undoubtedly imperialistic, may find themselves in the same danger as the loyalists in America and Ireland.

The only solution would seem to be a firm confederation

## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

among the States themselves, a unity of policy and a common front so that no one of them will ever have to stand alone. The Chamber of Princes at Delhi can only be actively representative of State opinion if it is regarded seriously and regularly attended by all its members. So far the States rely too much on British support which may, of necessity, be withdrawn, should democracy find it impossible to support even beneficent despotisms. Their chance of salvation is twofold. First of all they must unite so that within the Federation, they will be strong enough to hold their own against their Indian opponents, without recourse to British aid. Secondly, they must originate in due course such representative institutions as may suit their different interests and peoples, so that in time the Princes of India will become constitutional monarchs, firmly established on their respective thrones by the will of their subjects.

### THREE PARTIES IN INDIA

**D**URING three periods of her history India has been—most dissidently—united. In the third century B.C. the great Emperor Asoka, representing the Mauraya dynasty, ruled the Buddhist world. From the sixteenth to the eighteenth century A.D. the Moghul conquerors reigned over most of the Indian continent. Subsequently British rule attempted the illogical task of treating a conglomeration of peoples without homogeneity of race, religion or language, scattered over a land twenty times the size of Great Britain, as if they were one established nation.

For more than two thousand years, the little independent, or semi-independent, kingdom has been the most persistent and important, as well as the most representative aspect of Indian life. Whenever an Empire was built up by conquering invaders, it was by the absorption rather than the abolition of existing States. The local sovereignties continued to exist but under the suzerainty of an Imperial power.

Until comparatively recent years, the rulers of these kingdoms and Principalities, some of them so old that their origin was confused with Hindu mythology, were Hindus. For Hinduism is of immemorial antiquity. It is pre-history and, founded on the Vedas, its abstruse complications of caste constitute a social system according to whose ordinances two hundred million people live to-day. Like Islam, of incomparably later date, Hinduism is more than a creed. It is a complete method of living.

## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

Separated from the Hindus with their age-old, pantheistic mythology surrounding and often obscuring the One God, not by British intrigue as the Extremists suggest, but by completely different moral and social traditions, by history, character, outlook and purpose, are the eighty million Moslems.

I believe British rule in Ireland was once described as a comedy in which a stupid and honest race were attempting to control a dishonest and clever people. The same might be applied in inverse fashion to the Hindu attempt to influence Moslem opinion.

Between the two great racial creeds are the sixty million outcastes regarded by the old-fashioned Hindu as beyond the social pale, although he allows them specialized economic functions.

Ninety per cent. of the population of India is engaged in agriculture. Therefore, in the States, as in British India, the most important facet of national life is the village. There are 700,000 villages, whose occupants hold the soil on a system of peasant ownership, paying land, water, and head taxes to the government or to the landlord, whether he be a zemindar, a jaghadar, or a rajah—squire, nobleman, or prince. Weaving used to be the most important village industry and it is the one which Mahatma Gandhi insists must be re-established to occupy in profitable fashion the four empty and hungry months when there is nothing to be done in the fields. But organized industry in the big towns and the spread of communications, have contributed to what is loosely termed "progress". The clock has moved on. Nobody can put it back.

Generally speaking, the Indian States are in a stronger position than British or Congress India. Politically, they are less advanced. The Extremists have indulged in an

### THREE PARTIES IN INDIA

immense amount of propaganda in their villages, but without much effect. For the peasant is still steeped in the interconnected feudal and religious systems. He would rather be ruled by, and worship in connection with innumerable other forms of God, his Maharajah, Queen Victoria, Mahatma Gandhi, or the local tax-collector. Congress is too impersonal.

State administration is far simpler than the complicated system of British India, although it is often based on the same model. Among the mass of the people, there is less wealth and less poverty. Life still has its extravagant possibilities. In case of drought, the Maharajah, motoring in his shining silver car through a district devoid of crops, may promptly and imperiously remit a year's taxation. It has been done again and again—with just a sentence to the Minister in attendance. On the whole, taxation in the States is lighter than in British India, and the burden of rural debt less heavy. On the other hand, except in such particularly modern States as Mysore, Travancore and Cochin, where the administrative system is equal to that of a British province, there is probably a lower level of civilization among the people. This may be attributed to the remoteness of the majority of the States, some of which are buried in mountains or jungle, while others are little more than oases in limitless deserts. Another reason is that most of the aboriginal or exceptionally primitive tribes, such as the Todas, Bhils, Gonds, Minas, Ooralis and the forest peoples, belong to the Central and Southern States.

The personal link between the British Government and the Princes is provided by the appointment of Agents or Residents who act the part of Ambassadors, but their advisory powers can be reinforced in cases of obvious misrule. Since 1818, there has, inevitably, been a certain amount of



## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

encroachment on the sovereign power of the Princes. Before the Institution of their Chamber in Delhi, the Indian Rulers had no common meeting-ground. They were isolated, without modern communications, and at their gates was the overwhelming military power of Britain. There must have been occasions when Imperial necessity took precedence of State requirements. Under Lord Curzon, there may have been too much interference, but no British Resident appointed to a far-away Hindu or Moslem Principality, could logically be expected to await the revolution which would follow egregious misrule, when, by prophetic action, he could prevent it.

First in the minds of Imperial Statesmen and of the Crown's representatives at the Indian courts, loomed the necessities of defence. On such grounds arterial railways and the telegraph system came under British jurisdiction. State troops were limited. The import and manufacture of arms were prohibited. Monopolies of salt and opium were claimed by the Imperial treasury. A uniform system of customs duties was established and most of the States persuaded to relinquish mining and currency rights.

According to the Extremists, it was the pre-war policy of Britain to isolate and divide the States and it was only after the world war, when the Princes had proved their Imperialism, that Downing Street, visualizing the value of the feudal system as a barrier to Congress irresponsibility, instituted (in 1921) the Chamber of Princes, with a view to solidifying autocratic India against the threat of democracy. Thus the penalty we pay for the greed of the East India Company, a greed equalled by courage and powers of endurance, and to a lesser extent for the natural ignorance of British ship-builders, manufacturers, and merchants seeking orders and markets at uncounted cost to India, is the dis-

### THREE PARTIES IN INDIA

belief of every Indian to-day in even the most obvious of our good intentions.

The Chamber of Princes in Delhi consists of 120 members. Of these 108 are the Rulers of the great Principalities, with a right to salutes of between eleven and twenty-one guns. They attend by a right which will, presumably, be hereditary. Twelve other members are elected by the 127 States ranking next in importance. The Chamber, which has lost a great deal of its effect owing to the defection or indifference of some of the leading Princes, and to the divergence of opinion expressed by the rest of its members, is a deliberative and consultative organization. It should be the spearhead of State opinion, although the Extremists assert that in few cases do the Princes represent the people they rule, but it has no executive powers.

The India Act of 1935 is presumably based on the assumption that in case of Federation the States would introduce a strong Conservative element to counterbalance the untested socialism of the Congress Party. While conferring complete autonomy on the eleven Provinces of British India, subject to the reasonable but much criticized "safeguards", it gave to the Princes representation in the Central Legislature far in excess of what could be claimed on a basis of population. For while the peoples of the States number only 80,000,000 compared to the 270,000,000 of British India, the Princes can send 104 members out of 250 to the Upper House (the Council of State) and 125 out of 375 to the Federal Assembly.

At present the Congress, the Extremist party, hold office in seven out of the eleven provinces of British India, and their Hindu leaders appear to regard Federation as a conspiracy between Britain and the Princes to put an end to any hope of Indian unity and freedom. On the other hand, the Moslems attack Federation and the disproportional

## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

representation given to the States on the ground that the Princes would send as representatives to federal legislature a preponderating body of Hindus, thus giving Congress a stable Hindu majority capable of keeping Indian Islam in subjection.

The Princes, of course, are far too intelligent to support such a policy, which would lead to anarchy, for the Moslems are the fighters of India. It is far more probable that their Highnesses would be obliged to choose a number of representatives from among the lawyers and professional politicians outside their borders, because in some cases, they would not have sufficient trained political material within them.

Congress politicians realize that they cannot indefinitely postpone Federation if the Princes agree to it. In the four non-Congress Provinces, Bengal, Assam, Sind and the Punjab, where Moslems predominate, the moderates would favour Federation if they were convinced that the British Government would give the Princes a free hand and not use the undoubted influence of the Crown, a principle to which every Indian Ruler is loyal, to influence them towards the protection of Imperial rather than Indian interests.

Hindus and Moslems alike acknowledge that the immediate future of India lies with the Princes. If they accede, wholeheartedly, to Federation, the Provinces have no alternative but to concur.

## INDIAN OPINION

YEAR after year, with tedious reiteration, Britain is accused of Machiavellian intrigues with regard to the future of India. Our overworked politicians and officials are credited with a demented brilliance and with a Jekyll and Hyde adaptability totally at variance with the Anglo-Saxon character. Incidentally, we are accused of inciting Hindus and Moslems to behave to each other much as Protestants and Catholics did in the old days in Belfast, thus ensuring an infinity of dangerous work to the police who are supposed to be our pawns.

From my own experience of India, spread over a period of twenty years, I believe that the average Englishman is far more concerned with the Indian point of view than is the member of Congress with the British.

The Indian tongue works like lightning. Eloquence is a physical delight to the speaker as to his audience. But the Indian mind moves slowly. It is, naturally enough, steeped in ancient grievances, social, industrial, and political. Nationalists still regard any public appearance of goodwill to their opponents as likely to weaken the fighting front and to endanger their prestige in the eyes of their followers. Their speeches and writings, therefore, are much more unyielding than their own private opinions. Argument has become a passion. It takes the place of sport and of most other physical amenities. An Indian is perfectly happy if he is arguing, and ecstatic if he can do so in a law-court, or a

parliament. Although he prides himself on being progressive and is often extremely intelligent, he is not original-minded. He adores shibboleths. Even when they have achieved all they want and do not in the least know what to do with it, Indian politicians, I imagine, will continue to speak of the concessions heaped upon them as "futile", "perfidious", "unacceptable" and "outrageous". Such words have become habits with the Extremists. They mean nothing at all, except the feeling that their authors will not "be put upon" and a general distrust of Imperialism which might be summed up by paraphrasing the old patter: "Go and see what England's doing and tell her not to!"

Under the surface, it seemed to me, this year, that the most incompatible elements showed signs of fusion and that stalwart dichards on either side were tempted by the idea of co-operation. There is still an amazing belief in constitutional forms, which belief, when extended to cover their potency, borders, it seems, on the superstitious. But responsibility is having its usual effect in clipping the wings of exaggeration.

Indian writers, as well as Indian politicians, have become so accustomed to securing and keeping a following by stigmatizing the British point of view as "sun-dried bureaucracy" that they cannot now—when the situation has completely changed—distinguish between what is reasonable in the Imperialist attitude and what is prejudiced or out of date. No sensible person expects India or any other country to enjoy or be grateful for alien rule. President Roosevelt once said to me at the White House: "No people want to be well-governed. All they want is to ensure that they themselves enjoy the perquisites and privileges of government." This applies most decidedly to India. She does not want to be well-governed, or even to help in the better governing of

the country, nearly so much as she wants—quite logically—to govern herself as well as and no better than, she chooses. Sinn Fein or Swaraj inevitably mean: “By myself, for myself.”

What is difficult to understand in the Indian attitude is the inability of the Nationalists to envisage what they would lose as well as what they would gain by complete independence. So few extremist speeches are seriously meant, but surely the time has come when Indians should realize that the rounding of an oratorical period or the satisfaction of appearing intransigent, is less important than coming to a sensible agreement with Great Britain.

Having seen some of the well-governed Indian States, large and small, I have no doubt that there are Indians capable of adequate, even admirable government. If Britain were to withdraw altogether and if no other foreign power were to take her place—an extremely unlikely contingency—I believe that India would revert from most of the Western democratic institutions imposed on her to forms of autocracy more or less benevolent. For India will always follow the man rather than the cause. Personal leadership, especially if it had a religious flavour, could carry the masses of India far back into the middle ages, beyond reach of modernity. Congress and its various idcas of revolution have roused a great deal of noisy fervour. India is like Ireland. In battles, verbal or otherwise, she always wants to know: “Is this a private fight, or can anyone join in?” But the deepest emotions to which I, personally, have been a witness, have been roused by Gandhi as a mystic not as a politician, by such religious festivals as the Kumbh Mela, and by the Indian Princes in their own States.

If a sufficient number of suitable autocrats arose to take the place of British rule and if one can imagine a super-

## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

natural power limiting the spheres of these so that they would not make war one upon another, no doubt the Indian general public would be content. Progress as the West understands it would undoubtedly be retarded, but, always supposing that Russia and Japan could be kept from interfering, India would have the satisfaction of being ruled by men of her own race. She would suffer nothing new. Life would go on very much as it has done in the past. There would be the same grievances, but less bitter because they would be, so to speak, a family matter. Above all, the majority would be content because they would be ruled once more by individuals, not by ideas.

This is where the States have the advantage. Obviously, the quality of rule depends first and foremost on the character of the Prince. A man like the Maharaj Rana of Dholpur ensures the prosperity of a Principality. It needs nothing more. For the Indian Prince is responsible for the support of his country. So far as he himself is concerned, his enormous revenue is often only a matter of form. It has to cover the upkeep of troops and police, schools, hospitals, roads and un-numbered charitable institutions. In fact, the average Maharajah takes the place of the local deity and is expected to supply everything his country requires, from good advice in the season of marriages, and rain when the harvests are threatened by drought, to employment, at need, for every man and boy in the State. Deprived of Britain, but given the miraculous conditions suggested, India, with a passion for deifying the individual, would probably be saved from anarchy by a hundred different autocracies, and would be governed in a manner satisfying to the majority of Indians. But, failing such direct interposition of Providence, it would seem obvious that in India, as in Europe, the stronger Principalities would become aggressive. There



A Banquet given by his Ministers to  
H.H. the Nawab of Rampur.





In Cooh Bahar, after a shoot.

## INDIAN OPINION

would be much the same situation as exists between the Rhine and the Caucasus to-day. Communists and Nationalists, Hindus, Moslems, Sikhs, autocracies and democracy, the Eastern equivalents of Fascist and Nazi and Bolshevist terrorism, would be at each other's throats. There would be a 'Thirty Years', or a 'Hundred Years' war after the Chinese rather than the Spanish fashion.

For, however impressed the English traveller may be with the indications of good government in some of the modern States and whatever he may deduce from such evidence with regard to the rest of India, he must also be convinced of the immeasurable benefit which Britain has conferred upon India in the form of peace. In a territory approximating to the size of Europe and inhabited by nearly as many races, she has established and maintained a system which means that neither States nor Provinces need waste their money after the fashion of our own continent. India has no need to arm or re-arm. She has no fear of invasion. However liberal be the traveller, however impressed by the demands of Indian Nationalists, he must be amazed at their reluctance to acknowledge this entry on the credit side of Imperialism.

It is inconceivable that India could from her own resources, build, equip, and man a fleet capable of defending her against foreign invasion. It is equally unlikely that her own armies, with no focal point of unity, could protect her frontiers. At this moment India complains of the cost of maintaining the limited number of forces required to keep order among her 350 million people. Yet she is spending only a fraction of what a European power with a tithe of the population considers essential for defence.

The most intransigent member of Congress, who knows as little of the British Empire as the young Russian artisan of any system but the Soviet, might at least ask himself how

## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

India is to be prevented from relapsing into the condition of contemporary Europe, distraught by taxation and terror, if the central government were deprived of Imperial support. No Indian politician would admit that Britain has rendered services to his country, but he might perhaps acknowledge that she can perform useful functions. For these in the past, she has perhaps been altogether too highly paid, but she is certainly entitled to some *quid pro quo*. In talking with Indians, whether Hindus or Moslems, I have been continually reminded of controversies between Socialists and Capitalists in England. British Labour insisted on a peaceful economic purpose throughout the General Strike with its intent to paralyse the country, and would not face the fact that if they succeeded in overthrowing the Government, it would mean revolution. So Indians, urging non-co-operation, affirm their pacific purpose when its success must logically result in anarchy. For there comes a moment in every struggle when a Government must either resist, or cease to exist at all. No Indian politician, to my mind, has decided whether he really wants to force Britain to a point where she must either fight, or pack up and go.

I think it was Pandit Motilal Nehru who said of civil disobedience (Lahore, 1926) that although it "is a legitimate weapon to be used as a last resort, the country is not prepared for it."

Have the Congress leaders ever decided for how much and how little their continent is prepared?

There used to be a theory that the Indian would never grow up. Simultaneously, the East was described as "unchanging" and Kipling wrote that East and West would never meet. With regard to all such theories, President Roosevelt, discussing native problems all over the earth, said to me a few years ago: "The English were the best

## INDIAN OPINION

rulers in the world for races still in the kindergarten stage. In your dealings with India and Egypt, you've been schoolmasters and like most professors you're blind to the coming-of-age of your pupils." The President added that he voiced what was no more than an impression because he had not sufficiently studied the Indian situation.

I imagine that the Indian Civil Servant of the last generation did regard himself as being in charge of a nursery of Peter Pans. No man, I think, has rendered the world greater service. From public school and university, he went East for the best part of his life. He had courage, honesty, common sense, self-confidence and the capability of dealing with any situation as it arose. He was an individual, and generally a personality, administering alone and unguarded a district the size of a Balkan State. He was quite capable of making and keeping peace on a frontier, or of making war if he thought it necessary for the prestige of Britain. Within his limits, there has been nobody to touch him except perhaps one or two of the Dutch Residents who have made the East Indies their homes, and the handful of venturesome Frenchmen, like de Foucauld, who civilized the entire Sahara. But the old-time civil servant imagined that India would remain unchanged. He was, in fact, his own undoing. For while he kept peace, limited disease and famine, thereby increasing the population, he gave to the most intelligent Indians the education by which he himself had been formed. Conscientiously, he created the needs and the desires which the system he represented could not satisfy. Still believing that East and West could never meet, he did his best, by a wholesale application of Western science, to bring about a fusion. When he succeeded, his surprise was only equalled by his dismay.

The heritage of the university-bred civil servant of earlier

## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

decades, the official with an admirable historical and literary training, is the orator, agitator, patriot, or revolutionary of to-day. A largely increased population has been provided by Britain with leaders trained in Western methods. There is no longer any possibility of ruling India with a handful of our best men, even if these "best men" would accept the invidious position of Saint Sebastians, targets for every arrow fired by Congress members in search of publicity or popularity. India has grown up, or rather a sufficient portion of India has grown up, and in no more illogical fashion surely than the youth of Spain or Russia, Germany or Italy.

"When future generations read the history of our era," said Roosevelt, whom I quote because he is essentially a creature of this age, experimental, adaptable and impetuous, "maybe they will consider us the last of the barbarians, for we have perfected the means of killing while of the art of living, we know very little."

Mahatma Gandhi complains that, as barbarians, we have broken into, and, to a certain extent, broken up, the life and culture of the East without substituting our material Western prosperity. This man who is at times a John the Baptist and at others a Bismarck, maintains that there are insufficient roads and canals, that the villages are hungry, the land uncultivated and the mass of the people uneducated. For all this he blames Britain, but the exploitation of a continent cannot be achieved by any foreign government in the face of popular opposition. We can supervise and train. We can provide a large number of experts. We can supply machinery, or the means of making it in India. But only the Indians themselves, by an immense and hitherto unexampled display of energy, altruism and initiative, can develop the resources and ensure the steady advancement of their own country.

## INDIAN OPINION

Mahatma Gandhi once said to me as we ate a supper of celery on the floor of his sitting-room in Knightsbridge: "If we were free, we should not need to fight." So might the Baptist have cried upon the little hills of Judea.

In fact, if India is ever to be free, she *must* fight, united and determined, in the causes of agriculture, industry, health, education, the destruction of purdah and the elimination of superstition.

Not the greatest saint in history and certainly no politician can turn the clock backwards. It is too late for the Mahatma's theory of the self-sufficient village unit supplying its own severely simple and limited needs. Wireless, cheap printing, and the cinema, backed by a flood of oratory, have had their effect on a sufficient portion of India to set an eventual pace for the rest. British India has gone so far towards Westernization that it will be difficult for the States to hold back. There may be a gap of centuries between the polyglot townfolk, harnessing the resources of the West, and the peasants of the most remote States, passing rich on threepence a day, content if they can build their houses, clothe themselves, and cook their meals out of materials supplied by the forests in which they live. But the influence of the towns predominates. It grows with every new school and every new advertisement. The difference between the sophisticate and the savage is one of needs. Every scrap of print distributed in an Indian village suggests or emphasizes a need.

Religion, caste, poverty, and the immense unbridged distances, perhaps also the enervating climate and the inherited indolence of an inbred people, constitute a succession of obstacles. But these must give way in time.

India at the moment is at the crossroads. She cannot afford to dispense with British aid, nor can she rely on

## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

Britain to solve the social and material problems which impede her progress. She must still make use of Britain, paying fairly for services rendered, but she must also make use of her own personal and other resources. Only an Indian Government could persuade the mass of India to submit to essential taxation, to break down the privileges of caste, to differentiate between religion and superstition, to organize technical education, to establish a just balance between the needs of the peasant and the artisan.

There is a definite place in India for all that is best in British Imperialism, just as there is a definite place for India within our Commonwealth of Nations, and no possible place elsewhere at the moment. But, assured of independence and protection, India must solve her own internal problems, instead of counting on Britain to do so against violent opposition.

## GANDHI AND THE INDIAN PRINCES

IT was a young and extremely sophisticated Indian Prince who first talked to me intimately of Gandhi. The occasion was a London dinner party, so the setting could not have been more unsuitable. The good-looking youth beside me had just come of age. We talked of balls and polo. On an impulse I asked about the Mahatma, then at the height of his influence.

"Tell me what he is really like," I said.

The young man hesitated. He had been educated at Oxford and his knowledge of the English language was far more comprehensive than mine. He was admirably, but not too well dressed. The pearls in his shirt-front were just the right size. Within the limitations imposed by his age, he had been everywhere and knew everybody. Yet this is exactly what he replied:

"That is too difficult a question. What would you say if I asked you to describe Christ?"

Years later, I met the man who is supposed by many to be an exceedingly astute politician appealing to the emotions of illiterate masses by infusing predatory politics with mysticism. Some personalities do not depend on a background. I think if one met Lady Willingdon or the late Maréchal Lyautey in the turmoil of a station waiting-room, one would be so convinced of their quality that one would be oblivious to their temporary surroundings. But the great Indian was obviously and most naturally affected by circumstances. I did not find him impressive. On the other



hand, I could not doubt his sincerity. Like Hitler, who gives me the same impression of mental isolation when I talk to him, the Mahatma seemed to be without comparative knowledge. He knew something of Africa and of socialist literature, and a great deal of India, but little else. He spoke as a biblical personage and without, I thought, any relevance to modern conditions. His sympathy, like Hitler's, was entirely with the common people. I thought then that he was, spiritually, far more concerned with freeing the untouchables and the illiterates from unnecessary burdens than with freeing India. Only because he felt no social progress could be made under a foreign government, did he wish to eliminate such at once, without real thought for the consequences, or with such superficial thought as could honestly—and ludicrously—envisage the existence of a mercenary British army kept in India at the orders of Indian politicians.

Approximately five out of India's 250 million are enfranchised and Gandhi seemed to be more conscious than anyone else of the immense gulf between the illiterate labourer and the townsman who may represent him in politics. Because of his sympathy with the mentality of the villagers, with their old-fashioned simplicity, their lack of words and ideas, the Mahatma has had and may have again, I am convinced, at any moment he chooses, complete power over the Indian masses. And when Gandhi dies, another of the same religious or human quality may set fire to the peasant imagination from one end of the peninsula to another. Political agitators can make their impermanent impressions in the States, where the mentality of the people is feudal, where the sun rises no more regularly than the peasant pays homage to his god and his prince—often much confused—but only a prophet who appeals to something in

## GANDHI AND THE INDIAN PRINCES

the souls of the most religious people in the world could possibly affect the essential India.

It is difficult for a European to understand the relationship between Gandhi and the different classes of India. I've heard bachelors of art and science, about to leave their universities for the Mecca of government employment, admire him for all the qualities that I should have thought he did not possess. A young Indian doctor became enthusiastic about the way the Mahatma staged and produced his statesmanship. In the colleges Gandhi's influence waxes and wanes, but among the peasants the effect of his fasts is extraordinary. It would be curious to see the result of Mr. Neville Chamberlain or Monsieur Daladier announcing that he would not touch food until a stay-in strike came to an end. In Europe, I am afraid, the vicarious penance would have no effect, but in India it does. When Gandhi offers his wasted body as a sacrifice for the wrong thinking of others, the mass of his countrymen really do feel an immense satisfaction.

"His fasts are symbolic," explained a Maharaj Rana. "If you believe in the power of intercession, you must credit Mahatma Gandhi with an immense spiritual force."

To me, the Indian leader has always seemed extremely active, physically and mentally, but apart from the fasts which excite and satisfy the multitudes of India, his activities seem to me to border on the chaotic. He maintains that the worst self-government is better than the best foreign rule. He also insists that every villager must spin. In order to induce an atmosphere of general spinning, he would be willing to prohibit the import of foreign cloth. But he would still be defeated by the Indian mills, as also by the fact that India, badly governed by herself, would never be left alone to do so *for* herself.

It seemed to me that the various Princes with whom I

## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

talked about the Mahatma understood him much better than the politicians and the university students. It happened that I was staying in Patiala just before the late Maharajah's death. A number of Rulers, most of them relations, had gathered in the great rose-pink palace and in the Baradari set among masses of trees. At night we used to discuss the destiny of India with which Gandhi is so intimately concerned. One of the Maharajahs said: "He is very human, you know. The Prince of Wales" [Indian Princes rarely refer to their friend and ex-King as the Duke of Windsor] "understood that. Before he landed in India for his official visit, H.R.H. wired to Lord Reading asking that Mahatma Gandhi should be invited to have a conversation with him on board. The Viceroy deplored such unconventionality. The Prince of Wales insisted that everything could be satisfactorily arranged if the two of them could meet privately *before* the official landing which was to be the signal for widespread civil disobedience [Hartal.] I believe Lord Reading eventually telegraphed to the King begging him to intervene. Somehow the Prince was dissuaded and the visit was a disaster, as you know. I talked to the Mahatma about it afterwards and I asked him what would have happened had he received the Prince's invitation. 'I should have accepted it.' 'And then?' 'There would have been no civil disobedience. He would have appealed to our hospitality. We should have been obliged to receive him as a guest.'"

Whether the tale is true or not I do not know, but that night the Princes continued to build up for me the character of the Indian leader as they knew him. For the few who are not familiar with the Mahatma's history, it can be summarized from what they told me. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was born in October 1868. His parents were of the Bunia or trading caste, followers of the god Vishnu,

## GANDHI AND THE INDIAN PRINCES

one of whose doctrines, Ahimsa, forbids the taking of any form of life. Consequently no meat can be eaten and no vermin exterminated. At thirteen he was married and at nineteen he went to England, which showed that, even then, he had exceptional courage, for such a journey meant breaking caste. In London he finished his education, spent, according to his own account, "ten minutes every day before a huge mirror, watching myself arrange my tie," took dancing lessons, read Rousseau and Tolstoy, was greatly impressed by the latter and returned in 1891 to India to find himself an outcast among the more religious section of his people.

For two years he worked as a lawyer, an occupation oddly in contrast to the spirit of non-resistance inculcated by Hindu mysticism or Tolstoyan socialism. In 1893 Gandhi went to Natal where some 150,000 of his compatriots had already settled. There he must have realized for the first time the brutal and illogical force of the colour bar, for the narrow-minded Dutch of the backveld, rough, stalwart men used to making and taking their own way, saw no difference between Indian and negro. During this period of his life, Gandhi, the young lawyer fighting for the repeal of the poll-tax on Indian workers, was attracted by Christianity. He says that he read Matthew Arnold's *Light of Asia* and was enthralled by it, as by the Sermon on the Mount whose precepts, if not derived from, are at least closely allied to the earliest and purest form of Buddhism.

During the South African war, Gandhi organized an Indian Ambulance Corps serving at the front, and later a plague camp in which he worked with persistent gallantry. During the Zulu Rebellion he returned to ambulance work, proving to the limited mentality of his critics that an Eastern had the quality of courage inseparable from a Western concept of civilization. Subsequently he founded

## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

a communist settlement and was imprisoned three times for his leadership of the Passive Resistance movement (Soul-Force or Satyagrana) with which he sought to oppose the unjust poll-tax.

The "inert conspiracy of the poor against the rich", as Benbow described passive resistance in the early days of Trades Unionism, was successful. From the Transvaal Satyagrana spread into Natal. Strikes, mass meetings, mass marches about the country, exasperated South Africa and inspired India. In 1914 the poll-tax was repealed and Hindu labour made free of Natal.

When he returned in 1915 to his own country Gandhi had crystallized in his own mind, at least, a philosophy, subversive and reactionary. According to his point of view, India has been ruined for the benefit of Britain, in spite of the fact that since 1910 she has absorbed something approximating to 1,000 million in bullion. But his quarrel is really with the Western conception of civilization, for men "are enslaved by temptation of money and of the luxuries that money can buy".

In 1920 he wrote: "The last war has shown . . . the Satanic nature of the civilization that dominates Europe to-day. Every canon of public morality has been broken by the victors in the name of virtue."

A self-centred mystic, but also an honest and intelligent man, it is strange that Gandhi can offer nothing practical in place of the system he would like to destroy. At different times he has said: "Parliaments are emblems of slavery", "Machinery is a snake-hold", Education is evil—"do you wish to make the peasant discontented with his cottage and his lot?"—the post allows "anyone to abuse his fellows by means of a letter for one penny", "hospitals are the instruments of the devil", and "medical science is the concentrated

## GANDHI AND THE INDIAN PRINCES

essence of black magic". Underlying all these utterances is a grim belief in the simplest possible form of living, yet Gandhi knows perfectly well that if all machines and modern inventions were abolished it would mean the death-warrant of millions of Indian workers.

The Mahatma's actions have always been as contradictory as his ideas, for his character is a tissue of complexities. At the beginning of the world war he made every effort to enlist as an ambulance worker, but, forced to return to India through ill-health, he was apparently divided between common sense and a yearning for self-realization. At one moment he attempted to enlist the villagers to fight against Turks and Germans. At another he preached, in Kathiawar and Gujerat, passive resistance and the spinning wheel as a universal panacea. In those days he must have been affected by the Manichoean philosophy which approaches to masochism, for he founded a celibate establishment (Ashram) to encourage sterility, espoused the cause of the Untouchables, opposed the Brahmins and not much later announced that disarmament meant the emasculation of the whole nation!

While the Mahatma carried on his missionary campaigns among the villagers, "To say that British rule is indispensable is almost a denial of the Godhead. We cannot say that anybody or anything is indispensable except God," and "It is the absolute right of India to misgovern herself," agitators preached sedition in the towns. To cope with the extravagant difficulties of the situation, in March 1919, the Rowlatt Act established special courts sitting without juries, and by way of protest Gandhi instituted his first general passive resistance campaign. Hindus, Sikhs and Moslems joined hands. The Punjab rebelled. Martial law was proclaimed in April and General Dyer, rightly or wrongly,

## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

made history by firing on the Jalhanwala Bagh meeting, killing 359 Indians who may have had no intent beyond seditious oratory.

Gandhi as a saint had far more influence on such an inflammable situation than Gandhi as a politician with changing views. The Montagu-Chelmsford reforms of December 1919 divided the opposition into Moderates and Nationalists, upon which the Mahatma threw himself into the new Khalifat movement, with the announced object of forcing Britain to restore the Sultan of Turkey to spiritual and temporal power, but presumably for the purpose of uniting Hindus and Moslems. With the support of the National Congress, he urged his followers to withdraw from all government service "so that every link in the chain which binds society together is broken".<sup>1</sup> In the resulting turmoil, Sikhs were slaughtered in the Punjab, the Moplahs revolted and according to Sir Sankaran Nair: "Two thousand Mohammedans were killed; the number of Hindus butchered . . . running into thousands; women raped not in a fit of passion, but systematically . . . and horrible cruelty for which I have not been able to find a parallel in history . . . All this due directly . . . to the organizations of Khalifat associations."

This last rising Gandhi described as "The brave, god-fearing Moplahs, fighting for what they consider religion in a manner they consider religious." Yet there was a limit to his powers of genuine self-deception, for, when in the United Provinces, 3,000 extremists followed up the Hartal, declared upon the Prince of Wales's arrival, by burning alive some police constables in their barracks at Chauri-Chaura, Gandhi announced that "God had spoken clearly to him and that he must undergo a personal cleansing".

<sup>1</sup> Benbow.

## GANDHI AND THE INDIAN PRINCES

From that moment (March 1922) he appears to have sickened of the adoration of the "unthinking multitude" and in spite of his arrest on March 10th and his sentence of six years' imprisonment, his own spiritual withdrawal, or it may have been his uncertainties, caused his influence to wane. Perhaps Gandhi the politician had broken the heart of Gandhi the Saint.

In 1924 he was released after an attack of appendicitis during which he was treated by an official—"Satanic"—surgeon. By this time the Swaraj party had arisen. Its policy was to use the legislative assemblies as a means of acquiring responsible government and for such purpose it demanded a Round Table Conference to settle the means of which it could dispose. Gandhi did not ally himself wholeheartedly with such a scheme. In May 1925 he expressed doubts as to Hindu-Moslem unity. "So long as untouchability disfigures Hinduism," he added, "so long do I hold the attainment of Swaraj to be an utter impossibility."

Yet, in 1929, he was elected to the Presidency of Congress and to the consternation of his apostles, ceded the position to Jawaharlal Nehru, a brilliant disciple of Moscow.

In December Nehru, consistent in his beliefs, repudiated the Indian National Debt and declared for a republic. On the last day of the month Gandhi, the Saint in him struggling with the politician, wrote to the Viceroy offering to terminate civil disobedience in return for total prohibition, the halving of military expenditure and the land tax, and the abolition of the salt tax. When his terms were refused, he marched into the sea, clad in the symbolic loin-cloth, scooped up a handful of the salt which is a government monopoly, and was again arrested (in May 1930). With the Mahatma in prison the Round Table Conference met in London and that it succeeded in doing so was a defeat for



## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

those Congress members who boycotted it. When Gandhi was released to save the face of the National Congress, it was a gesture which could not fail to disillusion both saint and politician. The Mahatma sought the Viceroy and was received—in his loin-cloth—as an equal. At that meeting his halo saved the Congress, but it was the Viceroy who saved India.

Of Gandhi's strange, chaotic life, tarnished by the impact of a civilization which remained incomprehensible, (although the Mahatma could admire, imitate and perhaps transcend its courage,) I talked with the Princes assembled in Patiala. They understood Gandhi far better than any of the fluid-minded intellectuals with whom I have discussed his place in history. For their own fundamental point of view is rooted, like his, in the past. Whatever their culture, they are the willing products, in many cases the highest achievements of traditions closely linked with religion. The Mahatma saw himself as a tool of God with whom and in whom is the future of India. Many an Indian ruler, believed by his people to be divine, must, of necessity, have the same feeling.

"What has Gandhi done for India?" I asked, and a tall, spectacled young Rajah, ruling a primitive forest State as a great English landlord of a century ago might have ruled the estate dependent on him, replied: "I think he has shown India that she cannot altogether break away from her past. Her development and her progress must be the logical results of what she has been. Nothing can be given her, all neatly wrapped up in new official parchment, direct from the West. India has got to work out her own destiny. You can't really help her, except by keeping peace while she makes mistakes. After all, mistakes are not final. You've made a lot yourselves and yet you're immensely successful."

## GANDHI AND THE INDIAN PRINCES

"The Mahatma has always struck me as being sincere," I said. "Like Hitler and Roosevelt. But they all feel too much."

I thought that all these men, with whom I have talked at length, feel too much to be consistent. They are quite genuinely convinced of one thing on Monday. On Tuesday, another aspect of the affair has occurred to them. On Wednesday they are overwhelmed and excited by a flood of ideas and on Thursday a completely new one has taken possession of their minds.

"Mahatma Gandhi is too complex for any European to understand," said a philosophical Maharaj Rana who is deeply religious. "He expresses in himself all the different facets of Hinduism. You've seen the images of our gods. What do they mean to you? Everything or nothing? Each man has his own conception of divinity and therefore his own favourite image, but there is only one God. The Mahatma is to each man something different. In himself he is all that Indian humanity suffers, its doubts, its fears, its faith, its purposeless heroism, its unremitting labour, its errors, yes, but also its truth. It is difficult to explain. I should have to talk to you in parables and the English don't like parables. They call them fairy stories."

"Gandhi was the one chance we had of being united—and that wasn't much," said a spectacularly good-looking son of the reigning house.

"India can be united through her emotions," retorted the Maharaj Rana, "but once she begins to think, there is an end to her unity."

So the Mahatma, struggling for his own soul as well as for the soul of India, caused the masses to give birth to a principle which was bound to be stifled in the Congress, or for diametrically different reasons, in the Chamber of Princes.

## FABULOUS PATIALA

PATIALA is the premier Sikh State. Its 5,932 square miles consist chiefly of plain. Except in the rains, the bleached earth looks as if it would crumble into powder. The trees and the sparse vegetation have a sapless appearance.

Motoring north from Delhi on the magnificent trunk road, admirably surfaced, where there is little traffic except for the procession of bullock-carts creaking along, each in its own cloud of dust, there is a general impression of flat, dun-coloured earth, of fawn cattle and scrub wrung in the mangle of drought, yet a considerable portion of the plain is well irrigated by the Sirhind and Western Jumna Canal systems. Further away, beyond the capital which depends on His Highness's palaces and their multiple needs, there are forests of pine, deodar, oak, and bamboo. And still further north, in the hills, there is game, barking deer, musk deer and leopard. But apart from valuable mineral resources, the great plain is the source of the State wealth. For here 60 per cent. of the people work after the fashion of their great-grandfathers, with implements not much more effective than cardboard which they would not change for the latest miracles of modern machinery.

The Ruling House of Patiala claims descent from the Moon and from a great Rajput dynasty of the epic ages. One ancestor, Maharajah Gai, founded in the sixth century the Afghan town of Gahzni, from which came the notorious

## FABULOUS PATIALA

Mahmoud, in later years to ravage Northern India. Another was Jaisal, the Rajput chieftain who founded the State and city of Jaisalmer.

Sikh by religion and domestic rite, the Rulers of Patiala have inherited the dynastic traditions of their race. How could they not be warriors with the fighting blood of Rajistan in their veins and the heritage of Sikh battles in their hands? It is as a soldier and a sportsman, therefore, that the last Maharajah, whose actions were always on the scale of a Louis XIV, will best be remembered. In the third Afghan War the Maharajah remained at the front until the harassed Amir asked for an armistice. The Patiala contingent, which provided no less than 28,000 men, magnificent fighters, did good work in Egypt, Mesopotamia and Gallipoli during the European War, while His Highness served as one of India's representatives in the Imperial War Cabinet, and himself visited most of the Allied fronts. In 1925, he represented the Indian Princes at the League of Nations, and in 1926 was elected Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes.

On the other hand, in 1930, this Prince who cannot be judged by the usual standards of modernity because he was a direct product of the middle ages, of their magnificence, their courage, their cruelty, and their autocracy, was publicly accused of murder, torture, forced labour, illegal arrests, confinements and confiscations, and misappropriation of funds raised for public purposes.<sup>1</sup>

When an unsatisfactory inquiry instituted by the Viceroy and held in camera, cleared the Maharajah, who neither then nor at any time took steps to confute his accusers, there was considerable dissatisfaction in British India. Without broaching the question of the Princes' right, in a democratic

<sup>1</sup> *The Indictment of Patiala*, published 1930.

## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

age, to represent the seventy million people of their States, a number of representative Indian and other writers suggested that the Maharajah should have dealt with the changes in an open and impartial court of law.

Europe continued to acclaim the spectacular Prince as a mighty sportsman, rider and shot and cricketer, fabulously generous, and a host without equal, while, logically enough, His Highness's position in his own State remained unchanged. Socialist newspapers might inveigh against him, but the people of Patiala had never really considered their right to be well-governed. They admired their Maharajah immensely for all the qualities they associated with their Gods. His House undoubtedly ruled by divine right. I doubt if a peasant of Patiala, however highly taxed, however "oppressed" according to the democratic meaning of the word, would be inclined to indict his Ruler. For like the Gods, the Prince who is their descendent has a right to exact sacrifices. The villagers might grumble. Their emotions might momentarily be aroused by the insecurity of their daughters who, if sufficiently beautiful, might be forcibly taken for the royal zenana. But compensation flowed into the pockets of the bereaved.

It is barely conceivable that a concubine might be unwilling, but her family, finding themselves suddenly prosperous, would be still more unlikely to remain intransigent. Certain it is that when, in March,<sup>1</sup> the Maharajah died, some hundreds of women, crazed with grief, hurled themselves into his apartments, rent their clothes, tore off their jewels, beat their heads against floor and walls and gave every appearance of an anguish which they probably felt. For the late Prince had the gift of making himself liked. Apart from his splendid appearance and the exceptional good

<sup>1</sup> 1938.



From left to right, HH The Rajah of Patna, Prince Bujnara (son-in-law of the late Maharajah of Patna), HH The Raj Kumar of Patna, HH The Maharaj Rana of Dholpur and the author on the terrace of the palace at Patna



## FABULOUS PATIALA

looks inherited by his sons, he had great charm of manner. I doubt if his people, who are particularly conservative, except in their military tradition—during the last 125 years there has never been a war, or even a crisis entailing armed action in which the forces of Patiala have not come to the help of the Empire—are as much impressed by the new Ministry of Agriculture, the pending constitution for which they have not asked, the Faculty of Science added to the Mohindra college, free primary education, the Rontgen Institute with its modern installation for X-ray treatment, unique, I believe, among the States, the Clinical Research laboratory, and the latest anti-rabic centre, as they are by the lavish splendour of their Maharajahs. They like display. To their simple minds, steeped in tradition, gods and princes have a right to their tempers, their extravagances, and their extortions. If the late Maharajah, Lieutenant General H. H. Sir Bhupindra Singh, G.C.I.E., G.C.V.O., G.B.E., etc., etc. etc., was tyrannical, there was nothing new about such tyranny. A grievance, to be effective among the peasantry of an Indian State, must undoubtedly be a new one. The most beneficent sanitary ordinance might conceivably create a revolt, but no old-established exaction, whether of money or blood or women, is likely to rouse a feudal people.

To me, Patiala under the late Ruler, was profoundly interesting because it stood midway between good and bad in State Government. The goal of modernization was within the conception of its hierarchy, royal and ministerial. It may even have been a genuine purpose, but personal inclinations intervened. His Highness had to have money for his Arabian Nights palaces, his host of beautiful women, all of whom seem to have adored him, his parks full of fantastic animals, of birds from every part of the world, for the



polo and cricket he so magnificently supported, for his jewels and gold plate, his prodigious hospitality, his fleet of cars, and also for his boundless personal generosity.

From an Ancestor who held the recently-conquered Punjab for Britain during the Mutiny, thus contributing to the relief of Delhi which we might otherwise never have recaptured, the Maharajahs of Patiala have inherited the title of "Favoured Son of the British Empire" and their State has been called the cradle of Imperial Service Troops. As soldiers, therefore, rather than as Statesmen, these Sikh Princes have contributed to the ideas of modern Imperialism, while in their private lives they have paid tribute to progress by little more than the substitution of motors and aeroplanes for the horses which they bestrode like centaurs.

It happened that I was staying at the Baradari Palace in Patiala during the last week of His Highness's illness. The atmosphere of the pleasant white house, furnished with an enchanting collection of inherited chaos, reflected what was happening under the acres of rose-red roof, where, in the modern palace, a host of relatives, Ministers, courtiers, and doctors waited upon the health of the man who had certainly been to his own people a *Roi Soleil*, torrid, violent and munificent. Above me lodged some of the younger Princes, sons-in-law of the Maharajah, and their staffs. Below me, the great halls, with windows opening on to porches where pigeons kept up a soft, monotonous lament, were full of portraits of dead Maharajahs all wearing the same jewels. In spite of the conventions and the limitations of the artists, all the subjects had a certain life. I imagined them impatient of their silks and their diamonds, longing to get out into the open, with sword and horse and something to be won, but there was sensuality in the full lips between the carefully

## FABULOUS PATIALA

curled moustaches and the beards, rolled according to Sikh custom, over a fine black string tied under the turban. While I talked with the young Princes, one tall and thin, the other too good-natured to be anything but plump, or with a succession of A.D.C.'s in faultless jodhpurs who had always just dismounted from or were about to mount thoroughbreds, I used to study the unyielding eyes and the emotional lips of the portraits.

One day, there was laughter in the Baradari Palace. Everybody moved quickly. Even the cooks excelled themselves. For, from the monumental Palace, whose pink façade went on and on, apparently for ever, above a terrace thronged with courtiers in turbans whose colour reflected their moods, came the news that the Maharajah had sent for his barber. Subsequently, it was learned that, much to the consternation of his doctors, he had spent no less than two hours on his bath and the care of his beard. Being a Sikh and first among the Sikh Princes, it was necessary that every hair should be oiled till it shone like silk before being rolled neatly over a cord and tied round the chin.

Then there was his turban to be considered. When it was known that he had chosen to wear cherry-coloured muslin over a lilac head-band, everybody in the gigantic pink sugar-cake building was delighted.

His Highness must certainly be better.

It was curious how the personality of this fabulous monarch, whom we never saw, dominated our stay in Patiala.

For weeks the Maharajah had been ill, and from every part of India brothers and cousins, sons and sons-in-law, had gathered under the eleven acres of his roof.

Every afternoon there was a royal gathering in the central saloon, a sky-high apartment furnished with admirably

## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

comfortable English chairs and sofas, and decorated almost entirely with signed photographs of European royaltics.

From the piano gazed three generations of British monarchs.

The kings and queens of every country, from Portugal to the Balkans, from Stockholm to Cairo, scintillated in jewelled frames upon every table.

Goanese butlers served tea and a great many delicious cakes.

In the place of honour sat the Maharaj Rana of Dholpur in a sky-blue turban, closer rolled than those of Patiala, and a smoke-blue coat.

For generations his house had been closely allied with that of our host, and in stormier times, when it was dangerous to leave an heir-apparent among the plots and intrigues of his father's court, a boy prince of one State sometimes found refuge with the other.

Next in rank came the Rajah of Patna, a tall, spectacled youth who always wore white, the ruler of an Eastern State, married to Patiala's daughter, and his brother-in-law, a Prince of Nepal, plump and gay, with a great sense of humour.

Then there was the good-looking Maharaj Kumar Bujindra Singh, with a red beauty-spot above his eyebrows.

He talked of the teak-trees he was planting and the new irrigation canals and his collection of pheasants from every part of the world.

The Prime Minister, with an immense flare of purple muslin spurting out of the top of his pointed golden cap, talked of the proposed Constitution, which, in a year or so, would modernize the Government.

But the young princes talked of the ghost which haunts the Baradari Palace.

"It's a little old woman who walks up the staircase just beside your rooms," said the Rajah of Patna. "Haven't you heard her steps?"

And his brother-in-law continued: "Last night we came in late and I thought I would give you a fright, so I tried to walk like a ghost, with a great deal of rustling, you know—I put two big crackling leaves over my shoes—but you were asleep and wouldn't listen!"

Always the conversation came back to the Maharajah who lay ill in a vast pillared room overlooking the lake and the zenana palace, where hundreds of lovely women are supposed to live, and the magnificent gardens where white peacocks drift about like ghosts between ivory pavilions and fountain-filled canals.

I imagined the hidden potentate as our Henry VIII—an enormous jovial man who ate 50 lb. of food every day and gave away a month's revenue if peasants appealed to him because they had had a poor crop.

"He used to say he ate only one meal a day," murmured an A.D.C., "but once he sent for me in the afternoon, and while he talked to me of business he consumed three whole chickens with his tea."

A prince with ruby rings in his ears added: "After dinner, while we were eating dessert, an enormous gold dish with a golden cover locked over it used to be brought in and set before the Maharajah.

"He would unlock it himself, and inside there would be any number of dishes made with rice and meat and all sorts of sweet things. These he would eat with his fingers, and as soon as a dish was empty it would be refilled."

The Maharajah loved life and food and women and jewels, but because he was so splendid and rich, so extravagant, so generous and hospitable, because he shot well

## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

and drove his enormous cars at a fantastic pace and stopped them at once if the poorest of his subjects wanted to talk to him, because he laughed and scattered money into the hands of beggars, his people were genuinely attached to him.

They didn't care if they were oppressed or not. Probably they didn't even feel oppressed, because they could always go to the palace with its miles of rose-pink wall and its stupendous pink façade that rises straight out of a redder terrace, and they could be sure of seeing their ruler.

Sometimes the fabulous man, who ought to have been a Mogul emperor conquering and spending in the lavish fashion of the Middle Ages, would sit in a little white marble pavilion scarcely bigger than a hutch and listen to the petitions brought in from all over the country.

He would distribute a great deal of encouragement and sound advice with his promises of pardon or a subsidy. And the suppliants would go away enchanted.

In the evenings we used to go out with some of the Princes in an immense grey and silver car with arm-chair seats.

All the courtiers promenading on the red terrace, or standing talking in earnest groups, their poppy-red, yellow, green or tobacco-brown turbans like a flower-bed in full bloom, their beards very neatly tucked up and strung round their chins, would turn to look at us.

The guard would present arms. And quite possibly, before we left the gardens, we would come upon a procession of perambulators, each containing a brown-eyed baby, each pushed with the utmost solemnity by a bearded Sikh. I heard that in one week, no less than six children had been born to the monarch.

As the dozen or twenty royal infants passed, the guards saluted again.

## FABULOUS PATIALA

Nobody knows the size of the late Maharajah's family, but he was credited with at least eighty-seven sons and daughters, just as he was credited with the largest diamond in India, and an overdraft even bigger than his treasure of jewels and gold.

He had an annual income of about two million pounds.

When the grey and silver car left the last of the palace enclosures, the populace was apt to fling itself upon the running-boards with the feeling that the nearer it got to the ruling family the better chance it had of heaven.

In the country, where nothing has changed for 500 years or so, peasants would leave their fields and do a little diffident worship at a distance before going home to their families and saying:

"I shall have good fortune. I saw the Maharajah's son to-day."

The most conservative among them probably considered that all their sins would be remitted because they had caught a glimpse of a God.

For Patiala, like many other States, is completely feudal.

Most of the people know nothing of politics. Some of them believe that Queen Victoria still reigns in London.

I talked to one old man who assured me that the English Queen of whom he had heard from father and grandfather, was entirely responsible for the peace and security in which he lived.

"Before she ruled, there were dacoits [brigands] all over the land. Even within the walls of my house I wasn't safe! Now I can drive my cows where I will."

Educated youth, in the towns, which are, after all, only large villages, may talk of Congress and admire its methods, but the country people don't read and they don't think.

They know about God and the Maharajah, and some

## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

Deputy Commissioner who is a great man with much power, to whom they must pay respect, because he is concerned with taxes and the law, but beyond this their minds do not function.

They do not know of any other authorities.

One day, when we came back to the palace after feeding the spotted deer and sambur (Indian elk) the wallabies, which came bounding along as if they were playing leap-frog, and a host of great birds, storks and cranes, which wander loose in the paddocks, we found a commotion on the terrace.

The flaming turbans contrasted with the anxiety on every face. The Maharajah was worse.

The oldest A.D.C., General Chundra Singh, who, in 1921, at the age of 55, was still playing first-class polo in the famous team captained by the late Maharajah, led us into the garden.

"Illness should only be for the old," he said sadly, and in the same breath, "I am nearly seventy-three and I've never been ill.

"But then I never go in a motor car and I can still ride fifty miles a day."

He showed us his horse waiting under a tree. "I ride everywhere—to the palace, to my house, to the club. There is plenty of time and I am not in a hurry."

To distract his mind from what was happening in the palace, crowded with doctors from Delhi and Europe, he told us of his youth in the service of the dying Maharajah's father.

"In those days there were no politics, no papers, and no business. His Highness just gave orders and his Ministers—there were only two of them—saw that they were carried out.

## FABULOUS PATIALA

"We occupied ourselves with sport. There must have been 500 horses in the stables.

"Every day we used to get up at five and ride out thirteen miles into the country to pig-stick. We'd get back by eleven and have our special 'Patiala pegs', double strength, at the club, and then somebody'd say: 'What about a game of rackets till lunch?'

"So we'd all play squash, and in the afternoon after His Highness had signed his name to a few letters, there was polo.

"Each of us had his sixteen ponies in those days, and we always ended up with roller-skating before dinner."

The old man who spoke of such relentless sport as if it were the only natural way of living, strode along, spare as a reed, hard as whipcord.

Typical of the tireless Sikhs, warriors born and bred, to whom soldicring is the only possible career, he wore the steel bracelet that originated as a shield, the comb as a symbol of cleanliness, for no Sikh may cut hair or beard, and the knife ordained by their Prophet as a sign that man must always be ready to fight.

His snow-white beard curled up to his ears.

When talking of his family he never mentioned a woman, for in Patiala wives and daughters are rigidly secluded behind zenana walls.

When they move from one great house to another an immense crimson cloth is tied over the carriage, and, in the case of royalty, sealed, so that no eye can possibly see so much as a movement within.

I doubt if much education as we know it found its way into the royal zenana, although the then Heir-Apparent had married a charming and intelligent girl, daughter of the Paramount Chief of Saraikela. The life of the women



## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

belonged to past centuries, but when, in spite of the cleverest doctors in India, the flag above the colossal pink palace flew at half mast, something of that old, fabulous India, rigidly conservative, passed for ever—with the Maharajah who had lived, loved and eaten with such prodigious disregard for the limitations of our age.

## KAPURTHALA AND THE SIKHS

**T**HERE are fourteen States in the Punjab of which Patiala is far the largest in the matter of population, for it has nearly 1,700,000 people, and Bahawalpur the biggest in area, for it covers 16,434 square miles, but Kapurthala is the name with which England is perhaps most familiar because its Ruler pays annual visits to Europe.

His Highness Farzand-i-Dilband Rasikh-ul-Itikad Daulat-i-Inglishia Raja-i-Rajgan Maharajah Sir Jagatjit Singh Bahadur, G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E., G.B.E., attended the Silver Jubilee of King George V and the Coronation of King George VI wearing as a tiara above his turban the incomparable emeralds set in diamonds which are among the legendary jewels of India. Apart from his position as one of the foremost Sikh Princes, and the immense distinction of his appearance, for slight and clean-shaven but for a small moustache, with the burning dark eyes of a Medici portrait, His Highness resembles, in build and expression, those subtle statesmen of great race who were patrons of the Italian Renaissance—apart from all this, the Maharajah is remembered by his unnumbered guests as having the most delightful family imaginable. The Kapurthala charm has descended from generation to generation. The sons of the present Ruler have it in full measure and they seem either to have found its equal in their wives or to have succeeded in sharing the elusive gift with the beautiful women they marry. Among the daughters-in-law of the present Maha-

## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

rajah is numbered the loveliest lady in India, Princess Karam, but all the women of the family seem to have more than their fair share of looks, combined with the grace, dignity and warmth of generosity characteristic of India's children.

The Maharajah has travelled more extensively than most of his royal colleagues, visiting both Americas as well as North Africa and most of the countries of Europe and Asia. The cosmopolitan outlook he has acquired is reflected in the administration and the culture of his State, where the palaces and the public buildings combine the best qualities of the French Renaissance with the amenities suited to India. Of the many splendid edifices that embellish modern Kapurthala, the Durbar Hall is among the finest in India and the mosque, constructed in the Moorish style by the architect who created its fellow in Paris, is, I imagine, unique in Asia.

There is also a particularly interesting Sikh temple dedicated to the Faith of the ten Gurus or teachers, of whom the first, Nanak Chand, was born in 1469 during our Wars of the Roses and began his teaching about the time when Martin Luther, who was to preach a simpler form of Christianity in the Germanic lands of the Holy Roman Empire, was born. This boy, whose teaching has so influenced Northern India, is said, like the Lord Buddha, to have given up married life in order to become an ascetic and to have wandered as far west as Mecca in his search for the true religion. Legend has it that an Arab, finding him asleep on a hillside, abused him because of his position with regard to the Holy City. "How dare you sleep with your feet towards the House of God?" he asked. "Where then is NOT the House of God?" retorted Nanak Chand.

After years of wandering—those years in the wilderness familiar to all the great teachers in search of spiritual



The children of the Nawab of Rampur.



[H] the Maharaj Rana of Dholpur and the author.

revelation,—he returned to his village and his family with the startling information that he had searched Moslem and Hindu scriptures in vain. He could find no God in them, “for,” said the serious youth, bent on re-making the world, “God is infinite and invisible. No material likeness of him is possible. All men are born equal. There is no caste and there should be no idols. All men are brothers. They should be tolerant of other religions and of their faults. Respect temples and sacred rivers, but bow to none but God, who has sent many Prophets into the world; none should be called imposters.”

The young “Guru” or “teacher” whose followers were “Sikhs”, that is, students (from the Hindu verb *sikhna* meaning “to learn”) claimed neither divine descent nor special powers. He acknowledged the fundamental Hindu principle of re-incarnation and the pilgrimage of souls from one body to another until perfection is achieved, maintaining that abominable and unrepented sin might cause the transmigration of a human soul into that of a beast. Like the orthodox Hindus, Nanak Chand approved the principle of cremation, but he forbade sati<sup>1</sup> and the slaughter of unwanted girl children. As an ascetic, he neither smoked, drank alcohol nor touched meat, but his was no major schism with the ancestral Faith, for he held the cow—staff of life to the Hindu—sacred and although he would not accord divinity to the avatars or heroes of Hindu mythology, he was sufficiently attracted, spiritually, by pantheistic legends, not to deny the multiple aspects of the one God.

At the age of seventy he died and within a few decades the man who had neither claimed nor sought the privileges of divinity was pronounced to be a son of God.

Nanak appointed his own successor, Lehna the second

<sup>1</sup>The burning alive of widows on the husband's funeral pyre.

## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

Guru, from among his disciples, upon which his two sons seceded from the sect and founded another, the Udassis, called "the mournful ones" because of their original asceticism. Nine Gurus succeeded Nanak Chand and gradually they came to be regarded as intercessors between God and man. It was the fifth of these teachers who attempted to convert the Sikh religion into a social and racial status, which first step towards independence brought him into conflict with the Imperial Moslem Government at Delhi. Within a generation hatred grew between the old Faith and the new. Under their sixth Guru, the Sikhs, hitherto a peaceful sect, attracted towards the metaphysical aspect of religion, became a warrior clan organized for self-defence.

Towards the end of the seventeenth century, the ninth Guru, Bahadur, was executed by the Emperor Aurungzeb who persecuted, with ruthless and ferocious barbarity, all who would not accept the Moslem creed. From the scaffold the martyr, whose death naturally gave to the beliefs of a heretical sect the value and the importance of a religion, prophesied that: "In a little while there shall come from the West a band of my disciples, fair-skinned men wearing helmets, who will avenge my death and destroy my enemies to the last man."

On the rock of Bahadur's death was founded for all time the church militant of the Sikhs. The tenth Guru, who was eventually murdered, gave shape to the structure by initiating a distinctive dress for his followers and codifying their laws. Having done his utmost to eliminate from what had become a warrior creed all that it had originally inherited from Hinduism and Islam, he declared—with his last breath—that no more Gurus were necessary. In the future the Sikhs must look for guidance to the holy book, the Granth, which must be read daily, morning and evening.

## KAPURTHALA AND THE SIKHS

This last Guru, Govind, further ordained an initiation ceremony by which any adult man or woman may become a Sikh, for nobody can be born one.

It is a hard religion, adapted to an era of war and, at one time, under the peaceful influence of British rule, the number of its adherents began to dwindle. The indolent younger generation in the Punjab did not appreciate a Faith which enjoined so much self-discipline. They preferred to follow the line of least resistance and lapse into the position of low-caste Hindus. I don't know whether the British military authorities came to the conclusion that the Sikh religion made good soldiers, but they took a hand in the resuscitation of Nanak Chand's Faith by providing that the son of Sikh parents could not enlist in one of their famous regiments unless he had himself been initiated as a Sikh. In such cases the ceremony was performed with much pomp by the regimental priest and, for a martial race, the religion that made them free of the best regiments in the Punjab, received a new lease of life.

At present there are approximately three million Sikhs. The men are warriors by birth and training. Honesty and courage are among the tenets impressed upon them from the cradle. Novices are instructed to worship One God, to be truthful and pure, to keep faith, even unto death, to slay all enemies of the Khalsa (God's chosen, the mystical body in which all Sikhs are one with their Gurus) to carry arms or in their place to wear iron as a reminder of a fighting purpose. In addition they must not cut hair or beard, or wear black turbans. They must bathe frequently, if possible at Amritsar, their holy of holies. They must abjure the society of heretics and daughter-killers and use a special greeting: "Victory to the Gurul Victory to the Khalsa!"

The initiated Sikh wears five symbols by which he may be



distinguished from other Indians. The names of all these begin with the letter K—Kirpan, the knife, indicating readiness for battle; Kaura, the iron bangle, for fidelity; Kanga, the comb, and Kesh, the uncut hair on which it is used; Kuch, the pair of shorts, possibly indicative of manhood since the women wear trousers, or of a special activity.

A French writer suggests that the earliest Sikhs were forbidden to cut their hair because the barber's shop was a hotbed of gossip and rumour, in which secrets invaluable to a race constantly at war, were apt to be bandied about during the ritual of shaving. But in fact the care of the Sikh beard involves longer sessions with the barber than any amount of hair-cutting. It is amusing to watch stalwart soldiers in khaki washing floods of waist-long black hair, bent double in a corner of the parade ground.

Since the days of Govind, last and greatest of the Gurus, there has been an inner guard of the Faith, called Akhalis, who pile their hair into a pyramid held in place by a number of steel quoits with sharp edges which make effective weapons in the case of brawling or rioting. These fanatics, fierce and fervent as Govind himself when he hurled his cavalry against Imperial infantry divisions backed by artillery, are prepared to act as the vanguard of any attack or as the last reserve in retreat, but every Sikh, whatever his caste, has the right to add the suffix of Singh—lion—to his name, thus appropriating what was originally the privilege of Rajputs.

After the death of Govind, one of his followers called Bandha assumed the leadership of the Khalsa. When Aurungzeb's Empire dissolved, the Sikhs who had been waiting their chance to avenge the murder of their Guru and his younger sons, burst into the province of Sirhind. Had they forced their way to Delhi instead of scattering in search

## KAPURTHALA AND THE SIKHS

of loot, they might have imposed a Sikh Empire on the ruins of the Mogul. But they gave the Moslem Bahadur Shah time to call his armies from the south and eventually Bandha was defeated and captured with hundreds of his followers. A contemporary Moslem writer describes the manner of their deaths. "It is singular that these people not only behaved firmly during their execution, but disputed and wrangled with each other as to who should be slain first and even made interest with the executioners to obtain preference. Bandha was produced last, his son being seated in his lap. The father was ordered to cut his son's throat, which he did without uttering a word. Then his flesh was torn from him with red hot pincers." Contemporary Rajputs were wiser in that no warrior lived if he could avoid it to endure execution after a defeat.

In considering the history and the heritage of the Indian States, it must be conceded by even the most intransigent Congress politicians that the heroism of their warriors, unequalled in a thousand turbulent years, may well influence the future. For how can the soft-bred Bengali, the townsman and the lawyer, hope to stand against the Mahratta, the Rajput, and the Sikh? "Were the British to leave India there would not be a Province left," said a veteran in Kapurthala. "We should come back into our own. What is this talk of democracy? The sword knows it not."

G. B. Scott, in his history of the Sikhs, tells two stories typical of this people's attitude. "On one occasion a Sikh regiment doing a route march on the North-West frontier was attacked by a strong body of Pathans, who fired at them over the backs of cattle they had driven along between them. Though several of the Sikhs were shot, they never returned the fire, steadily continuing their march. The Sikhs' opportunity came later and they took it—with interest."

The only native troops who stood up to the British on comparatively equal terms were the Sikhs and the Mahrattas, trained by French or Italian officers. After the campaign which led to the annexation of the Punjab, an old Sikh soldier, who had fought against us in the succession of battles (1845-1846) ending in the surrender of the Khalsa at Rawalpindi, commented in this fashion: "Sahib, our infantry was more numerous than yours, nearly as good as the British soldiers, better than your sepoy; our cavalry was more mobile, our guns heavier and well served. There was just one difference and that gave you the victory. Whereas our sirdars kept well behind the line and called out 'Chelo bhai chelo' [go on, brothers!] your little boy officers rushed ahead and called 'Chelo ao, chelo ao' [come on, come on]."<sup>1</sup>

The Sikh kingdom did not last long. Rent from the Afghans, its greatest monarch Ranjit Singh, who died in 1839, defended it in turn against Baluchis and Pathans, Mahrattas, Jats, and the hills tribes of the Hazara, but he wisely came to terms with the British. Only Assyrian and Persian history records such atrocities as happened between the Indus and the Jhelum rivers during this period. Religious and racial animosities flared into the wildest fanaticism and after Ranjit's death anarchy reached its height. His widows, putative sons, ministers and generals struggled for supremacy. The army became dictators. Succeeding Rulers and Regents were assassinated, killed in battle, or executed. The British occupation put an end to this monarchical reign of terror and subsequently securing to the Sikh States as well as the Province of the Punjab, a stable and organized existence.

<sup>1</sup> I take it that the sirdars referred to were mercenaries, for the history of Sikh leaders is a scramble for first place in death.

## KAPURTHALA AND THE SIKHS

Descended from a contemporary of Ranjit Singh and from the legendary Raja Jassa Singh, victor of unnumbered single combats whose giant sword is preserved in Kapurthala's State treasury, the present Maharajah, fastidious, elegant, widely read, with a knowledge of many civilizations, rules a people who are either fighters by every tradition of their race, religion, and blood, or else earth-bound as the peasants of the rest of the Punjab, with no ideas but the soil, the crops, and the rain.

The city of Kapurthala is an anomaly. It has the tinsel fragility of an exhibition. A scrap of Paris laid at the foot of the Himalayas, it has the temporary quality of exile, but the effect is enchanting. The palace of a ruler, whose spiritual home might well be Versailles, resembles, with some logic, a chateau with gardens after the manner of Le Nôtre. The town at the gates is a feudal village, admirably maintained. There are some delicious pink villas to which one can imagine the Parisian bourgeois retiring in middle age. The gardens of these are as neat and as unimaginative as their prototypes in the suburbs of Fontainebleau.

Since the Maharajah is acknowledged the best host in India, it follows that his palace is furnished and decorated with all that is most agreeable in the art of two continents and his chefs are worthy of the Lucullan tradition. The town is equally satisfactory. There is nothing missing from its small-scale perfection. Prison or palace, law court or post office, temple or mosque, hospital, school, or co-operative credit bank, have the same charming appearance of being planned for an exhibition of decorative art. Undoubtedly the Maharajah has a talent for creation. Nothing could be more interesting than the model State he has made, an oasis, delectable and original, but not in the least typical of India, between Lahore and the Kashmiri tableland.

## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

Kapurthala to-day is a working plan for architects of the future, but I doubt if His Highness means it as the last expression of an Indian people's evolution. To my mind the impermanence of the structure is a sign of the Maharajah's genius. He has made a model in delicate colours and left it to future generations either to copy, or to change, as the evolution of what is still a comparatively new State hardens into national characteristics.

When a bugle call shrills over the roofs of the admirable villas inhabited by younger members of the royal family, the sound might well be waking a provincial town in France. But perhaps, simultaneously, a drum beats in the temple. From the pink and white town clustering, not like Arundel or Alnwick round the walls of a suzerain stronghold, but like a big village of Provence, sunlit and comfortable, at the doors of a country-house, comes a procession that is fundamentally Indian. The illusion of France disappears. The bugle becomes inaudible. Yellow-turbanned men of a fighting race, hundreds and hundreds of them with banners and pennons, march in irregular contingents from the delicate stone and stucco township. First comes what must surely be the largest elephant in the world. In a silver howdah, infinitely high above the multitude, rides an elder brother of the Khalsa, a Granthi, reader and expounder of the Sacred Book which lies before him on a cushion of splendid colour, gorgeously embroidered. Unveiled women, wearing trousers after the Moslem fashion, take up their position on white cloths spread upon the ground, and the procession passes towards the palace reft from France.

On his majestic elephant the old man, white-bearded, intones from the Granth: "As great as Thou thyself art, great is Thy gift. . . ." A satellite leans over his shoulder and dusts the air above the Holy Book with a whisk made of

snow-white hair. The mass of men and women shout greetings to the Maharajah, and the elephant comes to a standstill. Reflectively he waves his trunk over the heads of the crowd, then sucks the tip of it. The last I see of India paying tribute to the essence of her past is that immense bulk, philosophic and detached, or with a childish expectation of sweets to come, looking over the yellow turbans. I think of a cloud above the yellow tulips at Versailles, but the drums continue their clamour. Jugglers and buffoons make themselves into living wheels. The acclamations continue.

A Hindu acquaintance, who has benefited by the Maharajah's lavish ideas with regard to his people's education and is employed by the State Dispensary, becomes philosophical at my elbow. Here, he insists, is a representative principle of his country. However archaic or obsolete I may think such a ceremony, it is the identification of government with the governed, the personal link between Prince and people which the West has lost. Only in the States, he says, where God and the Maharajah are equally simply involved in the lives of the people, can you find an unbroken tradition of unity sufficient—well, almost sufficient—to transcend the feud between Moslem and Hindu.

In attempting to re-write the history of India, continues my acquaintance, who is of modest appearance, we have been somewhat obsessed by the benefits of centralization. Mild brown eyes stare at me through cheap spectacles. The States, says a gentle voice in surprisingly forceful English, have contributed much of India's architectural, artistic, and historical treasure. The concept of local kingship is far more in keeping with the Indian tradition than that of Empire. Popular legend depends not on the great figures of the brief periods of Empire, but on the heroes and

## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

heroines of the small ancient kingdoms, on the gods and spirits, the fortresses and the monuments dominating special localities.

The small man takes off his spectacles and wipes the dust from them. His eyes, unfocused, are dark blurs. In precise academic English he informs me that the Indian States, isolated from each other by local needs and customs, comprise the basic principles of Indian social organization. With spectacles replaced, he ventures a smile: "I have lived most of my life in Kapurthala. It is more important to me than an Indian nation. If I force myself to think exactly, I don't know what India is. Some of my friends say it is Calcutta or Lahore or Bombay. It may also be the aborigines about whom I have read. But—in spite of all my books—to me, it is Kapurthala."

## DHOLPUR

THE plain of Dholpur, north of the Chambal River, has been the battleground of innumerable armies. Invader after invader followed this age-old road from Delhi to the Deccan. The solitary bridge at Kotah gave passage to the Moghul hordes and the Chambal, so insignificant a river compared to the Indus or the Ganges, was on more than one historic occasion the Rubicon which changed the fate of nations.

On the Dholpur plain, the God Krishna is supposed to have tended the flocks of the shepherd with whom he took refuge in his bucolic youth. The affection he retained for the land which hid him from enemies and rivals, caused a succession of miracles in later years when, as a God, he passed through Dholpur territory. Where Krishna strayed with his adopted sheep, Shah Jehan, the great Moghul architect passed on his pilgrimages from Agra to Ajmere, the sacred city of Islam, and here his heir, Dara, fought a younger brother, Aurungzeb, for the Imperial throne. The little river, guarded now by ruins,—a palace of the usurper, Sher Shah, and a caravanserai built by Akbar,—saw yet another Moghul conflict when, in the first years of the eighteenth century the two sons of the Emperor Aurungzeb fought for the empire already lost to the descendants of Tamerlane.

The ruling house of Dholpur has its origin in far more ancient times. For the ancestors of the present Maharaj



## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

Rana founded Rudrakot<sup>1</sup> on the North West Frontier and made it their capital, until, between 334 and 331 B.C., Alexander the Great invaded and conquered the Principality on his way to India. The Hindu dynasty, exiled from the mountains, established itself first in the Punjab where, near sacred Hardwar, it founded the Kingdom of Mayapur and subsequently, in Matsyadesh, the eastern part of what is now Rajputana, which they conquered in A.D. 352. The Hun invasions of the fifth and sixth centuries were checked on the frontiers of this Principality and five hundred years later we find Jey Singh, ancestor of Dholpur's Maharaj Rana, fighting the Afghan invader, Mahmoud of Ghazni, and being rewarded by the Tomar Emperor of Delhi with the right to the royal insignia of an umbrella and the yak's tail.

A century later, the great grandson of Jey Singh was killed by the side of the last Hindu Emperor of Delhi in a raid which had for its objective the capture of India's Helen, Sanjagta, the Princess of Kananj, whose face sent armies instead of ships into battle. The tide of Moslem conquest submerged the State consolidated by Jey Singh and late in the twelfth century, his descendants, with already 1500 years of wandering in their blood, established themselves in Bumrowle from which these Jat Ranas of exceedingly ancient race take their family name. Yet even there they were not allowed to take firm root, for, driven out by the Lord of Agra, the eighth Rana of the Bumrowle line sought service with the Rajput rulers of Gwalior. For some generations, the family lived comparatively quietly in Gohad, or which they were eventually made sovereigns—after a successful expedition against Deccan freebooters. Staunch friends of the Tomar Rajputs reigning in Gwalior, equally

<sup>1</sup> Near Peshawar.

## DHOLPUR

staunch enemies of Moghuls and Mahrattas, the Jat Ranas held the State of Gohad for nearly 300 years, increasing its size and importance by judicious raiding. But after the great Sindhia's defeat at Panipat the Rana of Gohad seized Gwalior. He might have held it against the renewed might of the Mahratta hero, but for the treachery of his garrison.

Following a Rajput rather than a Jat custom, the Rani destroyed herself and her attendants instead of falling into the hands of the conqueror. Gohad was then taken by Sindhia and remained, with Gwalior, in the possession of the Mahrattas, but by British intervention Dholpur and several tributary regions were restored to the Bumrowle line in the person of Maharaj Rana Kirat Singh. From this magnificently nomadic House, whose Princes had carved for themselves kingdom after kingdom at the sword's point, is descended the present Ruler of Dholpur, Lt.-Colonel H. H. Rais-ud-Daula Sipedarul Mulk Saramad Rajhai Hind Maharajadluraj Sri Sawai Maharaj Rana Sir Udai Bhan Singh Lokendra Bahadur Dilar Jang Jai Dev, K.C.S.I., K.C.V.O., who succeeded in 1911, was a staunch supporter of the Imperial Government during the war and served with the Expeditionary Force against the Amir Amanullah in 1919.

With such a history of battle and invasion, of conquest and loyalty to ally or suzerain power, the Maharaj Rana must be a soldier by tradition, but he is primarily a philosopher and I think a politician. Keenly intelligent with a subtle brain and the gift of speech in several languages, he played a leading part in the Chamber of Princes, but found himself in opposition to his great friend, the late Maharajah of Patiala, whom he regarded as a cousin and from whose room he hardly moved during the weeks preceding his death.

More than in any other State I know, the Maharaj Rana

## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

of Dholpur has identified himself, not only with the welfare of his people, but with their personal feelings. He is, in himself, the whole of his State, for I doubt if there is a single person in Dholpur who could envisage life without the continuous interest and protection of their Ruler. The poorest among them can count on direct personal access to his Prince and it is this privilege which ensures the popularity of the monarchical principle in well-governed Indian States as opposed to a bureaucracy, however well-meaning.

There may be, there must be, files in Dholpur, but no villager or peasant can possibly consider himself reduced to the position of a numbered document in an office cabinet. For whenever one of the great, blue cars, expertly driven by the Maharaj Rana is seen gliding over miles of new road, there is a cry of "Shri Huzur", children tumble over themselves to throw flowers through the windows and everyone within reach runs up, smiling all over his face, with a petition written on a scrap of paper. Very often such notes only ask for advice on domestic matters. The Maharaj Rana must spend much of his day giving opinion, or counsel, or help to his people who take the place of a family, for His Highness has only one daughter.

Dholpur State has an area of 1,200 square miles and a population of over 220,000. Its length extends along the north bank of the Chambal river and its breadth slopes upwards towards a chain of hills covered with low trees and jungle. Deep ravines split the river valley and run into the high ground. These have proved the worst obstacles to His Highness's irrigation schemes, but numbers of small dams have been built to hold the rains, while the tanks constructed at the foot of the hills distribute water into a canal system covering much of the plain. From the crest of the

## DHOLPUR

low range, the view therefore is of numerous small lakes or ponds which dry in the hot season, and of silken bright crops—maize, wheat and sugar cane—with villages that are just handfuls of houses scattered among them. Banyan and tamarind trees, with the shining darkness of the mango, screen the hamlets which are largely inhabited by a very simple jungle people called Gujars.

Dholpur city, with some 20,000 inhabitants, is pleasantly set among gardens and parks. It is an oasis of green in a blood-red land, for rock and dust are equally incarnadined. The Emperor Akbar first quarried the precious red stone for the building of his new capital. Shah Jehan built of it the delicious palace on a lake in the jungle, where the present Ruler often stays. Fatchpur Sikri, Agra Fort and the immense mosque at Delhi owe their crimson effulgence to the quarries of Dholpur, which also provided the stone for the Viceroy's house and the great stadium in New Delhi.

Dusky red prevails in Dholpur city because many of the new well-planned houses are built of the local stone. To the Maharaj Rana's enterprise are due the wide streets, paved and lit by electricity, the High School, the admirably equipped modern hospital, and two others where Hindu and Moslem can seek healing according to the principles of Ayurvedic or Urani lore.

Dholpur is well situated on a main line from Agra to Bombay and the Maharaj Rana has increased the accessibility of his State by constructing an aerodrome. Feudal in principle because, to his profoundly religious sensibilities, kingship is the tool of the godhead, he has combined in effective manner the personal tutelage of a beneficent monarch with an experimental adaptability and an appreciation of modern methods, with the result that Dholpur benefits in spiritual and in practical fashion.

## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

From the thriving capital with its busy markets and its air of growth, I drove out into the dry bush, alternately red and grey, for which jungle seems too lush a name. As we left the cultivated lands for those chiefly inhabited by wild animals we saw the ruins of ancient buildings, fortresses or temples, splashed in red-gold upon their hill-sides. It was a dramatic country for wild boar, panther, and a lynx with delicately tufted black ears, trotted between the bushes, or stared at us gravely without taking the trouble to move. We saw hycnas, jackals and foxes, all toning with the dappled forest, so much a part of it that it seemed as if the earth took shape in their movements. Chinkara, lightest and most graceful of deer, leaped over the middle distances with the effect of branches blown about by the wind. Sambur, the Indian elk, stood in the middle of the road. A blue bull, massively indigo, remained as motionless as an idol in a wayside shrine. Where the bush gave way to open spaces, burned to amber, there was a scurry of mongoose or hare and beyond all this, no more motionless than the blue bull whom I had difficulty in crediting, rose the cardboard-thin walls of castles long ago deserted, or the broken dome of a tomb.

The red haze persisted as we drove, for the earth is the colour of dry blood, until it breaks into vivid green round Talshahi, the royal lake. Here in an exquisite petal-red palace, set on a terrace, with a causeway bearing a crowd of domed pagodas, which look as if they might be blown away at any moment, stretching far into the water, His Highness seeks respite from the cares of a kingdom which is also a family estate.

The arches of the great hall open straight on to the water.

Through them, while we waited for lunch, I saw enormous crimson fishes leap into the air, flocks of rose-coloured

## DHOLPUR

ibis drift across the shallows, hosts of duck flying in close formation, and snake-birds, swimming with their bodies submerged and only their long necks writhing out of the water.

For the lake is sanctuary. Not even a serpent may be killed within the precincts of this forest Eden.

On the other side of the red palace, built by the Moghul Emperor Shah Jehan and recently restored to dignity and simple splendour by the present Ruler, the Maharaj Rana has boldly created a golf course, where he plays every morning—in mid-jungle—with his A.D.C.s.

Tiger probably watch with mild amusement, knowing they are quite safe, for the ruler of Dholpur dislikes killing.

Good-looking, intelligent and a great reader, His Highness divides his time between the Chamber of Princes in Delhi, of which he was once vice-president, and his own State, in which he is regarded as a father and a god.

All revenue goes back into the land. Important agricultural schemes are always being carried out under the personal supervision of His Highness.

Driving himself in an immensely long car, the Maharaj Rana goes to every corner of his kingdom and is known to every peasant.

In a small village where the houses were like gaily-coloured boxes opening straight into the street, I saw every man, woman and child rush out to welcome him.

"Our ruler, our ruler!" they shouted.

The whole crowd was united in one ecstatic smile. It seemed to me the enormous car was surrounded and at last submerged in that smile.

Every conceivable offering was poured over us. We might have progressed over the backs and shoulders of delighted adorers.

## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

When, at last, the Maharaj Rana contrived to extricate his yards and yards of car, he took me to see his other friends, the biggest of the deer.

In gathering dusk, we waited under the walls of another palace. We heard the great stags belling and then the sound of soft footfalls on the leaves.

One by one, enormous sambur stepped out of the shadows. The leaders seemed to have no fear at all.

They trooped close up to the car and thrust their noses into the windows. Servants came from the palace with sugar-cane and flat cakes of bread.

"They'll eat out of your hand. Try," said my host.

A stag with mighty antlers allowed me to provide him with a good meal.

More and more came out of the forest until there must have been 30 or 40 gathered round us and in the distance others galloped about.

"Those are newcomers," explained His Highness. "They aren't certain about me yet, but in a year or two they'll be as tame as my friends here."

He patted the largest sambur as if it had been a dog.

One of the strangest things in Dholpur is the tower from which the Prince and his friends, but more often the Prince alone, watch a tiger, whom he has trained to eat under a spotlight.

A hundred yards from the loopholed building a buffalo used to be tethered, with a bucket of water beside him.

It took some time for the tiger to become accustomed to dining by electric light, but eventually he came every two or three nights for his meal.

During a particularly hot summer, however, he decided the water wasn't cold enough, so he went away without eating.

## DHOLPUR

After that the Maharaj Rana had ice placed in the bucket, with the result that the tiger returned accompanied by some cubs, who enjoyed themselves enormously, nosing and licking the frozen cubes.

After a good many buffaloes had died—with surprising rapidity, for the tiger, as an executioner, never makes a mistake—their owner thought it would be interesting to see if the killer would like a change of diet.

The bucket was filled with milk. On the first night the tiger sniffed and went away disgusted.

On the second he drank and remained meditating about the taste.

On the third he gulped down the last drop, and only on the fourth did he condescend to kill the buffalo!

Then, remembering that cats like eggs, the Maharaj Rana had a large basketful placed beside the bucket. The tiger approved.

For months he adhered to this vegetarian diet, and the buffaloes had a respite.

Then one evening he killed a shepherd as an appetiser, and next week he pulled down an old woman by way of dessert.

“So then I had to shoot him,” said the Maharaj Rana, “but I’m training his successor now and I hope to get better results. In any case, his coat’s improving and he’s putting on weight.”

During the day the Prince’s guests can have their choice of sport. The organization is superb. Each village possesses a telephone and each district its game-warden.

At dawn all the telephonic reports are gathered together and summarized so that, before breakfast, His Highness knows exactly what animals have been seen and in which direction.

With his early-morning tea the guest can therefore choose



whether he will set forth in pursuit of a tiger, a panther, or a bear.

The shooting is generally done from the top of one of the hunting-towers built all over the State, and only a few beaters seem to be necessary to drive the animal in the right direction.

But one day the Maharaj Rana and I went out to make personal acquaintance with a tiger. We left the car on a jungle road and crept soft-footed into the scrub.

An A.D.C., dust-coloured from the fan-like folds of his turban to his sambur-skin shoes, came with us, and a wrinkled old huntsman who never spoke more than two words.

Cautiously we crept down a gully where the tiger had been marked. In silence we hid behind a few stones.

The A.D.C. had a rifle, but no intention of using it. The huntsman let a few pebbles trickle through his fingers. Immediately the tiger came out to have a look. He blinked. I had an impression of yellow fire.

Flat upon the ground we lay. Nobody seemed to be afraid. The Maharaj Rana agitated me immeasurably by whispering: "He's a big one."

The tiger turned, switched his tail, regarded the jungle behind him, looked once again at the frail barrier behind which I, at least, shivered, and walked off, not at all hurried.

"Tigers only attack when they are frightened or hungry," explained my host. "It's only the cubs which kill for fun. They are as destructive as children. Youth is the age which has no pity."

The Ruler of Dholpur is above all a philosopher.

Deeply interested in his own and other religions, he will talk for hours about reincarnation and the gradual evolution of Hinduism.

## DHOLPUR

In the great red hall, not unlike a cathedral for the roof is multiple arched and supported by a host of pillars, surrounded by A.D.C.'s in their hunting khaki, or wearing their evening coats of rich blue with turbans like poppies, he exercised his gifts as a story-teller.

But they were always true tales.

So I learned about the little girl in a neighbouring State or Province who, when she was about eight years old, startled her parents by saying she had once been the wife of a certain farmer and the mother of his now grown-up family.

Her relatives thought she was crazy, but the village wise-acre insisted that she should be taken to see the man whom she claimed had been her husband in a previous life.

It was a three day's journey, but when the girl arrived at the house that she had certainly never seen in this life, she knew her way about it.

She knew the names and habits of all the family.

She commented on the changes made in the last ten years, and she showed, correctly, where the farmer's wife had died.

Finally, she insisted on climbing up into a hole under the roof.

"I hid some money here," she explained.

Within a few minutes she had found the exact amount she mentioned, in the place where, without hesitation, she had gone to look.

This extraordinary occurrence was reported at the time in an Indian paper, but told first-hand by a man who had been sufficiently impressed to make inquiries on the spot, it gained value.

"Reincarnation is the most logical explanation of all the inequalities and the misfortunes that seem to us inexplicable," suggested the Maharaj Rana.

At that moment he might have been any one of his hun-

dred ancestors, Jats and kin to the fighting Rajputs, once monarchs of a much larger kingdom, heirs of the great god Krishna, who, according to legend, drove the herds of his adopted shepherd father across the Dholpur plains. Next instant he had swept us out of the fragile crimson palace, with its row of little pavilions marching into the lake.

We passed the secretive red walls behind which lives the Maharani, an enchanting Princess of a very old Punjab family kin to the most famous of its Kings. Her favourite colour in the decoration of her rooms seems, like the last Vicereine's, to be purple. Her only child is a daughter, who, slight and active, has not yet succeeded in defeating her father at badminton.

For a moment I thought of their jewels, which the elder Princess still wears in Indian fashion, a cascade of diamonds falling over her brow and a circle of the same precious stones swinging above her upper lip, while the younger, lovely as a Persian miniature, has a single ruby that almost covers a finger.

She dropped it negligently out of the zenana window one day, and was surprised when I insisted on rushing down at once to hunt for it in the long grass.

The Maharaj Rana himself wears, on state occasions, a necklace of nine strings of fabulous pearls and a collar in which the pearls are really nearly as large as plovers' eggs.

But when we had hurried, first into a car and then into a superlative and very silent launch, I forgot the fantastic India of jewels and veiled princesses, even the India of little girls who recognize their sexagenarian husbands of a previous life.

For off we went into an unfenced zoo.

The Maharaj Rana knew the habits and haunts of every animal. I expected him to call the crocodiles by name.

## DHOLPUR

They lay like tree-trunks, half in and half out of the water. Monkeys with tails curved into hoops thronged the banks just out of reach of their jaws. Deer of all sizes crept timidly about the creeks. Sambur bellowed. A tiger roared.

An old bear, disturbed by so much noise, came lumbering out of the rocks to see what it was all about. A little fox sat on his haunches undisturbed. With very bright eyes he looked about him, but the birds made a great deal of fuss. Blue jays and brilliant bulbuls, kingfishers, pelicans breasted like dowagers, cranes, ibis and herons, a flock of flamingoes with scarlet under their wings, hoopoes fashionably striped, hawks, pigeons, the hunters and the hunted, all these rose hurriedly into the air, or higher into the clouds. Duck and snake-birds, the wary geese who keep themselves to themselves, snobs in a world where, suitably enough, democracy is at the mercy of outlawed force, plunged into the water. The tiger roared again. It was a hoarse complaining sound. The little fox whisked round and disappeared. "I look upon them all as my family," said the descendant of nomad warriors, the Ruler of a model State.

## CHITOR AND THE RAJPUT JOHUR

EARLY in the morning, when the light was still grey, I leaned from the window of the train to look at Chitor. All I could see of the fortress was a magnificent sweep of wall and the Towers of Fame and Victory. High on a rough hill-side stood the ruin. Grey earth and grey bush fell away below the ramparts. The land seemed to be deserted and the little train too exhausted after the efforts and the activities of a night on the narrow gauge to move out of the hills. So I remained leaning on the sill and staring at the scarred rocks and the terrible walls of Chitor. Three times the city was sacked. Three times its women, led by a queen, walked into the furnace prepared in the vaults, while every man died in a last, hopeless charge against the invader.

“By the sin of the sack of Chitor” was the oath by which, for centuries, Rajput Princes swore. Among the sapless bushes a jackal howled. Far up in the leaden sky vultures appeared. Their heavy black wings might have been the banners of those murderous hosts which ravished Chitor.

Back I went into the carriage. Very carefully I dusted James Tod's *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*. The train started. Braced against the shattering jerks which threatened the stability of every object in the compartment, I sat on the floor because it was difficult to keep myself and the book together on the seat, and read about Chitor. Layers of dust settled on the pages. A haze of dust filled the carriage

## CHITOR AND THE RAJPUT JOHUR

because I had forgotten to shut the window, but I did not notice.

With Captain Tod, who came out to India in 1799 as a seventeen year old ensign in the employ of the Honourable East India Company and was an unwilling witness to the depredations of the Mahrattas and the gradual dissolution of the Rajput heritage, before he became chief intelligence officer to the British army operating against Mahratta and Pindari marauders and subsequently first Political Agent in Rajputana—with this man who gave his youth and his heart to Udaipur I found myself hurrying back through the centuries to search for the first of the Rajputs. Two races they were, according to their devoted chronicler, the Suryavansi, ancestors of Udaipur (Mewar) Jodhpur (Marwar) and Jaipur, claiming descent from the Sun, and the Chandravansi, the House of the Moon, whose descendants rule Jeysulmer and Cutch. Later came the four Fire-born races, the Aginkulas, origin of the ruling houses of Sirohi, Bundi and Kotah.

From the eldest son of Rama, king and deity of Ayodia, hero of the Hindu odyssey, the Mahabharata, sprang, according to the universal Hindu belief, the line of Mewar, whose Maharana is the acknowledged head of the Thirty-Six Royal Races which, had they ever been able to unite, could have saved India from Afghan and Turk.

A divine origin adds lustre to the premier house of Rajisthan or Rajputana, but before they became gods, the mythological Rama and Krishna were something of adventurers. Their roving eyes were very wide open and Krishna, at least, often paid tribute to the charms of a milkmaid, or a comely peasant, working in the corn.

When such Gods had taken their place in the Hindu pantheon, from the steppes of Central Asia came the Aryan

migration. Over the legendary Oxus, now the Amu Darya "Mother of Rivers", which divides the feudal and religious autocracy of Afghanistan from the experimental communism of the Southern Soviet Republics, through the passes of the Hindu Kush, down the five rivers of the Punjab, came these Aryan peoples, with, perhaps, Scythian or Tartar blood in their veins. A white race, they may have intermarried with the aboriginal Indians and with the Dravidians in the South, but their Brahmin Priesthood and their Kshatriya warriors (the upper classes evolving out of the traditions of a settled people), regarded the fruit of such intermarriages as outcasts. Hence came the original conception and the gradual consolidation of caste as a religious principle.

The word Hindu covered not only a new Indian people, white as their Aryan brethren in the West, but a new social system in which there was "a place for everyone and everyone in his place".

In the sixth century before Christ, a Rajput Prince shook to its foundations the whole of this complicated structure. For five hundred years the teaching of this devoted reformer, Buddha "the enlightener", who at the birth of his first son, left throne and wife to become an ascetic, a preacher in the wilderness, dominated the mentality of India. Its simplicity must have appealed to minds exhausted by the intricacies of the older Faith, but Brahminism came back, and the law of Gautama Buddha swept eastwards to Tibet and China, leaving the Hindus to recreate their system which depended on forgotten social and religious distinctions. At that time the harassed priesthood must have been willing to admit any stout supporter to be of the ancient Kshatriya lineage. So came into prominence, not only the Princely Rajput houses, but a number of clans with their yeomen landowners, their chieftains and great warriors.

## CHITOR AND THE RAJPUT JOHUR

Unfortunately, like their prototypes in the Scottish Highlands, these tribes or clans were always fighting against each other. So, when the new faith of Islam surged first through Arabia and Western Asia, then into Northern India—synchronizing with the Norman Conquest—its hosts were faced with Principalities as inimical to each other as to the invader.

Southwards moved the Rajput clans, imagining that in Central India they would be protected by the waterless deserts and the confusion of arid hills, but small groups remained in the valleys of the Himalayas. In the Punjab, whole tribes were converted to Islam, but they remained Rajput. So did a few of the families isolated in the plains, like some lost Highlander keeping to his clan pretensions in foreign circumstances.

The incomparable Captain Tod tells how the Rajput fugitives, or should they be compared to the Boer Voortrekkers, established themselves on the spurs of the Aravalli mountains overlooking the imperial plain of Delhi. Bikanir, Jodhpur and Jaisalmer, Alwar, Jaipur, Kotah, Bundi, Udaipur and Tankse were oases kingdoms in the great desert, but they were kingdoms in which then and now the original inhabitants vastly outnumber the conquering clansmen.

Rajputana to-day has an area of over 128,000 square miles, but out of its population approximating to eleven million, the Rajputs number a bare 700,000. The peoples they rule are Jats, Gujars, Ahirs, Dravidians, Bhils and other aboriginal races. The priestly Brahmins number more than their warrior supporters, which weakens the already doubtful logic of Rajputana's ethnography.

When the Princes or Chieftains of these new Aryan dominions had struggled and quarrelled and fought themselves into a tenure that might be considered more or less



## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

established, they found themselves threatened by the tidal advance of Turks, Arabs and Afghans. The hatred which their exiled ancestors had brought from the Himalayas burned fierce in the breasts of Tod's heroes. Again and again they fought against the Moslems, breaking themselves and their countries in vain against the spearhead of Moghul invasion. Only Mewar, the Udaipur of to-day, was never conquered and never reduced to the humiliating expediency of sending a Princess to the bed of a Moslem emperor in Delhi.

Akbar, that architect of empire, was endowed with a sufficiently constructive genius to make peace with the nearest Rajputs and to make use of them as bulwarks to the universal state he visualized. His successors, less intelligent, were also less tolerant and there were other battles, other wars, ending in the frantic persecutions of Aurungzeb.

Last came the Mahrattas, those sturdy, raiding horsemen, relentless as a flood released by a crumbling dam. From these, only the intervention of Britain rescued the proud Rajputs, who had shed the best of their blood, spent their treasure and were faced at last with surrender.

Of all this history, of all the agonies endured by a fierce and intransigent people who kept faith, but who could not keep peace, of their heroism and the monstrous sacrifices demanded of it, Chitor is the emblem.

From James Tod, perused with burning cheeks and eyes glazed amidst the heat and dust of railway carriages, or in a garden of the unbelievable city of Udaipur, I have taken the stories of the three Johurs which to me seem most terrible among all the tragedies of Chitor. Here they are. For eight hundred years the grey limestone fortress, now derelict, was the capital of the Ranas of Mewar. It was apparently a symbol of sovereignty to the Rajputs, for only a

## CHITOR AND THE RAJPUT JOHUR

king or the son of a king might defend it and this was the first duty of the royal line. Blood was poured out like a river when the mountain snows are melting, for no man or woman of the clan would consent to live after the fortress which represented their racial godhead fell to an enemy. Only a child was smuggled away, so that the line might continue unbroken.

The first Johur took place in the time of Alla-ud-din Khilji. This Emperor of Delhi invested Chitor, largely on account of an Indian Helen, for Bhimsi, uncle of the Rana, had married a Ceylonese Princess, famed as the most beautiful woman in the world. At first the besieger demanded the Princess as ransom for the city, but the Rajput defence was such that he reduced his terms to a sight of the lady in a mirror. This was conceded. Trusting in the word of a Rajput which had never been broken, the Tartar entered and left the palace unharmed, but he had arranged an ambush at the gate. Bhimsi, escorting his undesired guest, was seized and taken to the traitor's camp.

The Rajputs retaliated in kind. Since the Emperor demanded the Princess Pudmini in exchange for her husband, they sent what was supposed to be the lady in a crimson litter carried by six bearers. A procession of seven hundred such palanquins said to contain her women followed that of the royal victim. All these passed into an enclosure with high tent-like walls, but out of them stepped no Rajput dames in priceless silks and jewels. Armed nobles of Bhimsi's race flung themselves out of the litters. The humble bearers became clansmen with drawn swords. Bhimsi was rescued and borne back to the fortress, but the rearguard died to the last man.

Alla-ud-Din, the Tartar, returned to the siege. Sortie after sortie failed. No mercy was to be expected and none

was asked. When further defence became impossible owing to the number of the dead, the Johur, the burning, was prepared. Only by this could the Rajput women escape the lust of the abhorred conquerors.

In the great caverns under the castle, pyres had been built. Fire was set to them and into the torture of the flames walked an indomitable procession led by the queens and their daughters. Pudmini, the proud young beauty for whom a whole race was prepared to die, stepped on to the pyre after every other woman had done so in front of her. The doors of the vault were closed. The fires burned down.

That the line might endure, the Rana's twelve-year-old son was sent in disguise through the enemy camp. Then the Rajputs opened the great gates of the fortress. Through them they charged for the last time. The Tartars paid dearly for the sacrifice they had enforced, for every Rajput died with his sword hilt-deep in blood. That was the first Saca in 1303.

When dissensions had reached their height among the clans, when Rajasthan, according to local saying, was governed by "Poppa Bhai ki Raj", the fabled Princess of misrule, Bikramajit Singh, son of the great Rama Sanga who had lost an eye to a quarrelsome brother, a leg to a Gujerati cannon-ball and an arm to the King of Delhi's troops, was defeated in open battle. Only an infant son of Sanga remained in Chitor. Thither hurried his enemies among the Rajput chiefs, turned into allies by the sacred duty of defending the fortress which was already a racial legend. Sacrificing all they held, the most famous Thakurs gathered within its walls.

The Moslems were not content with a siege, although they had artillery and Europeans, probably Portuguese, gunners. They mined the ramparts, but failed to storm the

## CHITOR AND THE RAJPUT JOHUR

breach because, where there had once been masonry, the Rajput chivalry inserted their bodies. Walls of flesh and blood withstood the guns of Islam. Jowajir Bhai, Queen and mother of the reigning Prince, put on a man's armour and was killed at the head of a sortie. The besieging armies closed in. There was hardly time to smuggle a child out of the fortress, but the race must continue. Sanga's child was carried to safety. Then a prince of Deoli was crowned within the palace, because only a king could defend Chitor. Already the Moslems were at the outer walls.

Once again the terrible Johur was prepared. While the breach was forced, while the last remnants of the human rampart were being trodden under Moslem feet, the Princess Kurnavaiti headed the procession of thirteen thousand women who chose to suffer the most appalling martyrdom in an underground cavern where a pyre had been hastily constructed and fired with the powder magazines.

While the Rajput women in the height of their youth and cherished loveliness exulted in the sacrifice which would defraud the enemy of victory, Deoli ordered the great gates to be flung open. Clad in the saffron of Rajput mourning, the banner of Mewar still streaming from the castle, he died fighting, with every man of his race. Deoli's last charge took such toll of the enemy that the Moslems referred to their conquest as a "terror of desolation".

This was the second Saca in 1535. In it 32,000 Rajputs gave their lives for the defence of Chitor.

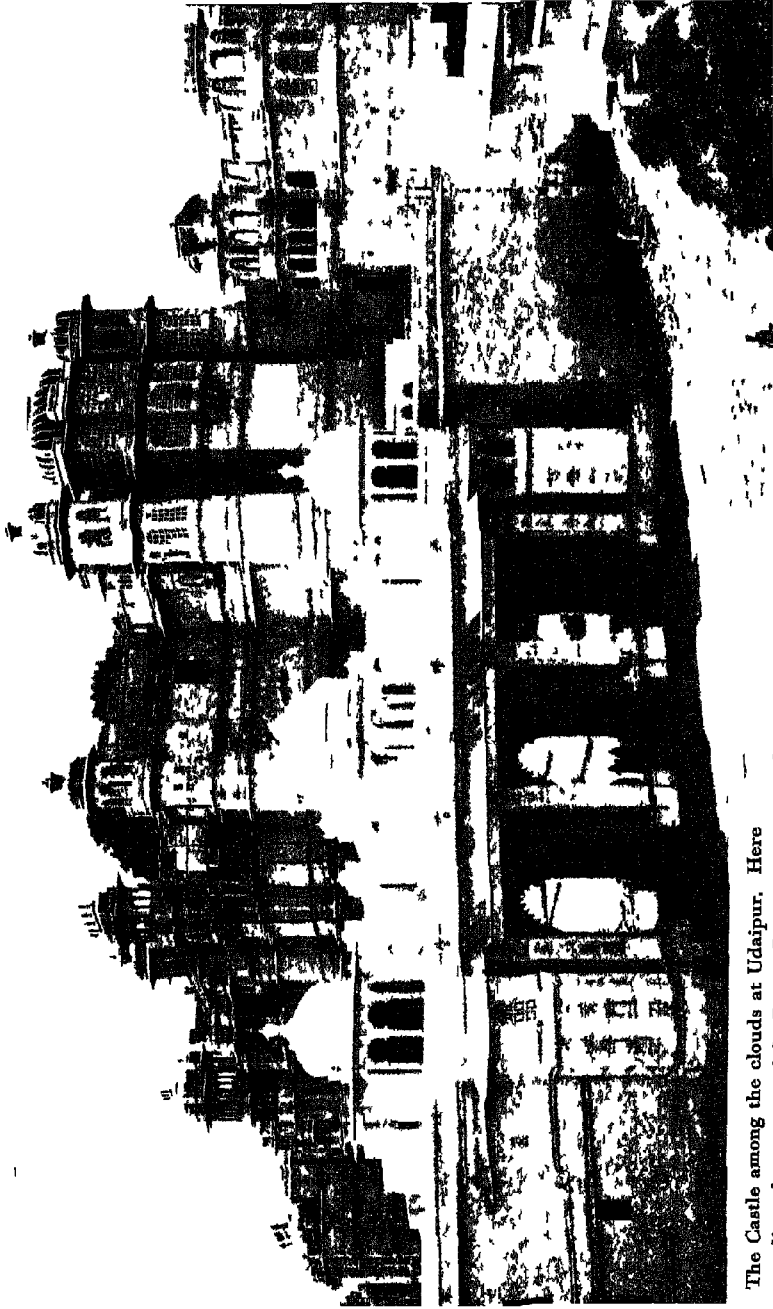
The Imperial throne in Delhi passed from Baber to his son Humayun, who lost it to the Afghan Sher Shah. At the age of fourteen Humayun's son, Akbar, defeated the Afghans at Panipat, from whose slaughter the great Sindhia escaped to consolidate in Gwalior the varying fortunes of the Mahrattas. By 1566, Akbar was undisputed on the throne of

Delhi and he was clever enough to seek an alliance with the Rajputs, but Rana Oody Singh of Mewar foolishly defied the great Moghul.

Akbar, then aged twenty-five, established himself in front of Chitor with an efficient army and a siege train. According to local tradition, he was repulsed by the Rana's chief concubine, queen in the absence of her craven lord. It was only a matter of time, however, before the Imperial army again threatened Chitor. From all over the State, the Rajput chiefs rushed to the defence of their ancient capital, but there was no king to lead them. In the absence of Oody Singh, alone among Rajputs to earn the scorn of their faithful chronicler, young James Tod, the sixteen year old Putta put himself at the head of the great vassals of Mewar. Within the fortress, queens and princesses cared for the families of the clansmen who would so shortly die in their defence. Without, Afghan and Tartar flung themselves against the walls so grandly defended. Rajput girls scarce old enough to marry fought and were killed with the youths who should have been their bridegrooms.

When the great warrior, Salumbra, died defending the Gate of the Sun, the boy, Putta, took his place. His mother threw over his shoulders the saffron robe of mourning. Then, seizing a weapon and thrusting one into the hands of her daughter-in-law, a bride of fourteen, she went out on to the rocks beside him. Together, the three died, and the warriors on the walls of the fortress saw them fall. Doubtless they vowed a terrible vengeance, but all they could do against the colossal hosts of the Emperor was to die as their ancestors had done.

For the third time in history the Johur was made ready. On this occasion there were a few hours for the rites of prayer and preparation. Pan was distributed among the



The Castle among the clouds at Udaipur. Here  
lives the greatest of the Rajput Princes



Morning at the well

## CHITOR AND THE RAJPUT JOHUR

women. One hopes this "bread of sacrifice" was suitably drugged. Probably not, for when the gates were thrown open and eight thousand Rajput warriors in their saffron robes charged through them to die, nine queens, two of them with their infant sons in their arms, led the procession of triumphant women into the flames.

Over this third Saca, in 1568, there was no rejoicing. The hosts of Akbar collected more than six hundred pounds weight of collars worn by the Rajput chiefs ( $74\frac{1}{2}$  mans) and since then the figures  $74\frac{1}{2}$  have been held accursed in Rajasthan, but Akbar, who had desired an alliance with his heroic neighbours, knew the bitterness of defeat as he regarded the stillness and desolation of a city wherein, as the result of his victory, no man, woman or child remained alive.

After this last sack of Chitor, Rana Oody Singh founded a new capital on Pichola Lake. In his city of Udaipur, he died unregretted at the age of forty-four. His House still rules the premier State of Rajputana, but Chitor, which he alone among the kings of his line, failed to defend, is a ruin.

The State of Udaipur covers an area of 1269 miles. In the north and east, there is an undulating plateau, but much of the country consists of wild rocky hills and jungle.

Lt.-Colonel Filose writes: "It is a regrettable but definitely established fact that democracy is bad for elephants, which are on the decline everywhere". Udaipur, because of its history and traditions, because of its position away from a main line and also because of the character of its Ruler must be one of the least democratic States in India. Hence perhaps its fighting elephants which, with two mahouts clinging to pads on their backs, wrestle with their trunks, across a low wall. They cannot approach nearer to each other because of the chains on their legs.



## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

In Udaipur, I imagine it would be inadvisable to shoot even a rogue elephant. A forester said to me that he would rather lose the lives of several beaters, or even of an inconspicuous guest than destroy an elephant. But there are fine tiger and bear in the Aravalli hills and H.H. the Maharana Sir Bhupal Singhji Bahadur, G.C.S.I., K.C.I.E., who succeeded his father in 1930, is a fine shot. He is unfortunately partially paralysed and he has no heir, but he is active, as far as physical limitations allow. He has a curiously subtle brain. With his frail dignity and a reserve which nobody has ever breached, he is reminiscent of those portraits of the Italian Renaissance in which the subject is painted with an open book in a long, delicate hand, an hour-glass and some scientific instruments at his elbow and a view of a distant city. Yet His Highness has had a long experience of government, for he was called upon to implement the necessary reforms when his father's administrative powers were restricted.

The late Maharana was a tremendous figure in contemporary India. With his cleft white beard, his stature and his fine features, he embodied all the traditions of Rajput chivalry, but he lived in the past. Sir Robert Holland wrote of this mighty old Rajput, who exercised his powers of life and death without any regard to the circumstances of today: "The world is changing and H.H. may possibly sometimes in his heart of hearts, find it difficult to approve of all the changes which he has witnessed." Further evidence is supplied by Yvonne Fitzroy who visited Udaipur with the Viceroy and Lady Reading. "There is something of the old, heroic spirit in his [the Maharana Fateh Singhji] stubborn resistance to change. Something at once immense and pathetic in the challenge he flings to those new forces which we of the West, though we cannot control, unlike

## CHITOR AND THE RAJPUT JOHUR

him, dare not defy. One wonders if sometimes the shadow of this new invasion presses very closely on that gallant heart."

The "invasion" against which the eighty-year-old Maharana stood firm, maintained by the dignity of his character and the unstained honour of his traditions, has not yet greatly affected Udaipur. The population of the State is under a million and a half. Of these, 70 per. cent are Hindus, traditional if not reactionary in their outlook. Of the rest, at one end of the scale there are Jains and at the other Bhils. These latter are among the most primitive peoples of India. They are sturdy and short in stature, brave, agile and possessed of great strength. They are expert thieves. It is said that a Bhil can steal a blanket from under a sleeping man who has been warned, in advance, of what will happen. Naked and oiled from head to foot, the robber Bhil is as impossible to hold as he is to see. The race are adepts in protective mimicry. Like the chameleon they seem to be able to change colour and they can certainly twist their limbs into the semblance of branches or tree-stumps. Sir James Outram succeeded in raising two regiments of Bhils and they were excellent fighters, but those who still live in the jungle, building their huts of boughs, wattled with long grass, are exceedingly superstitious. Some of them worship a peacock. To them the bird is so much of a god that the women of the tribe veil their faces and look away when they catch a glimpse of male tail feathers.

The philosophy of the Jains is the glorification of life even in its lowest forms. They examine any seat before sitting on it, lest they happen to crush an insect, drink only filtered water for the same reason and if they carry their devotion to its natural limit, they wear muslin across their mouths, lest in breathing they destroy invisible life. There are four

## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

classes of Jains, monks and nuns, lay brothers and sisters. All these practise, in greater or lesser degree, the virtues of abstinence, continence and silence, in imitation of their seventy-two Saints, or teachers, the simplicity of whose lives is indicated by the nakedness of their statues. A Jain temple is "a prayer in stone".

Certainly among the delicious confusion of houses in Udaipur where the narrow streets run as they will and the sounds, the scents and the colours reflect centuries of unchanging customs, the temple of these lovers of life is both interesting and beautiful. But it is also intricate and the Jains I met were just the reverse. To begin with, they were not in the least concerned with politics. Intelligent and disciplined, they naturally did well in the colleges of British India, but although many were prepared to be lawyers, their instincts were not for material gain. Delicate, they seemed to me, and fantastic, of course, in the meticulous care with which they lived all that mattered of their lives apart from the familiar crowds among which they moved. Amidst the superstitions and the riot of colour, the secretive and yet seething family life, always about to pour over the walls by which it was enclosed, the clamour and the music, the slow, shuffling throngs, human and animal, the golden jewellery in the cupboard-shops where craftsmen were always bent over their tools and on the breasts and foreheads and ankles and arms of the women, the Jains seemed to be dim and somewhat ethereal. They were honest and gentle and good talkers, but not as robust as their Hindu neighbours teeming in the dusty lanes and the coolness of the gardens beside the lake.

With a Jain, I went to see the Sardars school, in which the sons of the Sixteen Nobles of the First Class and the less important landowning gentry of Udaipur are trained to cor-

## CHITOR AND THE RAJPUT JOHUR

relate history and progress, to meet, in fact, the challenge of those new forces with which the West has influenced, but failed to change, the fundamental East. He said: "I do not think there should be so much distinction between people because of what their ancestors have done. What a man is in himself should be enough."

I rode beyond the Pichola Lake with a Thakur of His Highness' household. We paused to look at some village houses. The inhabitants kissed the Thakur's feet and his stirrups. They looked as if they would have liked to kiss his horse's hoofs. I protested and the Rajput replied: "They give honour to my father and all my race, not to me. A man is not only himself. He is what his ancestors have made him and as such doomed to ignominy, or worthy of the highest honour."

## CASTLE OF DREAMS IN UDAIPUR

**N**O European stays in the romantic castle of Udaipur. For State guests there is a pleasant house on a hill, from which they can see the unbelievable fortress rising tier upon tier above the prostrate town.

A symbol of romance, of deathless courage, of all that was most chivalrous in the history of India, this Rajput stronghold fitly belongs to a race which never acknowledged defeat.

Chitor fell as has been recorded, but succeeding generations won back the Rajput heritage, and to-day this proudest of all aristocracies rules a tenth of India.

No Monarch of Udaipur has ever visited Europe. For a little matter of 10,000 years the Rajput Princes, of whom the Maharana of Udaipur ranks first, have claimed descent from the sons of the heroic god, Rama.

They call other Indian Princes "Brother"—but they marry only among their own clan.

In the great castle of Udaipur there are 400 portraits of previous Maharajahs, but the last of the direct line has no child.

The present Prince, "descendant of the sun", lives in one of the many towers of his vast white palace.

The only approach is by a ladder-like staircase cut in the thickness of the wall. It is so steep that the bare feet of the equerry who shows the way are on a level with the guest's eyes as they climb step by step.

## CASTLE OF DREAMS IN UDAIPUR

I used to wonder how these great bearded men kept their feet so well, since they wear neither shoes nor socks.

The greatest Prince in Rajputana is a small, slight man who speaks English fluently, although he rarely crosses the borders of his own State.

He receives his guests on a loggia sunk into his impregnable tower, with the loveliest city in the world spread like a map below him.

He never walks, so, as he sits cross-legged, with one foot resting on the other knee, the soles of his superlative English boots show no sign of ever having touched the ground.

In spite of the intense heat he often wraps a rug round his shoulders while he talks, as an onlooker, of the India he has never seen, although he holds so great a place in it. For the Monarch of Udaipur avoids Delhi and the Chamber of Princes. He rarely gives audiences to Europeans, and is not even concerned with his neighbours.

Alone in his tower, mysterious and unapproachable, frail in body but magnificently moustached as any of his buccanering ancestors, the Maharana remains the arbiter of Rajput morals and manners, the last court of appeal for "the warrior kings".

The royal castle of Udaipur is as large as an ordinary town. Upon a great cliff of masonry, blinding white, it rears itself above a lake dotted with islands. So enormous is it that one imagines only the clouds stopped its upwards growth.

No stranger could possibly find his way among the interminable courts, terraces, corridors, and halls, all of white marble.

Underneath the precipice of the first walls stand rows of fighting elephants. Their tusks are tipped with metal,

## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

and they are chained at a safe distance from one another. Otherwise there would be bloodshed.

On the days of battle the Prince and his court watch from a roof while two of the great beasts, trumpeting madly, strive for supremacy.

The castle of Udaipur is self-supporting. It does not depend on the town. Months of siege could not affect it. For within its precincts there are farmyards, storehouses, and wells.

Chickens scratch between the feet of the fighting elephants. A cow, complacently sacred, eats a garland of fresh marigolds which a worshipper has just hung round the neck of the elephant-headed god guarding the steep and almost invisible stairway, just a slit in the wall, that seems to be the only way into the palace.

It happened that I arrived at the same time as the royal washing. A row of humped bulls crossed the courtyard. Over them and on each side of them swelled huge bundles of bright-coloured linen.

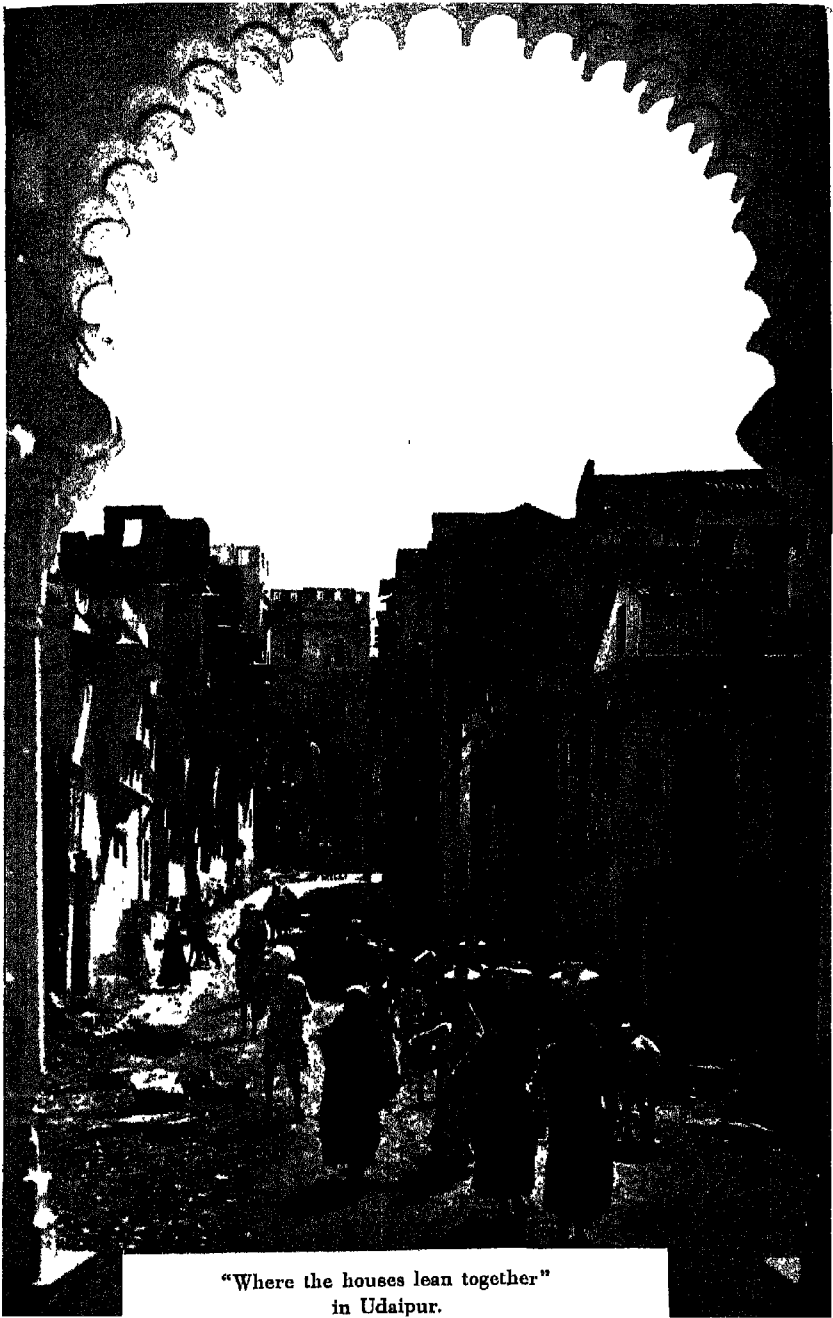
On top of the balloon-like bales, half sunk in them, perched the skinny figures of the washermen.

Under the first arch sentries dreamed, with their equipment hung on the walls above them. It was noon, and so hot.

On an exquisite little terrace shaded with orange trees, some Rajput nobles, with magnificent cleft beards, were choosing new turbans.

The merchant who had spread out his wares on a shawl, took no part in the conversation. Humbly he sat on his heels, with his eyes downcast.

"I like the red one. It is a fine colour," said the elder warrior who wore a coat of orange brocade. His sword was wrapped in an emerald green scarf.



"Where the houses lean together"  
in Udaipur.





The washing arrives at the castle.

## CASTLE OF DREAMS IN UDAIPUR

"The purple might suit you better," suggested the exquisite youth beside him, a great shot and rider, who looked too delicate to set foot in the sun. They argued for some time while they twirled the brilliant erections of muslin between languid fingers. I thought they might quite well go to sleep before they reached a decision.

Everybody else in the palace seemed to be asleep. Guards dozed with their rifles stacked behind them. Priests in violent yellow nodded in front of their altars. The strange-shaped gods smothered in flowers were no stiller than the courtiers and equerries extended wherever there was shade.

In an ante-room the most magnificently-dressed officials I have ever seen had discarded their swords as if they were umbrellas, and were dreaming peacefully under a colossal reproduction of the sun in coloured glass.

The only people who seemed to be awake in that fantastic castle were a couple of villagers carrying trays heaped with meat, grain, and cakes, with a small mound of coins in the centre of the foodstuffs.

"Who are they?" I asked, rubbing my eyes, for I too had overslept that morning. (The train had waited twenty minutes while I dressed, and a host of splendid personages in white and red, servants, no doubt, but with the air of Cabinet Ministers, had contributed to the chaos by packing everything I wanted to wear.)

"They are bridegrooms," explained a smooth youth, with a fan of cherry-coloured muslin on his head. He wore rubies in his ears and a jewelled bracelet on his wrist, and he had killed more leopards on foot, stalking them in the jungle, than most Europeans have done safely perched in trees or on the backs of elephants.

"They have brought the usual marriage offerings to His

Highness. It is a form of tribute, but the priests take the food and the money goes to the castle servants."

Shyly, the bridegrooms lifted the muslin veils which covered the great dishes, bowed to the nearest half-awake officials, and retired.

From the castle that is bigger than the town I drove far back into the middle ages. For Udaipur is like no other place on earth.

Her holiness the cow, wanders where she likes, holding up the traffic at will. Monkeys and pilgrims quarrel over fallen rice. Camels with bursting panniers stick between the toy houses that lean together across the alleys. Naked priests huddle in the dust tending fires which exhale a thick blue smoke.

An elephant, gorgeously draped in crimson and gold, pushes its way through stalls heaped with marigold heads, orange blossom and balls of meat on skewers.

Women in swinging scarlet skirts are forced with a great clatter of anklets, into unknown doorways. There are shrieks, but nobody really minds.

When the royal beast has passed, the gods are picked up again—stone gods and wooden ones, smeared with vermilion or drenched with holy water—and replaced where they are bound to impede the traffic.

With a charming and intelligent young man who had been at Oxford, I went to see the Jain Temple where his father was, I believe, a chief priest.

"Our people won't take life in any form," he explained. "The most orthodox among us wear strips of gauze across our mouths, so as to avoid swallowing the minutest insects."

"What would a Jain do if he saw a cobra about to attack his only child?" I asked.

"He should have sufficient faith to do nothing at all,"

## CASTLE OF DREAMS IN UDAIPUR

retorted my companion. He was a vegetarian and he walked carefully, so as not to crush any living thing under his feet.

“And fleas? Wouldn’t you even kill fleas?” I persisted.

“Strictly speaking, *no*,” said the young man, who meant to be a lawyer. “I’ve even heard of monasteries, or hermitages where there is a sort of bug refectory. The most charitable Jains go and sleep there once a month so as to ensure that the vermin have a good meal occasionally.”

Watching my astonished face, he laughed and said: “I’ve never done it myself, but it’s quite logical, you know, if all life has the same value.”

The Jains are pacifists. Under no circumstances will they resort to violence. They have twenty-three patriarchs and their religion is founded on the principles of chastity, charity and poverty, but their temples are said to contain the richest treasures in India. The famous Dilwara shrine is supposed to have cost twenty million pounds.

Astride a young horse, I rode out beyond the famous lake with its island palaces, to see the wild pig feed.

At sunset, hordes of the great tusked brutes come out of the dry scrub and thorns, waiting for the sound of a horn. At the first blast a blue-black wave of pig pours on to a dusty space surrounding a tower.

From the roof great baskets full of grain are flung down on to the screaming, fighting mass. Then battles rage.

I saw no other action, violent or vigorous, in the dreaming land of Udaipur.

Even the dancers who performed one night in a white marble pavilion, against a background of carved wood, sat cross-legged upon rich carpets, while they postured a whole story of the emotions, love, hate, jealousy, wrath and despair.

No Hollywood star, using every limb, could have been

## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

half as effective. Yet the "dancers" of Udaipur moved nothing but lips, eyes, nostrils and brows, with an occasional gesture of fingers so sinuous that they could be bent backwards to touch the wrist.

It was illogically horrible to watch living faces featuring the extremes of sensation, while the bodies attached to them remained so still as to suggest death.

On that occasion nobody slept.

But, for the rest, my chief impression of the loveliest State in India, where the women are a flower-bed and the men an armoury, equally richly coloured, is being waked, or waking somebody else—to hunt, to shoot, to drift about the lake in State barges, to leave at last, regretfully, in the Leopard Moth, generously lent to me by the Maharajah of Jodhpur.

"I'm not certain I shall be able to get off the ground if you insist on taking your hatbox," said H.H.'s English pilot with a twinkle of very blue eyes. "The acrodrome's a bit small for this machine, and those hills are considerably in the way."

I refused to sacrifice my hats.

"All right, we'll have a try," laughed the pilot.

I shut my eyes. When I opened them we were satisfactorily in the sky.

## A NIGHT IN JODHPUR

IN the dusk the great K.L.M. plane circled above the aerodrome. The air was thick and hot. I imagined that I could take hold of the gathering darkness and feel its texture. A line of trees came to meet us. In the distance the red fort reared above the city crumpled at the foot of the rock. We landed. Stumbling, we walked across grass and concrete and dust. In taxis we drove to an admirable hotel, but while we ate and talked of the flight from Baghdad, I thought of the fort crouched half-way to the sky. It belonged to another age and I was surprised when an Indian friend said: "Let's go there at once. You can't wait until to-morrow."

With a powdering of stars in the sky, we drove through emptiness and dust to the city. The streets were so narrow that our vehicle brushed the walls on either side. Lights cut sharply into the darkness and I caught glimpses of the rich yellow and reds of the Rajput women's dresses. I thought that if the town were ever decorated there would be no need for flags. The clothes of the people would provide colour heaped on colour.

At the bottom of the cliff, the car stopped.

"I've thought of a plan," said my friend.

He disappeared through one of the myriad doorways and I was left in the curious diapering of white and black. No other Indian town has held for me such mystery. At that moment I heard every sound connected with human life and I saw nothing at all until an immense bulk filled the

street. Like a private earthquake it reared out of the ground and the houses shrank to the size and shape of milliner's boxes heaped carelessly one upon another.

My friend's idea had been an elephant.

From its back, after I had mastered my first feeling of isolated insecurity, I looked down upon the Rajput city, whose people, "Homeric heroes in the century of industry, continue their magnificent existence unconcerned"<sup>1</sup> with the evolution of other, less dignified if more purposeful standards. The splendid days of Indian knighthood may have passed, but the Rajput mentality is still that of the eleventh century, of the crusades and of Childe Roland who to "the dark tower came".

Beside me, balanced easily on the leviathan whose slow pace separated us from the earth and all that generally belongs to it, my friend talked dreamily of history. It was as if he held in his hands, like a richly-jewelled chain, the dramatic story of Jodhpur, the old state of Marwar, and let it slip slowly through his fingers. Beyond the confines of the city, spread the sands, thirty-five thousand miles of them, for this largest of the Rajput states, like Bikanir, is almost entirely desert. It holds but two and a half million people, of whom 90 per cent. are Hindus and it gives its young ruler a revenue of a million sterling. The Maharajah of Jodhpur is paramount chief of the Rahtore Rajput clan, whose origin is lost in legend. According to Tod,<sup>2</sup> the first of the Rahtores grew from the splintered spine of the god Indra, but other genealogists trace their descent from the second son of the divine Rama, King of Ayodhya. So, like the Sesodias of Mewar, they are children of the Sun and of the highest rank among Rajputs.

<sup>1</sup>Kaiserling.

<sup>2</sup>Chronicler of Rajputana.

## A NIGHT IN JODHPUR

"But of course," said my Indian friend, "the Rahtores don't belong to the present at all. They are, in themselves, the last expression of the feudal system. Unequaled in history, their chivalry has stood the test of foreign invasion and of endless internal feuds. Recklessly independent, proud, jealous, vengeful, the Rajputs have never been able to combine. Oddly enough, when they were defeated, by Mahrattas, Moghuls, whoever it might be, they were apt to become valued allies of their conquerors. Akbar knew well how to make use of their services. More recently their greatest Princes have been known as 'Friends of the English'."

The elephant plodded on. Immeasurably removed from the earth, with only the sky and the crouching fort above us, I lost the sense of his words. I remembered the incomparable Tod again.

"Ask a Rajput," he wrote, "which is the greatest of crimes. 'Forgetfulness of favours', he will reply."

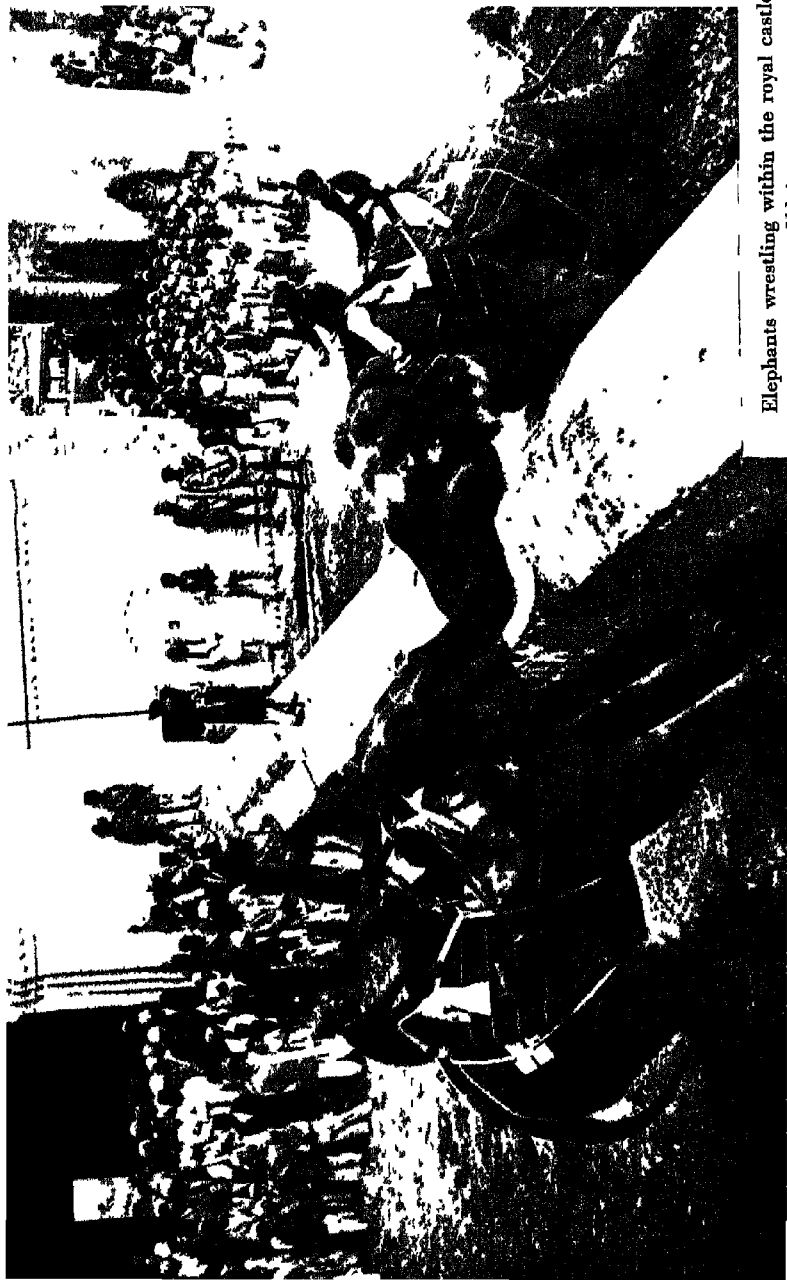
Add to this, a hoarding memory of good and ill, for Rahtore vengeance has been as swift as Rahtore gratitude, high courage, pride of race, a jealous sense of honour, a passion for freedom and for the intricate Faith of their solar ancestors and there is the material out of which has been built the modern state of Jodhpur with the manners and the timeless traditions of an Olympus.

The elephant tilted backwards. I imagined him as a monstrous bluebottle, climbing ponderously up a wall. We had arrived at the first of many arched gateways leading into the fort. Like the Acropolis of Athens, another city of the gods, this remarkable architectural achievement grows out of the native rock, dusky red as the cliff which forms its base. The flat-roofed white houses of the city huddle round

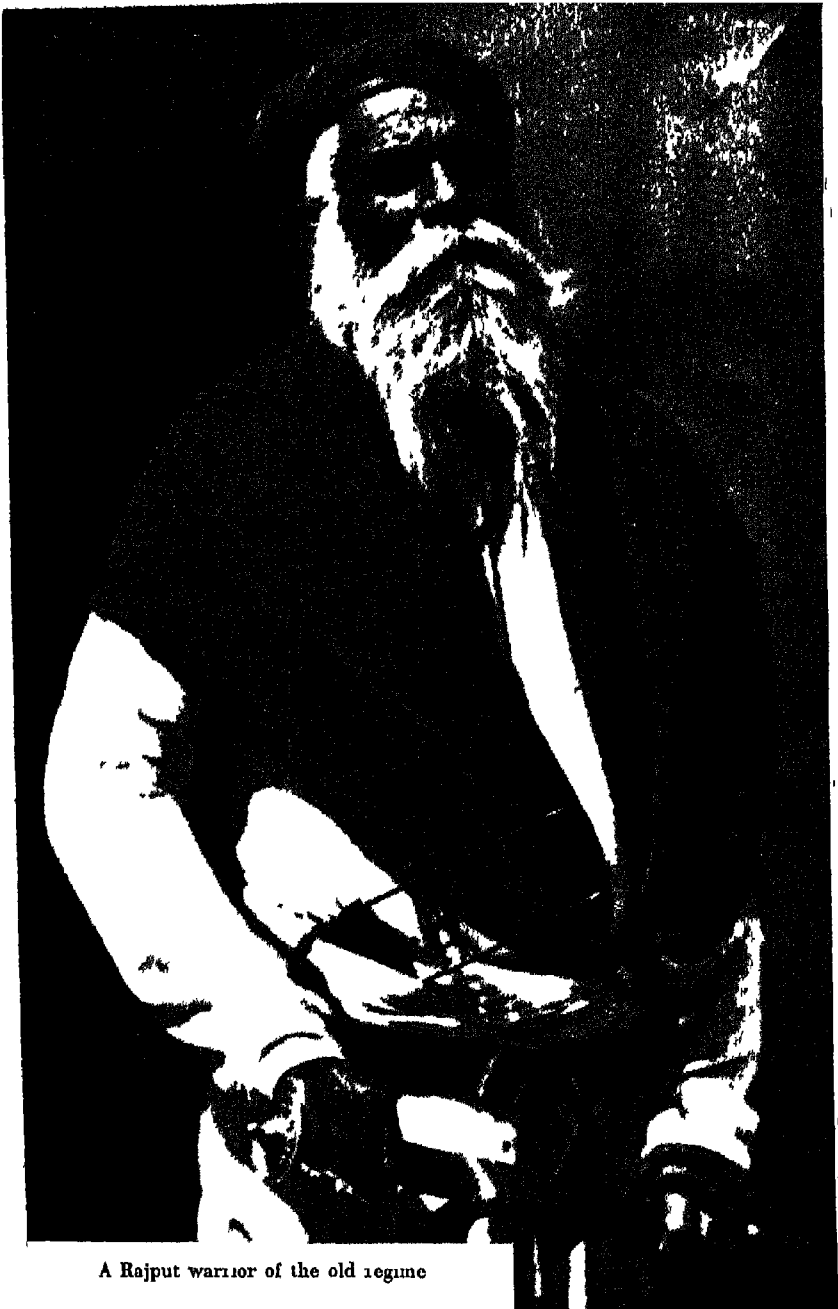


three sides of a natural bastion, shut in from the desert by a colossal wall, guarded by towers and pierced by seven fortified gates. The hill on which stands the fortress rises a sheer 400 feet above the town with its lacelike delicacy of eaves and carved balconies, but from the north-west corner, a crest of rock slopes downwards, bearing an admirably-metalled road to the Gate of Victory, named in memory of the defeat and exile of the Moslem Governor after the death in 1707 of the detested Emperor Aurungzeb. In that desperate year, when the fate of two great religions, as of the dynasties which supported them, hung in the balance, Moslem holy men (Mullahs) dressed themselves as Hindu beggars and ascetics (Saddhus) in order to leave the country with some measure of safety, while those Rajputs who had been forcibly converted to Islam returned with delight to their original faith.

Descending reluctantly from the back of the mammoth, I realized myself dwindling in stature and mentality. Human pity returned to me. No longer remote and detached from suffering, smells, dust and the pressure of innumerable fears, hopes and diverse purposes, I looked up at the walls of the rose-red fortress. And I saw the impressions of many hands. On either side of the last arch giving access to the world, Rajput queens had left the marks of their fingers on their way to death. Most of the hands were very small. They might have belonged to children, so boneless were they and so delicate. Here and there a stronger impression indicated perhaps the character of one of those warrior princesses who defended a fortress till the walls crumbled, then caused it to be set alight and threw herself into the flames. But others, frail and tenuous, might have been made by ghosts. It was not difficult to imagine the terror and the pride with which the wives of a dead Maharajah would go forth on their



Elephants wrestling within the royal castle  
at Udaipur.



A Rajput warrior of the old regime

## A NIGHT IN JODHPUR

first journey unveiled, on their last in a world of which they had known very little.

A Chinese Bolshevik, condemned to execution, once told me that it was easy to die if you were sufficiently angry. Were they angry, or stupefied, or just frightened, those queens who went out, with faces uncovered, jewelled and robed in state, to face first the awe and adoration of the crowds, their silence or their acclamation, and then the agony of the funeral pyre? The last recorded "Satis" were the six widows of the Maharajah Mansingh, who died in 1843, but on the walls of the Loha Gate, carved now in relief from the pattern made by trembling hands dipped in henna, red as blood, are the signs manual of generations of royal ladies who preferred the cruelty of religious tradition to the sin of living alone.

Within the walls of the fort, crushed into a space some 500 yards by 250, are an inchoate mass of palaces, barracks and armouries. That night I saw them all confused and dominant, rearing up against the sky. The pale red sandstone was darkened under the stars. Beside me a gentle voice spoke of "old, far-off, forgotten things and battles long ago". A hermit had chosen the site where Jodha built his stronghold and the ancient blood sacrifice was made by burying alive under the foundations, a workman called Rajia Bambi. In memory of his unwilling sacrifice, a strip of land, still called Rajbagh, was bestowed upon his children. Legend has it that the hermit was a man of peace and when his meditations were disturbed by the perpetual feuds, raids and wars of the Rajputs, he retired in fury, cursing the wells of the new fortress so that they became brackish or dried, with the result that even now the garrison have to fetch their water from a tank outside the walls.

Slowly we mounted the great ramp and the small, slight

man at my side spoke of the great deeds of Rajput history. His voice sighed away on the breeze which whispered between the immensity of wall and tower. I was not certain that I really heard how Jodha's son founded what is now the progressive State of Bikanir, and of how his grandson, Rao Sanga, allied himself with another equally gallant Rahtore prince in a last vain effort to stem the Moslem advance. But I remembered reading of Akbar's marriage with a Jodhpur Princess called "Mary of the Age"—origin perhaps of the story that the great Moghul conqueror had a Christian wife—and of how, under this Moslem who, according to a contemporary historian, "ruled the known earth", Jodhpur became a bulwark of the alien invaders' throne.

I remembered also the legend of Abhai Singh, the fabulous warrior who severed the head of a buffalo with one stroke of his sword, to offer it as tribute to a Rajput prince acting viceroy for the Moghul emperor, and of the prodigious infant Ajit Singh, heir of the Rahtores, who was smuggled away from the jealousy of the wicked Emperor Aurungzeb in a basket of sweets, and brought up by one faithful retainer on sacred Mount Abu, till, as a man, he could return to his own country to claim his place among the children of the Sun.

In the eighteenth century, Jodhpur, then Marwar, fell to the fierce-fighting Mahrattas and Pindaris. At the battle of Merta, Scindia's artillery and the strategy of the arch-adventurer de Boigne defeated the impetuosity of the Rahtores who knew better, it would seem, how to die than how to do anything else. Eventually the contest between the rulers of Jaipur and Jodhpur for the favour of the Maharana of Udaipur and the hand of his exquisite daughter, Krishna Kumari, led to the intervention of the British, for the

## A NIGHT IN JODHPUR

Princess—the Iphigenia of Rajputana—was either forced to drink poison, or, according to some accounts, did so with the habitual courage of her race, in order to save her father and her country the disaster of what would have been a family war.

Jodhpur has never failed in her alliance with Britain. Her fort gave refuge to English women and children during the Mutiny. Her troops served in the Frontier War in 1888, and during the Boxer Rebellion in China. They sailed for France under the grandest figure of modern India, Sir Pertab Singh, just twenty-five days after the Great War started, and they fought there for three years with unvarying distinction. Restored to their horses, they made history in Palestine, where a troop of the Jodhpur Lancers, under Jemadar Asa Singh, charged so fast and far into the Turkish lines that they could not turn. Every man was killed. A month later, the regiment, under Colonel Thakur Dalpat Singh, took the town of Haifa at an equally headlong gallop and once again a Rajput leader died at the head of an epic charge.

It has been said that British peace has emasculated India, that law has taken the place of arms and the ease and logic of living put an end to heroic dying. Britain has been accused of making India more helpless than the Britons themselves when Rome withdrew her legions, but there is certainly no lack of courage in the States and it may be that leadership will grow with opportunity.

Seated upon the outer rampart of the fort, with all the different sounds of the town below fused into the monotonous hum of a hive, I heard about the Maharajah, Sir Pertab Singh, uncle of the present ruler, for many years Regent of Jodhpur.

“He has no equal,” said my friend. “He must have lived many times and perhaps he will never live again.” He

spoke one of the greatest names in India with a shy pride and a diffidence that was attractive. Here is his description of the man who gave up a throne for the sake of Jodhpur and its youthful rulers—blunt, curt, candid, a disciplinarian, utterly honest, without fear, devoted to Britain and to the British soldier. For to Sir Pertab, in whose veins ran the blood of Chitor's warriors, whose heart beat with the same courage, there was only one way of life, one dignity, one purpose. All these were epitomized in the soldier of whatever race or creed. He himself was one of the finest soldiers in the world because for him, the profession of arms had lost nothing of its ancient honour and romance. He brought to the trenches the spirit of Gustavus Adolphus or of the Magyar nobles calling to each other: "Hurry! Hurry!" as they galloped across the plains of Hungary to meet the Turkish hosts. It was his one hope that, like countless ancestors, he might die at the head of his charging Lancers. But mechanized war, waged on a scale undreamed by an older chivalry, refused him the glory of a Rajput death. He lived to return to his own country, where it is said that he received those of the heroic Jodhpur Lancers who followed him back at the end of the war, with the grim question: "Why are you not dead?" For Sir Pertab, "a soldier's death wherever won was the best and greatest gift of life."

Fortunately for Jodhpur, this fierce old romantic, imbued with every form of courage, lived to see peace restored, the present Maharajah's minority at an end, and the young polo team he had so proudly trained conquering internationally in the name of his State.

"There is one story," said my friend, leaning closer. "Among so many others, of course; do you know it? About the young Englishman, an officer, who died in Sir

## A NIGHT IN JODHPUR

Pertab's house. The body of a Christian meant the worst pollution, but His Highness would not let the sweepers touch it. He carried it himself to the bier. Within an hour the Brahmins were at his gate, clamouring against such breach of caste. You can imagine their horror. But Sir Pertab, born of the warrior kings, retorted: "Between soldiers there is no caste except that of comrade."

Whether the little man quoted correctly I do not know, but I liked the story, told in the night, between the stars and the secretive walls of Jodhpur.



## MORE OF JODHPUR

THE Jodhpur coat of arms bears the legend "Rahtore invincible [or stubborn] in battle". The words come from the old quatrain:

No host so good as the Deora,  
No donor so liberal as the Gaur,  
In pride none equal the Hara  
In arms none surpass the Rahtore.

To the truth of this history bears witness, for Jodhpur's war of independence under Durga Das Rahtor against the Moghul Emperor, Aurungzeb, has no parallel in courage and audacity except Mcwar's (Udaipur) struggle against Akbar.

Since Maharajah Man Singh's treaty with Britain in 1818, Jodhpur has been a generous ally of the Imperial Government. Her Lancers served in the North-West Frontier campaigns of 1897 and 1898 and in China in 1901. During the Great War her Maharajah, Sir Sumer Singh, served in France with his own Imperial Service Troops and the Jodhpur cavalry (the Sardar Rissala) won eighty-eight awards of honour for distinguished service in the field.

The present Maharajah succeeded his young brother in 1918. He is now thirty-six and has five sons to carry on his work and the tradition of personal service imposed on the royal house of Jodhpur by the great Sir Pertab Singh.

His Highness, Sri Sir Umaidsinghji Sahib Bahadur,

## MORE OF JODHPUR

G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E., etc., is a serious-minded young man who devotes himself first to his State, where he has instituted financial, administrative and military reforms, and afterwards to sport. He is a great rider and a first-class polo player. Devoted to pig-sticking, he is likely to use a plane to drop him in the middle of a comparative desert where there are known to be pig. His people, who are immensely proud of his prowess, say that he is quite capable of finishing off a boar with a bowie knife and thinks nothing of following a wounded tiger on foot.

In Jodhpur, they sometimes hunt chinkara (small deer) with a trained leopard which is kept hooded like a falcon until the moment when, with the quarry in sight, it can be unleashed in pursuit. The Mahwars, of course, are born horsemen, and they breed horses famous for their spirit and endurance. Like all his fellow-countrymen, the present Ruler talks readily of his horses and his hunts, but I think his allegiance is wavering. For having learned to fly, as an expert not an amateur, he has bought one of the fastest planes in India, capable of doing two hundred miles an hour. In this he is apt to set off after his early morning tea for some State at the other end of India. Covering 800 miles or so without particular landmark, as if it were a matter of driving from London to Brighton, he arrives—to the despair of ministers and equerries who thought it would be quite time enough to go down to the aerodrome hours later—at the exact moment scheduled, with a demand for an early lunch as he wants to get back to his own country in time for dinner.

The Maharani of Jodhpur keeps the strictest purdah. Invisible to everyone except her own family, she must know the sky considerably better than the earth. For she drives down to the aerodrome, a link of the international chain, in

a purdah car with black glass windows so that nobody can see inside, steps out of it veiled from head to heel, climbs into the splendid new plane and is off, alone with her husband, into the skies. It must be an amazing experience for a Princess whose whole life is hidden away behind veils and curtains and the shutters of palace windows.

The Maharajah has done a great deal for aviation. The huge aerodrome on which French, Dutch and British liners land with such regularity that the inhabitants can set their clocks by the appearance of the planes linking Europe and the East within three days, must stimulate the imagination of Jodhpur's citizens. But it is His Highness who has made flying possible for any of his subjects who choose to learn. When I last stayed in Jodhpur the enterprising and effective Prime Minister, Sir Donald Field, flew solo every day. At that time he believed he was not air-minded, for there was some evolution he could not master, but I gather that he has now changed his mind and is among those leading Jodhpur in the sky.

The State has sufficient problems to occupy the hours her Maharajah spends on land and off the back of a horse, for Jodhpur with its enormous half-desert area (36,021 square miles) between four and five times the size of Wales, has an excessively dry climate which limits the possibilities of agriculture. Eighteen great irrigation works have been constructed to give water to 60,000 bighas of land. The scarcity of water in the city has been remedied by the erection of a reservoir with eight pumping stations. Roads are spreading. Fine buildings are springing up on the outskirts of the lovely old town which remains secretive and unchanged. One of the best hotels in India, owned by the State, companions the aerodrome.

But Jodhpur is bounded by no less than eight other

## MORE OF JODHPUR

Principalities and by two districts of British India. Sparsely inhabited, with wide empty stretches devoid of road or rail, she provides unwilling refuge for criminals escaping from other regions. Among her peasants, growing millet, wheat and oil-seeds, a little cotton, with cattle as their chief source of wealth and some horses, camels and sheep, there are the remnants of criminal tribes. To deal with these the State Police have been organized on military lines and their efficiency has greatly increased. Simultaneously prison conditions have been improved and the Central Jail Factory is a remarkable institution, producing products of high quality.

It is difficult for any police force to deal with primitive people among whom crime is a religion. For every European in India, there are about ten hereditary criminals. They are born in what one might call a criminal caste and they would probably be insulted if their villainy were not recognized. If one can imagine a snobbery of crime, it exists among the people whose children are trained in the arts of thieving and murder. They are the heirs of the Thugs, eliminated by British vigilance. In various parts of South and Central India, they practise their specialized dacoitry, believing that, if they die while committing a crime, they are as certain of paradise as the devout Moslem killed in battle against the infidel.

Scattered far and wide over the Provinces and the States, each criminal tribe has its range—the territory in which it alone can operate—and its chieftain. It also has its special superstitions. In one place I was told that for a “crim” to meet a milkmaid, or a man carrying rice or water, was a most fortunate occurrence and would ensure the successful completion of the evil contemplated. On the other hand, a jackal howling, a white cat, the screech of a kite, mourners

wailing a death, spilt water, or a broken chatty would be sufficient to dishearten the boldest.

There are, in some districts, criminal villages which have a code as strict as that of Moses, but the exact opposite with regard to morals. In such communities the leading men are those who have committed most undiscovered crimes and such are numbered in tens after the manner of the Thugs who used to keep records of their murders in a human game book.

The land pirates of the South are called Kuravers. Of these there appear to be a quarter of a million hereditary, habitual and totally incorrigible criminals who look upon robbery as a sport, and often regard murder as too easy and therefore an unsportsmanlike way of achieving a successful theft.

Jodhpur is not concerned with these proud bandits, who maintain they were originally Vedans or hunters rather than temple servants as historians claim, but her criminals are of the same mentality if not the same stock. They regard their peculiar vice as a creed and are willing to make sacrifice for it.

After my nocturnal visit to the fort, which is still the fierce red heart of Jodhpur, I used to go there every day for the sake of the view. For beyond the ancient town, so closely crushed together that a loaded camel could scarce pass between the houses, I could see the long roads quilted in dust, the carefully planted avenue of trees leading to the aerodrome, the railway streaked in shining black, the plain burned to the colour of amber under a grey mist of trees. Close below me I could see ten or eleven temples and as many ancient palaces, and further away the magnificent new buildings which prove the quality of the present administration, for they are devoted to law, to education, and to public works.

## MORE OF JODHPUR

The Government is administered by a State Council consisting of five Ministers under the Presidency of the Maharajah. Under the flying Prime Minister there are some forty departments, with powers unusually decentralized, so that, with a minimum of delay, they can deal with ordinary administrative and executive work. There is also a House of Lords in the form of a Council of Sirdars, which deals principally with the problems raised by the Jaghirdah system, similar to that in Jaipur. These feudal lords own so much land, are so rich as a result of the taxes they levy and in many cases, so isolated in their hill castles, impregnable except by artillery or aerial bombing, that their intransigence and their determination to do as they choose with their sometimes unfortunate peasants, provides a serious problem for the Ministers of Jodhpur. They share this and must eventually solve it with other Rajputana States.

In the Fort, which is the epitome of Jodhpur history and its culmination, for the incomparable Sir Pertab was born there, I met the man who must know more of fabulous India than most of her contemporary historians. In the days of the late Nizam, one of the strangest figures of the East was a Mr. Jacobs about whom nothing was known except that he controlled enormous wealth. This curious personage who travelled about India in his own railway coach, attended by a host of servants, was said by some to be a Persian, by others to be a Jew, an Armenian, or a Russian. Certain it is that, whatever the man's nationality, he had a flair for diamonds and whenever some colossal stone slipped secretly into the market, it found its way—invariably—into the hands of Mr. Jacobs and from them into the coffer of his august patron in Hyderabad.

The place that once belonged to the mysterious individual from Teheran or Judah or Moscow is now held

by an Englishman. For Mr. Allen, small, well-built, fair, carrying discretion to the point of being, even physically, difficult to describe, spends months and years in the secret recesses of Indian palaces, resetting the jewels of queens and princesses. With this man, serious in appearance and slow of speech, who yet has a gift for stringing careful words with as much effect as the necklaces he contrives, with equal precision, out of handfuls and heaps of loose jewels, I visited the armoury in the Jodhpur Fort. It contains two or three million pounds' worth of jewels, I suppose, and provides therefore the most amazing contrast to its owner. For the present Maharajah, shy and quiet, devoted to sport, interested only in the most practical politics, dresses and lives with the utmost simplicity. He does not care for the ancient splendours to which he is entitled. I have never seen him wear jewels.

Yet in his armoury there are children's toys made of solid gold and nursery balls set with rubies. I saw rose-water basins and dishes, jugs, perfume bottles and censers, betel-nut sets and palm-leaf boxes all made of gold. There were writing-table sets encrusted with precious stones, swords whose scabbards and hilts were a solid pattern of emeralds, diamonds and pearls. The furniture was plated with silver and gold, or with small squares of looking-glass.

There were pairs of women's shoes, pathetically small and amusingly down-trodden at the heel, so thickly sewn with diamonds that I could not see the stuff of which they were made. There were eyebrows of diamonds—thin, curved streaks of light with hooks to hold them over the ears, which the princesses of olden days used to wear across their foreheads. And there were rows and rows of exquisitely enamelled crutches, those tall, slender sticks with gem-studded handles on which the Thakurs (great nobles) of Rajputana

## MORE OF JODHPUR

leaned during the long ceremonies when, owing to the presence of their sovereign they might not sit.

In olden days, when a queen or a princess died, her jewels were packed away and stored among the family treasure. Her successor was dowered with a completely new outfit of precious stones. Thus from generation to generation the royal treasure accumulated. Nowadays some of the jewels are handed down to daughters and daughters-in-law.

The Maharani of Jodhpur wears a rakhri (a disc) pendant on her forehead of which the centre stone is a blue diamond that must be worth at least £12,000. She also possesses an expanding cap which fits her exquisitely shaped head and is made entirely of diamond solitaires, each of the first water.

"Is there anything to equal this in all India?" I asked, and Mr. Allen, heir to the secrets of that other discreet gentleman whose name may or may not have been anything so indicative as *Jacobs*, began to tell me, slowly and cautiously, of the garnered wealth accumulating for centuries in the palaces of Indian sovereigns, but neither he nor anyone else could measure the value of stones which are already legendary.

For instance, the young Maharajah of Jaipur, India's most popular sportsman, possesses a necklace of spinel rubies, each as large as a bantam hen's egg. There are three rows of these fabulous stones and their market value must be enormous, for there are no other such spinels in the world.

They were collected by Barbar, the great Moghul conqueror of India and the necklace was added to by his son Akbar.

Among the State jewels which are occasionally shown to His Highness's friends are three great emeralds and two pearls strung together to form a sort of fringe worn across the front of a turban. The largest stone is of 490 carats and



such emeralds are worth anything up to £200 sterling a carat.

In Jaipur the statues of the Hindu goddesses in one of the temples wear tiaras set with pear-shaped diamonds of 70 carats each. But the loveliest sight in that particular State, whose Ruler is as fearless in the air piloting a new 200 m.p.h. Lockheed aeroplane as he is at pig-sticking, polo, and tiger-shooting from the back of an elephant, is a "White Durbar". This ceremony takes place once a year at full moon on the roofs of an ancient palace. White carpets cover the flat expanse of marble. The walls are sheathed in white.

There is only one chair, silver-plated, upholstered in sumptuous white brocade, for the Maharajah. Everybody else sits upon the ground, or leans upon a tall, crutch-handled stick. And everybody is dressed in white. All the jewels are white. Cascades of pearls gleam among silver embroidery. Hems are stiff with pearls and the breasts of coats heavy with diamonds. Streams of the same precious stones drip from turbans surmounted by stiff, white aigrettes. Rivers of them pour across the silver tissue of ceremonial dress and down the velveted scabbards of State swords.

The Rajputana Princes are among the most hospitable in India, so their treasures are better known than many others belonging to fellow rulers. At the banquets which the Maharajah of Jodhpur gives in the Ratanada palace, a set of Royal Worcester china specially made for 100 people is used to great effect.

All over the Sikh countries I heard of the great possessions which the late Maharajah of Patiala delighted to use. Among them was a silver dinner service made for him by our Goldsmiths and Silversmiths Company previous to the visit of the Prince of Wales, and rumour has it that this panoply of precious metal is worth thirty thousand pounds.

## MORE OF JODHPUR

In Patiala I slept in a bed plated with gold. My apartment consisted of five rooms for my sole use. There were fifteen dining-rooms in the palace. As many different dinners were served each day. The old Maharajah kept 500 horses for his own use. There were, when I was there, 143 cooks, scullions and other kitchen helpers, of whom seventeen cooked only curries. In the armoury I was shown the famous Patiala emeralds, each as large as a dessert spoon, and a necklace which, when I tried it on, covered half my person with streams and lakes of diamonds. It was set by Cartier and contained pink, yellow, greenish and what I should call pale brown diamonds all as large as my thumb-nails.

Still in the armoury of Jodhpur, handling now a snake-headed anklet encrusted with emeralds and now an ear-ring like an inverted pagoda, each story built of rubies and hung with infinitesimal bells, I exchanged tales of palace India with the surprising Mr. Allen. His fingers were as accurate and delicate as the instruments they used. They never fumbled or hesitated. They never made a mistake. I remember telling, while we looked at a jewelled bridle that must have been very uncomfortable to handle, how, in a Southern Indian palace, I saw the ruling Maharani in full dress. The weight of her jewels was so great that she could not stand without the support of two attendants. Her anklets of gold, studded with emeralds, weighed 100 ozs. each and were valued at £1,400. Over her slender feet she wore flat strips of gold attached by chains to jewelled toe rings. The same precious metal covered the backs of her hands and was held in place by diamond links attached to her rings and bracelets. She could not bend her elbows because her arms were covered solidly from wrist to shoulder with wide bracelets of precious stones. Diamonds blazed upon her breast and hung in a multitude of chains

far below her waist. Her throat was stiffened by collars of emeralds and rubies.

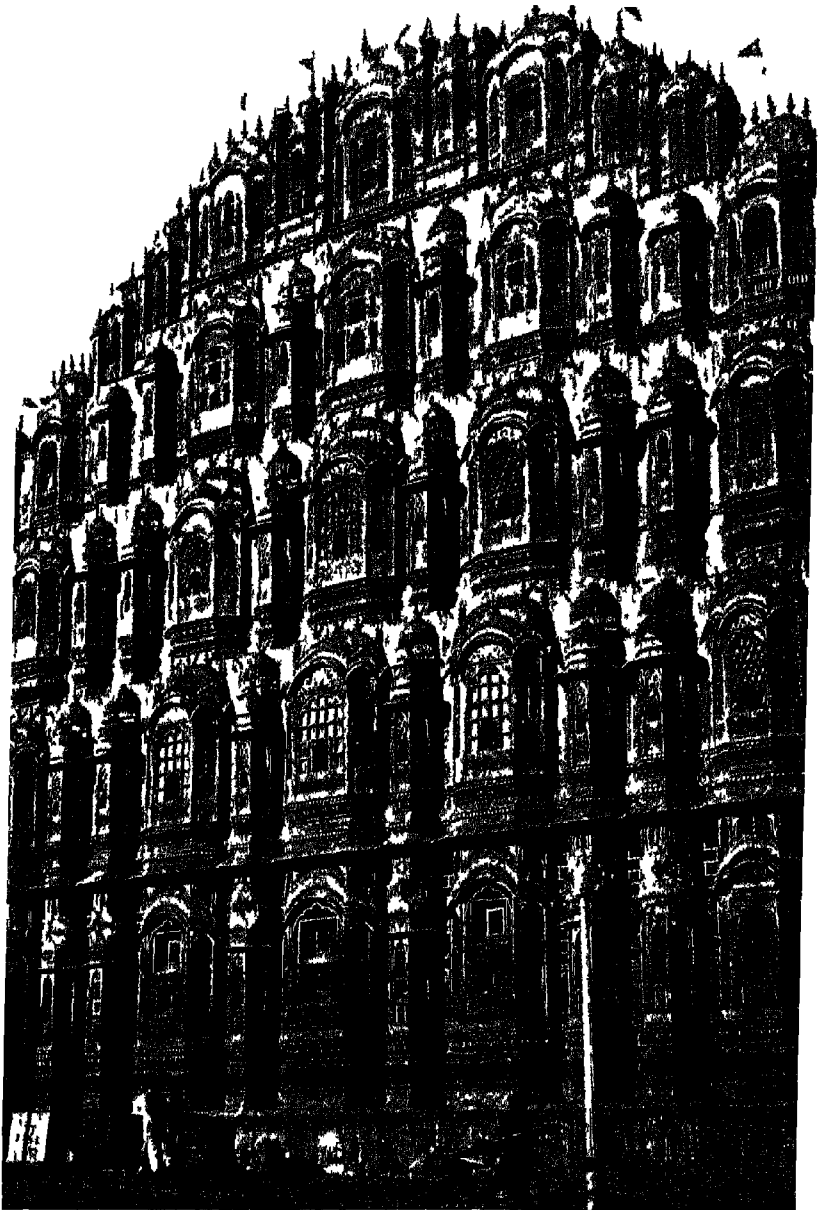
Down the full length of her plaited hair, from the crown of her head to her knees, hung a sort of fishtail of gold set with jewels. It was about three inches wide at the top and it tapered to the point where a pear-shaped diamond hung. I calculated that the eighteen-year-old queen was wearing more than her own slight weight in treasure and the value of at least a quarter of a million sterling.

Throughout the Indian States, I reflected, the privileged traveller must catch glimpses of fabulous wealth and an equally prodigious generosity. The Maharajah of Travancore feeds 5,000 Brahmins (the priestly caste of Hindu) daily at the doors of the Temple.

The Sovereign of Nepal, a wholly independent kingdom, uses 390 elephants at his royal shoots and from the back of his own magnificently caparisoned mount scatters basketsful of coin to the three or four thousand beaters. I stayed in one palace where there were a hundred servants to wait on a solitary guest and twenty-eight police as a wholly unnecessary guard.

In another State I counted my host's cars and found they numbered 270, including what appeared to be an entirely chromium-plated Rolls specially fitted with dark glass—a peculiar brownish-black colour which rendered the Maharani sitting inside invisible while she herself could see everything outside.

In the City Palace at Jaipur, which is a town in itself, I was told that nearly 3,000 women were employed. In its stables were two hundred horses, each with its name printed over the door of a box as large as an American "bed-sit", with an electric fan in the roof and a shower-bath next door.



Perhaps the most curious building in India—  
“The Hall of the Winds,” Jaipur.

Jaipur peasants on their way to a fair.



## MORE OF JODHPUR

The Maharajah of Gwalior has "tons of pearls", so many that he cannot even count the strings. His great friend and neighbour, the Maharaj-Rana of Dholpur, a philosopher who devotes his whole time to the care of his State, sometimes wears the most famous pearls in India, nine rows, perfectly matched, each as large as a thrush's egg.

The Sovereign of Baroda possesses a carpet made solely of jewels. The groundwork is of pearls and the design of turquoises, rubies, emeralds and diamonds. On State occasions a salute is fired from a canon made of solid gold with the bores of steel.

Kapurthala is justly famous because its Maharajah is one of the best and most popular hosts in India. But it should also rank among the legendary States because its generous and accomplished ruler, to whom—as in the case of his fellow princes—half the land owes employment, possesses a fabulous crown which he wears on top of his turban. It is made of three thousand carefully selected diamonds and pearls. Another exquisite possession of this distinguished prince is a topaz belt buckle. I believe it is the biggest topaz in the world. It must be nearly four inches long and it is of an indescribably burning amber-yellow colour.

Such jewels represent the iron ration of the State, a treasure that would serve in moments of national emergency. "For," said Mr. Allen, dropping ropes and ropes of pearls into a case, with a movement so gentle that they seemed to slip of their own volition into a chosen place, "you must remember, when you think of the Nizam or a Maharajah, with revenues of anything from a million to seven million a year and no personal taxation, that most of it goes on the upkeep of the country. Troops, police, schools, hospitals, roads, priests, cripples and beggars, in the long run they're all paid for out of the State exchequer."

## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

I agreed that the average Prince must, on occasions, feel harassed in spite of the jewels in his armoury and the taxes pouring into his treasury. For he must provide, as deity and ruler, father and priest and king, for every need his subjects can conceive.

## JAIPUR

HIGH above the city of Jaipur rise the walls of Nahargarh, the Tiger Fort. For several miles the battlements are confused with the cliffs out of which they apparently grow. Eventually they join the fortifications of Amber, whose palace is deserted, although Kali still rules in the temple.

Somewhere inside the fort is hidden a fabulous treasure. So legend relates. Hundreds of years ago an ancestor of the present Maharajah, a General or a Viceroy, who carried the victorious arms of his ally, the Moghul Emperor across the breadth of India, brought back from Afghanistan a hoard of gold and jewels which he secreted in the depths of the sombre Nahargarh.

Once in a lifetime and once only, the throned Ruler of Jaipur may enter the massive walls towering out of the hillside and look upon the treasure they guard. But even the Maharajah never knows its exact situation or how to reach it. For, according to long custom, he is blindfolded upon the threshold of the fortress and led by devious ways into the labyrinth of the castle vaults. Within the jewel-chamber the bandage is removed from his eyes so that he may examine the diamonds and emeralds, the golden vessels and the sword-hilts studded with precious stones worth more than a king's, or even a country's, ransom. Before he leaves this fantastic strongroom, the ruling Prince may choose one jewel to take with him into the outer world. Imagine the difficulty of the choice.



The present young Maharajah has not yet made entry, for the first and last time, into the chamber where a fortune is stored. "They say I am still too young," he explained, "and as I can only go in once, what does it matter? There is no hurry."

He showed me the golden bird, solidly studded with rubies which his predecessor had brought out of the fort. It stood about sixteen inches high and was so heavy that I could not lift it off the mantelpiece. Never had I seen anything quite so red. The stones burned with a fierce, crimson light. It seemed to me they had gathered fire from their long sojourn in the dark.

The treasure of Jaipur is guarded by a criminal tribe. They are outlaws, who acknowledge no code but their own. Throughout the centuries they have murdered and robbed and plundered, but they have been loyal to their trust. Chieftain after chieftain has kept faith as warden of the fortress and every man of the tribe is ready to die in its defence. There is a tale about a small boy who stole a lemon from the garden and was immediately killed by his own father. "For," said the savage old man, "when my time is finished that boy would have been guardian of the treasure. Everything within these walls would have been in his charge. If he can steal fruit to-day, he might when full grown put his hand to jewels or gold. Then the honour of my people would be lost."

I do not know whether this tale, as I heard it, has been embellished by time and repetition, but it is in keeping with the audacious and unusual beauty of the city laid flat in a plain, with irregular blue hills rising suddenly to enclose the horizon.

So many ancient places are hastily described as rose-red, Petra must have originated the facile phrase. Lalibela

## JAIPUR

among the mountains of Abyssinia and Bamyan in an Afghan valley inherited it. But all these, in reality, are the dusky, purplish reds of hewn rocks stained by centuries of storm and dust. Only Jaipur is the clear pink of oleanders and sugar-cakes, and, I regret to say, flannelette. Personally, I think it is one of the most attractive towns in Asia and I am surprised that Captain Tod, meticulous chronicler of Rajasthan should dismiss it with the brief: "Jaipur is the only city in India built upon a regular plan, with streets bisecting each other at right angles."

Two hundred years ago when the great Jaisingh designed his capital, London had no plan at all. The metropolis wandered into insanitary confusion, in which she was imitated by provincial towns lost among their slums. It was no mean city that Jaisingh gave to his successors, for the widest thoroughfare, the street which might well be "called straight", is approximately thirty-seven yards in breadth and it runs for a magnificent four miles without deviating from its direction.

The sugar-pink houses which border this and other unexpectedly straight streets, wider than anything we have in commercial London, are deliciously irresponsible. They have the smallest Noah's Ark windows to keep out the sun. They are encrusted with carved balconies and shutters, so that often one cannot help thinking of yards and yards of delicate, poinsettia coloured lace with a very intricate pattern hung on each side of an immense highroad. Most amazing of the buildings which rise above the tree-lined streets thronged with traffic is the Hall of the Winds, which one architect dismissed as neither "temperate nor noble", but which so fascinated Sir Edwin Arnold that his exaggerated praise roused Lord Curzon to heap insult on such a "truly telegraphese vocabulary".

In spite of this dissension among the experts, the Hall of the Winds rears its organ pipe structure, nine stories of projecting latticed windows, each with its own pagoda roof, set one above the other in tubular formation and surmounted by a host of metal flags. If not particularly beautiful it has a great deal of charm and provides a suitable background for such processions as the Vasant Panchmi when the image of the Sun God—from whom the Solar line of Rajputs and therefore the Kuchwaha Rulers of Jaipur are descended—rides through the town in a chariot drawn by six white horses, preceded by the Maharajah and his nobles, and followed by elephants bearing golden or silver howdahs, camels gorgeously caparisoned, Marwari cavalry in medieval dress, and foot soldiers in chain mail armed with battle-axes. Five thousand years ago the Egyptians attended the Sun God Aman-Ra in similar splendour on his passage down the Nile.

If the houses of Jaipur, many of which open on to terraces of irregular height approached from the street by flights of stone steps, are architecturally inconsequent, they suit the medley of traffic which passes continuously but very slowly below them. The general pace of the bazaars is one-and-a-half miles an hour. Without exceeding this stately limit, elephants, their tusks ringed with metal and their foreheads painted black, tread with caution lest they crush some particle of the crowd which must seem to them an animated carpet. Camels roped head to tail, with immense bells swinging under their chins, pad through the dust with their peculiar soft and swaying gait. Buffaloes, bland and intensely superior, stand in the middle of the street and stare. Occasionally, with an immense effort, they move a few paces before standing still again. White cows, sacred of course, wander about poking horns painted bright green into

## JAIPUR

pyramids of clay jars, or brilliantly-dyed fabrics heaped on the edge of the street. The largest goats I can conceive, nightmare goats, with flowers round their necks, eat what undoubtedly should not be eaten and go to sleep in unsuitable places. Monkeys carrying their tails, with the dignity of a mistress of the robes anxious about her new court train, walk with delicate deliberation under the trees, where bullock-carts are crowded like little ships in a harbour, all close together and creaking as wind or tide, or, in this case, the movement of oxen chewing, shift them gently one against the other.

Bullock-carts are the omnibuses of Jaipur. When, drawn by magnificent blonde beasts, they stagger slowly down the width of street, emitting from protesting wheels a Wagnerian cacophony of sound, they seem to be overflowing with bundles of rich colour. Orange, scarlet, fierce emerald green, violent purple, saffron and amber and the blue of a midday sky are huddled together under gold tissue or gold embroidery. These are the clothes of the women, with the reds and yellows of parrot tulips predominating, but the women themselves cannot be seen, unless an eye, brown and generally somewhat opaque, peers between the brilliant folds.

The place of taxi-cabs is taken by the most enchanting pagodas on wheels, also drawn, but at a trot, by milk-white oxen. When zenana women use these, they draw the cream-coloured curtains round them and within a peaked tent rattle and bump unseen, but certainly not unheard, past the electric lights and the modern drinking fountains, and the images of Ganesh or Kali—I'm not sure really which God it is—sitting in small clay shrines above heaps of marigolds, offerings of blood or food, right in the middle of the streets.

## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

But the most extravagant beauty of Jaipur is in the daffodil skirts of her women, their carriage and the jars which they carry upon their heads as if they were coronets of flowers; in the blazing riot of the stuffs which come straight from the dyers' vats and are carried out into the sun to dry by two men, with arms stained to the shoulders, walking a little apart so that the wind blows out between them the yards of crimson or scarlet, royal blue or vivid yellow silk. On a busy morning, when all the women in their fierce, raw colours heaped one upon another, for Rajput skirts swing wide below close-fitting bodices, are walking amidst the intermittent music of their anklets, and the dyers have been particularly successful, the streets of Jaipur look as if all the Impressionists had upset their paint boxes.

It is a relief to turn from a blaze that no tropical flowers or brilliant-winged jungle butterflies could equal, into the narrow streets where craftsmen labour. Each man sits alone with the object to which he is devoting his genius. There are workers in brass and ivory, jewellers and makers of gods.

It was the Sculptors' Street which most interested me. Rough blocks of stone and marble made progress difficult, for they had been left standing or lying in the alley. This crept between the rows of cupboards let into the lower stories of the houses. Each such cupboard was a studio. In them old men with the magnificent cleft beards of Rajputana, pale youths who never looked up from their work, and boys who could not have been more than ten or twelve years old, were occupied with their chisels. Some of the bigger cupboards were schools of sculpture in which a master craftsman supervised his students or apprentices. Shavings of stone, dust and powdered marble, lay thick in the alley. Our footsteps made no sound as we walked

## JAIPUR

between rows of gods. For all the sculptors, sitting on the floor in the front of the cupboards, or invisible in the shadows from which came the harsh noises of their tools, were diligently making gods. Most of them seemed to be of the same pattern and I was told that a successful model would be passed from one atelier to another to be copied, but sometimes an artist essayed an original interpretation of Vishnu or Kali.

Motionless, in the dust, sat the Ganeshes and Hanumans. Very quiet they were and indifferent to their surroundings. I remembered the gigantic Buddhas of clean, white marble in the Sculptors' bazaar at Mandalay, but they were more impersonal. Their naked backs showed such an expanse of flesh. I'd seen them in moonlight. They were too white and cold. I could not imagine them desiring anything at all, even a temple. But the little gods of Jaipur were evidently waiting for purchasers. Some of them had the heads of elephants. Others had three faces, or a multiplicity of legs and arms, but all of them had definite appeal as they sat there, not arranged in rows, but all over the place.

Beyond this market of gods, a wedding procession passed. The bridegroom rode on an elephant. He was followed by a company of serving women. Their skirts of hot yellow and red flared across the dusk of the alley. On their heads they carried trays of sweets, jewels and clothing—the promised dowry. I had an impression of music and a gay clamour. There was a rush of feet. Then one of the long, many-cylindered cars belonging to the Palace passed. At great speed, with siren blaring, it swept down the straight street designed, two hundred years ago by a great astronomer who was also a king. Accustomed to the stars, he planned a city suited above all others in India to motor transport.

## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

I looked at the gods seated about my feet. There were so many of them that I had to step carefully. But they paid no attention.

So far removed in conception from Jaisingh's city with its bloom as of pink pollen and its women more gorgeous than Solomon's lilies of the field, is the new town just outside the last mightily-arched gateway. For, under the ægis of her young Maharajah, Jaipur State has "gone to school in Europe". Her architects have learned to build comfortably as well as splendidly. The State museum, the magnificent new hospital called after Lady Willingdon, the country palace and the State Guest House are all admirable in their different ways.

Jaipur has every reason to pride herself on windows—and hospitable doors—opening towards the West. Influenced by her young Maharajah, who is most ably assisted by an exceptional Prime Minister, Sir Beauchamp St. John, and by a brilliant Minister of Finance, Rai Bahadur Pundit Aman Atal, Jaipur is far ahead of any other Rajput State in the matter of education. When the Maharajah's college was opened in 1844 there were 40 pupils. Ten years ago the number of students attending the State educational institutions was 49,648. An English college, a Sanskrit college, a technical school and a school of arts and crafts have now come into being and literacy is increasing every year, although, as in all the Rajput States, purdah is still general among the upper castes. There is a women's hospital where very good work is done, and several child welfare centres. The State police force has an intelligence branch organized on modern lines, and the Mayo Hospital has an up-to-date chemical and bacteriological laboratory. So Prince and Ministers have achieved much of what they set out to create.

With an area of 16,682 square miles and a population

## JAIPUR

of 2,631,775, Jaipur is the third largest State in Rajputana, the ancient Rajasthan, historical pattern, but on a larger scale, for the Scottish Highlands. For in both these ancient countries every hill was crowned by the stronghold of a chieftain whose hand was against every man's and every valley had its tale of heroism or treachery, of slaughter, pillage and rapine.

No race in the world has fought more royally than the Rajputs and it was the sword of a great warrior, Dhala Rao, son of Soora Singh, which, nine hundred years ago, won the State that is now electric-lighted Jaipur. For centuries Rajasthan was the Flanders of India, its soil as heroically defended against Moghuls and Mahrattas, but at the mercy of the feuds between thirty-six royal houses, during which Chahan fought Rahtor or Kachwaha as ruthlessly as Germans and French fought on the Western Front.

Jaipur's ruling family trace admitted descent from Rama Koshala, Nala of Nishida, and Dala, the lover of Maroni, a lineage so ancient that the historian Tod describes it as "the boast of heraldry". They were kings of Ayodhia, the modern Oudh, and an inscription discovered in the fortress of Gwalior shows that they emigrated long before the eleventh century and towards its end, crossed the Chambal river to subjugate the semi-independent chieftains then ruling Dhundhar (Jaipur). Their first capital was at Daosa, their second at Amber, whose fourth Ruler, Panjun, joined Prithviraj, the last Hindu King of Delhi, in a desperate attempt to stop the Moslem invasion. They failed as was inevitable, and equally surely, because of their proximity to Delhi, the Lords of Jaipur were forced in self-defence to ally themselves with succeeding Moghul Emperors. Some of these Kuchwara Princes held high office under Humayun



and Akbar, and one of them, Mansingh, famous as "Captain of Seven Thousand Horse", ruled in turn as Viceregent of the Emperor, Bengal, Bihar, the Deccan and Kabul. Under Aurungzeb, the first Jaisingh, whose arrogance equalled his courage, won spectacular victories for his suzerain and betrayed for him, in equally ruthless fashion, the tragic Prince Dara,<sup>1</sup> whose son was murdered in Gwalior.

It was the second Jaisingh who built Jaipur city in 1728 and it was he who, by shrewd diplomacy, as much as by the sword he used so effectively in alliance with Rajah Ajitsingh of Marwar (Jodhpur), succeeded in increasing the size of his kingdom and maintaining its prestige through the turbulent period when the sons of Aurungzeb fought each other for their father's empire.

Jaisingh must have been a remarkable statesman since he was able to raise his principality, vulnerable because of its key position on the Delhi road, to so high a position among the States of Rajasthan, but it was as an astronomer that he gained a European reputation. In *Indian India* C. W. Waddington, a principal of the Rajkumar College where the sons of Ruling Houses learn about their difficult heritage, describes the creator of Jaipur city: "Regardless of the clash of arms around him, he tranquilly studied the heavens with a detachment only equalled by Archimedes, the engineer of ancient Syracuse, who, we are told, was so absorbed in describing figures in the sand that he failed to notice the capture of his native city by the Romans and lost his life in consequence."

After the death of this philosophical Prince, who shared a common lineage with the Gods I saw sitting so imperturbably in the dust, Jaipur suffered from a succession of inadequate Rulers and it is not too much to say that, after the

<sup>1</sup> Aurungzeb's elder brother.

defection of the vassal chief of what is now Alwar, the land dedicated to Rameses, sun god and sun king, was only saved from disaster by alliance with the British in 1803.

During the Mutiny, Jaipur's Maharajah did far more than was required by his treaty obligations. For his generous services he received an additional grant of land. His successors have maintained the now traditional friendship between Britain and Jaipur. The late Maharajah rendered the greatest possible assistance to the Empire during the Great War. He also founded the Indian People's Famine Fund. Dying in 1922, he was succeeded by his adopted son, Maharajah Sir Sawai Mau Singhji Bahadur, G.C.I.E., who is now twenty-eight.

Because of his appearance and his charm, his possessions and his feats on horseback, this exceedingly good-looking young man, famous as a sportsman in three continents, occupies in the imagination of the Indian general public much the same position as the Prince of Wales did in the minds of working men when he also was twenty-eight. In no other way can I suggest the universal popularity, combined with a rather breathless wonder as to what he will do next, which surrounds this best-known of India's young Rulers.

Everybody who can possibly contrive it goes to Jaipur. There is no other place quite like it and no other Maharajah with such an appeal to popular sentiment. For the young man who rules—wisely and well—this proud State of Rajputana, double the size of Wales, with a population approximating to three millions, is as fabulous in his way as the treasure in Tiger Fort. He is a first-class polo player, an excellent shot, undefeatable as a horseman, and willing to try anything new the wide world over. When I last stayed in Jaipur he had just broken an arm in the Indian polo

final and, until he could get back on to a horse he was learning to fly one of the fastest planes in the country.

His Highness, it must be confessed, is an autocrat. His will is law. But though, legally, he can act as he chooses, he has always set an example of constitutional rule. Scrupulously refraining from interference with routine administration, he is wise enough to follow the expert advice of his Council of State, of which he is the President and the Prime Minister Vice-President.

The State revenues, so admirably administered by Rai Bahadur Aman Atal, go to form a regular budget and His Highness, having fixed a sum for his privy purse, regards himself as People's Trustee for the rest.

The Ruler of Jaipur has more to contend with in the matter of internal administration than most of the Indian Princes. For in Rajputana, as in the historic Highlands, there are numbers of chieftains whose allegiance to the reigning House is measured by fear, convenience or ambition. In Jaipur these feudal nobles, called Jaghirdars, own a large proportion of the land from which they have the right to collect taxes. The State revenue amounts to about a million sterling, but of this a third remains in the coffers of the Jaghirdars. The territories of these chieftains are, in some cases, comparable to those of a small Indian State. The largest covers over a thousand square miles. Their castles stand upon the hills in positions easily defended. Recently one of these stoutly retrogressive Jaghirdars refused to allow his son to accompany his sovereign to Europe. Closing the great gate of his fortress, he prepared for a siege. Whether he could have withstood the State troops trained in modern warfare is more than doubtful, but the gesture, futile as it was, showed the mentality of the feudal chieftain secure behind his ramparts and bastions, assured as a High-

## JAIPUR

lander of the loyalty of his own clan and completely impervious to the assaults of what the twentieth century has achieved in the way of mental or social progress. There are twelve of these great nobles in Jaipur, whose independence is a matter of how much they hope to gain or fear to lose.

Far removed from the life of the fortresses which grow out of rugged hills, their walls made from neighbouring earth and stone, are the days which pursue each other, swift and full of colour, in the modern section of Jaipur. Hundreds of years lie between the clansman's conception of privilege based on the value of his sword and the interpretation which the hard-working young Maharajah places upon the word. For there is no end to his labours on behalf of irrigation and agriculture, health, education and justice.

In moments of relaxation he collects people much as other connoisseurs collect pictures or china, or perhaps it is the other way round, for everybody who is interested in Indian India wants to see the facet of it represented by Jaipur. The State Guest House is always full. His Highness seems to employ a multitude of intelligent young men with an encyclopædic knowledge of what should be seen each day. A printed card is handed to the visitor and he can choose between elephants and horses, temples, dead cities or modern institutions.

If Kapurthala has captured some of the atmosphere of France because of its Ruler's familiarity with French mental processes by which he has been influenced towards an additional subtlety of expression, Jaipur has adopted a great deal of what is good, or at least comfortable and agreeable in England. I refer to furniture and even food, to machinery, to habits, and to plumbing, but above all to gardens. The Prime Minister has introduced herbaceous borders to Jaipur. The Finance Minister, Aman Atal, who is an expert

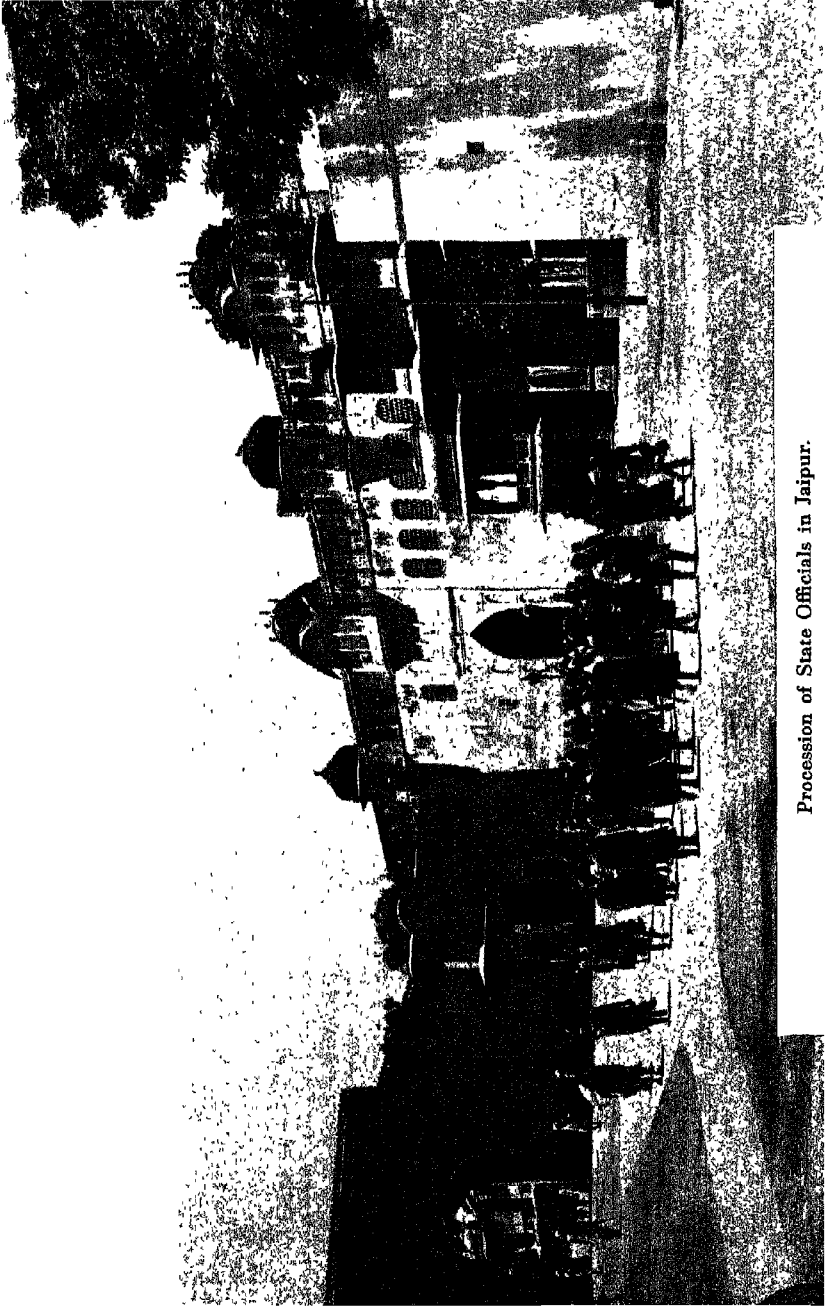
## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

bridge player, has succeeded with carpet bedding. Last winter his pansies were a Persian rug. They reproduced all the colours of Isfahan, and rambler roses were trained into a most engaging umbrella.

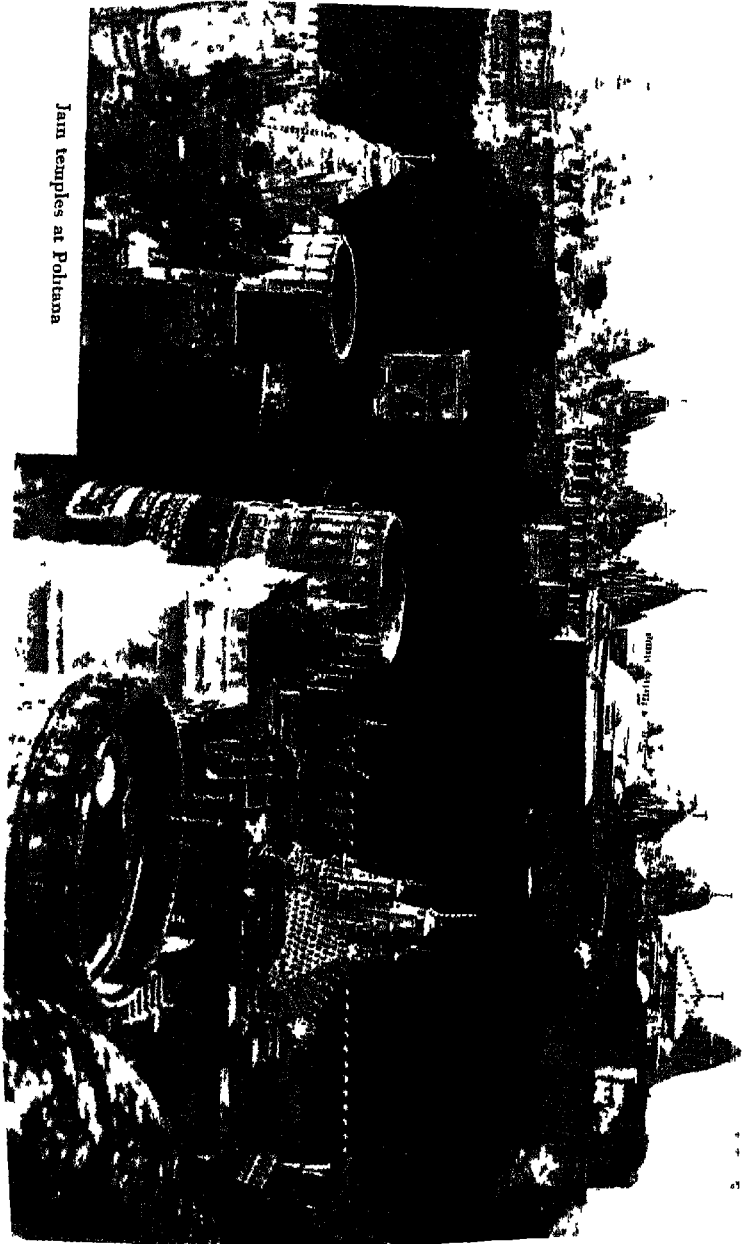
Typical of the contrasts in any modern Indian State, but especially of Jaipur where science and superstition, the aeroplane and the bullock-cart are equally familiar, I remember a party on the terrace of His Highness's country palace and a visit to Amber.

On the first occasion I have an impression of fountains and flowers, of a high white flight of steps and an A.D.C. waiting at the bottom, of the palace reared against the dusk so that I thought of Sitwell's comparison of the snows on the Spanish Sierras to "the wings of angry swans". For the pale walls lifted above us had in their poise a suggestion of flight.

On the terrace peculiarly delectable drinks were supplied by servants in white, with turbans on their heads. But these, and the warm dusk with no hint of wind or rain, were the only reminders of India, for the Maharajah and his A.D.C.s wore European clothes. Opening on to the tall flowers, their colours muted by twilight, were long rooms combining England and India, as idealists in Parliament have failed to do. On a faint green wall hung a portrait of His Highness's small sons. Delicious they were, brown-eyed and solemn, in long silver brocaded coats, with shoes and turbans of geranium scarlet to match the scarlet-scabbarded swords nearly as big as themselves. On the mantelpiece in the same room stood the parrot encrusted with rubies which belonged to the treasure in Tiger Fort. Its proud colour dominated the collections of jade and pink crystal ranged on glass shelves sunk in the walls and cunningly lighted. For the rest there were enormous sofas and



Procession of State Officials in Jaipur.



Jain temples at Polhama

## JAIPUR

chairs offering a prodigious amount of comfort and no suggestion as to the passage of time. Curtains and cushions repeated the greys and greens of the general colour scheme. The Maharajah, I decided, must have a gift for decoration; But I imagine he is happiest with his horses, of which I saw at least two hundred, chiefly of English thoroughbred stock.

Back on the terrace with the gathering darkness flowering into lights, with a confusion of English voices saying the things that are always said at cocktail parties, with trays and glasses catching the long gleams from the palace windows, and the fountain spray, no more graceful than the lean young men with muscles of whipcord who held—with inconspicuous strategy—the party together as only a chosen few take the trouble to do in England, I thought of the tawny plains, sharp with cactus, which lay beyond the city and of the stubborn hills broken into gorges. Such strange, delicate ruins cling to the sides of the hills, or to any slight eminence which emphasizes their shape.

On the way to Amber, next day, I delighted in the forsaken country houses reminiscent of Sheherazade's tales, the tanks and the umbrella-roofed pagodas or tombs, all the fragments of city life strewn as if they were old toys in the middle of palms and dry, grey trees, of sand and bush and caves where I hoped there would be wild beasts.

The palace of Amber stands magnificently above the pass. It is perhaps the most spectacular ruin in India. Unlike the seven cities left desolate in the plain of Delhi, it fell to no alien violence. The scientist, Jaisingh II, preferred to live spaciouly in the plain rather than to inhabit an eyrie, however splendid, isolated among barren rocks, with the disputed road to Delhi which had cost so much Rajput blood beyond a Pass that he need no longer defend. Within



the labyrinthine walls of Amber there is one court which gives me a desperate feeling of suffocation. There the women used to live, within towering cliffs of wall. A square of sky was all they could see. At noon the stones on to which their cell-like dwellings opened must have been too hot to touch. There was no shade except that cast by solid and unrelieved masonry. If I remember rightly, one distorted tree existed in the middle of this palace prison. The sole approach was by a sloping tunnel hewn out of the wall. Through its darkness, queens and princesses were pushed on a frail cart. The monotony and limitations of their lives left them no strength to walk.

I am always glad to leave this court with its atmosphere of dull and hopeless misery, for the terror of Kali's temple. Here is the very antithesis of the party on the terrace of the Maharajah's new palace.

The appalling goddess within the second gate at Amber wears serpents round her waist and a necklace of human skulls. Blackened with age and evil, reeking with the blood of sacrifice, she was the inspiration of the Thugs. These professional murderers offered to the fearful Kali, with her hideous hanging breasts, her protruding tongue thirsty for blood, her crooked limbs and black shrivelled body, a proportion of the goods reft from the travellers whom they had strangled.

Older than the Hindu religion, Kali must have been an aboriginal goddess, so dear to terrified humanity that she was enthroned in the legendary pantheon as the wife of Siva the Destroyer. She has outlived history and within a few miles of a progressive capital, blessed with filtered water and a satisfactory system of sanitation, within sight of the new schools, hospitals and laboratories, Kali still claims her victims. At Amber a heap of rags and some blood-stained

## JAI PUR

sand shows where goats are beheaded by the priests of the sinister goddess.

Within a few hundred yards, in the village, there is a temple sacred to the Jains who will not even take the life of an insect. No further away, in the village school, children repeat the most modern formula of education. All this is India.

## BIKANIR

FOR more than forty years Bikanir has been well governed by a beneficent autocrat. It is not in the least a democratic State, but it is a progressive one.

Major General Sir Ganga Singhji, G.S.C.I., etc., *ad infinitum*, twenty-first of his line, is a diplomatist and a man of independent character. The two qualifications do not generally go together. But the Maharajah of Bikanir has, I should imagine, never made allowances either to the East or to the West. He has served his State well, but he has also governed it and with no uncertain hand. His people number about a million and they are nearly all Hindus. A considerable proportion of them are interested in banking, perhaps because the city, protected by endless miles of desert, stretching to the borders of the Punjab and the Sutlej river, is satisfactorily inaccessible to raiders.

The history of Bikanir is very much like that of other Rajput States. The sixth son of Rao Jodha, who built Jodhpur, went out into the desert in the middle of the fifteenth century and with Rahtore arrogance, proceeded to carve a kingdom for himself out of lands occupied by pastoral Jats. Although these people depended for their living on bartering the wool of their flocks for their neighbours' grain, they did not disdain an occasional raid. With the Bhaths of Jeysulmer they were on particularly bad terms, so, perhaps, they did not regret a Rajput suzerainty which gave them protection. To this day, a Maharajah of Bikanir

## BIKANIR

receives the *Tika*, the mark of inauguration placed upon the forehead at the hands of Jats, descendants of the nomad clans conquered by Bika, Rao Jodha's son.

Like all the Rajput Principalities, Bikanir fought against the Moghuls until in time its Princes allied themselves with the Emperors of Delhi and fought in their service from Ahmadabad to Afghanistan.

Aurungzeb, who seems to have had a genius for treachery, planned to convert Rajasthan to Islam by wholesale massacre, but he was foiled by the Ruler of Bikanir who, by a strategy, immobilized the Moghul army, boatless, on the banks of a river. For this his fellow Princes awarded him, for 24 hours only, the title of King of the Desert.

Moghuls, Pathans and Mahrattas failed to conquer Bikanir, but by the beginning of the nineteenth century such prosperity as its early shepherds had known was at an end. Invasion and internal strife had exhausted its resources and the alliance with Britain in 1818 was the only hope left to the country.

By that alliance Bikanir has stood firm in war and in a synthetic peace. During the Mutiny the Afghan War and the Sikh campaigns, the State rendered effective support to the British. Her famous Camel Corps served in Somaliland and during the Great War, in Egypt and Palestine. In addition to providing a stream of recruits for the Indian army between 1914 and 1918, His Highness gave many lakhs of rupees to the Imperial Treasury.

With no uncertain voice, this Maharajah, probably the strongest of Indian Rulers because he is the most decided, supported the alliance which has gradually taken more definite form and purpose between the Princely States and the Empire of which they are—to his mind—as much an integral part as of India itself. The tale of development in

## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

Bikanir is the record of one man's will. At the British India Political Parties Conference held in Lucknow in 1928, when the Princes were faced by the incoherent howling of a young and untried democracy, Maharajah Sir Ganga Singhji stated: "I am for the association of the subjects with the Government of their States. This is a policy which I and my Government have whole-heartedly and consistently followed."

From the beginning of his reign over what amounted to a desert measuring 23,000 square miles His Highness has been faced with sudden problems which he has certainly solved in a manner beneficial to the State, but sometimes the advice of Ministers and advisory bodies has been asked as a confirmation of accomplished fact.

Within twelve months of his ascending the Gadi, after a minority of eleven years, during which the State was administered by a Council under the presidency of a British political agent, Bikanir was scourged by the worst famine of her history. The rains were delayed, all the crops failed, but the young Maharajah wasted no time.

For more than a year he poured out money on relief works and camps, where peasants were fed in their thousands. He converted the magnificent Camel Corps into an emergency relief force and as if it had been at war, the entire resources of the State in men and labour were organized in as desperate a battle as any fought by the descendants of Bika against the Afghans.

Since those days, the Maharajah has acted as vigorously on behalf of irrigation. One of the miracles of India is the concrete-lined canal which brings water from the Sutlej river at Ferozepore across eighty-five miles of sand to the Bikanir frontier. There begin the 600 miles of distributary canals which convey the water to an area of between six

## BIKANIR

and seven hundred thousand acres. So, lavishly fed, the desert becomes a garden and a fit setting for the splendid city of Bikanir.

This ancient metropolis is differentiated from the majority of Indian capitals by the fact that it has a definite and powerful middle-class. Generally in the States there are, roughly speaking, only two sections of society, though these, of course, are elastic. The Maharajah's court is composed of Ministers and nobles with an outer ring of officials. It is the centre of an aristocracy of birth and feudal tradition. Below this, there are only really the peasants, whose best educated sons form a nebulous and continually changing company of shopkeepers, craftsmen and graduates anxious to become professional, or to find Government employment. There is, therefore, an upper class with its satellites and a lower class, more or less contented according to the quality of government.

But in the walled city of Bikanir, with its five miles of battlements, interrupted by five great gateways, there exist a large number of retired Marwari merchants. They are the Lombards of India who have wandered far from their original land of Marwar, now Jodhpur. Their enormous fortunes, made in Calcutta and the other great coastal cities, could purchase the State of Bikanir, but they cannot buy entry to the court among the Thakurs or Barons, who have on occasions revolted against a Maharajah rather than submit to his taxation. Much of the Marwari wealth, made in trade, is spent on comfortable living. Their houses can only be described as opulent. The façades are often richly and elaborately carved. Inside the furniture is a mixture of Birmingham and Bombay.

To this society belong also the rich bankers who do business all over India. In a land of persistent borrowers

## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

and reluctant lenders, it is necessary for a banker to be, or at least to appear prosperous. Apart from the usual business, bills of exchange, and so on, the local Indian banker specializes in loans at a very high rate of interest. He can charge this exaggerated rate even on good security, because everyone is eager to borrow, but he has difficulty in attracting depositors. To do so, he must prove that there is already a great deal of money in the bank, and to keep their deposits, he must be able to show clients what they fatuously regard as their own money ready to be removed at any moment.

So, any evening, in a large, bare room, well-lighted and open to the passer-by, with a dozen or a score of clerks, ranged at low desks along the walls, the anxious depositor, strolling into his bank after his own office hours are over, can see beside the ledgers and the candlesticks and the extra lights floating in oil, or under a blaze of unshaded electricity in more modern establishments, a quantity of metal boxes, all containing rupees. The sight of so much money, so accessible in case of a family emergency, reassures the salaried worker or the small official. He returns home convinced that he has seen his own particular coins, and he finds this much more comforting than rows of figures which he knows from experience can mean anything or nothing.

In Bikanir city the camel comes into his own and proves that he is not only civilized, but sophisticated. It is natural to meet him as the familiar spirit of the hardy peasant. Together they put up a good resistance to the rigours of a climate which goes from one extreme to another. Like the Bikaniri, the camel can do with little water and he is used to the general atmosphere of sand. Neither beast nor peasant can afford to be particular about what they eat or drink, for the monsoon is short and limited, the wells few and far

## BIKANIR

between and the little water that lies on the surface as brackish as the pools in the Sahara. In such a land, it follows that the population must be largely nomad. With their invaluable camels and their thin brown sheep, the Bikaniri wander in search of wizened grass, or the sapless grey bushes that mist the plain. Often they are reduced to living on grass seeds or berries, the few roots that grow in the ravines and the agreeable khejra pods, which, coming from the thorniest of trees, taste like fine spinach. These are the desert manna and they take the place of the beans, sesamum, scant millet and other grains which spring up after the rains.

In the corner of Bikanir once irrigated by a tributary of the Indus, the Maharajah has spread his canal system like a piece of tapestry with the result that the villages, deserted after the river changed its course, have been rebuilt, the old fields re-ploughed and an air of productive luxuriance mantles what was previously desert.

One thing always seems to grow in Bikanir and that is the water-melon. Wherever there is a crack in the ground or any form of shade, in the dry beds of water-courses that no longer exist, these scrambling plants grow and thrive. The peasants eat them and forget that they need water and even the camels take pleasure in them.

These magnificent thoroughbred beasts do most of the work in the State—I was going to say mental as well as physical, for in the city they appear to have as much to do with the directing of traffic as the superlative policemen on their backs.

Orange, yellow, blue, white and green float the colours of Rajputana above the city and the fort of Bikanir. Clear cut as the mirage which, in desert Africa, precedes the dawn, with the fantastic exaggeration of such a mirage, the build-



## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

ings, sharply red or white, rise above the surrounding wall, roof piled upon roof and surmounted by domes. All around is an accentuation of desert which might well be Africa. The sand is tawny yellow and the scrub a faint, dry green. The impression in the early morning is one of sun-burned emptiness out of which floats, between earth and sky, a city of the imagination. But towards the Saracenic splendour of the Palace, the Lallgarh with its indescribable profusion of latticed arch and pagoda roof, towards the carved red sandstone of the banqueting hall or the magnificence of the Victoria Club with its flight of pavilions on the roof, towards the carefully planned gardens and the Peoples' Park where, as in Berlin's Tiergarten or our own Westminster Abbey, memorials have been erected to those who have best served the State, towards the Dungar College, the sixty foot Kirti Stambh tower commemorating the proud old wars of Bikanir, and the amazing terrace, over 600 feet long, protected by lacework of red sandstone, towards all this new magnificence, pad through the dust, unhurried, the dust-coloured camel caravans. Sometimes a farm-cart rattles over the new roads which serve the capital and it is drawn by a four-in-hand of camels. Sometimes a haughty rider spurns the dust and crowds of the seething markets and he is mounted high above the hump of a lion-coloured, trotting camel.

Rajput horsemen on their high-bitted steeds scutter through the streets with the effect of small waves, breaking upon a beach. The women, the endless slow-moving women in their brilliant reds and yellows, with children scarcely visible under their splendours of silk, gold coins and jewellery represent the sea—a sunlit sea in which all the primal colours are reflected. But, imperturbable, with unchanging gait, camels dominate the scene as the ocean is

dominated by the great Atlantic billows rolling slowly towards the shore.

In Bikanir I did not linger in schools and colleges. Nobody even wanted to show me the hospitals, the dispensaries, or the Walter Nobles school. With difficulty, I induced my merchant friends to mention the interesting system of medical agencies by which health is literally propagated throughout the State. They referred casually to the admirably organized Police Force, mobile as the Flying Squad in Brazil who wage war on the Valentines, professional assassins. Dacoity is now too dangerous a profession to be much practised in Bikanir.

But the inhabitants are accustomed to a liberal and intelligent rule. They take it for granted that there should be compulsory, primary education, Boy Scouts and girls' schools, one of the largest electrical installations in India, a model system of justice, co-operative societies to help the workers, Municipal Boards, Village Panchayats (Councils) and who knows what else, for the Maharajah has a fertile brain. Whether his people want it or not, they are going to have the best of two civilizations and two systems of living. The coal mines are being effectively worked. Electricity is spreading to provincial towns. The revenue is increasing by kangaroo leaps. Famine is at an end. Only the locusts and the dust-storms remain.

When there is a bad plague of the hideous chameleon-like insects who begin life as small brown hoppers, turn green, turn yellow and mate, lay their thousands of eggs and turn a sickly shrimp-pink, there is not a scrap of vegetation left in the line of their flight. The only consolation left to the miserable peasant is an unwholesome meal. For locusts can be eaten. They can even be dried and stored for lean months to come, but a surfeit has the same effect as lampreys on a

## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

King of England whose greed exceeded his common sense.

The dust-storms are more uncomfortable than destructive. They gather themselves out of nowhere. They take unto their hearts large quantities of desert grit and sand. Whirling into pyramidal form, they advance like siege towers. Gyrating fiercely upon their own axis, they meet other dust-devils and from nothing they gather form. If they don't break in a rain of painful matter, they spread in a fierce thick fog across the horizon, stationary so far as the afflicted stretch of country is concerned, yet violently agitated within their own dimensions. From them, travellers emerge, flayed, with particles of grit in every pore.

But the Bikaniri do not willingly talk of their dust-storms, or even of the locusts who might be attracted by such attention. They ignore the unpleasantnesses of nature. Too familiar with the benefits of art to discourse about them, they concentrate on the sand-grouse at Gujner and the temple of Lakshmi-Narayam.

Of the guardian deities to whom the shrine is dedicated, Mr. Waddington, who has added enchantment to his most interesting book on the States of Rajputana *Indian India*,<sup>1</sup> by a series of delicious drawings, writes that Narayam, the consort of the goddess Lakshmi, is "identified with Vishnu the Preserver, the personification of the sustaining power of the universe" which moves on the face of the waters. "His colour," says Mr. Waddington, "is the deep transparent blue of the sky, which is his element and in which he soars on the back of his vehicle, Garuda, half man, half eagle, poised motionless with outspread wings. His 'sakti' or energy is personified in his consort Lakshmi, who is closer to

<sup>1</sup>Jarrolds, 1930.

humanity. . . . She is embodied in the holy Basil or Tulasi plant, a little bush of which is cherished by every orthodox Hindu family and in this form her marriage is annually celebrated with Vishnu in the shape of a sacred black fossil known as the Salagrama. In North-West India no new well can be used, no fruit from a new orchard tasted until this marriage ceremony of the plant and stone have been performed with great magnificence."

In Bikanir, the temple of Lakshmi-Narayam, built by the second Ruler of Bikanir early in the sixteenth century, is of dusky red sandstone, defaced in parts by whitewash. Fierce and scarred, it hangs over the Western ramparts. In a sunset redder than its walls, I looked over the gardens, dear to the heart of the Maharajah, and over the simple tomb of Bika, son of Jodha, who, with his band of Rajput adventurers, founded a State that is still largely Jat. And the Jats have not changed their pastoral habits. After five hundred years they are still, in effect, changing the wool of their flocks for their neighbours' grain as they were doing when Bika, to their surprise more than their indignation, insisted on ruling them. Then, as now, the desert, with its manna in the form of camel-thorn and khejra pods, surged about their huts or tents, as it surges to the edge of the Maharajah's gardens under the temples on the city wall.

Gujner, to which I drove one evening with my merchant friends is a palace, of the most delicate and ephemeral colour like the breast plumage of flamingos. It belongs, of course, to the Maharajah and it is mirrored, with considerable self-satisfaction, for nothing so beautiful could be unaffected, in a lake. In the singularly transparent water a few trees stand, startled and evidently deserted. A mass of different greens rise on either side of the palace. There is a general effect of bubbles, delicately roseate against a background of brocade

## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

in whose texture every conceivable shade of green has been used with great effect.

The lake is artificial. The palace is modern, but the effect could not be improved.

It is at Gujner that the Maharajah has his fabulous grouse-shoots, at which the bag is numbered in thousands. "The birds," explained one of my friends, "are not allowed to drink for two or three days beforehand. The whole countryside takes an interest. Every village boy becomes a beater and it would have to be a very clever grouse to succeed in settling near any tank in the neighbourhood. So when the shoot begins, it sounds like a battle. The birds, frenzied for want of water, are determined to get to the lake. They come over in clouds, hundreds of them together. For hours on end, you can hear the guns going."

I asked if it was difficult shooting.

"Well the grouse come fast," said the merchant who approved of sport, but did not shoot. Vaguely, he thought of it as a link between Englishman and Indian. It was, therefore, good for trade, for this particular Marwari had an international conception of commerce. When his wife, who kept the strictest purdah, gave me tea, her sari came from Liberty, her high-heeled shoes from Central Europe and her stout woollen undergarments from Huddersfield. The porcelain was marked in Staffordshire and the tray looked to me as if it had been mass-made in Birmingham for the Indian market. The knives were proud of their Sheffield origin and the silver came from the city of London. There was one lovely betel-nut box with red enamel peacocks amidst a silver jungle, undoubtedly wrought in the artist shops of Jaipur.

"The Maharajah is a fine shot," said the merchant and he proceeded to extol the Prince in whose country he lived.

## BIKANIR

“He uses three guns at a time and as many loaders, or perhaps it is only two, but he is a very remarkable man. He can shoot a thousand grouse in a morning and return to the business of the day which is work. If there were a few like His Highness in Congress India, there would be a lot more done and”—the elderly man permitted himself the suggestion of a wink—“a great deal less said.”

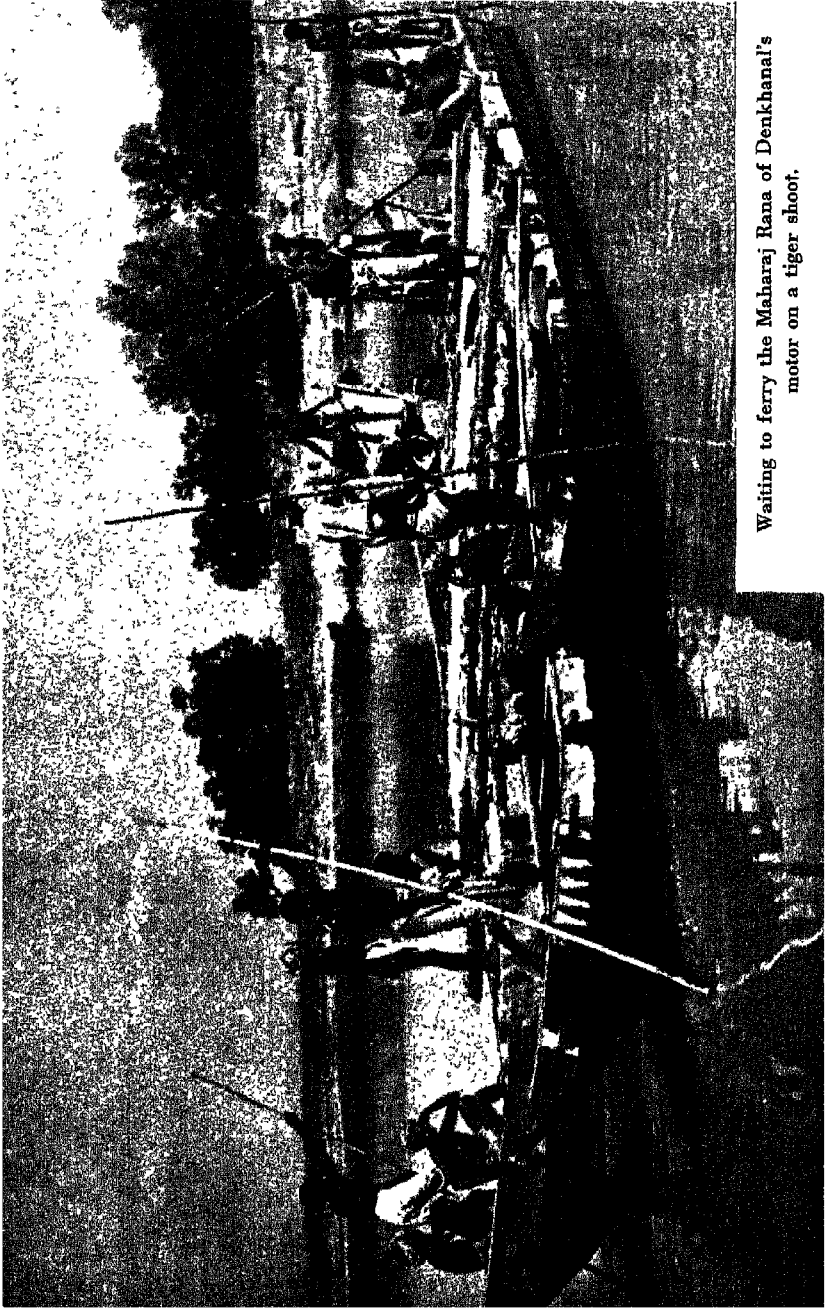
I thought it was an excellent summary of Sir Ganga Singhji's methods and I quoted for the appreciation of my companion who enjoyed apposite speech, an Arab proverb which runs: “First think, then act, then—if you must—speak.”

## DENKĦANAL

**A**MONG the twenty-six feudatory States of Orissa, Mayurbanj is the largest with an area of 4,243 square miles, and Hindol with a hundred square miles under cultivation and some two hundred and twelve of forest inhabited by wild elephants whose capture, taming and sale adds appreciatively to the revenue, is among the smallest. Between the two in size comes Denkhanal, a Principality which unites the merits of beneficent feudalism with a progressive educational and agricultural system .

The present ruler, Rajah Sankar Pratap Mahindra Bahadur, F.R.S.A. (London) is the seventeenth of his line to occupy the Gadi. Before the State of Denkhanal was formed, semi-independent chiefs of Hindu or aboriginal origin ruled over strips of jungle with sparse patches of cultivation to the south of the Brahmani river. Later, when there was a King of Orissa, three royal brothers of the Kshatriya caste or clan came from Rajputana and became first soldiers of fortune, then allies, and finally the successors of their patron, Maharajah Pratrap Rudra Deb.

Their descendants ruled a State varying in size with their victories. In the eighteenth century Rajah Trilochan, a particularly valiant warrior, fit son of his indomitable Rajput line, defeated again and again a succession of Maharatta generals and was rewarded by the monarch of Orissa with the hereditary title of Mahindra Bahadur. Unlike the other Eastern chiefs who sought peace by paying tribute to



Waiting to ferry the Maharaj Rana of Denkhanal's motor on a tiger shoot.





Sura Sundari, the hunting elephant,  
brings back the spoil.

## DENKHALAL

the fierce Mahratta, Trilochan would never acknowledge the suzerainty of the marauders. On the contrary, he wrested considerable territory from them and his successors continued to enforce their supremacy over neighbouring chiefs, one of whom, the Lord of Hindol, used to make an annual present of sweets by way of tribute.

A poem which is still sung in the villages along the banks of the Brahmani, tells of the Samar Taranga, the war-wave which threatened Denkhanal and which, like an ebb-tide, was thrown back upon itself.

If the State of Denkhanal owes its origin to war and the great deeds of a succession of Rajput rulers, exiled by their own ambition from their own land, among the latter must be counted the reforms instituted by Maharajah Bhagiratha in the middle of the nineteenth century. These were as effective as the battles of his ancestors, for they stabilized and gave form to what audacious fighting had won. Bhagiratha must have been a remarkable man. He would have done well in the world of to-day, and it is a pity that his astounding powers of administration, his intelligence and common sense are not at the disposal of the modern Chamber of Princes. Far ahead of his times, he held the views of a Gladstonian Liberal and acted accordingly. Needless to say he established the best schools, dispensaries and jails which his purse could afford. He forced every department to keep accurate accounts. He instituted an admirable system of land tenure among the villagers, encouraged every form of learning, built a charming palace of reasonable size, with well-planned public offices, neither too large nor too florid, kept open house for all who shared his scholarly interests and lived much as a great English nobleman might have done in the middle of his tenant-farmers and villagers. Incidentally Bhagiratha was a magnificent shot and he is said

## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

to have killed 352 tigers, to the great delight of the Juangs, an aboriginal forest people who imagined that if they wore any clothes at all, they would certainly be eaten.

The Maharajah, objecting to their nakedness, distributed free apparel throughout the jungle and the Juangs were apparently so impressed with their Ruler's marksmanship that they decided to risk the effect of loin-cloths on man-eating tigers.

The Rajahs of Denkhanal have always been the staunchest allies of Britain, and the last Maharajah rendered invaluable service during the European War. Denkhanal is not a rich State. All her revenue goes back into the land, for both the present Ruler and his father have reclaimed many miles of jungle, instituted large irrigation works, preserved valuable forest, encouraged the breeding of cattle and horses by the loan and even the free distribution of bulls and stallions, developed local arts and handicrafts, such as weaving, carpentering, filigree work and the carving of horn and ivory. They have sent students to British technical colleges and universities at their own expense, created a co-operative bank to assist the farmers and save them from the greed of money-lenders, introduced sanitation in the town and building laws in the villages to obviate the constant fires, erected an admirable English High School and instituted a network of primary schools in the hamlets and even in the forest districts.

In spite of all such claims on a none too elastic revenue, the late Maharajah contrived to contribute on a generous scale to the War Loan, to the Red Cross and to the Orissa Chiefs' Aeroplane Fund, as well as presenting a motor ambulance and ceding to the Imperial Government for the duration of the war all royalties due to the State on the local Mica mines. When he died of influenza in 1918, this pioneer,

not of constitutional but of manorial rule according to the best and most modern principles, was only thirty-four. The British Empire lost in this provincial Chief of great lineage and exceptional administrative powers one of her most intelligent adherents, for the still youthful Prince looked to the development of India by her own people, under Imperial protection and with the assurance of an Imperial peace.

The Rajah was succeeded (in 1918) by the eldest of his six sons, aged fourteen, who soon proved himself capable of completing his father's work. Young as he was and still a minor, his affairs managed by the Court of Wards, this boy took an active part in the relief of the widespread famine from which his State suffered for eight months in 1919. Almost the whole of the paddy-crop failed that year, owing to drought, and sixteen large irrigation works were immediately undertaken. The necessity for preserving and increasing the water supply must have made a deep impression on a serious-minded boy, for the Rajah is still continually concerned with problems of irrigation. His other great interests seems to be education and the development of the Boy Scout movement among all classes and castes. He has used his autocratic powers to remove untouchability from a caste penalized half a century ago for faults already ancient and has re-organized the Police Department and the Courts of Justice, so that his poorest subjects can obtain relief quickly and at a minimum cost.

There is no end to the beneficent activities of this young man, now in the middle thirties, for he has opened country dispensaries, established several girls' schools, and two for aboriginals who are terrified of coming anywhere near a town, leased jungle-land to an American-trained fellow-countryman for the purposes of industry, sent local boys to be trained in technical colleges beyond his own borders,

## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

instituted compulsory physical training in the High School and compulsory education in the prisons.

With so many interests, it would seem that the young Ruler can have little time for sport, but he has a passion for physical fitness and with this in view, plays tennis every evening and subsequently goes out shooting. I doubt if he has much time for dinner, because as soon as it is too dark to see a tennis ball, away to the jungle he drives in a large blue car, fitted with spotlights. He is an excellent shot, but if Hindol belongs to wild elephants, certainly tigers can claim vested rights in Denkhanal. Despite His Highness's prowess with a rifle, we heard that last year 430 people had been killed by man-eaters.

As soon as our train drew up alongside the platform of red earth, marooned in the country-side, with no sight of town or village, we heard the tale: "This very week, the driver was pulled out of a bullock-wagon as he slept with his legs dangling over the pole. His family followed the trail into the forest, but they found nothing left of him except the soles of his feet."

On the occasion of my visit to Denkhanal, the State guest-houses were occupied by a number of young Princes from the royal college at Rajkot who had come to visit their kinsman and enjoy the varied sport offered by his jungles. So we slept the first day or two in a saloon coach within reach of the lonely red platform. Our servants camped in tents and a charming A.D.C. with a number of cars at his disposal, acted as liaison officer between the palace and the train.

On the evening of our arrival, a couple of elephants appeared in the siding. In the dusk they looked like small, slow-moving mountains. Soon they blotted out the windows of our coach and we were told His Highness had sent

## DENKHANAL

them to take us to the palace. Delighted, we clambered from the high steps of the train on to their backs. With some difficulty, we arranged ourselves, clinging to any support that offered. The great beasts heaved themselves to their feet. In darkness, we started, not down the solitary red road which led, in circuitous fashion, to the town, but up a bank thick with trees and then straight across country. I imagined i was riding a leviathan which breasted the rollers of an ocean. Immeasurably below me, the bush rolled in wave after wave of thick dusk, crested sometimes with a spume of paler leaves, or a flowering creeper. I felt there was no obstacle to unlimited progress. Slowly and inevitably, we should surmount the ranges and the rivers, the night itself, until we reached, at last, the stars. These hung low and near. The brightest of them seemed to have been caught in the hills. I realized, after some time, that these were the lights of the palace.

The mahout, speaking a dialect, said that my elephant was called Sura Sundari. A name should have made her a trifle more companionable, but she acted in a god-like fashion which prevented any feeling of intimacy. Trees, huts appeared and disappeared. Bulk without form passed below us. Sura Sundari never put a foot wrong. After a period of time which I made no attempt to measure, for riding at night on an elephant or a camel has always seemed to me an undimensional pleasure, we came from the thick, sweet-smelling darkness pricked by the sharpness of the stars, into a street. It was a narrow street, hazed with dust, in which sat crowds of brown men selling scraps of what I do not know. In front of them were baskets and cloths spread with odds and ends. Some of them had stalls lit with tapers. Others sat upon the earth behind small, flickering fires. I had an impression of the whole town selling in the

shadow of cardboard houses. The walls of these had no substance. They were pasted flat against the sky. The doors and windows were daubed, as if in paint. It was all completely unreal. The wisps of fire blooming in the dust lit one side of a face, half a figure, the slope of a shoulder, a head bent over an indistinguishable body. Sura Sundari plodded through this human mirage. Nobody moved. There was no sound except a cheap gramophone playing in the distance.

As we turned out of the street drugged with merchants, unnaturally shrunken, their odds and ends of wares and their carpet-bedding of lights, the mahout explained to me that Sura Sundari could be relied upon. She was indeed a personage. Specially trained for hunting, she knew she had to charge as soon as she heard a shot fired from her back, so that, if the tiger happened to be wounded, she could finish him off with her tusks.

In the court of the palace, a pleasant white building standing on a rise above a broad, open space bordered with trees, lay the body of a fine sambar, shot by one of the young Princes. The elephants did not stop at the foot of the ramp. They went straight up it, under an archway, and knelt at the entrance to a reception-room. The Rajah received us in a large hall, hung with portraits of his Rajput ancestors and furnished with heavy carved blackwood. He is a strong, short man, squarely-built, with much charm of manner and eager eyes. I imagine those eyes see a great deal. Behind them there must be a keen and sensitive intelligence. Above all, I should say that the Rajah is kind and just.

We had not been talking for more than five minutes when our host said:

“Let’s go and see if we can find a tiger. It’s rather late, but I know a good water-hole quite close——”

## DENKHANAL

Within a few minutes we had piled into a huge saloon car, the Rajah at the wheel, myself beside him, another guest and the shikaris behind. As soon as we reached the forest, each huntsman produced a torch, directing the powerful beam upon the jungle closing in on either side. For a mile or two we drove slowly and in silence. Then we saw one enormous yellow eye—a round bright spot amidst a tangle of branches. We stopped and in the same second our host had his rifle ready, the barrels projecting under the open windscreen, but he got no chance of a shot. A second eye appeared as the tiger turned away and slid into the jungle.

Three nights later, a member of the party shot him in the same place, which seems to show that tigers are almost as careless as the forest-dwellers who are always getting eaten when their minds are on other matters.

Spotlight shooting was great fun. In three or four cars, taking different roads, we careered through the jungle, one of us leaning out with a torch, the other with rifle ready. As soon as we saw two eyes, we tried to put in a shot between them, but a fog of dust always rolled up as soon as the car stopped, so the animal had all the chances on his side. If he were wounded, we had to pursue him, most unpleasantly, into thick bushes, with a barrage of torchlight to make him keep his distance. The bag was varied. It included sambur,<sup>1</sup> deer, a leopard and a hyena. Jungle cats and all sorts of striped creatures varying in size ran across the road. When we saw an owl, the Rajah declared it was lucky. "Now we shall get our tiger! Besides the astrologers have told me these are fortunate days."

<sup>1</sup> Indian elk.



## TIGERS IN DENKHANAL

AS we drove far into the forests at night, it seemed to me that the Rajah of Denkhanal would have been at home among the Arabian Bedouin. He was as little concerned as those tent-dwellers about where he slept, what or when he ate. He loved looking at the animals quite as much as shooting them. Tigers had to be destroyed because of the harm they did and, prodigiously hospitable, like all Indians, His Highness wanted his guests to get a good bag, but otherwise, I think, he just liked to be in the jungle, beyond reach—for a few hours—of State business, of reports and reforms.

The Ruler of Denkhanal lives very simply. His palace might be a large English country house, his A.D.C. the secretary of a hard-worked landlord. When we moved to the Guest-House, I was entirely content. For the town was not visible from the wide porches, only a river and sun-browned earth sloping to a green stain where there were trees. Further away there were hills faintly washed with those delicate petal colours, lilac and rose and tenuous mist-blue, that belong only to India.

Astride a variety of horses, we rode about the fields and the edge of the forest while our host worked and we felt as if we had always lived in Denkhanal. For, as in an English village, everybody knew about us. They had invented a complete history to account for our being there. They talked to us as if we were relations and always the Rajah

## TIGERS IN DENKHALAL

came into the conversation. The whole State was conscious of him. He was the spear-head of every quality and function. Like a Highland chieftain, living familiarly among his clan, not divided from them, but united to them, by the respect with which as a matter of course they regarded him, this young Prince appeared to us as the best that Indian India, remote from the political turmoil of the cities, could produce for her own benefit and that of the Empire.

During the course of our visit, the Rajah arranged several forest beats in the hope that one of us might shoot a tiger. To these we drove out across country, in a procession of roadsters, some of them striped with the colours of the State. Policemen with spears had been posted at intervals across the open country so that we could not lose the way. When we came to a river, we found fragile rafts supported on three or four of the long local canoes, waiting for us. Crocodiles also waited, but they had no luck.

Driving with the Rajah, I learned something of Denkhalal which has a population of between two and three million and an area of 1,463 square miles. There are no political problems, not even the usual struggle between Moslems and Hindus, but there is always fear of a drought. Life is a perpetual battle with the sun. His Highness leads the defensive campaign for, by his orders, four hundred embankments have been built to hold the precious water necessary to the rice fields, and against the threat of famine, grain is stored in the State warehouses. "But I can't make the country people build their houses in anything like fire-proof fashion," exclaimed our host, as we drove through what looked like a jumble of small haystacks, leaning one against another. "Look at this village! It is burned down regularly every year, but they rebuild it at once with the houses much too close together and all made of straw."

## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

The words were hardly out of his mouth when I noticed two brown hummocks in the middle of the track. They resolved themselves into brown bodies prostrated with their heads in the dust. "That means a petition," explained the Rajah, stopping the car. Eagerly the slight brown men thrust scraps of paper through the windows, after which they again rolled themselves into balls level with the footboards. "They both ask the same thing," said our host. "They want to erect two more houses in an overcrowded village where my officers have wisely refused to licence further buildings."

His Highness took much trouble to explain the situation before driving on and the suppliants shouted after him: "Take thou the name of God!" which is their flattering version of our "God Save the King".

Within half a mile we were stopped again, this time by a good-looking youth with a panther skin over his shoulders who thrust a long poem into the hands of his Ruler. The first twenty verses dealt with the good fortune of Denkhanal in having such a Prince and the twenty-first asked for a job—any kind of job—in the palace.

The royal car proceeded, sometimes through herds of water-buffaloes. "I believe in being accessible to my people," said the Rajah. "Anybody can talk to me who likes. I think the days are past when a ruler could be unapproachable and autocratic."

This small, strong, gentle man, who took his troop of Boy Scouts to Holland for the International gathering, having first taught them personally how to tie their elaborate turbans in correct fashion, prides himself that, during the whole of his reign he has never signed a death sentence. His four thousand State police, armed only with spears, keep order in patriarchal fashion. Primary education is com-

## TIGERS IN DENKHALAN

pulsory. The lovely Maharani, who keeps a measure of purdah and whom I saw wearing diamonds as big as stars and a black sari embroidered with a peacock's tail in rubies and crystals, has started Girl Guides. The Rajah himself has instituted night schools, where his forest subjects, slight and berry-brown, with wild black hair and the eyes of deer, learn to write and read.

We saw about a thousand of them waiting to act as beaters. They were small and stalwart and their pay was threepence a day, but they could live on about a sixth of that handsome amount.

A ride had been cut through the forest, with machaans set at intervals along it. A machaan is a platform made of planks, four or five foot square, surrounded by a palisade of branches. The whole structure is mounted on stout poles and is twenty feet above the ground, approached by a ladder of rough trunks. After the beat has begun, nobody must descend from his machaan for fear of wounded animals. So there we all were, for three or four hours, with a roof of branches above our heads and far away the sound of a horn indicating that the thousand little men stripped to the loins, with axes and knives as weapons, were pushing or cutting their way through the forest in a vast semi-circle, driving all game in front of them.

On the first day a tiger pursued by an elephant broke back through the line and there was a clamour of distress. But the next time we sat, two together, midway up the forest trees, all sorts of animals appeared, elk, spotted deer and mouse deer, then a huge grey hyena loping clumsily and with a great deal of noise, across the fallen leaves. Peacocks screamed as they flew overhead. One of the party shot a large, brown bear. A number of boar pushed their way through the undergrowth. They looked to me blue-

black and they made no sound at all. At last the tiger came.

The Rajah had been sharing his Indian sweetmeats. They were delicious and conducive to slumber. The queer howling noise made by the beaters and the thunder of their drums was drawing near. A panther crossed between two machaans. Then the tiger appeared—a huge beast, magnificently striped. He came slowly, walking with the utmost indifference, cruel and contented, gluttoned, perhaps, with human food—for a woman had been taken the previous night from one of the inflammable straw villages.

The Rajah fired only one shot and that was the end of the day's sport.

In triumph, Sura Sundari, the hunting elephant, who could track wounded tigers on her own, bore back the huge striped carcase of her natural enemy. Hundreds and hundreds of little brown men swarmed among the bushes, shouting their greetings and their gratitude: "Take thou the name of God."

"Would you like the skin?" asked our host. "That is my seven hundred and thirty-ninth tiger. I shot my first when I was thirteen. I'm having a race with a Maharajah of fifty who has shot over a thousand."

Amidst a swarm of small brown men, clustering like bees round a queen in flight, the Rajah moved towards his car which must have had some of the qualities of a tank for it did not mind going straight across country. The small brown men pressed closer. They did not worship a god, or an aspect of god, as I had seen the peasants do in larger States, where, perhaps, the Prince was less accessible, but they behaved very much like respectful puppies crushing themselves against a superior but friendly legging. With some difficulty we started. It seemed to me that we must

## TIGERS IN DENKHANAL

pass, like Jaganath, over a mass of bodies, but somehow they were evaded and off we went, out of the rough forest rides, on to equally rough tracks between plough and embankments and haycock villages with every house built of straw.

The Rajah did not talk about tigers. The day's sport was finished and my host's mind already occupied with affairs of his State. We had been out since shortly after sunrise, and it was now late in the afternoon, but His Highness's energy remained unbounded. "Let us get out here and see the villagers making those hats you liked," he suggested. "The market's over, but some of the people will be working in their houses." So, with the sun on our backs, we plodded across the dry, cracked earth and were welcomed as perambulating manna in pleasantly clean houses, where women plaited ingeniously-peaked hats out of palm leaves.

After a few more miles a tyre burst among a herd of water-buffalo. "Don't get out," instructed my host. "Sometimes they're savage with strangers." But he himself leaped out of the car and helped a scrap of a boy to drive the great, lumbering beasts out of the way, after which, equally effectively, he assisted the chauffeur to change the wheel.

On again and with the sun well down, His Highness suggested visiting one of his forest schools where the half-naked little brown men are taught to read and write and do simple sums.

"Do they need education?" I asked.

"If they know some arithmetic, they're not cheated when they go to market to buy cloth or a treat in the way of food," replied my host, but he agreed with me that medicine is more important for the jungle-dwellers than any other form of learning.

That night in the palace the Rajah and two of his brothers

entertained us with a display of magic. All of them are experts and we saw apparent miracles with no sort of stage or special lighting. Things disappeared from under our noses. Other things appeared. We couldn't even keep our thoughts to ourselves.

"Can you do the rope trick?" I asked at last. The Rajah laughed. "If in broad daylight you see a man throw a rope into the air, climb up it and disappear," he said, "I assure you, it is just hypnotism."

Then I remembered that the only man I have ever met who has seen this far-famed Indian trick is King Haakon of Norway. He once told me—in Oslo—that he had witnessed such a performance as the Rajah described, in Tunis, and that his A.D.C. had taken a photograph at the moment when a boy was—apparently—poised in mid-air with only the magically autened rope to support him. When the film was developed, it showed rope, juggler and boy on the ground.

On another occasion, there were dances which I find hard to describe in the wide courtyard of the palace at Denkanal. The performers were all men, dressed and painted to represent the gods and goddesses, the heroes, beasts and devils of Indian mythology. I understood that none of them were professionals. They were just the young townfolk who had had a few lessons, and they put up an excellent performance, dancing and miming with precision as well as energy. Long and complicated stories of love, battle and heroic death were portrayed by a number of youths who all seemed to be jointless and most of whom had a definite sense of the dramatic. To the Indian, dancing seems to be as natural as speech. Both are effective because momentarily, they have the inevitability of a conviction. Lying, of course, is an equal art among certain types of Indians, but

## TIGERS IN DENKHALAL

I doubt if they regard it even as a defect. It is natural to them, or else it is an occupation for which they have a talent. I think a lie, if sufficiently complicated, gives real pleasure to its Indian inventor. It is his creation and he is proud of it. Generally, of course, he lies from courtesy or habit, from what he believes to be obvious common sense, bordering on necessity, but there are occasions, in the witness box, when I've heard a B.A. of Calcutta lie with such enthusiastic abandon that I could only imagine he believed himself a Shakespeare creating a "Midsummer" Day's "Dream."

This divagation has no connection with the happy days I spent in the State of Denkhanal, whose Ruler added to an inherited wisdom a European simplicity and directness of speech.

I remember, on the night when his subjects danced, with the effect of butterflies or leaves wind-driven, I sat in a big room opening on to flat roofs and talked with the Rani who is a sister of the tall young Rajah of Patna and of the present Maharani of Patiala. She wore the most graceful dress in the world which puts to shame anything that Paris or London could devise. I think it was black or night-blue, gleaming with delicate embroidery. She sat on an English sofa, infinitely graceful, with the grace that is lost to the West. I don't know whether high heels, or "sensible brogues" have had the worst effect but certain it is that few European women look all of a piece. Certain portions of them are admirable, but rarely can any one of them be regarded as a whole, whereas the Indian woman, young or old, laden with an unborn child, withered or heavily curved, moves with the effortless perfection of a circle. She is in herself complete. There is nothing lacking, so long as she remains of her own country with her own traditional



manners. The crone, withered as a sapless branch, the villager, burdened by annual childbirth, the Syrian Christian studying Sanskrit or light-waves in a Travancore college, the Hindu bathing in the sacred Ganges, all have the same assurance. It may be an animal quality. I do not know, but it reminded me of a phrase uttered by Madame Ayala, the French wife of a Paraguayan President, at a moment when she was oppressed by the subservience of her acquired fellow-countrywomen, owing to the fact that they outnumber the men by eleven to one. She saw a foreigner walk unconcernedly into a room where the sexes had divided themselves into two groups, each avoiding the other, and she exclaimed in her own language: "Ah! There is one who has not lost the habit of pride in being a woman!"

As I listened to the Rani of Dcnkhanal talking of Ganesh, the elephant God, and his place in the family life of India, I realized the position and power of the purdah woman. She has so definite a place behind the shutters of her home that I can well understand her not wishing to come out and battle for an entirely different place in the dust and the glare of the modern arena. Inevitably, of course, purdah must pass. India will have to make use of all her human power and she cannot do so while half of it is shut away from public work and public life. There is a great deal of ignorance, unnecessary illness and pain, hidden away behind the zenana shutters, but there is also a great deal of power, a fundamental wisdom, a dignity and assurance that I have not seen surpassed. "Ganesh," said the Rani, "may seem to you a strange kind of God, but it is easier for the people to reverence something they understand. Think what the elephant has meant to working India. He is kind and wise and strong. He is never tired. He is so big and he lives so long. Is it strange that the



Dragging captured elephants across a river.



The end of the Khedda—captured elephants  
leaving the river.

## TIGERS IN DENKHANAL

people see in him an aspect of divinity?" The Rani showed me a delicious little Ganesh in a jewelled frame. The eyes were kind and wise, as she had said.

"Hinduism is the worship of one God, but in the form that most appeals to the worshipper," explained the Rajah, and he talked familiarly of religion as if it were the continuous concern of his life. So might an Englishman speak of sport, an American of business, a Spaniard of love, a German of his country, a Frenchman of politics, and a Russian of the technique of living. "Some Hindus spend much time in the temples, because they find God there. Others find him in their thoughts," concluded the Rajah.

## “SEVEN NEW ELEPHANTS”

“MY brother-in-law needs seven new elephants,” said the Rajah of one of the smaller Eastern States of India. He spoke much as a hunting squire might say: “I really must try to pick up a likely four-year-old at So-and-So’s sale.”

Wondering how on earth one acquired seven new elephants, I waited for our host to read the rest of the letter from the neighbouring ruler who had married his sister.

“Have you ever seen a Khedda? No? Then, of course, we’ll motor over and watch my brother-in-law replenishing his stable.” It all sounded very simple.

In olden days elephants were generally caught in pits, and even now, in Cochin, the villagers sometimes resort to this method when a rogue is uprooting their crops or pulling down the small bridges because he happens to like the taste of home-made mortar.

In such a case an enormous hole is dug in the centre of the freshest trail. The top is covered with light bamboos over which mud is scattered, and then, to make it all look quite natural, grass and stumps of sugar-cane are planted as if the trap were a plot of ground freshly cleared for agriculture.

Along comes the tusker and, enchanted by the prospect of a sweetened meal, he makes a rush for the cane. The earth, of course, collapses under him, and down he falls into the pit.

When this method was applied to a herd of elephants it

## “SEVEN NEW ELEPHANTS”

was undoubtedly cruel, for imagine the weight of the great beasts falling one on top of another. On one occasion about twenty elephants crashed down into the same trap. Of these only ten were found alive next day, and several of them had such badly broken limbs that they had to be destroyed.

The usual method nowadays is to hunt the wild elephant with tame beasts who seem to enjoy themselves enormously. In the independent kingdom of Nepal, the Tharoos feed several of their tame elephants on excessively stimulating food until they are in a wild state of excitement called “must”. This is really the mating mood, and in it the elephants become decoys for their wild kindred.

The Tharoo tribesmen take their “must” elephants out into the depths of the forest, and when they come up with a suitable herd they send the specially prepared beasts into it, rather like sheep-dogs. The “must” tusked chase their victim and hem it in.

Then one of the Tharoos slips from the back of his great beast, and with astounding deftness contrives to get a moosack, which is a specially prepared noose of raw hide soaked in oil, round the back legs of the wild elephant.

Of course, the hunter runs a grave risk of being trampled into the ground, but the victim is half hypnotized by the scent of the “must” elephants and does not generally resist very hard. Once the noose is pulled tight about his legs, he cannot do so.

Mysore has a different method. There the great Khedda arranged for the Viceroy and Lady Reading took three months to prepare. During this time, hunters had been tracking herds in the jungle. Selecting the most suitable, they had driven it, gently and unobtrusively, day by day, in the desired direction. At any moment the herd might have

become suspicious and broken back, trampling the boldest spirits among the hunters and the Maharajah was so disturbed about this possibility that, although his guests were invited to see the last drive, another herd was already enclosed in the big Khedda. In this case, the tame elephants, Koomkies, stood, belly-deep in the water, in a line stretching across the river close to which a magnificent camp, a city of canvas surrounded by artificial garden plots, had been erected. Led by an enormous tusker, forty to fifty elephants came out of the jungle and started to swim the river, heading straight for the opening to the Khedda. It would have been the tamest of captures, had not the tusker suddenly taken fright. He charged the wrong bank, was received with a fusillade of shouts and irresponsible shooting and turned headlong downstream. The Koomkies, whose part is a treacherous one, were already advancing. With flaming torches, beaters rushed along the forbidden bank. Trumpeting, the leading tuskers turned to rejoin the herd, which hesitated up-stream. The other elephants were confused by the noise, the sight of the Koomkies and the cries uttered by the females supporting their calves against the current. Eventually they all turned and swam towards the bank above which there appeared to be a way of retreat, in reality the opening between the palisades of the Khedda. Not until they reached the roping enclosure at the further end, did they realize that they had been trapped. Then they turned on the Koomkies which had followed into the stockade and there was battle royal. But the mahouts remained unhurt. None of the wild elephants apparently noticed the men perched on the necks of their unnatural enemies, which was fortunate, as one sweep of a trunk would have deprived their opponents of human guidance. Struggling against the orderly advance of the Koomkies,

## “SEVEN NEW ELEPHANTS”

charging the palisades against which they wasted their strength, most of the herd found themselves driven inexorably into the inner stockade.

During the night a tusker was killed and a calf born.

Next morning, while some of the elephants still lay on the ground, too exhausted to move, roping began. One by one, the great tuskers were driven by their tame step-brothers against the palisade and held there by the massed weight of Koomkie bodies till the hunters could get nooses over first one leg then another. Straining, struggling, the captives are dragged from the stockade with several tame elephants in front and one with lowered head supplying the proverbial “kick in the pants” behind.

The Khedda for the purpose of providing my host's brother-in-law with his “seven new elephants” was a much smaller affair, but it was taken to mean a holiday for the whole district. It seemed to me that the country-side had been emptied and that all the population had congregated in the forest to take part in the fun.

We drove across deserted fields. The villages of mud and thatch were strangely quiet. But as soon as we left the plain and began to thread our way along a rutted track between great trees there was a good deal of noise and excitement.

At least a thousand small brown men, clothed only in a strip of stuff round the loins, armed with inadequate knives and spears, were acting as “stops” or “look outs”. It was their business to mark down beasts of suitable quality and age and follow them as they moved about the forest.

This is no easy task, for an elephant, large as it is, can be invisible at twenty feet. Its gnarled grey hide looks exactly like the dry and sapless leaves of any number of Indian trees. I have been within a few yards of an enormous tusker with a little Juang hunter at my elbow whispering: “Elephant



there—look there——” and been unable to see anything at all. Equally, of course, the elephant does not see—unless he is almost on top of you. He only smells.

The camp was pitched a few hundred yards from the huge stockade covering several acres of forest. This had been specially built for the Khedda. Its walls were of tree-trunks planted deep in the earth and bound together with smaller timber. At one side there was a heavy wooden gate with a complicated arrangement of rope pulleys for lowering and raising it.

For days hunters had been making a broad trail leading to this stockade, and the first day's operations were devoted to getting the elephants within reach of this tempting path. It was exciting work because, although the Indian elephant is not savage like his African kinsman, he makes quite as much noise when, his suspicions aroused, he crashes out of the herd, trumpeting and stamping down everything that happens to be in the way.

It took three days to separate a dozen elephants from the various herds, drive them gradually within a narrowing circle of beaters, on foot and on tame beasts, into the prepared path and so through the gate of the stockade. Once they found themselves trapped, the elephants charged the tree-trunk walls, but they were driven back by the small, indomitable hunters, armed with bamboo spears, who perched, most precariously it seemed, upon the top of the palisade.

When the tumult ebbed a little, about a dozen tame elephants insinuated their way quietly through the gate. The mahouts perched on their necks, with legs tucked under the great ears, were dressed in brownish-grey to match the hide.

The tame elephants work in pairs. Each couple, guided

## “SEVEN NEW ELEPHANTS”

by their mahouts, come up on either side of a wild beast and hem him in, leaning against him with all their weight. While the astonished victim trumpets and struggles, the “roper”, almost invisible in his hide-coloured suiting, slips off the back of one of the tame elephants and, quick as lightning, gets a noose round the hind legs of the captured beast.

How he manages to evade being trampled to death I cannot imagine. At one moment you see a lithe brown streak slipping off an elephant’s quarters into a maelstrom of angry feet, each with the power of a steam crane, and next instant he is swarming up by the tame beast’s tail, his perilous work accomplished.

One by one all the wild elephants were roped and each was tied to a solid tree. For twenty-four hours they were left there, with the tame elephants wandering among them and the hardest mahouts climbing on to their backs to rub and handle them with expert fingers so that the captives may get used to human touch.

Next day each of the wild elephants was led away, roped to two tame ones. In a special camp they would be gradually domesticated and taught to work, always under the guardianship of wise old tame beasts, who no doubt say to them; “It’s no use making a fuss. After all, there are lots of perquisites—good food and regular outings! You’ll get as much sugar-cane and coco-nuts as you want. Much better put up with what you can’t change.”

Sometimes a wild elephant refuses all food and nothing can be done but let him loose again. But, generally, within a few weeks he has made friends with his mahout and is working proudly, with an air of “I am not as these others—merc savages”, when a wild cousin crosses his path.

## ALL WAYS IN COCHIN

IN Cochin it seems that everyone lives on the water. Boats take the place of houses.

On the hundreds of backwaters leading to the magnificent harbour, houseboats cluster, close as the buildings in a village street.

Smaller craft ply between them. In the early mornings the harbour, which has recently been improved at the cost of millions, so that liners and battleships can enter it, presents the appearance of a country fair.

Fishing, marketing, gossip and cooking all go on together—upon the water, not beside it.

Huge sailed junks make for the open sea. Winged nets, mounted on poles so that they look like aeroplanes, are swung up and down from platforms built in the shallows.

It may take a dozen men to work each of these nets, but they seem quite happy if by the end of the day they have caught a handful of fish.

Oddly-shaped creatures, not unlike sea mushrooms, bob about all over the water between rafts, houseboats, and canoes.

From the windows of the State Guest House, I watched these extraordinary growths. Subsequently, in the royal launch, with the elephant flag of Cochin streaming proudly from the stern, I went out to investigate.

Each mushroom was a little nut-brown man crouched on

## ALL WAYS IN COCHIN

his haunches under a gigantic straw hat, with a paddle in one hand and a fishing-rod in the other.

Round his hips fitted closely a nutshell of a craft, smaller than any canoe. Between his folded knees were the three or four tiny fish he had caught since the dawn.

Fishing supports something like 30,000 people in the lovely land of Cochin. There are no rules . . . except to catch as many fish as possible, whatever their size and shape. Some of the tribes use a blow-pipe, others a crossbow with an iron arrow attached to it.

The gentle Mukkavans throw their nets from the shore. Instead of whirling the mesh over their heads as they fling it out upon the water, they twist round on supple ankles and the balls of their feet, so that they look like slender brown tops spinning under the palms.

In the backwaters, drenched in green light from the jungle, the Valans use the Chinese net, or fishing stakes driven firmly into the mud with the nets attached to them. On every jetty and along the banks, old men and children sit motionless or occasionally twisting a toe, while they hold a line and stare, half hypnotized, at the water. Further inland, there are complicated erections of bamboo poles, a sort of maze leading to an inner chamber where a dead cat has been placed as bait. In these eels and crabs are captured.

Apart from the woodcutters, sawyers, carpenters, and other forest workers, Cochin is given up to fishermen, but they do not put to sea in stormy weather. They drift out on the land wind about six in the morning, when from windows opening on to the harbour, sails like the petals of chrysanthemums and dahlias appear to be blown across the sky. With the sea breeze they return in mid-afternoon. Sometimes when it is calm, they remain out all night, and then the fishermen keep up their spirits by singing as they sit

round their pans of charcoal under a screen of plaited palm leaves.

Cochin is more densely populated than any other Southern State. The reigning dynasty claims Kshatriya rank and descent from the great Chera Rajahs. Like Travancore, it is a matriarchate. The throne descends in the female line, but the Maharajahs have evidently made a habit of marrying young and frequently, for, at the moment there are no fewer than two hundred Princes, all heirs to the crown. Of these seventy-five, I believe, are over sixty years old. At a party, I was introduced to some of these future Maharajahs by number as well as by name. "This is the thirteenth" or "the hundred and thirtieth prince." The drain on the State revenues must be considerable, but with her splendid new harbour Cochin has doubled her importance. She is getting richer every year.

Above all things, Cochin is tolerant. Even her ancient wars were conducted according to the best principles of chivalry. It is supposed that the Phoenicians came to "Kerala" by way of the Persian Gulf and later of the Red Sea, and that they were followed by the Jews in the reign of Solomon. It may be that legendary Ophir, from which came gold and precious stones for the building of the Temple in Jerusalem, was Calicut in Malabar. In 30 B.C. Rome traded with "Kerala". Four hundred years later the last of the Cheraman ("big man") Princes was converted to Buddhism, and after his death the land was divided into what are now the States of Travancore, Cochin and Calicut. The stories of medieval travellers included those of a missionary Friar, Jordanus, in 1324, of Ibn Batuta, the remarkable Arab historian in 1347, of a Chinese in 1409, and a Persian in 1442, so in her earliest days, Cochin was evidently cosmopolitan.

## ALL WAYS IN COCHIN

The Portuguese reached Calicut in 1498, but Vasco da Gama's first expedition was a failure for he lost two-thirds of his men and one of his two ships. It was Cabral who, after a murderous journey down the coast, established friendly relations with the Ruler of Cochin, and in the sixteenth century Portuguese and Nayers<sup>1</sup> made an alliance against the Zamorin, the Sea-King of Calicut.

The Cochinese must have been terrific fighters. Before they made their treaties with Da Gama and Albuquerque, and later with the Dutch and the English East India Companies, they fought in close columns, the swordsmen in front, bending so that their shields touched the ground, the archers in the second line and behind them, the rearguard armed with lances, clubs and javelins. Before the battle both sides bathed in the same tank or pool, having shared the same peaceful sleep, and the fight started and came to an end at the precise moment when the tribal drummers sounded the first note on their instruments.

Pacheco's defence of Cochin against the hosts of the Sea-King, "dense as a sandstorm", with scarcely 150 Europeans, and the 300 native soldiers sent to him by the Rajah, proves that the Nayars were still warriors.

Soon after the death of the mighty Albuquerque in 1515, the power of his Government waned. The Portuguese were not good colonists. Their officers were ill-paid. They became traders and gamblers. All the work was done by slaves and according to Sir William Hunter, hangers-on of the court of Lisbon, the destitute and depraved with whom a European country could no longer cope, were banished to Cochin. "Young women were shipped from Lisbon," he says, "with the dowry of an appointment in India for the men who would marry them."

<sup>1</sup> The people of Cochin.

## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

In 1663, the Dutch captured Cochin and proceeded to destroy the Catholic churches and monasteries, as a prelude to establishing the reformed faith. Fra Bartolommeo gives a curious picture of the country towards the close of the eighteenth century:

“At Cochin there are a great many European women. They, as soon as they set foot in India, are converted into ladies of the first rank, though at Paris, or London, or Amsterdam, they had been fruit-sellers or washerwomen.” And “I remember an unmarried tobacconist at Cochin who kept a whole dozen of females, yet asserted that it was improper for the Catholic clergy not to marry.”

In 1773 the Rajah of Cochin was obliged to accept the suzerainty of the Moslem ruler of Mysore (Haidar Ali, the father of Tippoo) in order to avoid being conquered by “the Tiger”. Subsequently, when, under the Governor-Generalship of Lord Cornwallis, Tippoo Sultan was defeated at Seringapatam, the British found allies in the Hindu States of Cochin and Travancore. In 1791, the former made an alliance with the East India Company, paying tribute of a lakh of rupees in return for protection. Since then a series of British residents, accredited to the two great Southern States (Cochin and Travancore) with one exception, Colonel Macauley, whose want of tact and courtesy were largely responsible for the rebellion of 1808, have added to the prestige of Britain and the prosperity of Southern India.

Cochin possesses a population of approximately 662 people to the square mile as against Great Britain's 374 and India's 158. The language is Malayalam with a phonetic alphabet of 54 or 55 letters. Religion seems to be divided between pure Hinduism “where everything, mind and matter, is considered to be a part of God or a manifestation of Him” and the demonology of the Dravidians whose

## ALL WAYS IN COCHIN

magnificently-carved temples flower into a confusion of gods, devils and beasts all over Southern India.

Certainly, Cochin is broad-minded, for, in the same village there may be a community of Syrian Christians whose church was represented at the general synod of A.D. 200 and who believe that it was founded by St. Thomas the Doubter, a land-owning family of Nambudri Brahmins, who insist that all the land between Cape Cormorin and Bombay was reclaimed from the sea "before history" by the demigod Parasurama, conqueror of Rama in 21 epic battles, to be given to them and their descendants in perpetuity; and any number of serpent worshippers, or low-caste Parayans, exploiters of witchcraft, exorcism and sorcery.

An official report gives the number of "beggars, vagrants, witches and wizards" as 1,402, which is small, of course, in relation to the total population. Serpent and demon worship are equally common, but they do not necessarily interfere with the adoration of a superior God. A serpent shrine may exist in any simple hut, whose owner fears leprosy, sterility, or blindness, and at the same time there may be a "kavu", a place for the worship of ancestors in the exact middle of the dwelling.

A chauffeur told me one morning that we could not possibly get through the day without an accident as he had within an hour seen a cripple, a widow, and a barber. No combination could be more unlucky. When he ran into an ass, an additional ill omen, he burst into tears.

Elephants, cows, swans, white horses and corpses are fortunate and bring good luck to a journey. As every road in Cochin is littered with cows, it would seem that travellers need fear little.

As in every Indian State, there is a whole world of difference between the far-off country districts and the towns,



## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

between the forest dwellers, terrified of wild animals and evil spirits, living sometimes in trees, eating vermin, nomadic in their habits, learned in forest craft, and the widely-educated, politically-minded cosmopolitans of the ports.

The capital is divided into twin cities. For on one side of the delicious island-flecked lagoon, surrounded by palms, there is the strange town of Eruakulam with its street of the "Black Jews" and on the other side of the water, Cochin, pleasantly medieval, with its quarter of the "White Jews" whose green-shuttered mansions belong to a small community, not very prosperous, which is gradually dwindling in numbers.

Nobody really knows how the "White Jews" came to Cochin. They are undoubtedly Nordic, and not only white in the generic sense of the word, but fair. According to their own account, their ancestors were exiled by Solomon in connection with the building of the Temple in 1000 B.C., either to supervise the supply of material from the local "Ophi", or because they were suspected of participating in the opposition which in the succeeding reign led to the revolt of the Ten Tribes. One Rabbi tells that Nebuchadnezzar extended his proud empire to Cape Cormorin and after carrying off the Children of Israel as captives to Babylon, he found the tribe of Manassch altogether too turbulent and exiled it to the furthest corner of his realm in Southern India. Another learned teacher says that the Jews made their own way to the Malabar coast after the destruction of the second temple in A.D. 70, while the existence of such names as David Castile (David the Castilian) suggests that the White Jews of Cochin are—like their gorgeously-dressed co-religionists, existing in medieval fashion in the oasis of Bou Denib South of the Atlas—descendants of the

## ALL WAYS IN COCHIN

fugitives who fled from the persecutions of the most Catholic Ferdinand and Isabella.

The White Jews treasure certain precious vestments which they say came from Jerusalem and among other documents, a charter on copper plates, dated A.D. 378, which can be seen at the Synagogue. It was granted to one Joseph Kabban by the last of the Perumals, King Bhaskara Ravi Varma, and it entitled the Jews to carry umbrellas, "to use trumpets, shawms, and dulcimers and other musicks", to collect their own taxes, to ride on elephants, to fire salutes with mortars, to behave, in fact, as a princely race, favoured by the Ruler of what then approximated to a Malabar empire.

In the synagogue, where historians and antiquarians argue over the origin of the race and the authenticity of its copper plate charter, there is a floor the colour of a stormy sea. The blue and white tiles, foam-capped waves tumbling in over a stillness fathoms deep, were brought from China by Dutch merchants, at the order of a Hindu Rajah. But they never reached his palace, for the Jewish Rabbis, coveting them for their beauty, informed His Highness that the tiles were made with bullock's blood. The potentate, incensed at such sacrilege, ordered the tiles out of his sight, and the wily Rabbis promptly took possession of them for their place of worship which is without an altar so has never known a sacrifice.

The Books of the Law are kept in a cupboard behind a curtain and there is a gallery in which women are allowed to stand, as unnoticeable as may be, for the local Jews "offer up daily thanks that they were not born of the female sex".

The Sabbath with all other feasts and fasts, is duly kept in Cochin. By sundown on Friday evening, all fires must be extinguished and all the work of the following day accom-

## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

plished, the food prepared, the tables set and a messenger ready to fetch light from the only flame left burning in the Synagogue.

For the Passover, every Jew is dressed as if for a journey. His luggage is ready, whether it be a bundle or a cheap modern suit-case. His stick, specially cut, is held in his right hand, while, standing ready to start, he eats in haste, as was ordained by Mosaic law, the kid whose blood should be—but is not—sprinkled on the doorpost and the lintels.

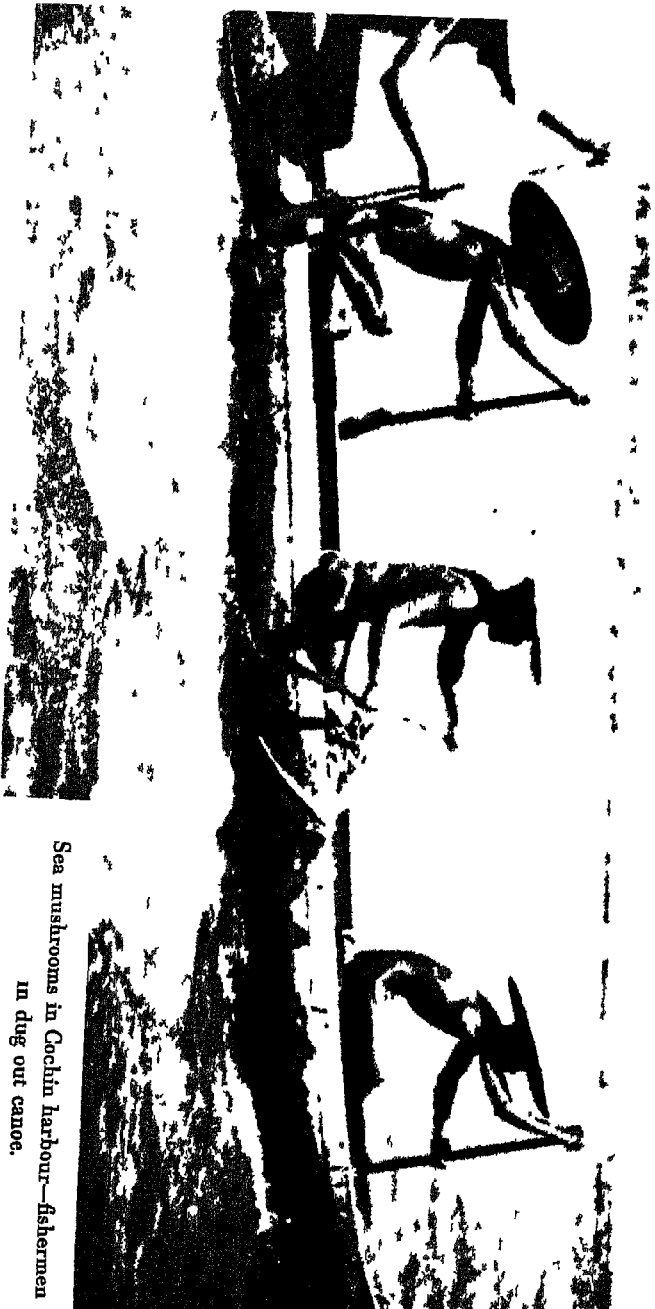
Circumcision is practised on the eighth day, in public, generally in the synagogue, and at the great Feast of Tabernacles when the Books of the Law are taken in procession round the place of worship, men and women dress in their brightest clothes.

With their robes of crimson, plum-colour, bronze, amber, saffron, orange and green, the men look as if they had walked straight out of the Bible. Their wives and daughters, almond-eyed and full-bosomed, are scarcely less resplendent in dozens and dozens of skirts, primrose and pink, in all shades of gay blue prints, with their raven hair in plaits and their fine, bold features that might be stamped out of metal.

Still more dramatic is the fast in commemoration of the Fall of Jerusalem. Then between the tropical sea and the palms, there rises a storm of wailing and lamenting. In the synagogue the men beat their breasts and prostrate themselves on the ground, crying out as if in the last frenzy of despair. In the houses, the women rend their clothes, and heap ashes upon their heads. Smearred and distraught, they mourn what might be the most recent and personal of losses. So great is their emotion that tears pour down their cheeks. Men choke when they try to speak. In the streets there are no greetings, no word of business or ordinary conversation. As a great wind rising, the voice of Israel laments. There is



Workers in a Cochin jute mill—women of the southern matriarchate where there is no Purdah.



Sea mushrooms in Cochin harbour—fishermen  
in dug out canoe.

## ALL WAYS IN COCHIN

nothing to be heard but the sorrow of a lost and forgotten people.

To-day, the White Jews number barely two hundred, but they will not marry outside their own community. The Black Jews are more numerous. They claim to be descended from the Sabacans of South-West Arabia, or, more reasonably, from the Yemenese Jews who intermarried with the Axumites of Ethiopia, converted to Judaism by their King, the son of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. But the White Jews laugh at such pretensions, insisting that their black or brown co-religionists are the descendants of the slaves whom they themselves bought in the coastal markets, converted to Jewry and subsequently liberated.

For 1,500 years the two communities have lived apart. The Black Jews, numbering perhaps a thousand, are scarcely distinguishable from their Moslem neighbours, except for their characteristic noses, their ringlets and the cloths of the ghetto which they persist in wearing. They are, contradictorily, sad and vital. Those with whom I talked displayed the enduring patience of a people which believes itself chosen, yet has no national significance. I asked one old man if Jewry was a race or a religion and he thought a long time before saying: "I cannot distinguish between one and the other."

Under the Portuguese the Jews who must then have been a numerous and prosperous colony, were persecuted, but by a succession of Hindu rulers as well as by Dutch and English they have been treated with complete tolerance. It is the Jews themselves who will not take advantage of modern conditions. They cling to the principles and structure of the ghetto, building and rebuilding their houses on the same medieval pattern.

Cochin is prosperous. Her port is growing with her com-

## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

merce. Brokerage and finance, the handling of every form of merchandise, money-lending, and ship-chandling, should give her Jewish population every opportunity, but they feel themselves cursed in a land of plenty. Fever-ridden, suffering from a terrible form of elephantiasis which magnifies and distorts their limbs, the Black Jews make little effort to escape the effects of Deuteronomy, or to interpret the words of Jehovah in terms of modern progress. Aloof, dignified, erudite in an unusual and subtle fashion, the White Jews, chemists, astronomers, philosophers, sit in their green-shuttered houses, with a "portion from scripture", sealed in bamboo or tin tubes, upon the doorposts. Across the ruined bastions, they can watch the ships of all nations steaming or sailing into the new harbour. They can judge the prosperity which must follow its audacious construction. But their thoughts are in Judea, "*Eretz Israel*" (the land of Israel), and to them it would seem that there has been no important building since Solomon constructed the Temple.

## LORDS OF THE MANOR IN COCHIN

COCHIN is very proud of her pioneer action in appointing an elected representative of the people to be a Minister of the State. By so doing this progressive Principality ruled by H.H. Sri Sir Rama Varma, G.C.I.E., who was born in 1858 and ascended the Musnud in 1914, considers she is, if anything, ahead of the times. But, unlike neighbouring Travancore, she is intransigent in her attitude towards the casteless who may not enter the temples. The Brahmins, a power in the land, naturally support the Rajah, who maintains and adheres to the dignified, if old-fashioned, system of domestic and social life.

Consequently, in Cochin, below the last of the Sudras, washermen, barbers and, oddly enough, hereditary schoolmasters (the Erhuthacans), there exist the castes known as "polluting". Among them are the Kammalans, carpenters, masons, goldsmiths, tanners, blacksmiths, and workers of metals, the Erhubans, said to have come from Ceylon, who work among the coco-nut plantations, the Valans and Arayans who are fishermen, the Kaniyans, professional astrologers who arrange auspicious hours for marriages and foretell the births of sons, the Vilkurups who make bows and arrows and palm-leaf umbrellas, and the Parayans, lowest of the "land-slaves", whose purchase, sale and mortgage was forbidden in 1854. These last live by making mats and baskets and by practising witchcraft. They represent the lowest elements in the hierarchy of agriculture,



## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

at the head of which is a Namburdi or Nayer landlord. The Parayans of to-day are free to move if they choose, but they are so ignorant and superstitious that they would be afraid to leave the estate they know and on which, for generations, they have worked for payment in kind.

Many of the lower castes attend the State schools and the only tribes who, in Cochin, can be said to be beyond reach of education are the nomad forest and hill-dwellers shyer than animals, some of whom regard the trees as their fellows.

Cochin, with her long reddish roads and her white-robed, unveiled women, has succeeded in more than one interesting social experiment. In the capital there is a club, bordering on the unique in India, where men and women have equal rights as members. I went to a party there and found the sexes divided only by the width of the room. On one side the brilliant Advocate General was indulging in an argument with several barristers.

"In India," he insisted, "politics are a business and social reform a charity!"

Across the room a gathering of lovely women, with saris every colour of the rainbow, watched in silence until an energetic girl-doctor arrived and galvanized them all into speech.

"Don't you think we've progressed?" she laughed at me. "Come to my hospital and you can watch me do an operation."

If the charming harbour-side towns belong to a sea-loving people happier with oars or sail, with the great kite-winged nets that look like the ghosts of aeroplanes, than on their feet, the forests and the unending rice-fields belong to a sturdy race of cultivators.

The royal launch swept us up mile after mile of back-water.

## LORDS OF THE MANOR IN COCHIN

Not an advertisement, a sign-board, or a scrap of corrugated iron spoiled this Eden of thatched villages and palms, of spider-web nets hanging over the water, of brown men paddling, sailing, sleeping on rafts, cooking with their toes in the water, or swimming lazily, a perfectly good modern suit-case balanced on a trunk so that it could be propelled in front of them.

We passed a wedding procession. The youthful bridegroom, naked but for a gold cord round his waist, was perched upon the shoulders of an elephant behind a screen of bright scarlet heavily embroidered.

In front of the huge beast walked a crowd of male relatives and friends. Two carried fire in iron dishes and others swords nearly as tall as themselves.

Drums and reed flutes preceded a number of young men singing, and an incongruous note was provided by a smart State policeman in khaki, who cleared the way for the procession.

The groom was only fourteen, and his bride, whom he was going to fetch from her house to live with his parents, two years younger.

In all probability they had not yet met, but each would have been told enchanting tales of the other's charms by the relations who had arranged the marriage.

"There is no mystery about your weddings," a more sophisticated Indian bridegroom said to me. "You see so much of your fiancées day after day that you cannot possibly dream of them at nights.

"For us, mystery is the greatest thrill. Will she be, can she be, as charming as our parents have told us?"

"Will she, perhaps, be even more exquisite and fulfil all that our excited hearts invent about her?"

The objective of our journey was an estate belonging to a

## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

Nambudri of the priestly caste which immigrated to the Malabar coast before history began. When we left the launch, we walked through coco-nut groves, strongly scented with copra and resonant with the sound of choppers. A Nambudri dame, of considerable age, came to meet us a yard or two from her front door. She carried a peaked native umbrella which she twirled about, using it as a fan to prevent any unattached man staring at her unveiled face. The usual little girl attended her. In a village or the country-town, the child would walk a few paces ahead of her mistress calling, in shrill, monotonous tones, to lower-caste people: "Make way."

The house was quadrangular, consisting of four oblong blocks with a courtyard in the centre. The western wing contained the store-room, some bedrooms and a hall devoted to the household deities, the northern held the kitchen and dining-room, the eastern was reserved for the family, and the southern consisted of pleasant open reception-rooms where guests could be entertained. The building was two-storied, roofed with tiles, and there were wide porches on both floors. The whitewashed pillars were painted with geometrical designs and screens of palm matting kept out the sun.

The ancient Nambudri lady exchanged her quaint umbrella for a fan made out of a palm leaf as soon as she entered the house and during all the time I was with her she never let me look at her full in the face. Always the fan slid between us, hiding now her eyes, now her lips, now a fragment of the grey, seamed cheek. From her distended ears hung stud-shaped circles of gold, but these were her only jewels. Her fine grey hair that had once been blue-black, was uncovered and twisted into a knot low on the back of her neck. Yards and yards of white stuff were wound in

## LORDS OF THE MANOR IN COCHIN

complicated fashion about her still shapely person, under a little cotton jacket, also white and immaculately starched.

There was very little conversation, but one of the numerous younger women offered me coco-nut milk in the shell. She would not put it into my hand for fear of touching me, but placed it on the ground at my feet.

The Nambudris, highest of the priestly caste, prevent the division of their large landed estates by allowing only the eldest son to marry within his own caste. He may have as many wives as he chooses and he has to keep all his unmarried sisters as well, so a Nambudri household gives the impression of a nunnery. As many as three generations of women, unwed, may sigh away their lives under the same widespreading roof. For if the younger sons insist on marriage they must take wives from a lower caste, thus exiling themselves from their family and losing all right to their inheritance which, in the case of the Nambudris, goes in the male line.

These people who are very much a race apart, the prototypes of our Tudor barons, divide their properties into tenant farms which are let on twelve-year leases to the Nayer gentlefolk, descendants of the original Cochinese. Sometimes the Nambudris farm small portions of their own lands by means of serfs who work under the supervision of the younger sons and grandsons. Such labourers are free to leave if they wish, but for them a mile down the sandy track between walls of jungle, is foreign territory and every wild beast, every breath of wind, every sound in the forest, may be the emanation of an evil spirit.

The Nayers are the warrior aristocracy of Southern India and to them belong the Zamorins (Sea-Kings) of Calicut, the Maharajahs of Travancore and the Rajahs of Cochin. The Nambudri precedence is religious and the respect paid to

them is due to their knowledge of Sanskrit and Hindu philosophies. Their education is almost as hard as that of a Buddhist monk. Day in, day out, for seven years, a Nambudri boy must spend twelve hours learning by heart and repeating Sanskrit verses. It is not necessary for him to know what the words mean and he never sees them written. Hour upon hour he repeats the verses after his tutor, until he has learned the correct cadence. Fortunately his physical education is as stringent as his mental, and he has to spend yet another hour each day prostrating himself and rising in one slow and admirably sustained movement after the Ayurvedic method, and it seems likely that this violent exercise does much to relieve the strain of monotonous and rigidly enforced studies.

The Nambudri family I visited had its own Ayurvedic practitioner who recited long and complicated verses called mantrams when any of his patrons were ill. He gave "hot medicines" consisting largely of pepper for all "cold illnesses" among which he counted fevers as well as chills. He made numerous ointments from herbs, dealt with rheumatism by means of invocations, deep breathing and rhythmic exercises, used a special poem to cure snake-bites, made "mappu" from a combination of herbal salts to "kill" all other poisonous diseases, and claimed that he could raise the dead if he took sufficient trouble, but it was a dangerous proceeding because, if he made the slightest mistake, he would lose his own soul as well as that of his patient.

Fortunately, as the old Nambudri lady told me, in one of her rare conversational moments, none of her people would wish to live one moment longer than their destiny (Karma) decreed, for why should they "keep the next life waiting"? Reincarnation means a continual advance and knowledge is the ladder upon which Brahmins climb. But such knowledge is

## LORDS OF THE MANOR IN COCHIN

circumscribed for, although I heard of one Nambudri family owning a tile factory and part of a cotton mill, those I visited were intensely conservative. They led a very simple life, the women secluded in one wing of the house. None of the family would eat with foreign or even with Nayer guests. They supported the village school, where the teachers were paid 10s. or £1 a month. They professed themselves ignorant of the exact extent of their estate which housed and employed several thousand villagers and produced between two and three hundred thousand pounds of rice annually. Their only amusement seemed to be to listen to a story-teller who took the place of the buffoon and the musician in the castle of a Tudor landlord. This man used to sit in the courtyard outside the women's rooms and tell unending tales, sometimes in Sanskrit, to the immense diversion of the young people who seemed eager not to miss a word.

A Nambudri landlord can insist that no man shall appear before him clad in more than a loin-cloth and no woman with her breast covered. Since the younger sons of the house may not marry they are apt to take mistresses among the Nayer women.

Like the Syrian Christians and the royal houses of Cochin and Travancore, inheritance among the Nayars passes in the female line. The family, or tarvad, consists, therefore, of all the descendants of a common ancestress, but the eldest male member of her clan, the karanavan, has absolute control over the family property, except in South Canara where under the Alia Santanum law it is the eldest female member who manages the communal wealth.

Until recent years there was no marriage under such a matriarchate.

The Nayars live as they have always done in large com-

munities, "tarvads" of which the oldest woman is a sort of constitutional ruler, while the eldest man, acting as steward, can be deposed only for gross mismanagement. Since the property descends from mother to daughter, all children born to the women of the community are entitled to sustenance at the expense of the tarvad, but the children of the men who marry outside their own community must be supported by their mother's tarvad.

There are now two kinds of marriage, the talikettu and the sambandam. The former is an obligatory form and it must be effected before the latter, which is the real marriage and one solely of taste, can be legal.

My Nambudri friends, some of whom were intimately related with Nayer women, the loveliest in Southern India, described the talikettu as a curious custom which would disappear with the spread of Indian, not European, civilization. Apparently a Nayer mother may ask any passer-by to come into the house and place the tali, a gold necklace which takes the place of a wedding ring, on her daughter's neck. She will then pay him the marriage fee, a rupee, and speed him on his way. That is the last that either wife or mother-in-law ever see of the stranger who for a few minutes has played the part of bridegroom to a child not yet grown-up. Subsequently the girl, having already the formal status of a married woman, may enter into the sambandam relationship with any man of the Nambudri or Nayer castes. In this case the husband presents a suit of clothing, or just a cloth, to the wife in the presence of relations and friends. She goes out of the room to put it on and when she returns, wearing the gift of her groom, the marriage is considered to be ratified, but it is always soluble at the will of either party.

The woman generally continues to live among her own

tarvad, under the rule of the most ancient female relation, and her husband visits her in her own house whenever he chooses. Their children add to the size of the tarvad, or family group and poverty often ensues, for the labour of the father belongs to his own people and if he happens to be a younger son of the proud Nambudri he contributes nothing but prestige to the alliance which may be ended as soon as the woman wishes to take another Sambandam partner. She can only have one such husband at a time, and the association often lasts for a lifetime. Nobody knows what the Nayer men, who used to raise and command their companies (kalaris) when the Rajah needed their services in war, think of this local version of the medieval "*droit de Seigneur*".

It is difficult for the ordinary traveller to understand the prestige of the Nambudris, deeply rooted in the past, impervious to change or to modern conditions. They own much of the land of course and therefore the source of life of their simple countrymen, but they also represent the authority of learning. The humblest castes credit them with powers approaching the divine and it is not unusual for the head of a Nambudri household to be invited by his tenants to perform a rite at the cobra shrine which every Nayer household possesses, in order to ensure that nobody shall be bitten by an unregenerate snake.

Once I ventured to ask the old lady, her face of grey parchment, half-hidden by her palm-leaf fan, how long she thought the ascendancy of her people would last. She replied:

"So long as we do good and such good is more appreciated than evil."

But it seemed to me sometimes that the family idea of doing good, apart from its continuous charity to the poor



## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

and the sick, was to do nothing at all. Among the Nambudris I found dignity, reserve, the quiet courage of endurance and self-control, but also a conviction that all change is sin.

## TRAVANCORE

TRAVANCORE is like no other Indian State except its neighbour Cochin. For here, whether it be among the Nayer landowners in mid-jungle or in the admirably modern capital of Trivandrum, women rule. They rule, not by the generosity of men, but by traditional right. For Travancore is a matriarchate. The succession to the throne and to the big estates goes in the female line. So the heir to the present exceedingly intelligent and hard-working young Maharajah, after his brother, will not be any son of his own, but the infant boy born last year to his sister. The title of Maharani belongs not to the wife of the Ruler, but to his mother, his aunt, or his elder sister. In effect, every male of the royal house has the right to reign, but none can transmit that right.

The same system is in force among the Nayers, a caste of Hindus only found on the Malabar Coast. Originally nobles who engaged neither in crafts nor in commerce, devoting themselves entirely to war, they had developed their own civilization before the advent of the twice-born Brahmins. The Nayers to this day prefer the country to the town. All along the backwaters can be seen their old "tarawad"<sup>1</sup> homes, which are villages in themselves for, as in Cochin, these people live in matriarchal groups consisting of a mother and her children, her daughters' children, her brothers and sisters, and her sisters' children. In olden days

<sup>1</sup> Communal.

## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

the Nayar home was a fortress surrounded by a strong wall. Above the gateway was a small room roofed with thatch, loopholed so that an enemy could be enfiladed. On either side of the gate were seats for the servants who kept watch. Many of these old gateways remain, although the system which gave rise to such fortified isolation is passing.

The Rulers of Travancore, like those of Cochin, trace their descent from the old Chera kings who were independent in the third century B.C., when they were referred to in the edicts of the Emperor Asoka. They are entitled by birth to Kshatriya status, but Brahmin ascendancy has been, until recently, so firmly established in Travancore that successive monarchs have been adopted by special favour into the Brahmin caste. The late Maharajah never gave interviews to Europeans after the dawn because, having polluted himself because he was too polite not to shake hands with his visitor, he would be forced to take a purifying bath among other ceremonies. This he did as a matter of course every morning, but it would be altogether too much trouble to have to repeat the performance later in the day because he had touched a European.

According to Frazer, "when a Rajah of ancient Travancore is near to death they seek out a holy Brahmin who consents to take upon himself the sins of the dying man in consideration of the sum of ten thousand rupees. Thus prepared to immolate himself on the altar of duty, the saint is introduced into the chamber of death and closely embraces the dying Rajah, saying to him: 'Oh, King, I undertake to bear all your sins and diseases. May your Highness live long and reign happily.' Having thus taken to himself the sins of the sufferer, he is sent away from the country and never more allowed to return."

From the coronation of a Chera King in A.D. 311 date the

## TRAVANCORE

two curious ceremonies in which the Rulers of Travancore take part before ascending the Gadi. First the body of the King is weighed against an equal amount of gold which is then distributed among the Brahmins. Then the King immerses himself in holy water which is kept in an enormous lotus-shaped receptacle. After these ceremonies which may date from the pre-historic Parasurama, the Monarch is entitled to assume the family honours.

Travancore State assumed its present boundaries during the reign of Rajah Martanda Varma (1729-1758). This famous warrior subjugated the neighbouring chieftains and forced them to become his tributaries. He then dedicated all his possessions and relegated his temporal powers to Sri Padmanabhaswami the tutelary God of his line and subsequently administered the Kingdom as viceregent of the divinity. It was this same Martanda Varma who allied himself with the East India Company. His successors maintained the alliance and fought with Britain during the Mysore Wars, with the result that, in the middle of the nineteenth century, the title of Maharajah was bestowed in perpetuity upon the Rulers of Travancore.

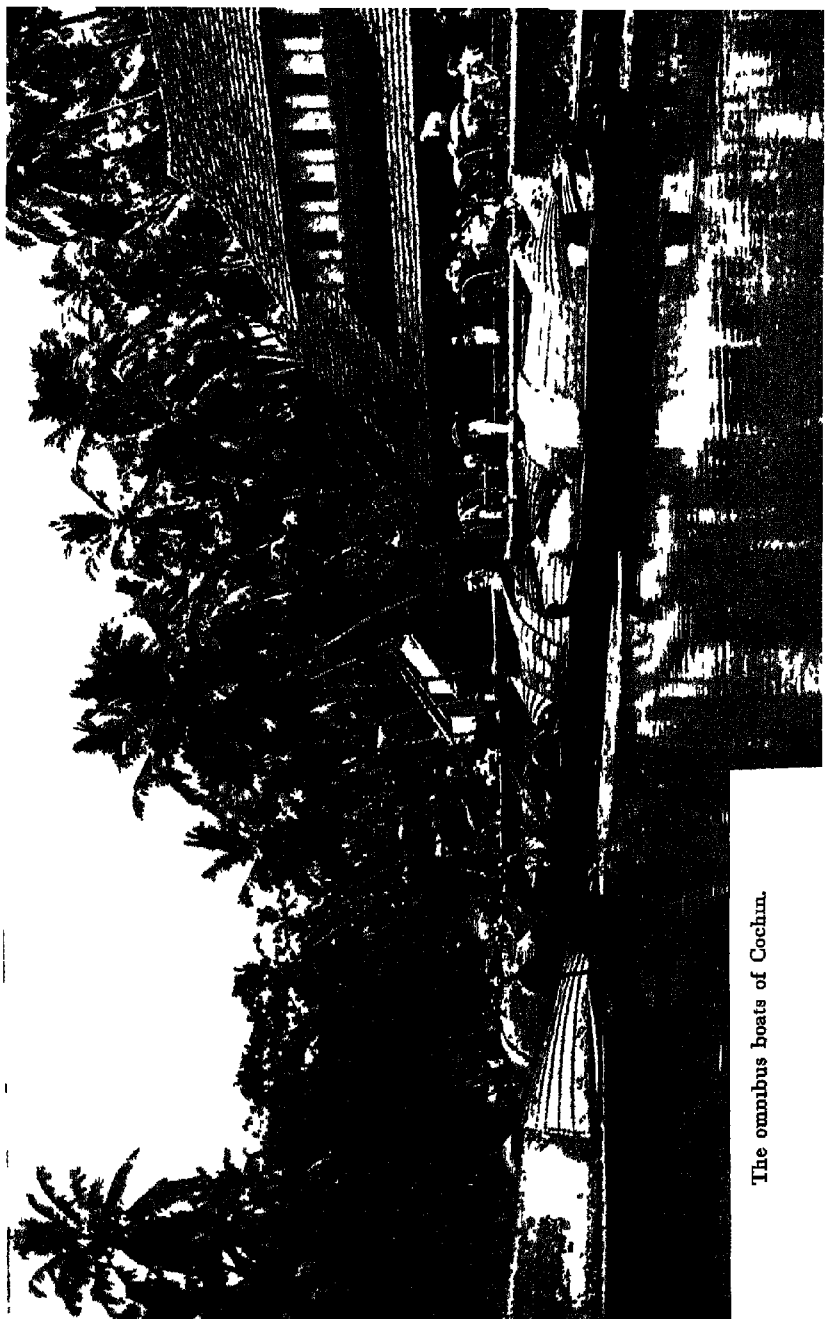
In earlier days this State, particularly interesting because of its constitutional and educational development, was cut off from easy communication with the rest of India by the range of the Western Ghats, impenetrable and covered with jungle. Sixteen mountain passes provided an adequate barrier to invasion. The Moghul armies never came so far south. Other raiders, carving themselves kingdoms out of the chaos in Northern and Central India, did not venture to cross the formidable Ghats. Travancore has never been conquered. She has always been ruled by one Hindu line. But all along the Malabar coast there are traces of sea-borne traffic. The Phœnicians came in search of ivory, sandalwood

## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

and spices. Megasthenes, Greek Ambassador to the Court of Chandragupta and the Roman historian Pliny, mention their countries' trade with the west coast of India. Chinese sailors came to Quilon and Cochin. Persian and Arab dhows sailed with the monsoon to Malabar. Vasco da Gama and Marco Polo give fascinating accounts of this isolated and self-sufficient land. Later Danish, Portuguese and Dutch sought her ports for trade, or in an inglorious attempt at conquest. Last came the English, but Travancore, though she has been tolerant of all Faiths and points of view, has not tried to imitate the West. First among the Indian States, she has achieved a position, or an attitude of mind, which is definitely modern without being pseudo-European.

Travancore has an area of 7,625 square miles and a population of over five million. This means that, though comparatively small in area, she ranks next to Hyderabad and Mysore in the number of her people. Approximately half of the State is covered with forests and a network of backwaters. So the cultivated lands, growing rice, coco-nut, pepper, tapioca and jack-fruit on the plains, cardamom, coffee and tea in the hills, show a population of something like 800 to the square mile. This is enormous compared with the rest of India and it is likely to constitute a serious problem. For the standard of living cannot keep pace with education.

In the whole of India 15 per cent. of the men and 3 per cent. of the women are literate. Hence the difficulties of the Congress Party, for discontent can only be disseminated among minds which have reached a certain degree of intelligence and which are accustomed to exercise themselves with comparisons. In Travancore about half the male and a sixth of the female population is literate. There is a school for every two square miles. A hundred and twenty different



The ornibus boats of Cochim.



A drink of coccoe-nut milk on the way  
to Peryar forest.

## TRAVANCORE

newspapers and periodicals are printed in English or Malayalam, a fifth of the revenue is devoted to education, and there are eight colleges affiliated to the University of Madras. Such figures, though tedious to read, are necessary to show what an independent Indian State, ruled and largely inhabited by Hindus, has achieved without recourse to excessive taxation. Except among the Nambudri Brahmins and a few immigrant Moslems, purdah, which has been a brake on the progress of India, is unknown. The women of Travancore, unveiled, have the same practical and educational opportunities as men. There is a good deal of co-education in the colleges where girl students share in all the men's activities except football. These are drawn chiefly from the Nayer caste and from the Syrian Christians who sometimes wear enormous gold rings in the tops of their ears.

In Travancore women play a prominent part in public life and the best lecture I heard in Trivandrum was one given by a girl, who had taken her Doctorate of Law in Madras, on the subject of middle-class unemployment. Here is the great problem with which this delectable and efficient State is faced. For, with semi-universal literacy, the towns are being submerged by a tide of ambitious ex-students who want to be anything and everything except labourers or artisans. The land hunger, so strong in the Indian peasant whose very flesh takes on the semblance of the earth by which he lives, disappears altogether after a High School education. Travancore, like the rest of India, needs trained agriculturists, needs foresters and planters, but none of her schooled sons will go back on to the land. Education has deprived them of their mental as well as their physical heritage. Exiles by their own will from rice field and coco-nut grove, from the teak and ebony and sandalwood forests where their



## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

people were masters, they scramble for the meanest urban jobs which can be described as clerical.

Industrialization may be the answer to this problem, but it is an unsatisfactory one, for the State needs more food than she does mass-produced dry goods. She can, however, exploit her minerals and her timber. A hydro-electric scheme will soon be in operation and His Highness proposes to introduce a number of textile industries together with bleaching, paper and rubber making. Wise in his generation, the Maharajah hopes to avoid the worst results of such a policy, evident in Europe as in Asia, by intensive rural reconstruction schemes under which the villages will share in the benefits possessed by the towns. He and his mother, most farsceing of rulers, are doing everything possible to organize technical training for farmers and peasants, but young men—young women too—clamour for the privilege of using a pen instead of a plough.

His Highness is still legally the beginning and end of all authority, but for the last fifty years, succeeding Maharajahs have acted as constitutional monarchs. The revenues of the State are treated as public funds and H.H. Maharajah Sri Chitra Thirunal, who succeeded his grand uncle on the Musnad<sup>1</sup> in 1924, at the age of twelve, keeps barely 5 per cent. for his own use and that of his august mother, the Maharani, who acted as Regent during her son's minority.

Such a limited civic list permits of little display. The Ruler of Travancore lives in a very pleasant white house on one of the many hills that look over an ocean of palm trees.

For here is the India of the old lithographs and prints depicting the exploits of Tippoo Sultan, always against a background of palms. Riding—with difficulty, for there is

<sup>1</sup> Throne.

## TRAVANCORE

no open space except the market and the parade ground—in the neighbourhood of the capital, Trivandrum, it seemed to me that nowhere had I seen such a magnificently palmed landscape. However still the day, the long, curved fronds were stirred by a wind of their own and they covered hill and valley like a yellow-green smoke, for they had no particular form. Light as smoke they drifted over the horizon. All I could see were these billows and billows of palm trees with here and there a square pink house or a white one. It only needed the hot, bright uniforms and the cannons of Tippoo Sultan, always with a round white puff of smoke like the best swansdown poised in front of their muzzles, to complete the picture.

Through this eighteenth century atmosphere, I rode one day to visit a Nambudri family who lived not far from the town. I found their house, newly plastered, square and uncompromising standing among a smoke-cloud of palms, with a view over acres and acres of rice fields. These made a patch of clear, young green in the middle of the palms. They looked like damp silk and added to my impression of having walked into a Singleton picture, where just such fields lie between the armies in their tight reds and blues.

As in Cochin, the Nambudris, highest among Brahmin castes, keep their properties intact by allowing only the eldest son to marry—as often as he likes—among his own people. If the younger sons are sufficiently annoying to insist on having wives, they must find them in a lower caste which puts them beyond the pale so far as their own families are concerned.

The Nambudri dowager, who ruled her household with a palm leaf instead of a sceptre, told me that as no girl of her family could marry beneath her and there weren't enough eldest sons to go round, the house was "over-full"

of women. "They are all virgins," she added with illogical contempt.

While I drank coco-nut juice mixed with lime, gracious but ghostly creatures of three and even four generations drifted into the room. Sunshine filtered through closed shutters. Where a slat was broken, a bar of strong light lay across the rugs. A haze of dust filled the air. It turned the streaks of sunshine into a tangible substance like furred amber. Silent as images, equally immobile once they had taken their places, the Nambudri spinsters seated themselves in the shadows. A rich red caste mark burned on their foreheads. Their faces were oval, of a greenish olive colour, in the shuttered room. Their white robes had a Grecian simplicity. "Marriage with us is an affair of business—" said the old lady, and I thought a sigh from sisters, daughters and great-nieces echoed round the dim room which was panelled with reeds.

In Trivandrum, we stayed at one of the pleasant Guest Houses which are used as hotels. I admired the enormous, heavy-leaved trees and the lilies, tawny red, orange and yellow, which shook their petals into the breeze like the sails of galleys. The fierce colour burned against the green like canvas between a noon sun and the rollers of a Southern ocean.

Through a host of covered wagons, drawn by fine white bullocks, with hoops of blue beads swinging above their foreheads; through streams of absurd little carts like decorated hencoops, between elephants and pilgrims and holy men streaked with lime, I drove to the palace set on a hill.

Here I was received by their Highnesses, the Maharajah and his Mother, the titular Maharani, who is perhaps 35, and looks ten years younger.

## TRAVANCORE

By way of several salons furnished in European fashion, we went to a charming drawing-room with walls and upholstery of pale blue.

His Highness, very slender, with a face like an ivory miniature, wore one of those complicated turbans spreading into a fan over the left ear.

His Mother had draped many yards of fine white muslin in Grecian fashion so that it fell from shoulder to heel in lovely lines, showing only a scrap of tight, short-sleeved white bodice.

Her head was bare, her very long black hair, steeped in oil, drawn back into an enormous loose knot on her shoulders. She wore no jewels.

A power in the land and conscious of it, the Maharani, speaking, like her son, a much better English than mine, said: "Naturally, the women in Travancore have a great deal of authority.

"The throne and all the great inheritances pass from mother to son, from sister to nephew, so we feel ourselves responsible for the future of the country.

"As a race we have never been conquered. The Moghuls who overran Northern India did not come as far south as Travancore, so we have never had to submit to purdah. The Hindu women here have never known the veil."

With the laugh of a young girl, this princess of a race so ancient that it is reputed to be descended from the gods, added:

"I believe we are even ahead of you in England. You are going to see the men's colleges, aren't you? Well, you will find a number of women teachers and lecturers there.

"We have got women doctors and lawyers, of course, and we have just appointed a woman judge."

"What are your problems then?" I asked, and the golden-

brown Maharani, with a smile which a poet described as "sunshine flashing on swords drawn in battle", answered:

"One of our chief difficulties is to find employment for all the young people who come out of our colleges with a liking for town life and no desire at all to go back to the land."

With authority she spoke of the various official schemes to induce a greater interest in agriculture.

Travancore depends on its rice and nuts, spices and gums, for its simple existence, for there is practically no industry as yet.

As I drove away between saluting guards, my driver slowing down outside the palace gates to avoid a super-sacred bull and some goats painted bright blue, I thought that Travancore is certainly in the lead where Indian problems are concerned.

Two years ago, by the Maharajah's birthday edict, it was decreed that the "untouchables"—who are below the four castes of the priests, the kings and warriors, the merchants or shopkeepers, and the servants—those pariahs who for so long in the country districts were little better than serfs, should have right of entry into the temples previously forbidden to them, on the same terms as the holiest Brahmin.

The marvel is that the reform was accepted without bloodshed by the priests and by the old-fashioned Nambudri, whose women carry a palm leaf nearly as tall as themselves and twist it about like a shield or a parasol, so that, although unveiled, they contrive that no stranger shall see their faces.

In Travancore, the Maharajah has the authority of a god. He rules as the Viceroy of the local incarnation (or version) of the great Hindu deity, Vishnu, to whom his conquering ancestor made over the land by sealed deed, and the names of the gods are always added to the Ruler's title.

## TRAVANCORE

By way of tribute to this celestial overlord, His Highness gives free food to 5,000 Brahmins morning and evening in front of the temple.

No European may enter the sacred precincts, but I watched one hot afternoon, pilgrims from every part of India bathing the most horrible sores in the temple tank, after which they took surreptitious draughts of the holy—but scum-covered and putrescent—water in order to ensure their cure.

From this glimpse of “Mother India”, unchanging only in the temples and behind the strictest zenana walls, I went to visit “Daughter India” in the proud, new women’s college.

Instead of Sadhus (holy men and beggars) dressed only in their own matted hair, ferociously painted and streaked, sitting hour after hour in distorted positions, so that their limbs stiffen and shrink (thus do they acquire merit) I found flower-like girls talking English among themselves because they find it easier than their native tongues.

The college buildings are all that is most modern. So is the teaching. Some of the students were listening to a lecture in Sanskrit.

Baffled, I sought refuge in the laboratory. Here equally elegant young women, in the loveliest of draperies—why are we so afraid of colour in Europe?—were according to the Professor “making experiments with light”.

This also sounded too learned, so I went across to another charming pavilion with a tiled roof curved about the eaves like the horns of a bullock.

Here a dozen girls in saris the colour of carnival balloons were playing complicated Indian music. They kept time with bare toes, deliciously brown but unpainted.

Later, they gave me tea made in English fashion and they

## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

explained how, instead of running to the early morning mirror to put on rouge and lipstick like their European prototypes, the first duty of their day, after the bath, was to do "poojah" (worship) before the household god in his marigold-decorated shrine just inside the front door.

But before bowing to the friendly image, they dipped one slender finger in a saffron paste and made the most ravishing purple beauty spot between the eyebrows.

When we arrived in Travancore, an unexpected monsoon was deluging the country. I have rarely seen so much rain.

But some of our servants bought coco-nuts and smashed them in front of the shrine dedicated to Ganesh, the Elephant god who protects travellers.

This, they assured us, was responsible for the fine day on which we started for the jungle.

We drove along the bright red roads between palm trees and rice fields under water. From an eminence draped in palms, we had a last view of Trivandrum. We saw its buildings sunk deep into what seemed to be a patterned carpet. Many of them were fine structures. They showed a strong clean red among the greens of their gardens and parks. One great modern road was drawn across the carpet like a seam. I remembered driving along it, beside big, new public buildings, and being much impressed by the propinquity of the forest, for Trivandrum is an oasis of architecture in the middle of the jungle.

Now that we were actually in what we had looked upon as fathomless depths of palms, we found that the ocean-forest of our imagination was bisected by narrow roads crowded with buffaloes and cows. We were never out of sight of a hamlet, or of human beings. So crowded is the cultivatable portion of Travancore that the simplest form of ribbon development follows every lane into the jungle.

## TRAVANCORE

House after house, temple and tomb, all thatched with palm leaves, all built of wood or mud, sometimes crudely plastered, stood beside the road. And always there were people walking bare-footed and carrying their shoes, or bundled up in a bullock cart which invariably strayed across our radiator. The driver said quite frankly he would rather kill a human being than one of the animals he regarded as sacred. It was very hot. A monsoon had lost its way, or made a mistake about the season, so it rained when it should have been fine.

All morning we drove slowly because of goats, children and an infinity of cattle. When we were thirsty, villagers were persuaded to come from under their low, thatched roofs and to climb the nearest palms in search of coco-nuts. Expertly they shored away the outer rind with choppers, sliced off the top as if it had been an egg-shell and presented us with the clean green shell full of clear juice. In the afternoon we came to Kottayam where an excellent lunch—I believe there were seven or eight courses—awaited us in a rest-house charmingly situated, with a blue and green view. There was water in the distance and palms, of course, so far as could be seen. The rest-house was solid and comfortable. I should like to have stayed there a long time, but a launch waited on a forest lake. We were told we must reach camp by night-fall. So, turning sharp inland, we drove over a mountain range, its lower slopes carpeted with tea, and came eventually to a river which fed a large expanse of water artificially created. The dam is described by Mackenzie as "a work unique in the history of engineering—built amidst unprecedented difficulties across a turbulent river whose highest flood discharge exceeds that of the Thames at Windsor fifteen times, and was equal to half the average flow of Niagara: impounding a lake covering more than 8,000 acres, with a maximum possible depth of 176 feet."



## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

On the lake, with its six miles of distributing canals, modern and model Travancore can justifiably congratulate itself, but for me the interest of the district lay in its isolation from any form of civilization. The Maharajah, who does not care for shooting, has made this forest into a sanctuary. So elephants and tiger, bison, elk and even the rare black panther, its cimmerian coat showing a mottling of bronze-dark spots, apparently under the fur, may sometimes be seen. Equally shy are the primitive people who live, almost as nomadic as the birds, among jungle-covered hills. Of these the wildest are the Pandarams of whom it is supposed that only a hundred or two exist. They live in caves or the hollows of trees. They wear bark and eat what grows in the forest. They make fire with flint and steel. When their craving for salt becomes irresistible, they creep down by night to the edge of a tea plantation or the outskirts of an Oorali village, where they make a heap of the products they consider most precious, honey, nuts, wax, jungle-fowls, fish and sometimes ivory. Planters and villagers know what this means. They accept the offering as if it were manna from heaven and set in its place a parcel of salt. When the moon sets, this disappears, but I never met anyone who had seen a Pandaram.

"I sat up all night within a few yards of the salt," said a forest ranger. "I'm sure I didn't go to sleep, yet I saw nothing and heard nothing. In the morning the salt was gone."

"What is the Pandaram religion?" I asked.

"Fear," retorted the ranger.

## INTERLUDE AMONG THE TREE-FUGITIVES

**T**O the undoubted Kingdom of the Elephants we went from Trivandrum, so pleasant a town in Southern India and the capital of Travancore.

His Highness the Maharajah warned us:

“You may find a herd right across the road and if they have young ones with them you won’t be able to go any further. Only last week an indignant mother, objecting to a motor which she thought came altogether too near her child, turned the car completely upside down. It’s a mercy she didn’t tread on it as well.”

Chastened by such tales, we started up-country in a little box of a car with tyres that punctured every few miles. While the exasperated driver sat in the dust mending and re-mending, the village boys, brown as coffee berries, shinned up coco-nut palms and knocked down the ripest nuts.

Coco-nut milk on a hot day is better than any number of cups of tea. I believe I drank the contents of at least half a dozen nuts before we reached the forest where everything is upside down. By that I mean that the earth belongs to elephants and all the people take refuge from them in tree-houses, perched among the branches after the fashion of birds’ nests.

We slept that first night in a camp built of reed matting. Every sound echoed through walls which might just as well have been brown paper. The funniest animals scuttled across the earthen floors.

## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

Bandicoots, rather like nice, fat and furry rats, sat up on their hind legs and looked at us. A mongoose which, I think, is like a striped grey squirrel with all the curves flattened out of his back and tail, finished a meal of snakes under my bed.

The camp, in the middle of Periyar forest, stood on the shores of a lake which had been scientifically dammed. Drowned trees, gibbet-like, reared out of the water. They were leafless and curiously silvered. Between the naked trunks drifted an occasional snake-boat, with high curved prow and stern manned by a dozen rowers. The camp was surrounded by elephant trenches. These must have been at least twenty feet deep and as wide as an ordinary room. A guard tent was pitched above the lake. Night and day, sentries were on duty. We used to hear the tramp of their feet and the clatter of their rifle-butts as we lay awake in the hamper-like rooms opening on to reed and cane porches. Whenever I woke, I heard also the noises that one imagines belong to a zoo. A tiger roared—fortunately on the other side of the trench—and a bison replied with an angry bellow, perhaps because the killer wanted to make a late supper off her calf.

The great deer called sambur communicated with each other in deep, bell-like tones. Nearer and nearer came the trumpeting of elephants.

When I woke in the morning and looked out of the gaps in the reed walls, I saw a whole herd had come down to the lake. They were on the farther shore, several great tusked, a lot of females, and three babies. It was amusing to watch them drawing the water up in their trunks and blowing it, in best shower-bath fashion, over their backs.

Something startled them and they pounded out of the

## INTERLUDE AMONG THE TREE-FUGITIVES

water. The tuskers put up their trunks and trumpeted defiance while the rest of the herd made for the jungle. In his struggles to get out one baby lost his footing and rolled over. Two of the males seized his legs and pulled him along like a bundle.

Later in the morning we set off in the same direction, but in a long, dug-out canoe paddled by a strange assortment of red-brown men, none of whom came up to my shoulder. One of them had a bow and arrow with which he proposed to shoot fish, if he saw any nice plump ones in the shallows. Another had a sling and a handful of stones, the pathetic defence of his people against elephants.

A forest ranger explained to me:

"Their whole life is spent in terror of elephants. At the first cry of 'Ani!' [elephant] every villager leaves the ground! It's like a flock of monkeys taking to the trees. Mothers with babies on their backs go up the tall ladders to the tree-houses quicker than you or I could run up the steps of a porch.

"The men get their drums and make as much noise as possible, but they won't leave the tree-tops. From the little platforms in front of their refuges they shoot their arrows and sling their stones, while the elephants, unaffected by such feeble missiles, go on eating the mealie crops and the patches of sugar-cane."

Between the drowned trees, which stuck out of the water, bleached as skeletons, we paddled until we came to a back-water where a river of tadpoles swam in a solid black line towards the lake. With cries of delight, our crew sprang overboard. They didn't care whether we upset or not. Here was food for a week!

Knee-deep in water and fat black pulp that would eventually turn into bull-frogs nearly the size of soup-plates,

## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

they plunged their arms into the wriggling mass and drew up handfuls of future lunch and dinner.

The bodies of the tadpoles were rather larger than shillings, with plump, pennon-shaped tails an inch or two long. One of the little men thrust a fistful into his mouth, then choked and spluttered as some of the tadpoles wriggled out again and flopped from his chin to his chest.

Cautiously, we made our way up a thread of a path with the forest hanging over us, towards the scraps of open hillside where the tree-men had planted their yams, which are like long and knobbly potatoes.

Besides the poor little crops, always at the mercy of elephants, were the oddest houses I have ever seen. Each consisted of a single room like a straw hamper, balanced on a platform which projected perhaps four feet in front of the hole serving as door and window combined, some forty feet above the ground.

Most of the houses were built on the top of shortened trunks so that they looked like top-heavy growths, but some were constructed in the clefts of branches with creepers trained as curtains. The only means of approach were the long ladders with rungs wide apart, clumsily made of the nearest forest material.

I didn't much enjoy climbing the tallest ladders, which shook in protest at my size. "Oh dear, I have never seen so large a woman!" wailed the little tree people, thinking of me perhaps as kin to the elephants, their enemies and at the same time their gods, for anything so big, so strong, and so impossible to destroy must surely be divine.

Inside the straw houses there was nothing but a bed made of reeds mounted on split cane, and a few jars and cooking-pots of clay.

"These people have no possessions," said the forest

#### INTERLUDE AMONG THE TREE-FUGITIVES

ranger. "They've no use for money. They're quite happy because they've nothing to lose, except, of course, their lives."

"But they aren't happy!" I protested. "They live in continual terror. At any moment a rogue elephant may come along and shake down their houses—just for fun."

"That is the privilege of a god," said my companion. And at that moment there was a horrified scream. "Anil Anil!"

A tiny brown woman came running down the hill. The head of the baby on her back nearly wobbled off its neck. Then from every side came other startled brown figures, and the ladders swayed and sagged under the weight of the fugitives.

Cries and the terrified thudding of drums, a frantic search for weapons—one little man beat an empty bottle against what might once have been the lid of a biscuit-box—all this heralded the approach of two enormous elephants.

Unheeding, the great beasts passed. Evidently they were not hungry. The little people prostrated themselves in gratitude, but they dared not yet leave their sky houses.

"What shall I give them?" I asked.

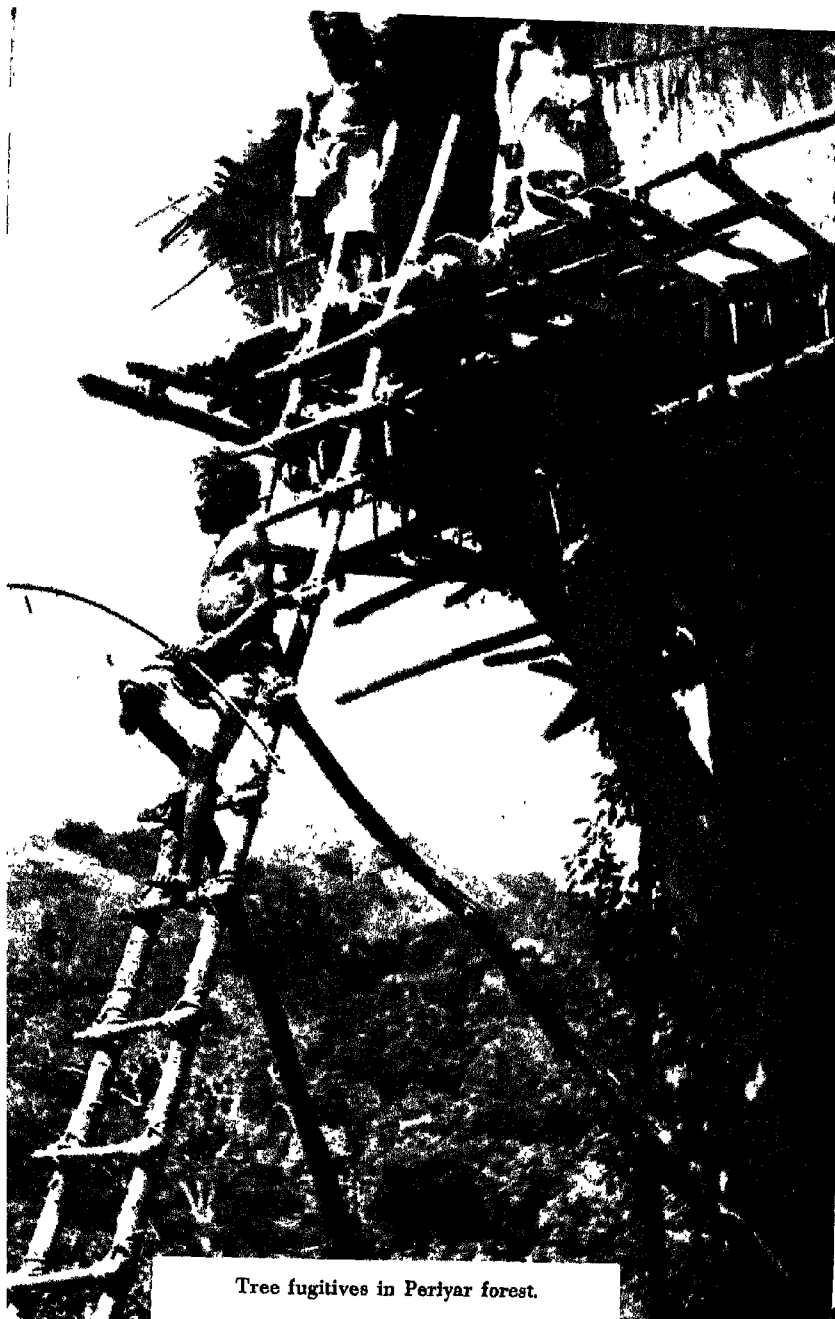
"Tell them you'll send salt," instructed the ranger. "It's the only thing they want. They can't get it in the forest. It's wealth and food and medicine combined. They'll be quite ready to worship you—on the same level as an elephant—if you send them a pound or two of salt."

## HYDERABAD

**F**IRST among the Princes of India comes the Nizam of Hyderabad. This great Moslem monarch, Ruler of an independent State about the size of Britain, is probably the richest man in the world. His revenue is seven million pounds sterling and his civil list a thousand pounds a day. Nobody knows the value of his jewels and treasure because nobody ever sees them, but legend insists that in the vaults of the fort which has withstood innumerable sieges, lies hidden an accumulation of precious stones and gold to the value of over fifty millions.

His Exalted Highness, entitled, with four other Indian Rulers, those of Mysore, Baroda, Kashmir, and Gwalior, to a salute of twenty-one guns, officially described as the "Faithful Ally of the British Empire", is not only the premier Prince of India, but the predominating religious personality in orthodox Islam. Mustapha Kemal, creator of modern Turkey, the only "Dictator" who never says more than he intends to fulfil, abolished the Ottoman Caliphate. *No longer is the ruler of Turkey the spiritual head of Islam.* So the 80,000 orthodox Moslems in India who would have regarded a Sultan in Constantinople with the homage that Roman Catholics accord to the Pope in Rome, are inclined to transfer their traditional allegiance, spiritual and cultural, to the Ruler of Hyderabad.

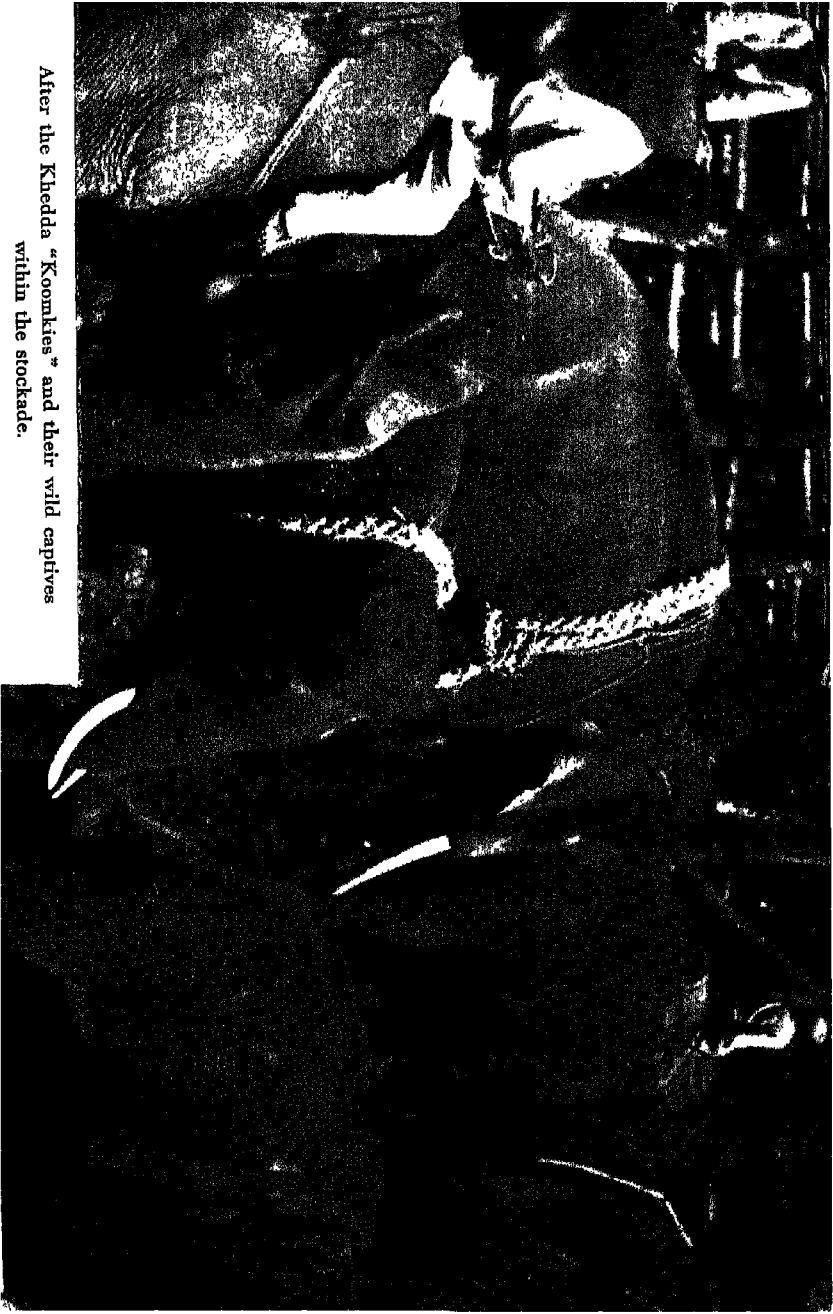
The State population is almost entirely Hindu. Ninety per cent. of the people are connected by race, language,



Tree fugitives in Periyar forest.



After the Khedda "Koomkies" and their wild captives  
within the stockade.



## HYDERABAD

religion and customs, with the millions of other Hindus across their borders, so, in case of Federation, with a resultant growth of democracy all over India, the Nizam would find himself faced with an exceedingly difficult problem. The territorial integrity of Hyderabad is guaranteed by treaty with the British Government, but a Socialist Ministry in Whitehall might find it difficult to implement an alliance made with a Moslem ruler should such be against the wishes of the vast majority of his subjects. On the other hand, any failure to support the Nizam would imperil British relations with his co-religionists all over India, and it is on the whole, the Moslems, more accustomed to battle than debate, who favour the continuance of British rule.

A nice problem evidently looms in the future for the representatives of democracy in England, requested to support the same principles in India. It may not materialize because both the Nizam and his Ministers realize the importance of Hindu opinion. By an impartial and effective administration, by legislation which, since the war, has been particularly progressive, they are contributing to the material development and the social prosperity of the country, so that unless religion becomes a tool in the hands of politicians, Hyderabad may well remain a contented State tending towards constitutional if not yet democratic government under the ægis of intelligent Princes whose Faith is their own private affair, but whose position as leader of that Faith must add to the prestige of their country.

The present Nizam was born in 1886 and in 1911 he succeeded his munificent father, who lived royally after the spacious fashion of the great Moghuls. He is the seventh monarch of his line and a lineal descendant of the first Nizam, Asaf Jah, Viceroy of the Deccan under the Emperor Aurungzeb, last of the Moghuls to reign in Delhi. His

## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

illustrious family has a yet more famous ancestor in Abu Bakr, successor to the Prophet Mohammed as Caliph of Islam. Unlike the other twenty-one-gun Princes, the Nizam has never visited Europe. He is a recluse, averse to travel and to any form of ostentation. His wealthiest subjects may travel in Rolls-Royces. Their Ruler is more likely to be seen in a Ford. Moslem hospitality is famous all over the world. Symbolic of their generosity is the Arab saying that "a host must cut up his body to feed his guests", but the Nizam does not entertain if he can possibly avoid it. His Guest Houses are often empty, his magnificent tigers left to their own devices.

Educated by an English tutor, he speaks English well, but prefers Persian to European literature. His life is one of excessive frugality and his only extravagance seems to be a large zenana. When he travels in his own country, or moves to his palace in Delhi, his household, mobilized for the occasion, is said to include two hundred women. Steeped in Moghul traditions, living in the manner customary to Moslems of the ruling classes all over Asia and Africa, the Nizam could hardly be expected to believe that Hindu intellectuals are suited, not only to rule, but to defend an independent India. Yet, averse as he is to the general run of politics, he would probably agree to Federation if the integrity of Hyderabad were guaranteed and his own position safeguarded.

In Sir Akbar Hydari, first Minister of Finance, then Prime Minister, the Nizam has an able supporter who, representing Hyderabad at the Round Table Conference in London, proved himself the equal of both Western and Eastern statesmen. Sir Akbar is astute, intelligent and eminently sensible. He is also courageous and generous. With the blood of warriors in his veins, he is reasonably democratic,

## HYDERABAD

immensely hospitable, and as kindly as the fabulous Maharajah, Sir Pertab Singh, where humble people are concerned.

Sir Hydari, lunching with me near the unromantic Marble Arch, invited me to stay in more imaginative buildings of marble, to study the premier State of India under his guidance and, by way of relaxation, to shoot unnumbered tigers in what, according to the map, appears to be unlimited open country.

The heir to such vast lands and such an unusual racial problem, the Prince of Berar, eldest son of the Nizam, married a daughter of the last Sultan of Turkey, while his younger brother married a niece of this exiled monarch. So the ruling family of Hyderabad is irrevocably allied with the fountain-head of orthodox Islam and committed to the principle of the Caliphate. Were any future Nizam to be deprived of temporal power, it would be interesting to see if his position would gradually develop on the lines of the Papacy. An Indian Caliph would not necessarily be confined to an Indian Vatican. But, so far, Islam, whose Saints have often been beggars and whose learned men have been content with rags, seems unable, where the Caliphate is concerned, to separate the idea of spiritual from temporal authority.

Islam reached India in the eighth century of our era when trade reached across the ocean, from Arabia, where the Caliphate was established at Baghdad, to the ports south of Bombay. It was not until the famous Mahmoud of Ghazni crossed the Afghan border in the first of a series of invasions, that India realized the fighting force of the new religion. In the Koran, there is much material taken from the Bible and it is possible that the first idea of the Prophet Mohammed was to unite the Semitic and monotheistic religions of

Judaism and Christianity under a new Prophet. His first great sermon preached upon the hills of Safa in Western Arabia proved a strong human appeal against the pessimism which had begun to infiltrate the ancient Hindu and Buddhist religions. It was bound to appeal to the lingering simplicity in mankind. The Indian mind, however, is complex. It can comprehend the intricacies of the Vedas, yet the new religion made converts in India because of its regard for the primal passions.

Strangely enough, the Koran which is a complete social as well as a moral code, gave women rights superior to any possessed by their contemporaries except those living under a matriarchate. In law they acquired an equal footing with men. Under no circumstances can a Moslem woman who is *sui juris* be married without her own express consent. The husband must make a settlement on her before marriage, which is a civil act and gives a man no power over his wife's property. A woman is entitled to use her own earnings as she chooses. She has a legal right to maintenance for herself and her children. She has guardianship over her son till he is four years old and over her daughter till she is marriageable. She can sue debtors in open court, deal with her own property as she chooses, and claim the law's protection against a husband's brutality. Neither father nor husband have any legal authority over her after she comes of age, but contrary custom has superseded the Koranic law, because, owing to the strictness of their purdah, the average Moslem women are isolated, insufficiently educated, and sometimes unnecessarily delicate. Polygamy was allowed, but not encouraged, and even in the third century after the Hegira (the Prophet's flight from Mecca) the Mutazalite doctors taught that the law of the Koran inculcated monogamy. Amir Ali, writing of present-day conditions, states

## HYDERABAD

that he regards polygamy "as an adulterous connection and as contrary to the spirit of Islam, an opinion which is shared by a large number of Mussulmans."

In Hyderabad I argued with a learned historian about the vexed question of purdah, for the veiling of women was enforced by the Moslem conquest, yet I can find nothing in the Koran or the sayings of the Prophet to support the suggestion that it is a fundamental part of Moslem law. The Indian with whom I visited the archæological treasures of Hyderabad, referred, as usual, to the one phrase in which the Prophet enjoins that true-believing women should hide their "zeinab", their beauty, from men. But this word may logically apply to the body rather than the face. My elderly companion whose family kept strict purdah, became very excited and insisted, with indignation, "while I live no man shall look upon my daughter unveiled in my house". Throughout India, I found the strongest objection to breach of purdah among Moslems.

The effect of the Mohammedan occupation of India has been considerable. Apart from the cloistered position it forced on women, in direct contrast it would seem to the teachings of the Prophet whose daughter led an army into battle and whose first wife, Khadija, was one of the most remarkable characters in Arab history, it altered the personal habits of its converts. The Indian Moslem is a magnificent fighter, but so also are Sikhs, Rajputs, Pathans and Ghòorkas. Where the sons of the Prophet differ radically from their fellow-countrymen is in their aversion to the caste system. "In Islam all true believers belong to the same caste," says an Arab traveller, but a more modern writer affirms that although "in the sight of Allah and of his Prophet all followers of Islam are equal, in India caste is in the air and its contagion has spread even to Mohammedans . . . As

## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

the twice-born Aryan is to the mass of Hindus, so is the Mohammedan of alleged Arab, Persian, Afghan or Moghul origin to the rank and file of his co-religionists."

In effect, though there are social distinctions among Indian Moslems, as is inevitable, these have no religious basis like the Hindu caste system. The brotherhood of Islam is its strongest quality, but to-day it applies only to men. For the women of the poorer classes who keep the most rigid purdah suffer noticeably in health and mentality.

Some Moslem women in Hyderabad have left their zenanas and are doing excellent social service work, and some of the Princesses of the Nizam's family do not keep strict purdah, so it may be hoped that this heritage of the Moslem conquest, alien to ancient India, will pass with the era of war, ignorance and ruthless cruelty in which it was inaugurated.

Almsgiving is a primal duty among the Moslems. So is sobriety and an abstemious mode of life. Usury is not allowed, for the follower of the Arabian Prophet is not allowed "to make money by using money." Unfortunately many humble Moslems find ways of evading this law, but as a body of public opinion, they are opposed to the wholesale usury by means of which peasant and artisan are always in the grip of the moneylenders, expert, intelligent and rapacious, with their future mortgaged and their crop or their work already owed.

Hyderabad is so large a State, for its 82,000 square miles would cover more than the whole of England and Scotland, that it is difficult to generalize about conditions. There are feudatory landowners within the country of the Nizam whose dominions equal in size many of the States with rulers entitled to salutes. One of these paramount nobles actually has direct treaty relations with the British

## HYDERABAD

Government and is entitled to a tribute of guns and the style of a "Highness".

The Moslems of Hyderabad, influenced no doubt by the policy of their rulers, are particularly staunch in their adherence to Britain. At the time of the European war, the Nizam urged his co-religionists throughout India to support the cause of the Allies, reminding them that "there is no Muslim or non-Muslim Power in the world under which they enjoyed such personal and religious liberty as they did in India."

The learned historian who took me to Ajanta, knew as much about present conditions in India as about the wars of the Moghuls or the penetration of Buddhism into the Deccan. First of all, he quoted to me Rabindranath Tagore: "It is my conviction that my countrymen will truly gain their India by fighting against the education which teaches them that a country is greater than the ideals of humanity. . . . Japan thinks she is getting powerful through adopting Western methods, but, after she has exhausted her inheritance, only the borrowed weapons of civilization will remain to her. . . . We, in India, must make up our minds that we cannot borrow other people's history and that if we trifle with our own, we are committing suicide. When you borrow things that do not belong to your life, they only serve to crush your life. And therefore, I believe, that it does India no good to compete with Western civilization in its own field . . ."

"There," said the historian, "you have the opinion of a Hindu. It is a new venture, for apart from Mahatma Gandhi's insistence on spinning as a symbol of Indian self-sufficiency, the Hindu idea has been to imitate first England, then Russia. We have never been so tempted. Our great men, Shah Reza Khan in Persia, the Ghazi in Turkey, have



from the beginning been impressed by the qualities inherent in their own people. They have wanted to make the best possible Persians or Turks, not bad copies of Europeans."

After a pause, he added: "Lenin, strangely enough, had something of Tagore's philosophy. He wanted to release the Russian from an unsympathetic foreign civilization, but he only succeeded in substituting the unsuitable ideas of Marx for the unsuitable ideas of Peter the Great. You may disagree with me, but I think Islam has been wiser. She accepts what is profitable in your machine-made civilization and links it to her own."

I noticed that my companion, born in Hyderabad, partially educated in Robert College, Constantinople, with degrees taken in New York, spoke of Islam as if it were united, throughout the world, like Jewry.

I asked him what he thought of British rule in India and he was enthusiastic about its material aspect. I forget most of the figures he gave me, but he listed tens of thousands of miles of railways, roads and canals built. Britain had achieved little short of a miracle in less than a hundred years, he said. With never more than 156,000 of her people in the peninsula, of whom two-thirds were women and soldiers,<sup>1</sup> she had established law and order, kept peace on the frontier, restricted plague and famines, abolished wholesale strangling and poisoning, and put more than thirty million acres under cultivation as a result of monumental irrigation schemes. But, naturally, Indians, and especially Hindus, could not be expected to appreciate all this, for no Eastern, unless it be the Japanese, said my companion, or such supermen as the Shah of Persia or the President of Turkey, worships efficiency as do the Teutons and the Anglo-Saxons.

"The Hindu," he insisted, "enjoys the second-rate. He

<sup>1</sup> 60,000 soldiers and 46,000 women.

## HYDERABAD

doesn't want the best of anything. It is too expert. It savours too much of the machine. He likes something left to chance. That's where the second-best comes in."

I thought that the Hindu worships within his own soul a hundred gods whereas we have only one, the Machine which Gandhi hates and Tagore sees as a spiritual as well as a material force.

Before we reached Ajanta we succeeded in attaching to us a Hindu student who greatly admired the historian. With these two men, so different in character, for one was definite and the other fluid in his ideas, I visited hermitages and cave-temples belonging to the third great Indian religion.

Chinese travellers, among them the famous Hiuen Tsang, who so deliciously describes the blood-red city of a thousand Buddhas, Bamyan in Afghanistan, speak of the work progressing in the fifth and sixth centuries A.D.; but, a hundred years later, still unfinished, it apparently came to an end.

Ajanta has twenty-six caves, some of them viharas or colleges composed of innumerable monastic cells, and others chaityas containing a stupa of pyramidal form hewn out of the rock. The frescoes which show Indo-Greek, Persian, Iranian and Chinese influence, depict the experiences of Buddha throughout his incarnations as related in the Jatakas. Sixteen caves are so decorated in the most delicate colours, but with a boldness of design and draughtsmanship that is remarkable. To me, the most interesting thing was the beauty of the women and their prominence in the series of paintings which represent seven centuries of Indian art.

Mr. Gladstone Solomon writes: "The Ajanta masters use women as their best decorative asset, under one aspect only, that of their beauty."

## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

Every detail of feminine perfection was evidently studied and meticulously reproduced by a succession of artists for whom beauty was hardly even second to godliness. The hands of some of the princesses portrayed are as exquisite as those seen in Spanish or Dutch portraits of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

"See," said the Hindu, pointing to the "dying princess", "her hands are like flowers." Then he said a curious thing. "There is no terror in these paintings, and I do not think there can be beauty without fear. Kali is beautiful, for she is very terrible. She absorbs everything."

Seated upon a rock, carefully cleaning his spectacles, he spoke of all the races which had poured into India, the pantheistic Dravidians, Aryans, Scythians, Greeks, Arabs, Persians, Afghans, Moghuls and British, with the Russians or the Japanese still to come, and of all the religions left in the land, the Sikh, the Jain, the Parsec, the Buddhist, the Brahmin, the variety of Christian cults, animism and the worship of sun and moon, of beasts, reptiles and birds, but, delighting in an intellectual pessimism, he saw Kali, the goddess of destruction, predominant over all.

"She is our inspiration," he said, and spoke of the Slav and the Hindu as united by an exaggerated inferiority complex which, through a multiplicity of fears, found satisfaction in destroying an existing order without full consciousness of what it wished to substitute.

The historian preferred facts. He quoted the number of civil servants working in India, of which he maintained that less than one in a hundred were British and of these, he said, a number were technicians and mechanics. In the police, the percentage of Europeans was even lower and among the judges, certainly not more than one in ten or twelve was a foreigner. "There are only a handful of Englishmen left in

## HYDERABAD

the Government," he insisted, "and most of those don't want to stay."

The student's family came from Bengal. His sympathies were with the Congress. He admired the material prosperity of Hyderabad, but objected on principle to monarchy. "It is retrogressive," he said.

"So is Kali," countered the historian. "So is your nationalism. The world of Islam is international and that is the solution of the Indian as well as the European problem. Both continents are in the same state of uncertainty. No Hindu has the faintest conception of democracy and in most European countries it is out of date. The history of the future may be that of two great systems or unions of races pitted one against the other, the internationalism of the East against that of the West."

"Then Russia will come in with us," said the student. "Her mentality is ours—and she has evolved a satisfactory system in Central Asia." He looked sternly at me while he uttered the last words. "You've seen it. You know," he insisted.

"I saw the spirit of Kali triumphant," I retorted, wondering for the hundredth time what the Soviet system could give to Central Asia in return for the elimination of her Moslem faith.

"There is beauty in destruction," repeated the student, but he agreed that if the British left India, it would be a world question rather than an Imperial, or a national one.

After many such conversations, for Indian ideas take to themselves words with an ease unknown to Anglo-Saxons, I found it difficult to concentrate my attention on the ancient buildings in Hyderabad, on the garrison life in adjacent Secunderabad, on reforms and sanitary improvements, on architecture, commerce and transport. But I was firmly

taken to see the Osmania University where teaching is in the vernacular. Sir Akbar Haidari's Memorandum on the subject affirms that this is essential in order "to engender a spirit of inquiry and research," but the use of the vernacular only must limit the scope of both these admirable objectives.

Undoubtedly, the present administration has done much to improve living conditions, to beautify the city by means of magnificent public buildings, to help the farmer and peasant to get the best out of the soil which, from the Western Ghats half-way across the State, is rich and heavy and holds water well, to improve the strength of the cotton staple, to reduce taxation and to increase the standard of education. A third of the cloth worn by the fifteen million inhabitants of Hyderabad is said to be woven on the country's hand-loom, but there is an urgent demand for mechanized industry to supply the cheap goods for which European influence has fostered an ever-increasing demand. "Bigger and better factories!" is the cry of educated youths whom only starvation would force back to their villages. Hyderabad, like British India, has her problems of middle-class unemployment, of men with brilliant university careers working for a pittance at tasks which could be done by any clerk.

With one problem more or less unique, unless it can be compared to that of Jaipur, where the Jaghirdars (hereditary nobles) absorb about a third of the revenue, the Nizam has dealt in effective manner. The Paigah estates were owned by nobles having feudal rights over their people, and although these were connected by marriage with the ruling house, many of them were autocrats, squandering their substance and doing little for their peasants. In 1912, the Nizam appointed an English Administrator to deal with the finances of these enormous estates

## HYDERABAD

and so successful were the tactics employed that not only were the estates rescued from debt and grasping creditors, but the senior Paigah nobles have now learned to manage their own affairs and the Nizam's court is once more the centre of a prosperous aristocracy whose villagers have benefited as much as their lords.

Of all cities in Southern India, Hyderabad best lends itself to the idea of a feudal court. The roofs of its great buildings, whether they be ancient mosques or the modern Osmania Hospital, the High Court or the colleges, are surmounted by "bubbles blown of dreams", an irresponsible and wholly delightful collection of domes which, like carnival balloons, might be expected at any moment to break loose and float into the sky.

"In Hydrabad," says John de la Valette, referring not to the architecture, direct heritage of the Moghuls, but to the social system, "the future is being moulded on the solid basis of what is enduring in the past."

## MYSORE

**M**YSORE, second of the twenty-one gun States, was re-created as a Hindu Principality after the British defeat of Tippoo Sultan, who said that it was better to live one year as a tiger than a thousand as a sheep.

No less than four wars had wrecked the finances and disorganized the life of the country, but by restoring a Hindu dynasty it was ensured that six million, out of whom only 350,000 are Moslems, should be ruled by a Prince of the predominating faith. In 1831, after a period of excessive misrule, British administrators were appointed to take charge of the country, and for fifty years this form of government continued. As a result Mysore, like Britain "having gone to school with Rome", found herself in the front rank of progress, and, owing to the quality of her subsequent Rulers, she has kept her proud place ever since.

The present Maharajah, Sri Krishnaraja Wadayar Bahadur IV, was born in 1884 and installed on the ancient throne of his people when he was only eleven years old. More than any other Prince of India he symbolizes the ancient Hindu ideal of a King. Rigidly orthodox, he will not eat with Europeans, and when he came to London two or three years ago, he brought his own cooks and in his hotel suite had two rooms specially prepared, one as a temple and one as a kitchen. Yet this Hindu Ruler, who is not the least interested in politics and would never play the leading part

## MYSORE

at Delhi to which he is entitled, has a Moslem Prime Minister in the person of Sir Mirza Ismail.

Monarch and Diwan have been friends and fellow-students since their boyhood. The administration of Mysore is in the hands of this Prime Minister, assisted by three members of Council, but all matters of importance, are referred to the Maharajah who has always taken a great interest in the progress of his country. Mysore is as model a State as one can conceive. It has its difficulties, for, as the townsfolk and many of the villagers are well-educated, agitators and orators employed by Congress have been able to appeal to intellects hungry for new material. Rural India dearly loves a meeting. It doesn't much matter what it is about, so long as the speeches are vigorous and violent. In Mysore there are lots of young students who, in spite of every effort of an enterprising and imaginative administration, cannot find employment of the kind they think they deserve and indeed in some cases do deserve, for the university student is a very hard worker with an aptitude for passing examinations. With the spate of young lawyers, doctors and potential government employees pouring out of the colleges, intent on some form of clerical post, looking upon the first steps in industry as a makeshift to be avoided if possible, and agriculture as a definite retrogression, it is not surprising that Congress eloquence should make converts by promising a new heaven and a new earth, both of them Indian. Still further reforms are demanded, not by the peasants who are in a large majority, but by a class who make politics their profession and who, under the wing of Congress, imagine that, if they can only make enough trouble, they will secure positions for themselves in a new regime.

On the other hand, in a State where one religion pre-



dominates, there are bound to be the usual disputes between Brahmin and non-Brahmin. These probably affect the life of a devout and simple people more than political agitation.

To ensure that his subjects took an interest in their own government and felt that they had a share in it, the last Maharajah, who died young, instituted an elected Representative Assembly. His son added, in 1911, a Legislative Council with a majority of non-official members. These popular bodies discuss all legislation before it is submitted to His Highness. They also pass the State Budget, but Ministers are appointed by the Prince.

In comparing Mysore with less advanced States, it must be remembered that it is a large country with an area of 29,433 square miles, and that it has considerable natural wealth from its gold mines at Kolar.

Twenty years ago a Prime Minister of Mysore had drawn up a five-year plan with regard to industrialization and the development of agricultural resources as intricate and as interesting in structure as anything the Soviet Government have produced. But the difficulty with which such optimists are faced in Mysore, as in Asiatic Russia, is that about three-quarters of the population are engaged in agriculture and cannot profitably, or even reasonably be industrialized.

Mysore silks are famous all over India. Generally, when I have admired a sari in far-off Kashmir, in Calcutta, or in Trincomali, I have been told the material came from Mysore. So it is natural that the silk industry should in this well-organized State, rank in importance immediately after gold mining. I believe fifty-five thousand acres are already planted with mulberry trees and the area is increasing every year.

When I first visited Mysore after the war, the Director of Agriculture, an enthusiast who insisted that a 5 per cent.

## MYSORE

increase of production in his own department would do more for the prosperity of the State than a 50 per cent. increase in manufactured goods, believed that a new plough was essential. Its adoption by the peasants who do not like anything new and who consider their soil too light for deep ploughing, would depend on its being cheap, simple, of comparatively similar appearance to the age-old pattern in general use, and entirely fool-proof. I remember we talked about this plough much as the Nehru family talk of an independent India. It would, said the Director of Agriculture, solve all the problems connected with a hard, dry soil which should be broken up before the rains.

In Mysore it is easy to become enthusiastic, for there is none of that stagnatory feeling induced by too many unproductive points of view.

There are echoes of an ancient and unchanging mode of life behind zenana walls, when a woman, constrained, perhaps, by her much-travelled husband to receive a foreigner, says, in effect: "Why should I give up purdah? It is comfortable and peaceful. It saves me all embarrassment. To a certain extent it saves me thinking. I have enough to do co-ordinating all my various relationships with women, relatives, friends and dependants. Why should I be embarrassed by having to meet and find points of contact with men? I don't want to go out. It would make me feel uncomfortable."

Historic Mysore, with an origin sufficiently ancient to be embodied in the legends of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, is symbolized in the Dasehra celebration lasting eight or nine days in which the Maharajah, ceasing to be a temporal ruler, becomes for the period of the festival, a God. As such, he must not be touched by human hands, with the result that he cannot logically be shaved or washed,

or brushed or clothed, for, being still a Prince, he should not perform such menial operations for himself. On a hill opposite the city of Mysore, strange conglomeration of two civilizations, stands a temple wherein is supposed to dwell in spirit an ancestress of the ruling line. To this place, sacred to the memory of a queen, the Maharajah makes pilgrimage at the beginning of the festival, and in communion with his unnumbered great-grandmothers, receives a temporary godhead. The climax of the ceremonies occurs on the eighth day when the whole city, and apparently most of the country-side, pour out on to a vast open space with the army in review order, and there wait for the moment when the Maharajah, who has arrived in procession with elephants and music, banners, riot of colour, and a court magnificently jewelled, shall, in the privacy of a State tent, be deprived of the divinity thrust upon him. Once more a human being, he can be washed and shaved with all the ceremony due to an occasion which may quite well last two hours.

By torchlight the Ruler returns to his palace, and that night his principal subjects see him and his diamonds—one commentator writes “the diamonds and their Maharajah”—as a shape scintillating with light. For jewels are supposed to have magic properties. An Indian Prince must wear them, so that their virtue, passing through his body, symbolizing the people of the land, may spread prosperity, magnificence, security, and glory throughout the country.

In the hills near Ootacamund, the summer station for Poona, where East meets West, and the families of Maharajahs on holiday, British officers and officials on leave, meet in the hot weather, I saw a festival of the Todas, said by some to be one of the lost tribes of Israel. Their language is a blend of Tamil and Sanskrit. Their physique is magnificent. The women wear their hair in long, well-oiled curls

## MYSORE

and the men have a thick, bushy mane falling to their shoulders. The sexes do not mix. When children greet their father, they kneel before him and he draws the big toe of the right foot, then that of the left foot, over their heads where the neatest of partings run from the forehead backwards. In the early morning, when the Todas come out of their huts to salute the sun, their reverence takes the form of a gesture with the thumb pressed against the nose. Like the Israelites the Todas are a pastoral race and occasionally I saw among them a face with a startling resemblance to pictures of biblical shepherds. They practise polyandry, and, as is usually the case under this system, the women have an assured position. Toda families live in small, bamboo huts, with their cattle in a neighbouring stone-walled enclosure. The dairy is a sacred place and the milkman akin to divinity. Everyone, even his own father, bows to the earth before the god-milkman, who alone, apparently, does not salute the sun. No human being except another milkman could legitimately touch him. If he were so defiled he would lose his sacred office. Consequently he cannot marry, nor must he approach another person except on two days of the week. He can shout to his people across intervening space, but he must not attend any of their funeral ceremonies, nor must he ever cross a bridge, or cut his hair or his nails.

The Todas are animists and it is said that none of them have ever been converted to other religions.

On the occasion of the festival most of the men wore voluminous white cloths. As many as possible crouched like clumsy birds, pelicans for choice, upon the stone wall surrounding their temple which was a hut roofed with thatch. The chief priest was a splendid old man in a purple turban striped with gold. Like Esau, he was hairy, with a

## INDIA OF THE PRINCLS

mighty beard and a thick growth on his chest. He held a wand and waved it while he addressed the multitude of hillmen. While he spoke two men danced monotonously within the temple compound. They were naked and they continuously beat their hands together, uttering a curious wailing protest. I was told they were devil-dancers who would keep away evil spirits. Later, a number of priests stood in a circle with their hands pressed together, and chanted an invocation to the sun, posturing the while with the left foot turned rigidly inwards.

I could not understand either the words or the symbolism, but, after the ceremony was over, it was amusing to watch a flood-tide of hillmen, all in white, pouring over wall and rock towards the place appointed for the feast. The men ate alone. They sat in a rough circle, drinking from a huge communal pot, manipulating with their fingers rice, vegetables and roots. The women remained apart in their huts, eating in a somewhat grim silence. Animals are sacred to the Todas so none of them taste meat except once a year when all the adult males of a village join in the ceremony of killing a young calf—with a club made from a sacred tree—and eating it roasted on the embers of certain woods.

On the way back to a town in the plains, it happened that we stopped for water. The radiator was leaking. In a hollow tree-trunk there was an image of Ganesh, the Elephant God. In front of him a stone, stained red and covered with a strip of gaudy material, formed an altar. Heads of flowers were heaped upon it and a small boy, who looked about six years old, was seated in the dust reflectively eating grain out of a begging-bowl. After a while he placed some of his food on the altar, mumbling a prayer or a recitation, while he stared at us with large and mischievous brown eyes. Steam poured out of the radiator, and the

## MYSORE

child stopped eating to watch. There was a certain inviolability about his attitude, yet I thought of him as a village imp playing with a toy god instead of a doll. But the driver suddenly took it into his head to make obeisance before the roughly-carved Ganesh in the split tree. It was, he said, a particularly holy shrine and we should have no more difficulties with the radiator. It would not even be necessary to repair the leak, for Ganesh was always kind to travellers and would certainly see that we came to no harm. Into the begging bowl he dropped an infinitesimal coin. The boy took no notice. Then the driver explained that this child was the hereditary priest of the village. The office had come to him upon the premature death of his father. During a pilgrimage, for Ganesh of the tree was famous in the neighbourhood, he might garner several hundred rupees, and at all times he would be fed by pious villagers. He would, of course, make a very good marriage, he would grow fat and gamble and be much sought after by women, continued the driver, and he would not really have much power, because there were a number of shrines in the neighbourhood and the place was full of priests.

With such mixture of faith and contempt, a young and adequately-trained Indian mechanic talked of Ganesh and his child attendant. Then he drove us back, away from the old Mysore with its bullock-carts and buffaloes, its cows wandering at will, its clusters of one-storied mud huts with little holes under the roofs for windows, its women walking proudly with water-jars on their heads; its naked children with stomachs swollen after a meal; and its whole families working on the land to earn an average of £20 a year—from all this and a few centuries ago, we drove to the city of Mysore which is planning for as many generations ahead.

Next day, with an exceedingly intelligent Government

official who was not interested in Ganesh, or the Todas, or even the Daschra festival which conferred divinity upon a Prince whom he, in common with other civil servants, admired for entirely mundane qualities, I went to see the Mysore University, the Engineering and Medical Colleges, the Land Bank which is really a co-operative society, the immense reservoir which supplies power for a hydro-electric plant, the sandalwood oil factory, in fact all that the State had created with an intelligent eye to the future. We talked, not of devil-dancing and the lost tribes of Israel, not of the friendly qualities of Ganesh and the absurd little scamp with enormous eyes, who was already a priest, but of pig-iron, wood alcohol, irrigation and the lakhs of rupees which had been expended on the development of industry. "A fifth of our total revenue goes on education," said the official.

Diffidently I suggested that in view of Congress propaganda, which is always more easily disseminated among those who have been stimulated and excited, not contented by education, this was perhaps too much. But governmental Mysore has inherited, after those fifty years of tutelage, the British point of view. Prince and Ministers combine to give to the masses what they have found best for an eclectic few.

All at once my new friend and I were discussing England and India. "Tell me honestly," I said, "what has been our fundamental mistake? I don't mean anything to do with politics. Generalizing, of course, how do you explain the incompatibility between our two races in British India?"

"I think it's probably because your people originally regarded India as a money-making concern. They weren't content to make their permanent homes here and pass on the wealth they'd made from father to son, like the Dutch in

the East Indies. They stayed here just long enough to become rich. Then they packed up and went home. That's it, you see. None of your officers and officials who were making a living out of India ever regarded it as their home. Nobody would have minded sharing India with you so long as you had looked upon it as your own country. If you had, so to speak, taken Indian nationality, you could have done what you liked out here."

That evening I talked with some of the college teachers. One of them came from British India and preferred the atmosphere of a State because, he said, no difference was made in Mysore between the European and the Indian. For that reason, he thought, my countrymen were generally popular in the States. Under the Princes they worked hard for the benefit of the country, and talked very little about what they had done. It was a simple and satisfactory arrangement. British officials and experts were well paid. The States were well served.

The conversation turned to British India. There is little difference between the mentality of the peasant whether he happens to be, let us say, a Gujarati in royal Baroda or a Gujarati under British rule, and the racial quality is naturally similar in adjacent lands whether they be State-owned or ruled from Delhi. Nor can there be a vast difference between the social and economic systems, the religious customs and traditions of peoples of the same kin whether they are living within or without the borders of independent States.

Perhaps feudalism, centring round the pageantry of a court makes life less monotonous under princely rule. Nobles and landowners have a freer hand outside British India. But the main differences between the States and the India that has to a considerable extent been carved out of their original territories, is the suggestion in the latter of a



## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

military and industrial occupation and the irritation caused by what opposing politicians consider the sores of Imperialism and Nationalism. Both points of view are sincere, and as such the more difficult to coincide.

"We have always admired your great writers and statesmen," said a Professor of Economics who had taken his degree in London. "From the middle towards the end of the last century we were your intellectual imitators. Your prestige was then at its height. I don't know if we resented you as foreigners, but we certainly appreciated you as superiors. Then you became obsessed by your Empire. Disraeli talked too much about it. You became masters instead of teachers. Kipling invented a humiliating phrase about the white man's burden. You must acknowledge that was unforgivable, for we had not asked for your support. You can't wonder that we were annoyed at being treated as a burden, when we had contributed enormously to your convenience, wealth and prestige. For the last thirty years and more you've been talking about your Empire and the need either for expansion or for development. We haven't enjoyed the feeling of being exploited and while the older men bitterly regretted the Englishmen in whom they found sympathetic counsellors, the young ones who had never known this aspect of the British raj, who had nothing, therefore, to admire and respect, became intolerant of your Imperialism. Kipling expressed exactly the attitude that was bound to awake Indian Nationalism, and Lord Curzon, with his greed of empire, roused it to action. It was inevitable but tragic that the Viceroy who wished to extend the frontiers of Imperialism to include Afghanistan and Persia should be to a great extent the cause of their present limitations. For you cannot get back the old, subservient India. Amritsar was the climax of a mistaken policy. Even the old

## MYSORE

men whose loyalty had welcomed generation after generation of your people into the same regiments and the same official posts, were horrified at such unnecessary slaughter. You had been severely tried, that is true. You were faced with the necessity for strong measures, but the crawling order, the floggings, the desertion of the wounded and the dead—that was too much. It was completely unlike you as our fathers had known you. We, the sons of the men who admired and followed you, find it incomprehensible and the best we can do is to leave it at that.”

It was strange to hear the echoes of General Dyer's firing order on the forbidden mass meeting which gathered within the walled garden in Amritsar, so far south in the independent State of Mysore. I suggested that, however misguided the action had been, it had broken a rebellion and thus saved an infinity of lives, but a young teacher interrupted. “It made martyrs,” he insisted, “and the ghosts of such give far more trouble than any number of rebels.” He cited parallel cases in the history of Central Europe.

“You must remember,” said the Professor of Economics, “that though you won the war and it was certainly better to win it than to lose it, the years of so-called peace which followed have destroyed once and for all our appreciation of European civilization. You cannot expect us to wish that such conditions should be imposed upon India. We here are none of us politicians, but we are students of world affairs and we must come to the conclusion that there is little civilization left in the West. You can no longer, therefore, maintain that Europe is the pattern on which India should model herself.”

The others agreed. “Ask us to work with you, Europeans and Indians together, to see if we can't evolve something new and better than either of us possess at the moment and

## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

we will do our best to forget," said a young man with enormous horn-rimmed spectacles. He looked like a beneficent owl. Simultaneously several other young men, all wearing spectacles, interrupted to express similar views, but it was the Professor of Economics who concluded the discussion by saying: "Both British and Indians have much to forget, but it must be done. It has *got* to be done. For there can be no parting of the ways. We must go on together. It is too late for us to separate."

Throughout the Indian States, in those which are exceedingly backward as well as in the great modern Principalities, I found the same general feeling—that India and England could not logically part.

## BARODA

**I**N the house of her only daughter, in Calcutta, I met the Maharani of Baroda. It was a privilege for, to me, this Princess of strong character and definite ideas is typical of the spirit of her people. The daughter of Sardar Bajirao Ghatge of Dewas, she comes of fighting stock and would be quite capable of leading an army in the fashion of the magnificent eighteenth century.

I remember the Maharani as slight and worn with a blaze of light in her eyes, arrogant eyes that would not make for others the allowances she never dreamed of asking for herself. She had beautiful manners, but she was completely detached. I supposed her an effective critic of East and West, sufficiently disillusioned to be capable of either bridging or widening the gap between two civilizations. She ate the hottest curry ever conceived and not without purpose, it was pressed upon those guests who, without understanding or sense of proportion, wanted to experiment with India. For the Maharani, tired, proud, still intransigent, scornful of the weaknesses of both peoples, a tower of strength to her own, a good friend and an equally good enemy to the race which she could admire or despise according to qualities rather than appearance, was impatient of pretences. She could not be impressed. Forced by circumstances to an outward show of tolerance, sensitive and consequently the more apparently unassailable, she had never abated her own standards, or willingly suffered the curtailment of a right.

## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

we will do our best to forget," said a young man with enormous horn-rimmed spectacles. He looked like a beneficent owl. Simultaneously several other young men, all wearing spectacles, interrupted to express similar views, but it was the Professor of Economics who concluded the discussion by saying: "Both British and Indians have much to forget, but it must be done. It has *got* to be done. For there can be no parting of the ways. We must go on together. It is too late for us to separate."

Throughout the Indian States, in those which are exceedingly backward as well as in the great modern Principalities, I found the same general feeling—that India and England could not logically part.

## BARODA

IN the house of her only daughter, in Calcutta, I met the Maharani of Baroda. It was a privilege for, to me, this Princess of strong character and definite ideas is typical of the spirit of her people. The daughter of Sardar Bajirao Ghatge of Dewas, she comes of fighting stock and would be quite capable of leading an army in the fashion of the magnificent eighteenth century.

I remember the Maharani as slight and worn with a blaze of light in her eyes, arrogant eyes that would not make for others the allowances she never dreamed of asking for herself. She had beautiful manners, but she was completely detached. I supposed her an effective critic of East and West, sufficiently disillusioned to be capable of either bridging or widening the gap between two civilizations. She ate the hottest curry ever conceived and not without purpose, it was pressed upon those guests who, without understanding or sense of proportion, wanted to experiment with India. For the Maharani, tired, proud, still intransigent, scornful of the weaknesses of both peoples, a tower of strength to her own, a good friend and an equally good enemy to the race which she could admire or despise according to qualities rather than appearance, was impatient of pretences. She could not be impressed. Forced by circumstances to an outward show of tolerance, sensitive and consequently the more apparently unassailable, she had never abated her own standards, or willingly suffered the curtailment of a right.

She did not believe in privileges. She was most simply and with the utmost assurance a Queen.

I could imagine her surrounded by men in Council, in a tent for choice, with desperate action pending. Then weariness and boredom would be stripped from her. She would flame into life. None would criticize. None would question her decisions.

A remarkable woman, fierce, proud, strong, a mixture of impatience and calm, a gambler not above playing with human dice, such is the wife of the present Gaekwar of Baroda and the mother of three sons, two of whom died sixteen and twenty years ago.

In that same house which the old Maharani dominated—with her few words and her eyes occasionally contemptuous, more often indifferent—when she happened to be staying there, I heard British India and the States discussed. “The Indian doesn’t hanker for the same law everywhere for everyone. He doesn’t want to find the same system of education and justice, the same code of morals in every place. He likes difference and variety. If he is in prison one week, it does not matter to him so long as he can imagine he has a chance of being a Minister or at least a member of Council the next,” said an Englishman who had served an Indian kingdom for close upon a lifetime.

He continued: “That is where State administration suits the popular idea of Government much better than the immense, impersonal and unwieldy bureaucracy of the Provinces, a system modelled in one continent and applied in another. The Indian spirit acknowledges no limitations, but physically the Hindu is accustomed to narrow boundaries and he is frightened outside them. His Maharajah is a real person and his own, like his conception of the godhead. He is like and unlike every other Indian

Prince in the same way that the facets of Krishna have their differences and their fundamental similarity. The Indian understands personal benefactions and personal exactions and he will introduce them himself into any system of government."

A young officer said: "There is too much monotony in first-class administration. Congress relieves this by quarrelling and by continuous indictment of the British. That's natural. The machine of British law and order is too much like the car of Jaganath. In British India headquarters are so far from the mass of the villages that nobody knows who is Providence in the shape of the actual ruler."

I remembered Sir Walter Lawrence's story of the two villagers staring at the statue of a Viceroy in Calcutta. "Who is that?" asked one. "Peradventure some demon or other," replied his friend with indifference.

Discussion continued under the roof of the Gaekwar's daughter. One man said that the Rajahs who spent much of their time in Europe must lose touch with their people. With acquired intellectual and physical tastes which India could not satisfy, they must become impatient of their countrymen's limitations. Another, who knew more of the States, disagreed on the ground that the change would only be on the surface. "It is impossible," he said, "to judge one race by the standards of another. I have known Rulers who, according to our ideas, were incompetent and casual, but who, because of their generosity and a certain fundamental wisdom, because of their good manners or just a good memory for names and local customs, were exceedingly popular among their own people. So long as the Rajah keeps in personal touch with his subjects he hasn't much to fear, for he can think their thoughts and see with their eyes, which we cannot do."



## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

Love of money, love of ease and idleness, love of a woman, love of cruelty, love of sport and speed, all these may cause trouble in an Indian State, but so long as the Prince does not break the personal link with his people he has immeasurable advantage over the officials doing the same work, better perhaps, but with less understanding of circumstance and character, in British India.

It was a curious conversation at the table of an Indian Princess. I remember the Maharani of Baroda looked as if she were in another world. She gave orders occasionally to the servants. Apparently she had not listened to the conversation of her daughter's guests, but when it came to an end she summed up the gist of everyone's opinions in a few sentences and added, if not her own, at least those which she chose us to believe were hers. She said: "Soon there will only be two real things left to us here, the Indian State and the Indian Village Council."

Baroda is one of the five great Principalities. It has an area of 8,164 square miles, a population of two-and-a-half million and a revenue of two million sterling. For sixty years it has been conscientiously ruled by the present Gaekwar, Sir Sayaji Rao, G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E., etc., an adopted son of the last Gaekwar but one. His Highness took possession of a difficult heritage, for in 1873 his predecessor had been arrested and tried before a special tribunal consisting of British officers, an Indian Ruler and Sir Dinkar Rao, on the charge of attempting to poison the British Agent. Previously a commission had been appointed to inquire into Malhar Rao Gaekwar's alleged maladministration. Neither by Treaty rights, nor by any recognized claim, had the British Government the right to arrest and try an Indian Ruler, so both the Princes and the Indian people were rendered indignant by this high-handed action. Unfortunately the

## BARODA

court was divided in its opinion. The British officers upheld a verdict of guilty. The Indians considered the charge unproved. There could be no reasonable doubt, however, about the maladministration, so, rightly or wrongly, the Gaekwar was deposed and his heirs precluded from the succession.

Since then graver cases of misrule have arisen and as serious criminal charges have been brought against various Princes, but there have been no further trials to uphold a sorry precedent. Forced abdications are not unknown, for the Imperial Government rightly interferes in cases of obvious maladministration, the misuse of sovereign powers, or crime proven and notorious. But the change in the relations between the Paramount Power and the Princely States is evidenced by the way in which undesirable rulers are induced "voluntarily" to cede their thrones, instead of being tried, condemned and exiled.

In 1903 the Maharajah of Indore, who had been responsible for murder, was "requested" to give up his ruling rights and when the criminal intentions of the Maharajah of Nabha justified the most drastic action, he was allowed to abdicate.

Malhar Rao Gaekwar's misrule can hardly have been exaggerated, for at the end of his reign, according to Edmund Burke, the Exchequer was served "by extortion as an assessor, fraud as a cashier, confusion as an accountant, concealment the reporter and oblivion the remembrancer".

No more tragic inheritance could pass to the boy of twelve, who was not royal, who had neither royal training nor tradition, but who was suddenly adopted by the widowed Maharani of a previous Gaekwar, as heir to the throne.

On the banks of the Nasik river, where holiness descends like manna, once in twelve years, live thirteen hundred

families of Brahmin priests. Hindu households of rank leave their records in the charge of these learned men, so, when an heir to Baroda was insisiently required, the family priests at Nasik searched their chronicles. Subsequently they announced that they had discovered the august lineage of a *farmer or small landowner established in the village of Kavhana*. He could undoubtedly trace his descent, they said, *from the brother of a Gaekwar who, in the eighteenth century, fought the Peshwa for the throne of Baroda.*

The second son of this simple household was chosen, taken away from the farm and brought up in a palace which must have seemed to him very much foreign ground. Miss Tottenham relates how this same boy, grown into a man, said to her: "I missed my father sorely when the Maharani adopted me. He was a fine man but very reserved and we were great friends. I used to wave to him from the balcony of the palace, taking care no one saw me, so that the old lady, Jumnabai Maharani, should not be jealous. I had no inclination for wrong-doing. I only wanted to be a good ruler and under nobody's thumb. I had no training in things ordinary and I never mixed with people. What you could teach me in five minutes, by myself I took five months or five years to learn."

At sixteen this boy, arbitrarily turned into a king, exiled from his people, his home and the life to which he had been brought up, a stranger still among strange ways, was married to the delicate niece of the Tanjore Maharani. The girl was often ill and suddenly, after five incomprehensible years, she died. The youth of twenty-one, established now in full command of the State which, during his minority, had been ruled by a Regent, Rajah Sir Madhava Rao, was left alone to take advantage or not as he chose of a Minister's precepts. "The safest, the simplest and the soundest way for



The Heir Apparent of Boroda sets out for the Dosschra Festival.



Rajah Man Singh's Palace at Gwalior.

a Maharajah to avoid, or to minimize, the interference of the British Government is to himself govern his country in the best manner possible."

The word "Gaekwar" means not so much herdsman as is sometimes stated, but protector of cows, which are sacred, and therefore protector of Religion, an Indian version of our Defender of the Faith. According to legend, the remote ancestor of Baroda's sovereigns won the title by saving a herd of cows from butchery by bandits, but it was not in their present State that they first assumed the royal privilege of defence. For like the Nizam in Hyderabad, Sindhia in Gwalior, Holkar in Indore and the Rajputs in many a conquered land, the Gaekwars were successful invaders.

When the Moghul empire dissolved into the concomitants of Princely and British India, the fierce Mahratta raiders made short work of Gujarat. Khanderao Dabhadi, their chieftain, was descended from the great Sivaji, "the mountain rat", leader of a band of wild adventurers, who rebelled against Aurungzeb, fought and won, fought and lost against the Emperor, until, for a short time, he could proclaim himself Rajah and "Champion of the Hindu Gods" in his mountain fortress of Raigbur.

In the veins of Khanderao this Robin Hood blood ran strong, and it was combined with the pride of the mountain lords, the Great Rathas, descended from Aryan clansmen who had fought their way into the West, married the daughters of the stalwart indigenous races and established themselves much as the Norman barons in Saxon England. As his ancestors had flung themselves against the Moghuls, so Khanderao hurled himself upon Gujarat and exacted tribute from the Province. Gujarati have never been fighters. Even to-day they say: "Make friends of your enemy", and although they are completely different in character and

temperament from the Mahrattas to whom war is wine and song combined, they appear to get on quite well with the ruling class established by invasion. But this may be only under "the general disguise that is India".

In 1734 the lineal ancestor of the Gaekwars captured Baroda and ruled in Gujarat as Viceroy of the Mahratta King of Satara. There were more wars, against the remnants of the Moghuls, against the Peshwa, those ministers who, like the Grand Eunuchs in Peking and the Mamelukes in Cairo, usurped the powers of their weak masters. The Gaekwar of the day distinguished himself greatly at Panipat, where Moslem and Mahratta fought and "the long, lean knives of the Afghan" prevailed. He still held Gujarat and added to it what is now the district of Kadi.

After his death there were disputes among his sons and these continued among his grandsons, with the result that Arab mercenaries asserted themselves to the extent of plundering the administration of posts and the treasury of silver. Alliance with the British came just in time. By the Treaties of 1805 and 1817 the State of Baroda secured for itself protection against the greed of Holkar, the ambition of Sindhia and the intrigues of the Peshwa, in return for confiding its foreign policy to the British Government and the cession of districts representing a revenue of 2,431,969 rupees for payment of a subsidiary force of 4,000 Indian cavalry, one company of European artillery and two companies of gun-Lascars with the necessary ordinance and stores.

During the Mutiny there were disturbances in Gujarat, but another Khanderao Gaekwar proved as warm-hearted an ally as his ancestor of the same name had been to his King Satara. Of this able ruler and loyal supporter of the harassed British, Major-General Roberts said: "But for his

unswerving attachment and active assistance the position would have been untenable and the hold of authority on the whole of Western India seriously compromised."

This second Khanderao, whose widow adopted the Gaekwar of to-day, must have been an attractive and at the same time an exasperating character, for he was always initiating reforms and leaving them half-finished while he built a palace or expended a fortune on jewels or sport. He seems to have been a jovial, large-hearted Prince, beneficent in intention, who found relief from the administration he sincerely desired to improve in hunting and other pleasures suited to the Mahratta tradition.

He was succeeded in 1870 by a brother who was then in prison for treason, so it is not surprising that this Prince's reign should have come to an end three years later with a murder trial.

The heritage of the Gaekwars passed to the present Ruler who, like Hitler, can say of himself: "Whatever mistakes I have made with regard to the rest of the world, I have made none that my own people can blame." But after a most conscientious administration which, in sixty years, has put Baroda in the forefront of the modern States and well ahead of British India in some aspects of education and in certain social laws, His Highness is still faced with problems which are the legacy of a troubled past.

Baroda is acknowledged to be one of the best governed States in India. It has a Legislative Council, consisting of 31 members, with a non-official majority, and an Executive Council comprising the Prime Minister, three other Ministers and two officers of State. There is a well-staffed Department of Industry and Commerce which has developed weaving, calico-printing, tanning, lacquer work and various smaller crafts. Rural uplift has given a further impetus to



the already effective work of the Departments of Agriculture, Co-operation and Health. The Maharani, whom I thought should have been a Zenobia, champion of Arabia against Rome—the East against the West—led the way among Indian Princesses by becoming, in 1926, Honorary President of the National Council of Women. A year later she presided over the first “All India Women’s Conference”. With her daughter, the Maharani of Cooch-Bchar, she has consistently opposed the purdah system and shown herself unveiled at the most formal religious festivals. “If only,” sighed this strange woman who has been accused of insularity and arrogance chiefly because she is an original, throned, half against her will, on traditions which minister to her pride as well as to her sense of isolation, “the right spirit could stir India’s women to-day, what wonderful things could be done!”<sup>1</sup> Miss Tottenham, recording this speech, suggests that the Maharani was thinking of the Princess Rajyasri who sat beside her father, King Harsha of Kathiawar and Gujarat and heard learned travellers from Persia and China discuss astronomy and philosophy with the politics and history of the world as it was then known.

Baroda had forbidden child marriage, as also Mysore and Indore, long before the Sardar Act in British India established the legitimate age for a girl at fourteen and for a boy at eighteen. In literacy, the State is also ahead of British India and while the Maharani’s example has done much to abolish purdah, the Gaekwar has encouraged the education of women in every possible way.

With regard to the Depressed Classes, he has given a lead to the whole of India, for, since 1883, special efforts have been made in Baroda to secure their education and co-operation in public life. Free schools and hostels for

<sup>1</sup> E. L. Tottenham in *Highnesses of Hindustan*.

these "Untouchables" were opened in the provincial towns as well as in the capital. Clothing, food and lodging were given to the students without any charge at all.

During the last fifty years much more has been accomplished. When I travelled through the State in 1930 there were already 217 schools for the Antiyaj and many thousands of these "depressed" people were being educated in the ordinary schools. At that time over 9 per cent. of Baroda's "Untouchables" were receiving liberal instruction, while the percentage of literates all over India, taking all classes together, amounted to 8.1.

Recently the Gackwar has been trying to make physical culture as compulsory as education. As a champion of what he calls "physical sanity", he has never lost an opportunity of combating the ancient social customs, such as infant marriage, the penalization of widows, caste privileges and purdah, which have done much to retard the progress of India.

With growing communications by road and rail, with the co-operative banks, the new port at Okha in the Gulf of Cutch, with ginning plants, mills and factorics, salt and chemical works, His Highness has introduced in Baroda what may be termed the modern industrial mentality. As yet it is only a reflection of the West, but, with this vision, confused and misunderstood, comes the unease, if not yet the active threat of Communism.

In Baroda, there was always an apparent difference between the handful of Mahrattas constituting the gentry and the Gujarati peasants dependent on their grazing and butter-making. Now, with education still ahead of industry and the latter importing its foremen from Bombay, there is a growing class of politicians. These appear to have nothing to do but agitate for change under the guise of unnecessary

reforms. Influenced by the ranker politics of the West, they have developed an exaggerated taste and capacity for intrigue. If they get the upper hand Baroda will be frustrated as the suburbs or the Provinces of Russia, where the most conscientious efforts fail under the burden of impractical design.

The Gaekwar is fully conscious of his difficulties in a State which, because of its area and composition, its coastline and the differences of mentality, is particularly amenable to suggestion. There are times when, tired of dissention, he has been inclined to surrender what he regards as a stewardship, when he has talked of being the last Maharajah of Baroda. But, however violently a political faction may demand responsibilities of whose weight it has no conception, the time has not come for a republic in Baroda, or in any other Indian State. The heritage of the Gaekwar must pass, not to the first President of some communist organization, but to a constitutional monarch who will carry on the work of the present Ruler and maintain for the sake of his people the personal element in authority which does not exist in Russia, bound beyond hope of rescue in immeasurable red tape. "Etymologically," said the Sovereign of a neighbouring State, "a Rajah is only he who *pleases* his people and keeps them well content. Protection is the very kernel of kingly duties, according to the Mahabharata; and of the 'six citadels in a kingdom', mentioned in our Holy Scriptures, the 'citadel of ready service and the love of the subjects' is the most impregnable."

In this sixth citadel certainly the Gaekwar deserves to be firmly established, for whatever mistakes in ceremonial he or his have made with regard to the Paramount Power, or that Power with regard to him, he has done well by Baroda.

## GWALIOR

GWALIOR ranks fourth among the five great States. It is ruled by the warrior Mahrattas and holds premier rank among them. The reigning family, the Sindhia, famous in Indian warfare, claim descent from the Rajputs, but their immediate ancestor was the mighty general Mahadji Rao.

Escaping from the holocaust of Panipat, where the knives of the Afghans broke the power of seventy thousand Mahrattas fighting with their women for a Brahmin Empire, the great Sindhia subsequently succeeded in carving a pirate state from the Moghul province of Mahwa and parts of Khandesh.

His whole life had been a battle. With the Peshwa's son, Wiswas Rao, "The hawk-winged horse of Damajee, mailed squadrons of the Bhao", he had in earlier days seized Lahore and dreamed of driving the Afghans from the Punjab. With his bandit chivalry, fiercest of all Indian raiders, he attacked in turn the Moghuls, the Nizam and the Portuguese, but he lost the fort at Gwalior which had been thought impregnable, and eventually, a statesman as well as a soldier, he came to terms with the British, by which, according to Aitchison "the independent power of Mahadji Sindhia in his relation with the British Government was recognized, but in all other respects, he continued ostentatiously to profess subjection to the Peshwa". This was the name of the original Prime Ministers of the Mahratta kingdom. They ruled, behind the throne, a succession of inconspicuous *rois*

*fenants* before their office was made hereditary and acquired sufficient power to include the throne had they so desired.

With the name of the great Sindhia, who defeated the Rajputs and who is the hero of Kipling's ballad:

"I held by Sindhia my lord as close  
As man might hold. . . .  
But Holkar's host were flying and our  
Chiefest chiefs were dead,"

is always connected the romantic tale of the Frenchman, de Boigne, adventurer and soldier of fortune to whom the Mahrattas owed much of their success. Compton describes the epic battle of Merta in 1792 when the Jodhpur Rathors flung themselves again and again against de Boigne's disciplined square, confronting the heroic Rajputs "unmoved as the rocks against which the storm waves are shattered and they rolled back broken but unbeaten. And so the ghastly sacrifice was consummated until only fifteen remained alive; and these, steadfast to the end, returned for the last time to the shambles of self immolation and found the death they sought".

Loyal to his hereditary master, the Peshwa, Sindhia refused the honour of the Viceroyalty offered him by the Emperor, Shah Alam, but before his death he was in effect, the ruler of India.

The State which his successors hold to-day covers an area of 25,382 square miles. It is therefore only a third of the size of Hyderabad, but larger than Greece. Its population is three and a half millions, of whom 84 per cent. are Hindus, and as among the other pirated States, the Mahrattas are represented by a very small minority, numbering about fourteen thousand. Only 6 per cent. of the population are Moslems, but where the plains of the Jumna river give

way towards the west to forest-covered hills, crowned with the castles of ancient war-lords, there are a number of aboriginal peoples whose religion is animist. They worship spirits who live in trees, hills and streams, and whose divinity includes their dwelling, so that any natural object may in itself be god or goddess.

In the early days of Sindhia rule, the forces of Gwalior were mercenaries—Arabs, Jats and Rohillas. The Maharrattas who have fought magnificently for Britain as well as—in three wars—against her, are enlisted largely from British India. The symbol of Gwalior is the ancient and inaccessible fortress, thrice captured by the British, and thrice restored to its own people. In the days of the Moghuls, it corresponded to that terrible “cage” on the Bosphorus where deposed monarchs, undesirable princes and heirs destined to disappear were imprisoned for the ominously short term of their lives. Seen from a distance across a flat plain broken into cultivation and misted with heat, the fortress rises like the hull of a battleship upon a wavering horizon. It is, in reality, a cliff of yellow sandstone crowned with battlements, thirty to thirty-five feet high. Stronghold and palace, with temples buried deep in caverns, the story of this “high place” must go back beyond what is known of its battles and its sieges.

In every Indian State there is a predominating factor which immediately impresses the traveller. It may be a harbour or a university, the personality of a Maharajah or a Maharani. It may be a religious or a political problem, as in Hyderabad, but Gwalior, like some of the Rajput States, is the epitome of all the wars she has known. We think, when we climb to the perilous eyrie defended with such courage and at such cost, not of the devotion her last rulers have displayed towards the British Crown, not of the admir-

able administration of the present young Maharajah, not even of the ancient State Army, "a vast Westernized service with many Europeans and men of mixed blood, a cadet service and generally a highly organized force and military system, built and controlled by the Count de Boigne",<sup>1</sup> or of the old premonition that only an adopted son could succeed proud Sindhia in Gwalior, but of the romance inseparable from the wars of Moghuls, Rajputs and Maharrattas.

The hill on which the fortress is built, or from which it grows so inevitably that masonry seems to have no part in its grandeur, is honeycombed with caves and cells. The oldest temple, dedicated to the four-armed Vishnu, patron of Rajput warriors, dates from the ninth century. Other shrines of Vishnu were built two hundred years later by the "Oilmen", the Telis who were itinerant traders travelling all over India with stores of oil balanced like panniers on either side of their lean bullocks. Pious and rich, they left a rosary of temples to mark the ways they trod.

Moslem conquerors, unfortunately, indulged in their usual iconoclasm, defacing the temples converted in the fifteenth century to the worship of Siva and his son, the friendly, elephant-headed Ganesh, and British engineers did their part when they occupied the fortress after the Mutiny. But the Jain saints, hewn out of solid rock during the short reigns of the Tonwars, still remain. So do the dungeons above the Dhonda gate, where Akbar imprisoned ambitious relatives whom he dared not publicly execute, and Aurungzeb "with many a foul and midnight murder fed", incarcerated his son and his brother, Murad Baksh. The latter was beheaded, but most of the other victims were forced to drink "poppy-water", a concoction of datura (the death-

<sup>1</sup> General Sir George MacMunn.

## GWALIOR

flower of India) and poppy-heads, used by the Thugs who, before the coming of Britain, were professional poisoners and stranglers. The beverage in which they specialized induced insanity and a particularly painful death.

Superb among the buildings crowning the fort is Mansingth's palace, built by a king of the Tonwar clan of Rajputs, with a façade three hundred feet long, and tall towers standing like lilies amidst foliage of richly carved balconies. Manucci, the Venetian traveller and chronicler of the seventeenth century, describes the town of Gwalior, clustering round the cliff which is the root and branch of her history, as being inhabited by "many musicians who gain a livelihood by their instruments. . . . Many people maintain it was on this mountain that the God, Apollo, first started Hindu music . . ." "Within this fortress is manufactured much oil of jasmine," he adds, and refers to the crystal springs irrigating gardens of cypresses and jasmine. These have disappeared with the profusion of water. To-day, the hill crouches above the plain, tawny and powdered with dust, like an old lion, the sheen gone from his coat.

As I sat on a rampart and looked down on the main roads leading north and south, I thought that the fortress, symbol of suzerainty, had been responsible for the destiny of succeeding peoples. For no army marching to the Deccan or Gujarat could leave it unsecured. The White Huns, invaders of the sixth century, took the fort from the Gupta Kings. Successive dynasties of Rajputs held it. In 1021 they lost it to that bold raider, Mahmoud of Ghazni, whose own castle between Kabul and Kandahar is built after the same pattern. Another Afghan invader, Shahab-ed-Din Ghari seized it at the end of the twelfth century and when the first Emperor of Delhi captured it in 1232, after a siege



of no less than eleven months, the Rajput women made the sacrifice of Johur. Having spent the previous night in the traditional prayers and preparations, they set forth, the queen and princesses with their ladies, children and young girls, the very old who had nothing to hope for and those who had not yet known anything but hope, to die by their own wish in a great tank within the walls of the fort. With their swords still reeking of blood, the blood of the women and children they had loved and slain, the Rajput warriors, clad in the saffron of their race's mourning, went to seek death in battle.

During the chaos following the fall of Aurungzeb, a Jat, ancestor of the present ruling house of Dholpur, took forcible possession of Gwalior, but was ousted by the Mahrattas who were then fighting the British for the empire lost to the Moghuls. Only the military genius of Wellington and Lake saved India from subserviency to a Mahratta confederacy, but it was a much less well-known soldier, Captain Popham, who took the fort at Gwalior in the violent heat of August 1780. Dacoits had discovered where the rocks could be scaled. The sepoy were provided with "shoes of woollen cloth, stuffed with cotton to prevent them slipping" and at midnight when all lights had been extinguished, a storming-party, carrying ladders, climbed the cliff, surmounted the deserted ramparts and forced the startled garrison to surrender. History relates that after twenty-five years had passed, the cost of the sepoy's woollen shoes was deducted from the then General Popham's pay.

Three years later, Sindhia's troops re-took their stronghold under the leadership of the indomitable de Boigne. After a lifetime as arbiter of the destiny of Mahratta India during her age of torture, this fabulous and romantic General of fortune sold his own regiment of Persian cavalry

to Lord Cornwallis, and retired to spend his last years in Chambery where he had been born. His retirement, and the death of his equally courageous patron, Mahadji Sindhia, erstwhile dependant and later patron of the Peshwa, put an end to the power of the stalwart marauders whose horsemen had passed like a cloud over the Deccan.

Four times the Mahrattas were defeated by the British, to the undoubted benefit of the countries they conquered without attempting to rule, for their capitals were camps from which they plundered all the villages within reach. They had, in those days, no creative culture, for, in spite of the taxes they levied, they left nothing useful or beautiful as a memorial to their rule which, like that of the Turks in Europe, appears to have been first destructive, then exceptionally casual.

The fort at Gwalior was held by the British for a year, then restored to the House of Sindhia, but re-taken after a revolt in 1844. During the Mutiny the Gwalior Contingent slaughtered a number of their officers within the walls which had seen so many massacres and later the incredible citadel was taken by the Indian Boadicea, the Rani of Jhansi who had been an ally of the British until Lord Dalhousie refused to allow her to adopt an heir. It was this tigress who was responsible for the murder, in May, 1857, of the remnants of the British garrison in Jhansi. Having promised them safe conduct to the nearest friendly post, she had men, women and children killed in her own gardens. She was then just twenty-two. A year later, with her inseparable companion, the favourite concubine of her late husband, both wearing the red and white uniform of Gwalior, she was cut down by a Hussar ignorant of her identity, as her horse stumbled, crossing a nullah. There, where she died as a soldier, fiercest of all who were then

opposing the British advance, she was buried by her devoted troops.

No chatri marks the grave of India's warrior queen, who defied an empire with a courage born of hatred and fostered by despair. But the Rani of Jhansi is one of the most dramatic as well as the most tragic figures connected with Gwalior's fortress. Her ally, another victim of the age, the notorious Tantia Topi who, for a brief period, was in possession of Gwalior, was tried and condemned for complicity in the crimes of Nana Sahib. Sixty miles south of the great fortress representing the destiny of a State, the majority of whose people are peaceful peasants, terrified of arms, a block of masonry was erected, with, in three languages the inscription: "Here Tantia Topi was hanged". Naturally the place is now haunted. Those who would pay homage to a patriot desperately resisting an implacable enemy, lay marigold heads and bowls of ghee upon the spot sanctified by legend—for the monument has been removed. Perhaps the savage spirit of Tantia, ablest of rebel leaders, a strategist skilled in guerilla warfare, betrayed at last by his most trusted follower—a serpent rather than a lion, but, whatever his qualities or vices, undefeatable—broods over the fortress behind which the sun sets, most suitably, in a haze of dust and blood.

To-day Gwalior is one of the model States. It is ruled by a young man, born in 1916, who succeeded to the Gadi in 1936. Few, if any, of the Indian princes are more popular within their own borders, for the youthful Maharajah has shown ability and foresight both in administering his country and in instituting schemes for her development. No doubt he has found a mentor in his friend and neighbour, the Maharaj Rana of Dholpur, with whom he often stays. The two men are very different in character. The

elder is a philosopher and a politician, subtle, intelligent and a brilliant talker. The younger is much more direct, with an equally charming manner and a happy smile, but concerned with Gwalior, rather than India, with the life of which he is at the beginning, rather than the many lives which his fellow Ruler sees as a familiar chain, the links already in his hand.

Every detail of State business is supervised by the Maharajah, but his authority is exercised through duly constituted legislative, executive and judicial bodies. There are eight Ministers of State and a Chief Secretary appointed by the Ruler, but the Legislative Council is composed of the people's representatives with an elected majority. Recent reforms have increased the responsibilities of this institution, but, in Gwalior, democracy advances more by the desire of the Maharajah, who is keenly interested in modern forms of government, than by the wish of his people. For there seems to be no great demand for representation among the villagers, who appear to be bewildered rather than enchanted by the new "rural uplift" scheme.

At a cost of ten million rupees, it is proposed to better the social, economic and physical conditions of the villagers. These at present live in much the same way as three hundred million others all over India. I visited two or three villages in which religion and caste played equally important roles. There seemed to be as many social distinctions among the multitude working at their various small trades or on the land, as in the cities of British India. Among the twenty-three market "towns" or big villages of Gwalior, I talked with educated merchants who told me caste was disappearing, that it was impossible to fulfil its obligations when travelling hurriedly on business. "Trains and motors have put an end to all this affair of special food and separate meals," they said.

"It is altogether too inconvenient to be obliged to refrain from intercourse with other castes, when commerce requires freedom of movement," insisted a young man in charge of a cotton ginning-plant, but another interposed:

"All the same, even in business, it's an advantage to be born a Brahmin."

I thought then of Eton and its free-masonry, wondering if, in the days to come, Brahminism will assume the principles of the "old school tie" and Kipling's circle be complete! But from such fantastic imaginings I was recalled by the young manager explaining that among merchants caste is much like a trades union. "Each craftsman has got to stick to his own work, but you have the same system in England. A cobbler doesn't suddenly become a mason."

"He could if he wanted to," I protested.

"Not without getting into trouble with his Union," triumphantly concluded my new acquaintance.

I pointed out that in the village from which I had just come there were no less than fifteen principal castes. There were also a number of sub-castes, so that life became a labyrinth of taboos. The unfortunate individual was never free, for he had as many duties to his family, including relatives of the fourth and sixth and tenth degrees, as to his caste. The young man then became so interested in the discussion that he ceased trying to show me samples of fine Chanderi muslins.

He said: "Do you really recommend the dole as an alternative to family obligation?"

I suggested that the necessity for finding work for unsuitable nephews, brothers and cousins diminished the efficiency of any departmental Indian. "Of course," I acknowledged, "the multiplicity of bureaucracy is a form of the dole."

"No," said the manager, "because it gives work for the wages received. It is a different principle. It is surely better for a man to work ineffectively than not at all."

We talked of the immense feeling of responsibility which every Indian has towards his relations, contrasting it with his responsibility towards the particular office or department in which he is anxious to place not the best men, but his own dependants.

"In the States, there is still sufficient power vested in the Maharajah and the nobles to ensure that every man who wants to work will find a job," insisted the cotton man.

We agreed that personal responsibility was the bugbear of every Indian official outside the Principalities. However truculent the Indian civil servant might be among his inferiors, whatever brand his politics, in an emergency he would not move an inch, he would not take the smallest decision without consulting the nearest British official.

"In the States it is different," reflected my companion. "Of course, our Maharajah is much more approachable than the British Government. There's no need to waste time going through all sorts of departments. In serious difficulty, relief can be had at once. In Gwalior, we're told we've got to make up our own minds and do what we think best at the moment, but, of course, we're always conscious of the palace."

It seemed to me that custom and tradition, respect, affection and the natural sycophancy of courtiers whose lives centre round the royal house, must retard the growth of responsibility, at least in the smaller States, whose Rulers find it hard to de-centralize. But on the whole, I thought, as I travelled through India of the Princes, there was a considerable sense of personal responsibility among the men in executive positions, and I attributed it to the fact that an

Indian would always rather serve an individual than a form.

Gwalior has its own light railway, two hundred and fifty miles of it, and nearly ten times as many miles of road, over which run a large number of motor-buses, but the endless bullock-carts won't be hustled out of the way. These ubiquitous objects, loaded with young animals, agricultural products, children, dung, a diversity of goods bought at the local market and women who, because their husbands have recently prospered a trifle, consider it a sign of respectability and social standing to cover their faces, litter the country-side. They are at once the four-wheelers and the bursting trunks of India, for everything animal or vegetable is contained in them.

In the days of the old Maharajah, Gwalior was famous for its tigers. I believe Lord Hardinge and his royal host shot nine in one day—from the backs of elephants which is far the most agreeable way of hunting. Later, when sport became artificial, in keeping with a synthetic age, somebody had the idea of encasing the so-called sportsmen in objects ranging from earthen pillar-boxes to towers of concrete. Surely a tiger-eaten guest or two could not matter so much that all over India, hospitable princes are inclined to pack the most famous shots within defences reminiscent of bullet proof waistcoats. The tiger, accustomed to seeing the erection every day, strolls across in front of it and the guest seated inside can put in a shot at close range in an interval between iced drinks.

But Gwalior for me will never be connected with jungle or burned plain, tawny as the lions' hide capes worn by chieftains in Abyssinia, nor will her people be merely the sun-dried peasants and artisans bent under a load, or bent over their ploughs, bent again over pestle or lathe or

cobbler's bench. Whether I motored up to the fort, "that pearl in the necklace of the castles of Hind, the summit of which the nimble-footed wind from below cannot reach, and on the bastions of which the rapid clouds never cast their shade"—past statues of Jain Saints, defaced by orders of the Moslem Emperor Babar, or whether I mounted the steep ascent to the Elephant Gate, suitably established upon the back of one of the royal beasts, I understood the relativity of time.

While some good-looking young Indian, seated easily beside me, smoking a cigarette, heedless of the shocks attendant upon elephant progress, told me of Gwalior's army—7,146 officers and men—of her irrigation works and her aeroplane routes, I thought of the centuries inserted like slides in a lantern, and the reflections cast upon the screen of the sky. They were so real to me, those pictures, that the figures in them took form. As the elephant paused in the dusk to make sure of the next precipitous step, the ghosts of immolated queens, of Aurungzeb's victims, of Rajput princesses praying for sons, warriors of every race and age who had found the death they craved, thronged out of the shadows. The beast moved slower and slower. I attributed his indecision not to the steepness of the way, but to the pressure of crowds, to the shriek of swords drawn from their scabbards. I saw, framed in the gate, the formidable figure of de Boigne, who left the service of Louis of France, "*le bien aimé*," for that of Russian Catherine, then fighting the Turks, and left her for Warren Hastings and finally served Sindhia, greatest of Gwalior's heroes. It was always with difficulty that I remembered the circumstances of to-day, and the interest in them which it behoved me to display. Inevitably, my companion thought me absent-minded.



## KASHMIR

WHEN the Moghul Emperor, Jehangir, lay dying in a tent, surrounded by his army at Lahore, he asked for only one thing. Generals and great officers of State pressed round his couch, begging for his last commands. Their lord could think of only one word, "Kashmir".

Like all his house, he loved the country, through which the advance guard of his Faith had fought their way to the conquest of India. Shalimar he loved as a woman and, like a woman he adorned her, but with gardens, not with jewels.

Kashmir State includes the territories of Jammu, Kashmir, Ladak, Baltistan and Gilgit and it occupies a vital position on the Northern Frontier. For no less than seven hundred miles its boundaries march with those of Tibet, Chinese and Russian Turkestan. Three empires meet on its borders, which are the vanguard of Indian defence in the extreme north. Kashmir has an area of 84,258 square miles and a population approximating to three-and-a-half million. The famous "Valley", an old lake bottom 5,000 feet above sea level, is a comparatively level plain covering some 1,600 square miles and surrounded on all sides by mountains. In it the Jhelum river rises from a sacred well and wanders away through the hills to the Punjab. Alexander crossed the Jhelum. Rajputs fought Greeks and Moghuls on its banks. Thomas Moore, who had never seen it, described its flooding waters with an artistry only equalled by that of the Emperors who, having converted to Islam all the Valley

inhabitants, except the Brahmins, raised there the most enchanting buildings reminiscent of their own Ferghana in what is now Soviet Usbegistan.

The long, barren ranges, north of the Punjab, rise to about 4,000 feet. The "Middle mountains" more than double that height and the great peaks belonging geographically to the Tibetan system achieve anything from 17,000 to 28,265 feet. The last is the second highest known summit in the world.

With a revenue of two million sterling, the Maharajah Sir Hari Singh, G.C.I.E., etc., who succeeded in 1925, has to deal with what is really a confederation of States corrugated with mountain ranges, so that many regions are inaccessible for months of the year.

The people of Kashmir offer as great a problem as their impenetrable hills, for the majority are Moslems with no sympathy for their Hindu rulers. In Jammu there are a number of Rajputs, among them the Dogras who provide some of the best fighting material in India. There are also a few Sikhs and some of the lesser breeds who shelter under the wide-spread Hindu umbrella. Throughout history the Kashmiri has been a victim. From his own character and the position of his country on the high road of invasion he was predestined to be conquered. Foreign rule, continuously changing, has made of him a rogue. His villainies are insignificant and habitual. They do not detract from his charm. The Kashmiri proper will always run rather than fight. He has a genius for the misrepresentation of the smallest and least important fact. Lamentably untrustworthy and undoubtedly attractive, he invites oppression, and a succession of conquerors have made habitual his natural inclination towards slavery. A hopeless people, but with a ready wit and an imagination that makes them the

first of story-tellers, they love and live on rumour. Indeed they are called "Hawabin", those who "see the air", to whom nothing is permanent or real, who become indolent and idle unless they are forced to struggle by oppression, and they themselves say they live under a curse. Yet they are excellent cultivators. They may not be courageous, noble or virile, they may not have the fighting qualities of the Rajput and the Dogra, but they are excellent cultivators, capable of developing their rich land, and their endless lies are often a form of courtesy, or a habit. Straight speech to so quick-witted a people is dull as cold boiled mutton. They offer prevarication as a spiced dish.

The history of Kashmir is as unlike that of other Indian States as are its position, its responsibilities and its peculiar military conditions. Until the present State was arbitrarily manufactured at the end of the first Sikh war, the territories it comprised had never been united under a single government. Kashmir, Baltistan and Gilgit had been conquered again and again and "the happy valley" with its surrounding parapets of mountains had for long been ruled by Moslems. Jammu and Ladakh had maintained a comparative independence. Gulap Singh the Rajput chieftain of Jammu, paid tribute to the Sikhs at Lahore. As a General, he fought under the banner of the great Runjhith Singh who drove Moghul and Afghan north along the road from Delhi and having established his Sikh kingdom where once he had been a governor, he followed his enemy across the Indus and even penetrated the Valley of Peshawar.

When Britain chose to interfere, to save the Phulkian States (States of the Flower) from Sikh ambitions, she went further than she had originally intended. War was disturbing to the trade she coveted and that trade must go surely and safely north. Indian firms had long financed the com-

merce of Central Asia. Britain and British India together were dismayed at the threat of French or Russian competition.

To Lord Wellesley and Lord Minto the Afghan menace was more than a spectre. The only thing to do was to build up along the Northern Frontier of India a barrier of friendly States which would be as effective an offence against commercial invasion as the great wall of China was against the barbarians. Steam traffic had spread from the Ganges to the Indus, but progress halted, for no wealth could pass from Delhi along the great Indus highway, blocked by the battles of Sikh and Afghan.

Central Asia was hungry for the merchandise of India. The road must be opened. So Gulap Singh, Rajah of Jammu, descended from the mythological Rajput line of Sri Ram Chandrasi, was offered the Province of Kashmir, originally Scythian-Hindu, then Moghul, then Afghan. In this curiously compounded mixture of peoples and countries, for part is logically Tibetan, the peasants were Moslem, the intellectuals Brahmin and the land-owners colonizing Sikhs or Afghans.

Fortunately Gulap Singh was an exceedingly astute man, or he would have had no chance among the conflicting elements of his new kingdom. *Remarking that this realm was one-third water, one-third mountain and one-third feudal fiefs undecided as to their attitude, he decided to improve its shape and general make-up. First he organized his army on European lines, with the example of his erstwhile allies and masters, the Sikhs, to indicate what he should imitate and what avoid. Then he proceeded to impose a forcible peace within his own unwieldy realm. Later he added to it the small States under the Hindu Kush and the Pamirs.*

## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

At the time of the Treaty of Amritsar (1846) which gave Kashmir to Gulap Singh and with it the status of a Maharajah, the Honourable East India Company were accused of being more dishonourable than usual. It was then said, and it is still said by anti-British politicians, that the Moslem Province of Kashmir was "sold" to a Hindu Prince for the traitor's thirty pieces of silver, in this case harmless enough, since they were, in actual fact, a portion of the Sikh war indemnity and the renunciation by Gulap Singh of a claim, "not proven", to certain Sikh treasure held in British India.

It was not, of course, in the power of the Company to sell a Province which they did not effectually hold, nor were they in a position to conquer it, but it was essential to their trade with Central Asia that a single rule and a strong one should hold the border passes. This the stalwart Gulap Singh and his successor, Maharajah Shree Ranbir Singhji, did most effectively at a gradually increasing cost to their exchequer. By 1889 the State was bankrupt and the old saying, "We are crying for food and the tax-collector is on our heels", was a common lament. With a memory of Aurungzeb's persecutions, the Brahmin pundits or landlords forced the Moslem peasantry to work for nothing. Soldiers were employed to oversee the ploughing and the harvesting of which latter they naturally took toll. This forced labour had ruined the land, for no peasant worked if he could help it in order to keep in idleness the clever and sophisticated Brahmins. Everything was taxed, including prostitution, marriages and grave-digging. Fruit, birch-bark, tobacco, hides, saffron, violets, silk and water-nuts were among the State Monopolies from which the Brahmins deducted a heavy percentage before the rest of the money found its way into the Treasury. When Sir Walter Lawrence was sent to Kashmir in 1889, during the temporary deposi-

tion of the charming Maharajah Pratab Singh, accused of indulging his subjects' taste for being ruled with violence or tyranny, his mission was to mitigate the hardships under which the peasants worked, to ensure cultivation and to restore land revenues to the Exchequer. In his remarkable books he pays tribute to the wisdom of the chief Mullah, the droll humour of the villages and the subtlety of Brahmin intelligence.

To-day about a seventh of the State revenue is devoted to the upkeep of an efficient and well-equipped army. A writer in *The Times of India* survey of the Ruling Princes (1930) says of Kashmir: "It is also of importance in another way, for it runs up to the confines of that mysterious country where three Empires meet and for this reason maintains a large and efficient force to which the custody of the longest stretch of external land frontier of any province is entrusted. The Maharajah, therefore, well deserves his title of 'Shield of Empire'."

Casual travellers are apt to consider Kashmir as an outsize Switzerland, an unrivalled scenic display, an emporium of shawls, rugs, copper vessels, with gods and turquoises from Tibet and a ramshackle Venice, beautiful and very much awry, for a capital. But, so long as the land-born trade exists between Central Asia and India, the camel caravans will pass on their six or eight months' journeys from the ports of the Indian Ocean and the manufacturing towns—whose machinery Gandhi would stop—through Kashmir and Ladak to the markets of Turkestan. From the commercial as well as the military point of view, therefore, Kashmir ranks in importance with the North-West Frontier and the Khyber, that other road into Central Asia which is rapidly replacing superstitions with machines.

In 1870 a trade treaty with the Government of India gave

## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

the State the right to levy its own customs and arrange reciprocity of transit duties. Under the new Soviet regimes, based on the development of home industries, the camel caravans crossing the frontier may dwindle from a stream of shaggy beasts roped head to tail, to a trickle of two-humped dromedaries, who knows? But Kashmir will still be the outpost of an Empire and of a system of civilization.

The armies of Gulap Singh and his immediate successors, modelled on the West and trained by Western adventurers, sufficed to control the extraordinary conglomeration of mountain peoples, worshipping Shiva and Buddha and the God of Islam; the Khans who claimed descent from Alexander's generals; the Brahmins, who had established their shrines on the ruins of Buddhist monasteries; and the heretical chiefs who paid tribute to the Aga Khan. Still fighting, this Dogra army, supported by Gurkha mercenaries, held a long foreign frontier, whose passes had become the channels for the intrigues, the rumours and the bribery by which Imperial Russia sought to undermine her rival's rule in India.

The Pamirs and the Hindu Kush acquired an added importance. Russian officers, Russian gold, Russian spies and adventurers, foiled in Persia, slipped over other frontiers. The bazaars of Peshawar and Seranagur told as good tales as those of Herat.

Long ago there had been a British agency in Gilgit. It was revived. British officers were sent to reinforce the training of the Kashmir army. So the Imperial Service troops came into being and on the penthouse slopes leading to the roof of the world, the Dogra forces of Jammu followed their English officers in a series of brilliant campaigns. The Khanjuti robbers of Hunza were laid low. Nilt was stormed with sensational courage, after a solitary

## KASHMIR

Sepoy called Nagdu had scaled the supposedly unassailable cliff in pitch darkness. Chitral was defended and Chilas held by 270 Kashmir troops against several thousand tribesmen who were finally routed by a remarkable counter-attack.

Since those splendid days the Kashmir army, which cannot recruit a man from among the people of the same name, has gone from strength to strength. This Rajput force, with Afghans and Sikhs in its ranks, has joined the British in many a gallant venture, from its famous march with Richard Lawrence to the relief of Delhi in 1857 and the later operations against Alai and in the Black Mountain, to its effective assistance in East Africa and Palestine during the Great War, and again during the Afghan war of 1919 and the North-West Frontier campaigns.

Kashmir may be the most beautiful State in India. Her mountains may be among the most spectacular in the world, her forests, her flowers and her fruits provide the most unexpected contrasts to the snow and ice of her glaciers, but she is, primarily the key to the Northern Gate of India. As such she must always be a fighting force as well as a commercial one.

Whenever politicians consider the machinery of Federation, the question of the Princes' share in the defence of India must inevitably be raised. The great States have stood most loyally by their Treaties with Britain. They have poured out men and money in an Imperial emergency, taking out more than their share in wars, which to Congress India appear as offensives. But by force of circumstances some of the smaller Principalities have been unable to ensure even their own internal security. British interference alone has maintained the necessary law and order. During the European War, the Kashmir Imperial Service Troops were maintained at a strength of 60,000 and the State contributed



31,000 of her subjects to the British army, yet no Kashmiri, beguiling rogue to whom truth and courage are alike unknown, shouldered a rifle with the martial Dogra of Jammu.

Kashmir, militarily secure, has as difficult internal problems as any State in India. For a long time the Government was in the hands of a Brahmin bureaucracy. These Pundits, with a religious rather than a civil education and no conception of national, let alone international, interests, treated the Moslems as serfs. With the rise of Nationalist principles after the war, inevitable discontent flared into rebellion. The Hindu-Moslem problem in Kashmir became headline news in the Indian Press, but it was not a religious dispute. It was a demonstration against a Ruler who had not succeeded in fusing the interests of his people and ruling for the equal benefit of them all.

In 1931 Moslem Nationalists entered Kashmir and British troops were despatched to put down the disturbances, which arose from their demonstrations. At the time the disorder was stigmatized as "communal", first cousin, at least, to communist, and a special ordinance was promulgated by the Viceroy authorizing Punjab magistrates to declare that four or five persons constituted the necessary "illegal assembly", if they met with the object of going to Kashmir to interfere with the existing administration. An official report subsequently declared that this "agitation was directed against the State" and that "it was not communal in the sense of being directed against any other community".

At the time the support of British and Indian troops allowed the Maharajah to re-establish an authority which was not then acceptable to the majority of his subjects, but an impartial inquiry followed and as a result His Highness instituted reforms on a large scale. A Legislative Council

## KASHMIR

was organized with a strong elected element, in which Moslems predominated. A British officer was appointed as Chief Minister, the peasants were relieved from all forms of forced labour, the activities of money-lenders were checked, co-operative credit societies and industrial schools were established, education facilitated and a measure of freedom was given to the Press.

Kashmir has still some way to go before it can be ranged among the most modern States, but there seems to be no fundamental rift between the indigenous Moslems who are, generally speaking, of a low class, ill-educated, superstitious, greedy and good-mannered, rendered idle by a certain physical well-being that is a result of the climate, and the old-fashioned orthodox Hindu or the Rajput soldier, but political dissension can easily be fostered. The Kashmiris have known too many grievances under a succession of conquerors to be happy without one.

In a setting of paradoxical charm, for in that particular district the cows were starving as well as sacred and I was not allowed to fish lest the soul of somebody's great-grandmother had entered into the trout, the houses had been tumbled about by earthquakes but they were delightfully coloured in ivory and amber, the chinat trees were an improbable green and the mountains an impossible blue, the boats, curved at stern and prow, long and brittle like a Chinese lady's nails, sped down, up and across stream in fantastic fashion, and some camels which had shed patches of fur so that they looked as if their under-clothes were too apparent, gazed reflectively at the ruins of an emerald-coloured temple—in this unsuitable setting, then, I talked with a very earnest young man. He was blind to the flight of duck and the extravagant beauty of everything in sight except the poplars, which, delicately gold and silver,

## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

were, in the best possible taste, inconspicuous. "It's no good being a Nationalist in Kashmir," he said with the utmost gloom, "for, as in every other State, the British Government always comes to the rescue of the Maharajah."

Protesting, I cited a good many instances of intervention on behalf of misruled peoples, but the young man was determined and one-sided, although undoubtedly honest in his convictions.

He said there were three reasons why the Nationalist Movement could not gain ground in the States—first because of the depressing belief that Britain would interfere; secondly because there was so little industrial development and "serfs who've never had a thought in the fields learn the free use of brains and tongues in a factory"; thirdly because Princes and Ministers, of the same race generally as the people they govern, with an understanding therefore of the general mentality, persuade the populace that they are already constitutionally ruled.

"I've been in a lot of States," said the young man with bitterness, "and there's always this illusion of representative government."

The eighty million people of the States would never combine, he said, either among themselves or with British India, and because they did not much mind being oppressed by rulers of their own race, with dark skins instead of pale ones, they would doubtless continue to preserve "useless and artificial monarchies that belonged to the middle ages."

It is, of course, true that the feudal elements in India, headed by the Princes and big land-owners, are sufficiently conservative to support the Imperial Government, not only for the sake of reflected prestige and the maintenance of their Treaty rights, but because the socialism of Congress is far more foreign to them than anything in foreign rule.

## KASHMIR

Supporters of Congress, as usual, go too far. By indicting one Prince after another they tilt against the windmill of conventional and inherited State opinion. This can be affected by incidental misrule, exaggerated personal extravagance on the part of an unpopular Prince, cruelty or exactions, but only time and a very long time could completely change it.

I asked the young man what he was doing so far from the Bengal university which was obviously his spiritual home. His answer was vague, but when I remonstrated with him for wasting his talents on a cause where, for every sentiment of genuine Nationalism, there are at least a dozen conflicting political designs, he replied that his instructions were rather to fight than to win. How well Mr. Forster expresses the difficulty of such conversations: "Nothing in India is identifiable: the mere asking of a question causes it to disappear or to merge into something else."

## BHOPAL

**A**FTER Hyderabad Bhopal is the most important Moslem State in India. It has an area of 7,000 square miles and a population of over 700,000. Two hundred years ago the State was founded by an Afghan general, Sardar Dost Mohammed Khan, who had served with great distinction the Moghul Emperor Aurungzeb. For half a century the subsequent history of the State consolidated out of the fragments of an empire, was one of continuous struggle for existence.

From earliest days women of the ruling family played a predominant part in Bhopal's history. For when Faiz Mohammed Khan relinquished the throne for a life of celibacy and religious austerity, his mother, Mameda Begum, ruled the country. She was apparently endowed with a strong character, a shrewd judgment and an unusual kindness of heart, for, in spite of the turbulent era in which she lived, she kept the affection of her subjects until her death in 1792. It was during her administration that Colonel Goddard was not only allowed to march through Bhopal, but was given every assistance as he hastened from Bengal to Bombay to support the claims of Raghuba to the Peshwaship. According to the records, "the State of Bhopal was the only Indian Power which showed itself friendly" to the forces of Britain, and from that date begins the long friendship which has existed between the two countries and which was not ratified by Treaty till considerably later.

## BHOPAL

Bhopal is the only Principality in India whose evolution and development has been due to a succession of women Rulers. For a hundred years it has been administered by one Begum after another. Each seems to have inherited the forcful character and the breadth of vision belonging to Mameda in the days of the Mahratta and Pindari wars. Succeeding Viceroy's of India have paid tribute to these remarkable women of whom the last was Nawab Sultan Jahan Begum, mother of the present Ruler. Succeeding, at the age of forty-three, her august mother, who built the State Railway and a large number of roads, adopted the rupee as legal tender and abolished the transit duty on salt, she lost her husband six months later and ruled alone for a quarter of a century.

Firmly believing in the necessity of seeing things for herself, the late Begum made the pilgrimage to Mecca in 1904, went to London for the coronation of King George V and subsequently toured most of Europe. A staunch Imperialist, she attended the Durbar of 1911, and when the world war broke out, she offered her own personal services in defence of the Empire. Reminiscent of the Rani of Jhansi, this heroic lady of approaching three score years was prepared to lead in person the troops she raised, and such an example served as a torch in the realms of Islam. When Turkey came into the war against the Allies the Begum must have been torn between her religious convictions and the Imperial duties she had assumed, but, with characteristic common sense, she issued a manifesto to her own subjects and to all Indian Moslems urging them to remain loyal to the Empire which had always defended their rights. Her sympathies must to a certain extent have been with her co-religionists and it is typical of this amazing woman's power of differentiating between the oblations due

## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

to Cæsar and to God, that she caused copies of the Koran and other religious literature to be disseminated among Moslem soldiers at the front.

Unnumbered were the services the Begum rendered to the Imperial Government during the four years of war, but they can be summarized by Lord Chelmsford's statement that, at the outbreak of hostilities, "your Highness placed all the resources of your State at His Majesty's disposal".

When the Prince of Wales visited India, Bhopal was among the first States to welcome him and the present Nawab was, at his mother's request, attached to H.R.H.'s staff.

Age and excessive grief at the death of her two elder sons, caused the late Begum to abdicate in 1926 in favour of her only remaining son who reigns to-day. The indomitable Princess who had done so much for her own country as well as for the Empire, did not die till 1930 and for the last years of her life, spent in comparative seclusion, she was granted as a personal distinction, by command of the King-Emperor, the continuance of the seventeen-gun salute due to the Ruler of Bhopal.

The most extraordinary thing about the late Begum was that, in spite of all her travels and the progressive modernization she imposed upon her State, she maintained the strictest purdah. Whether in India or in Europe, she appeared in public completely covered from head to foot in tent-like draperies of white with a mesh across the eyes through which, like other Moslem women, she could only see "as through a glass, darkly". In spite of that mesh, which reduces the world to a haze, in which objects and perspective are confused, the Begum saw all that she needed. Underneath her voluminous white draperies she often wore

European dress and on State occasions in Europe she surmounted the Burkha enjoined by Moslem tradition with the most magnificent diamond crown and a profusion of necklaces of the same precious stones.

It was an astounding sight in other years, to see this short, strong-built woman, in figure not unlike Queen Victoria whom she equalled in dignity, appear at a function entirely enveloped in folds of white stuff, gathered round the head into a close-fitting cap, above which rose the jewels of her choice. An order glittered where one imagined her breast to be and ropes of pearls hung over the voluminous drapery, but there was never a hint of the Begum's shape. Inviolable and mysterious because of her self-imposed detachment, she guarded herself and her very definite ideas from the people whom she knew far better than they could ever hope to know her.

Undoubtedly this great lady who has been described as a "sanctuary of purdah" did much to maintain the system in Bhopal. Her sympathies were wide and her encouragement of education liberal, but on the question of feminine emancipation she would not yield an inch.

It is curious that in India, whose queens have played so great a part in history, there are still women of intelligence and character who oppose with all the force and influence they possess any lifting of the veil imposed after the Moghul conquest by the imitative or the cautious.

With the death of the great Begum, Bhopal has made tentative strides towards femininism, led by the Heir-Apparent who is once again a woman. When I first met this Princess in London at the time of the Round Table Conference, she was small, slight, olive-skinned, with cropped dark hair. She did not often smile. Like her sisters, she was an expert musician, and when she played, her face changed. It was lit



## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

by a flame that made the flesh seem transparent. I had an idea then that she would burn herself away, so intense was she, so ardent, and yet so restrained.

Now, after a short and unsuccessful marriage, she has given up any semblance of purdah. She rides like a man, with wrists and muscles of whipcord. She plays polo, drives her own cars, is an excellent shot and I believe even flies a plane.

Inheriting her grandmother's energy and initiative, but applying them to modern conditions, the Princess who will one day reign in Bhopal, continuing the legend of the great Begums, is already a force in the country and probably the most original figure in India.

Meanwhile, a distinctive link in the chain of women Rulers, her father, H.H. Sikander Sanlat Iftikharul-Mulk, Nawab Mohammad Hamidulla Khan Bahadur, C.S.I., C.V.O., rules the State with the stalwart strength of his Afghan ancestors and the tolerance implanted by a varied education.

As a summary of Indian State policy, nothing could be more comprehensive than one of the Nawab of Bhopal's speeches to the Legislative Council: "A new order is taking the place of the old; and those who have any administrative responsibility, therefore, find themselves faced with a task which has to be approached with the greatest caution, prudence, and statesmanship. British India is forcing the pace towards complete self-government and we of the Indian States have declared more than once that our full sympathies are with them in their aspirations towards the attainment of Dominion status within the Empire . . . and further add that the Princes will be prepared wholeheartedly to co-operate and to bring their States into line with British India in any honourable, fair and just settlement which

may conduce to the welfare of our motherland and the good of our Empire. We fully realize our obligations to our country. . . . We, who are already self-governed, must endeavour to the extreme limit of our capacity to secure, where it does not already exist in the States, that peace, prosperity and contentment for which British India is struggling. But at the same time, we must also work for the preservation of our own identity and integrity."

The Nawab, who, among other qualities, possesses those of courage and common sense, is addicted to plain-speaking. He is not inclined towards that involved form of oratory wherein the meaning is as difficult to disentangle as a single thread in a tapestry of *petit point*. It will be noticed that he clearly refers to the necessity for maintaining the "integrity" of the Princely States. And he realizes that this can only be done by giving them "peace, prosperity and contentment".

Where the religious problem is not acute, where Moslem and Hindu are not divided by too many conflicting interests, it has always seemed to me that the handful of modern States have solved certain of the problems which distract the Provinces. Under their Ruling Princes, picturesque, feudal personalities who have contrived to bridge the gulf between medievalism and modernity with considerable success, they are beginning to enjoy a moderate share in their various governments with the result that Congress has not been able to rouse among comparatively contented people able to envisage a satisfactory sequence of reforms, the passions with which British India has been distraught. But it must be remembered that these well-governed modern States are in the minority.

Among the several hundred Ruling Princes, whose domains vary from the size of Scotland to that of a London park,

## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

there are many irrevocably old-fashioned, to whom all change seems to be an abrogation of their personal rights. While the wisest of Maharajahs are instituting some form of representative government, there are others completely opposed to what they stigmatize as the ways of town-bred upstarts, who cling to the customs and powers of the middle ages. The origin of some of these ruling houses is lost in the mists of time. Their ancestors have reigned since history began. Authority is in their blood. It is natural that they should rule an old and feudal people in a manner to which they have been accustomed for thousands of years, but it is these backward States which are particularly vulnerable. The most commonplace agitators can find the joints in their armour, for education is breaching the ramparts of the Indian feudal system, however firmly it may be established in a jungle or a mountain State.

At the other end of the scale, divided by their irresponsibility and their greed of the pleasures and excitements within reach of unlimited purses, from the reactionary Feudal Lords, who resemble, at best, the chieftains of the Scottish clans hundreds of years ago, as from the royal statesmen who have modernized their Principalities, there is a small section of Princes who imagine they would find fulfilment in ceding their powers altogether and living for racing motors and two-hundred-miles-an-hour aeroplanes.

In outlook and standards of life, in social atmosphere and ceremonial, the States differ from British India where, in the larger cities and in certain highly-educated groups, there is a departure from the Indian type. This divagation is sufficiently dangerous to Indian society which, according to Sir Walter Lawrence, is "a very nicely adjusted, delicate, complicated and somewhat static system". If this descrip-

## BHOPAL

tion be correct, the Princes who have given degrees of constitutional Government to their States have ventured further than the average observer can comprehend. Their success is the more remarkable.

An Indian proverb runs: "If you live in a tank, get on with your alligator." In the States I have met both brilliant and reliable Ministers who contrived, by dint of knowing men rather than law, to get on with all the alligators in their particular tank.

"It is really far better to be too little governed as is the case in some of the States," said a tall, athletic young Moslem of Afghan descent, with whom I became friends in Bhopal, "than too much governed, which is likely to happen in British India once Congress gets into its stride." He added that if he had to work in Delhi he would be asphyxiated by words. "It's so much better in Bhopal," he explained. "We can all take our ideas straight to His Highness. Generally we find he has still better ones and he doesn't dawdle about putting them into practice. Mind you, his people expect good government, which means a continued, personal interest in their affairs. There is a strong public opinion in this as in every other State which has advanced at all, but it is concerned with what you would consider small and intimate things. An Indian Prince has got to take into account the pride and the dreams of his people as well as their needs which are in the main simple, for what do you suppose the peasants here want except their work, their huts and their scraps of land?"

I asked this extremely efficient young man who wore the racial turban only on official occasions, and whose wife, one of the loveliest girls I have ever seen, had given up purdah as far as was compatible with her husband's position, whether he would rather live in the Provinces where the

## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

growth of civilization offered unending amenities, or in a State where life moved less swiftly but in more dignified fashion.

He replied that he was not enthralled by speed and perpetual change and that whether he were a peasant or an ambitious young intellectual, he thought he would find better opportunities in a State. "The whole thing's more personal," he concluded.

Certainly there is less litigation, less bureaucracy, less piling-up of delays, less political expediency in the modern, progressive States, but, in many cases also, there is less efficiency, although I am told that Lord Curzon chose many of the notable Indians who served on his Commissions from the States.

"It is social not political reform which India needs," affirmed my young Moslem friend, "and there the States should be able to lead, for the Princes are the custodians of local tradition. They should be sufficiently experienced and sufficiently trusted by their people, whose customs and habits they know, to be able to solve the difficulties which contact with modernity has emphasized." He added: "You talk of the Hindu-Moslem breach. It's nothing like as deep as the chasm between the European and the Oriental. I've worked in Delhi. I had a better job there than here, but I couldn't stand it because of the racial differentiation."

"What on earth is that?" I asked stupidly, and my elegant friend explained the social as opposed to the official tenets of British India. "We shouldn't be able to be friends like this in any British garrison town," he said, and laughed at my dismay.

With regard to the gradual introduction of democracy into Principalities or feudal estates which have been accustomed for centuries to complete autocracy, it may be



A Sadhu who has loved the fleshpots

A Sadhu on his bed of thorns



well to quote the Nawab of Bhopal, who has taken a prominent part in the deliberations of the Chamber of Princes. “. . . As far as I know, the Princes are by no means opposed to the principles of democracy. Why should they be? After all, the true aims and objects of all forms of government are the same, be they on the lines of Indian kingship or the American Republic. In the former the final authority is vested in the Ruler, in the latter in a small group of politicians, but the goal of both is identical . . . both are open to temptations and can be a menace to the people. Why then quarrel about forms? Why initiate methods of administration so far unknown to the country? Instead, why not reform ourselves where reforms are needed and yet retain our indigenous system which has stood the test of centuries? . . . Let nobody for a moment suspect that, when we hold views against an immediate change to democracy, we are opposed to its principles. We do so because we believe that a fully democratic government can only be successful in a country where a very large number of people know what is best for them. An honest examination of our conditions, I am afraid, reveals that at the present stage of our moral, mental and physical development, this is not the case with us. The fact is that the people’s ignorance of modern and progressive ideas makes them an easy prey to bigoted Conservatism, which leads to most deplorable communal strifes and creates a feeling of aversion in their minds to the initiation of elementary, social and other reforms. Their opposition to education and obstinacy against the adoption of modern medical, sanitary and scientific methods, stands in the way of their political progress. You cannot alter these conditions by, say, a wave of the magic wand. You need centuries of persistent and honest work and I think that it would not be practical politics to



## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

aspire to rule with any success a medieval people by the twentieth-century methods. . . . I am convinced that the success of an Oriental people lies in their remaining Oriental. I am afraid we've already had too many Western ideas forced on our Eastern minds and that too at the expense of our own culture and to the detriment of our civilization."

His Highness also said that "an irresponsible democracy is, and can be, the greatest danger to a country", and begged "all true sons of the country" to consider fully before they thought of "demolishing an existing edifice".

It is natural that such a Ruler should have concerned himself with the improvement of every form of social, agricultural and industrial condition within his own borders. The Nawab is a leading figure among the younger Statesmen, for while acknowledging India's obligations to the Empire, he maintains that the Princes also have responsibilities towards each other. Like other great Moslems he insists that the politico-religious question is capable of solution and with this all his younger co-religionists appear to agree. To my mind, however, so long as religion remains the dominant factor in the lives of the Indian masses, there must inevitably be a personal, if not a political schism between the two Faiths which are also complete social systems. I cannot believe that any Hindu or any Moslem would willingly appoint the other to a position, official or commercial, which he could find one of his own people, however unsuitable, to fill. The situation is much the same as exists between Jew and Gentile in Central Europe and even when modernization has broken the traditional power of religion in India, when the University has taken the place of mosque and temple, the factory of the hand-loom, the machine of the individual, there will still, I believe, remain between the Moslems and the Hindu, the indescribable involution

of racial and cultural instincts that divides the Hebrew from the Christian.

Bhopal has an enchanting capital, dominated by the Nawab's palace and reflected in a lake which gains value from the aridity of the surrounding country. As might be expected, the public buildings are admirable. Whenever a structure particularly pleases, it is sure to be a hospital, a school, the Legislative Assembly or a Court of Justice. In contrast to these modern buildings architecturally suited to the country, and the wide streets planned with an eye to development, there is, as in every Indian town, a maze of bazaars, threaded by narrow lanes, in which the whole population seems to spend the active portion of its life. These teeming crowds—on market-day—represent the "conservatism" to which the Nawab referred, and not so far from the charming capital, a few hours' drive over excellent roads, lie the forests where the young Heir-Apparent delights to shoot and where fortunate guests can be certain of sport. In these jungles live the Gonds who are among the most primitive tribes in India. Even the most conscientious and enlightened of Rulers may well find difficulty in including such as these under the widespread umbrella of State protection. Only in India, I imagine, could there be such complete tolerance and understanding of different stages of development. At one end of the scale the Statesman or the Philosopher, and at the other a people who, not so long ago, used to kidnap boys of the Brahmin caste and keep them for sacrifice after sowing or reaping. The youth was killed by means of a poisoned arrow, and his blood sprinkled over the plough or the crop ready for the sickle, after which his flesh was eaten.

In November the Gonds still worship Ghansyam Deo, a masculine Ceres, protector of crops and beasts. During the

## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

ceremony the god is supposed to take possession of one of the worshippers who is promptly seized with a fit and after staggering about, half-senseless, rushes out into the jungle. There he would die, according to the belief of his fellow tribesmen, if he were left to himself, for Ghansyam Deo has done him the honour of choosing him as scapegoat for the sins of the whole village. His friends and relations often have considerable difficulty in bringing the man back to his hut and usually he does not recover his senses for a day or two.

## PILGRIMAGE TO HARDWAR

ONCE in twelve years a million people attempt to throw themselves simultancously into a pool of the Ganges River. It is quite a small pool bounded by circular steps under the high white pinnacles of temples. On the further side there is a causeway leading to an arched bridge, by which the overflow of pilgrims makes its way back to camps and rest-houses, averaging in some cases a few hundred yards of progress every torrid hour. For the little town of Hardwar scarcely more than a village, is not built for the convenience of crowds. Usually its clusters of pale houses, gently peeling, dream away on the banks of Mother Ganges without anything happening at all. Myriads of flies are undisturbed. So are the water-buffalo wallowing happily wherever there is water, the long camel caravans winding down from the hills, and the Sadhus—saints or beggars—seated in the temple precincts among a host of monkeys with magnificent tails. But in the year of the fabulous pilgrimage, when a few drops of water from the sacred pool are worth more than any coinage can express, the population of Hardwar increases from a few thousand to well over a million. Every day for a month special trains, running one after another on a single line which usually carries little traffic, pour thousands and thousands of excited human beings into the maelstrom of the town. By some miracle of organization on the part of the Indian State Railways, nobody is permanently lost, but complicated

## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

arrangements have to be made to deal with the masses of illiterate humanity who can neither read, write, nor think, so ecstatic are they at the idea that to-morrow or next day, as soon as they can force their way over a solidly-packed mile, they will be able to fling themselves into the holy water and be cured, not only of all human ills, but of their sins as well.

The station is guarded by a corps of special police. Within steel-ringed enclosures the crowd seethes like the waves of a summer sea. From the top of a high steel tower a voice issues directions through a loud-speaker. Some of the peasants undoubtedly believe it is a deity looking after their material welfare. Unperturbed by the confusion of sound, the impersonal voice explains where there is food and water, how to find lodging, where to catch trains, what to do if strayed or damaged, or terrifyingly apprised of a lost ticket. Most of the pilgrims have travelled hundreds of miles on tickets stamped with some simple emblem—a teapot, a camel, an umbrella, or a snake. As they cannot read, it is impossible for them to study the comprehensive directions posted up in half a dozen languages, but they know that they must get into a train which bears on each side and also on the engine, the same familiar picture. If they lose themselves, they make their way to an enormous enclosure, ringed with strong metal posts, above which flaunts their guardian teapot, camel, snake, or umbrella. By this symbol they are guided to food, lodging, transport, doctor, or information bureau.

In 1936 I had visited Allahabad during the last days of the Ard Kumbh Mela, a combination of pilgrimage and fair which takes place once in six years. I remembered, with quickened pulses, the crowds of fanatics, sightseers, pilgrims, street-sellers, beggars, criminals (heirs to the pro-

## PILGRIMAGE TO HARDWAR

fessional stranglers or Thugs exterminated under British rule), holy men, beggars, frauds and fakirs, plastered so close together upon the sands by the river bank that, as an Inspector of Police exclaimed: "A fly couldn't get between them."

Remembering also the naked hosts, moved by one purpose, to submerge themselves in the holy water or be crushed to death in the attempt, the processions of elephants belonging to the monastic orders, the banners like poppies in a cornfield, the hideously striped dervishes sitting mushroom-like under their tattered scraps of umbrellas, or hanging head downwards—to encourage reflection—over a slow fire, it was natural that I should want to see the Kumbh Mela itself, the greatest pilgrimage in all India, when for a month Hardwar, a village among the foothills, grows to the size of Calcutta. With a million strangers—and some were very strange indeed—I would, I decided, make pilgrimage to Mother Ganges.

In pitch darkness and the middle of the night, I stepped out of the omnibus train, and immediately I lost all sense of my identity. I was just a crumb or a grain of sand amidst the mass of humanity.

Joséf, my mournful servant, who disliked the whole enterprise, was swept away.

With difficulty I kept my feet until a stalwart railwayman gripped my arm and dragged me out of the station. In the thicker darkness of a compound fenced with 12-foot steel bars, I thought, for a horrible moment, that we trod on corpses.

For men, women and children, lying close as a carpet, did not move under our feet.

"They're getting a good sleep while they have the chance," explained my companion, and trod calmly on.

Avoiding heads I followed him across the bodies of the last batch of pilgrims, six or eight thousand of them.

We came to a block of rest-rooms, newly built for the pilgrimage. One had been reserved for me, but travellers of all ages were piled against the locked door.

We had to shake them awake before I could enter my well of a room, three times as high as it was large, and so pleasantly cool.

Hours later Josèf was flung in like a scrap of waste paper.

"I lost myself," he said, "but I have here some of the luggage of madame," upon which he produced, from about his meagre person, a tooth brush, a comb, and half a pair of pyjamas, all that he had been able to rescue from a burst suit-case.

In the morning, however, order was miraculously restored.

Breakfast appeared, carried shoulder high by magnificently-turbaned railway employees, guarded by special police. Later, a car and an elephant arrived. I could take my choice. Foolishly I preferred speed.

So, with two or three policemen sitting on the hood, an Indian, who fortunately was an extremely gallant person as well as official photographer to the railway, and I packed into the car with our cameras and set off for the holy of holies.

This is the bathing-pool under the temple where, on the most auspicious day, something like a million pilgrims attempt to throw themselves simultaneously into the water.

At the last Mela, eleven years ago, sixteen were crushed to death and nearly four hundred injured.

The chief difficulty is that the mass of pilgrims attempt to press through the only direct approach to the pool, a lane perhaps ten feet wide, lined with food-shops like cupboards sunk in high walls.

## PILGRIMAGE TO HARDWAR

There comes a moment when movement in any direction is impossible, yet thousands more people, eager for immortality, thrust down towards the already packed street. Somehow, anyhow, they must get to the holy water and acquire a new lease of life.

For legend has it that countless years ago the gods and the devils fought, in mid-heaven, for a pitcher containing the nectar of everlasting life.

After a desperate struggle the gods won, but the pitcher had been cracked in the battle.

As it was carried upwards to heaven, precious drops were spilled.

Wherever they touched the earth—in five known places—the ground immediately became holy, and, according to the inhabitants of Hardwar, more liquid fell out of the magic jar (or Kumbh) in this particular locality than in any other.

Hence the importance of the pilgrimage, which can only happen when the astrologers say that Jupiter is in an auspicious position.

Photographs of the bathing-pool are forbidden. "Last time I tried they tore my camera from me and threw it into the Ganges," explained my stalwart friend.

I looked at his huge apparatus and suggested that he had only to show it in one direction for me to be able to take a snapshot unobserved in another.

We agreed to try the ruse, and when further progress by car became impossible, we told the driver to turn round, keep the engine going, and be prepared to start as soon as we got a foot on the running-board.

It was still early and unusually cool, so the pool was almost empty, but all along the banks of the river, Sadhus, dressed only in lime and their matted hair, were seated by the remnants of dung fires.



## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

Striped and daubed with yellow and red, they presented a ferocious appearance, but some of them were quite amiable.

They laughed at our boots and called out: "We are the monkey people, free as the air. We go where we like and we possess nothing but our own bodies. We laugh all day long because we have no belongings to bother about!"

A monstrosly-painted creature with a broad grin and a small skull tied round his neck, affirmed: "We feel neither cold nor hunger. Thousands of miles mean nothing to us. One 'day' we are in the high mountains among the snows and the 'next' we are at the other end of India in the desert where the sands are hotter than fire."

All day long under a blazing sun, the Sadhus may sit unfeeling, and all through a frozen night they may lie naked beside a handful of smoking wood.

Some of them are just cheerful beggars, pretending to powers they do not possess, so that for a faked horoscope or a powder that will "instantly cure madness, hysteria, and leprosy," not to mention making daughters marriageable and sons "potent as lions", they may receive a few half-pennies or a slab of bread.

Others, belonging to far-away monasteries and hermitages, are true ascetics.

I saw such a one preaching earnestly to a crowd of orange-sheeted disciples, while a friend cut an enormous boil out of his back. But at Hardwar all sorts of Sadhus appear to be received with equal honour.

The oddest thing is to see a purdah coach drawn up in a siding. From its shuttered seclusion emerge a number of graceful feminine figures, completely veiled.

Nervously they climb into a curtained motor or a little high-wheeled cart whose hood hides them from view.

## PILGRIMAGE TO HARDWAR

Thus they approach as near as possible to the bathing-pool. Then, becoming suddenly forcible and not at all shy, they contrive to push their way along with the crowd.

Their exquisite silk draperies are torn. Golden embroidery remains tangled round the feet of strangers.

At last, on the steps of the pool—sacred ground—these cherished and secretive ladies, young or old, throw off all but one sheet-like garment and walk unveiled through the crowds which they would normally only see through a zenana shutter.

Into the incredibly dirty water they step, proud as the tall bronze tiger-lilies they resemble. Nobody stares at them. Nobody takes any notice.

As we went down steep steps cut in a wall, a policeman arrived with a handful of photographic permits.

Half a dozen different authorities graciously gave permission to break the religious law. "But it won't be any good," said my Indian friend. "You'll see. I had all sorts of permits last time, but the people wouldn't stand it. They just went mad."

Half an hour later I realized how well he had described the process. We had wandered as near the sacred pool as shod feet may go. Discreetly I had taken half a dozen snapshots but somebody heard the last click.

A whistle blew. There was a great deal of shouting. In front of me rose an interminable flight of steps. Before I reached the top I was submerged in a furious crowd.

They tried to tear my camera out of my hands, or to knock it down and trample on it, but I thrust it inside my shirt. Beside me the Indian expert fought to keep us both on our feet.

Borne headlong to the road, amid a tumult of shouting, we could not see the car or the attendant police. All had

disappeared. There was only a seething mass of indignant fanatics becoming more and more excited as the noise increased.

For a moment a couple of loaded bullock-carts created a diversion, but the mob closed in again.

Blindly I sought refuge in a cookshop. Only twenty or thirty men could follow. Vast bowls of yellow paste were upset. My hat was knocked off. Blows began to fall. I bolted through an opening in a counter and my Indian friend promptly threw himself in front of it. "Give them the film," he shouted in Hindustani, and in English: "Pretend to, anyway!"

While I fumbled to open the camera, one foot in a basin of something hot and sticky, a man caught hold of my shirt. Fortunately it tore. I got the film out, but hadn't time to stick down the end. Thrusting it into my pocket, I pulled out a new roll, but a wild little man with blood running down his chin and the most elegant horn spectacles, saw the substitution.

"That's a new one!" he shouted. "Give us the other!"

"Run!" yelled my friend. "There's a back door! Look!"

The chief cook seized my arm. We had spoiled a good many of his dishes.

Doubtless he hoped to save the rest. Dragging me forcibly over mounds of farinacious foods, he pushed me headlong through a hole into an alley.

Hatless, his trousers drenched in soup, with gobbets of mutton adhering to him, my friend scrambled after me. Down the lane we ran. I don't think I have ever run so fast.

"The car! There it is!" gulped the Indian, and pulled me round a corner.

Then the police arrived—which was fortunate because the car would not start.

#### PILGRIMAGE TO HARDWAR

The driver lost his head and pulled and pushed all the wrong things, while the same crowd, or another crowd, wedged us in, all shouting.

When, with police on the running-boards, we reached the first steel-barred stockade within the railway precincts, it seemed to me that I had achieved, at last, a security bordering on the monastic.

## THE MOST BEAUTIFUL THING IN THE WORLD

**D**URING the last fifteen years, I have often been asked: "What is the most beautiful thing you have ever seen?"

I am not at all sure that it is not Mother Ganges at Hardwar on a night of pilgrimage.

Certain it is that in all my life of travel, I have seen nothing else like Hardwar, after sunset, during the festivities of the Kumbh Mela. With Indian friends, I went slowly, very slowly because of the crowds, between the towering white rest-houses, endowed by religious benefactors so that pilgrims could be lodged free of charge. But these buildings do not house a tenth or a hundredth part of the crowds which camp upon the river banks, hang like locusts upon the trees, swarm over the flat roofs and lie close as a drugget upon the paving-stones between the pool and the sugar-white temples, heaped with marigold heads. Thousands of cook-shops spring up overnight, but they cannot cope with the hunger of a million pilgrims. All along the Ganges there are cooking-pots and scraps of shelter made of canvas, rusty metal, branches or torn umbrellas. The only possible means of progress at night is on an elephant and even this great beast, stepping delicately as Agag, may find himself wedged stationary among a crowd, mad with delight because, at last, it has reached its physical and spiritual goal.

The famous pool is approached by the narrowest of lanes between houses whose walls soar up, unbroken as cliffs.

## THE MOST BEAUTIFUL THING IN THE WORLD

At the corner of this tortuous street where the dusk is thickened with smoke and dust, where the lights are reflected in a reddish haze, stands a lodging house comparable to an East End tenement.

Normally its crumbling cubicles, unfurnished but for a cracked rope bedstead, would command a few pennies a night from wayfarers indifferent to a press of company, to doors without bolts and shutters hanging from broken hinges. During the month of pilgrimage the landlord could rent them over and over again at two or three pounds a night. It was from the roof of this warren-like building, swarming with the noblest lodgers, that I looked down on Hardwar after sunset. Streams and rivers of light spread between the village and the scattered camps. They were reflected on the broad river. Starlight and torchlight waged battle, and from the hills, from the clefts between the houses, from the shining waterways, came caravans, came processions, all bearing lights. There was a confused sound of bells and stringed instruments. Far away, I heard men singing. "We must go down," said my Indian friends, and I saw that they longed to be in the middle of the crowd. They wanted to lose themselves in its unity of purpose, to share its friendliness, its passion, and its awe.

Down the thread-like stairways drawn through the walls, we stumbled. Deeper and deeper into the orange haze we walked. Our feet sank into drifts of marigold heads. Amber robes brushed against us.

At last we reached the tiers of steps rising in a wide semi-circle above the pool.

It was bright moonlight. All round the pool and as far as I could see along the banks of the great river was a white carpet of humanity. The people were so closely packed that I could not distinguish between the figures. Their heads

## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

were shrouded. Like tall hooded lilies, they bent, colourless, towards their massed reflection in the water.

From the many temples came the sound of drums and singing. Through the open doors I could see priests in marigold yellow moving before altars which appeared to be golden.

Suddenly the music rose in triumph. There was a crash of brass instruments and simultaneously hundreds—no, I suppose, thousands—of toy boats, heaped with flowers and each bearing a light, were launched upon the Ganges. Priests and holy men—the latter dressed only in their own long matted hair, with streaks of lime on their bodies—forced their way to the pool and pushed out upon its waters flaming boat-shaped receptacles.

The night was immediately filled with fire. The pool itself seemed to be dyed red, for the temple “boats” burned with rich-coloured flames. And the whole surface of the river flared with the strange lights produced by smouldering spices.

Away and away drifted the thousands of craft, leaving trails of scented smoke, blue, purple and sombre brown in the moonlight. If their fires lasted till a certain turn of the river, the prayers which had attended their launching would be answered. If the flames burned out too soon, misfortune would befall the worshippers responsible.

So triumph and lament alternated on the river banks, while Mother Ganges bore, blazing away, the hopes of a million of her children.

I had put on an Indian sari to be less noticeable among the crowd, and I remember, just at the moment when I'd forgotten everything but the astonishing beauty of the river on fire, one of my Indian friends whispered to me anxiously: “What have you done to your sari? You've got your feet



Pilgrims assembling on the steps of the sacred bathing pool in Haridwar.





Procession of a monastic order at the  
Kumbhi Mela pilgrimage.

### THE MOST BEAUTIFUL THING IN THE WORLD

through the hem and the rest is all bunched round your waist!"

With a shock, I realized that I stood bare-headed amidst the shrouded throng, clutching yards and yards of embroidered muslin as if it had been a crumpled bath towel. But nobody else noticed. Their eyes were on the holy Mother Ganges.

Later, when the crowd was beginning, not to dissolve, for the myriad worshippers would spend the night by the river, but to re-establish its multiplicity of different entities, we moved, with the pressure of the masses guiding us, down to the quay. Here shadow and light were sharply diapered as if there had been paving of black and white marble. The bulk of dreaming bulls, garlanded with flowers, loomed out of the tapestry of people, all seated, most of them reading or talking. Under the flaring lights I met a Maharaj Kumar whom I knew. He was second heir to one of the great Hindu Principalities and his parents possessed a house in the village. At the moment it was crowded with relations, for those who do not make pilgrimage to Hardwar go there for the sake of the fair and the shows. I met numerous young Indians, barristers, doctors, government employees, who had brought their wives to see the spectacle and indulge in the fun of the enormous fair where everything from immortality to a love potion can be had for prayer or money.

With my princely acquaintance I wandered along the quay and talked of Hinduism. For, within a few yards, we had passed a grave, quiet man, very thin and clean, wrapped in a spotless white robe, with gold-rimmed spectacles on his nose, and a great bulging hulk of a man naked but for the strip of leather and some garlands of marigolds, his hands and feet very dirty and striped with what looked like blood but was probably henna paste. In the first, who sat on a

small Persian rug and talked earnestly to an intelligent young Indian of the educated classes, referring at times to a document written in Sanskrit, I recognized a famous teacher. The other, wrapped in good-natured fat, was shouting and laughing with a number of equally bedaubed creatures who nevertheless paid him a certain amount of homage. "Both those men are Sadhus," I said. "It is difficult to understand." The Maharaj Kumar replied that probably the way of holiness represented by the fat Sadhu, who held a begging-bowl and many strings of beads, amulets and charms, would appeal to the masses, because ignorance could only be satisfied by symbols. By means of casting horoscopes and telling fortunes, the teacher, who, in spite of his bulk, was a notable ascetic, gained an ascendancy over the minds of superstitious people.

On we went through the inchoate mass of priests, widows unadorned and blurred with ashes, sacred bulls, some of them very thin, pilgrims, beggars, "crims" intent on pillage, ascetics with bloodless faces, peasant women in every violent colour, spectacled merchants, fakirs, dervishes, the clothed and the unclothed. At times we passed statues of the Hindu gods, Ganesh with his elephant trunk, and Kali the destroyer, dripping with blood. The Maharaj Kumar laid an offering in front of the most incoherent representation of divinity. It had a multitude of arms and I think no fingers. After a pause, he said: "How can anyone know what God is like? How do you yourself imagine the hands that made the world? What form have they? Do you really suppose they have fingers like ours? That is rather presumptuous, isn't it? Don't you see, the Indian painter or sculptor feels he can't possibly know what the limbs that can span all space are like, what is the appearance of the head that conceived a universe, of eyes that see every-

## THE MOST BEAUTIFUL THING IN THE WORLD

thing. Sometimes, he does not even indicate the existence of things so far beyond his knowledge. He leaves his gods without hands, or feet or eyes, or else he gives them an inordinate number. All such paintings and carvings are symbolical. So are the different facets of the same God. Since God is everything, the Hindu can worship whichever aspect is most pleasing to himself."

In India, the tolerance of those sufficiently advanced to worship the highest principle of the one God, for the masses, who, confused by substances and forms, worship according to the strangest cults, a whole pantheon of gods, is more complete than in any other land I know. The most learned Brahmin, capable of expounding Hegelian metaphysics, will explain that a spiritless conception of the Almighty is beyond the apprehension of the millions in the Indian villages and back-streets. They must be allowed to embody the attributes of God, His mercy and His terror, His omnipotence in concrete forms which naturally vary according to the educational level of the worshipper. Some forms are undoubtedly unpleasant, some childish, but no more so than the symbols of other faiths such as transubstantiation, a crucified body, and the apparent worship of a lamb.

Whenever I have argued about the illogical sacredness of cows with Hindus accustomed to word chemistry, they have always retorted with the lamb. It is, to them, equally puzzling. For the swollen statues of bulls in Benares and other holy cities, they have retaliated with the haloed lambs in our stained-glass windows. "At least," said the Maharaj Kumar, "there is only one Hindu faith. We can have no converts. To be a Hindu, you must be born one. And every Hindu, whether he is a mystic or a fetishist, is of the same faith and way of life." It seemed to me then that this unity of faith, so different from anything in Christian

## INDIA OF THE PRINCES

Europe, split into hundreds of sects, and in the Moslem countries still more fantastically divided, must give the Hindus a logical feeling of superiority. Not only from Britain but from the rest of the East are they separated by their religion, in which, to the outsider, doctrine and practice often seem at variance. "The only logical belief is reincarnation," said the tall young Maharaj Kumar. "It explains everything. It provides for everything. To the Hindu there is no need for fear or dismay. The succession of his lives are a ladder which he must eventually climb. He will know everything, enjoy and suffer everything. The sequence of his experiences cannot matter to him, since sooner or later he must undergo them all."

At this point in the conversation we stepped out of the way to avoid disturbing a cow, and bewilderment returned to me. It is difficult to apprehend why a mind which can visualize the Absolute should pay tribute, quite simply and honestly, to the various animals regarded as sacred in different parts of India. "Why not?" said the future Ruler of a State larger than Wales. "The cow with us is a life principle, just as is bread to you. Without the cow, the Indian peasant could not live. It is a symbol of God's gift of life as is your consecrated wafer. Only with us, religion is everywhere, a part of our everyday life, not shut away in a church. So the varying symbols of God, a friendly God or a heroic, a cruel, a vengeful, or a laughing and prolific God, are in our houses and our streets, on holiday with us and in our daily work. The Hindus want to take with them everywhere the comfort and companionship of God."

I asked my companion about other religions, but he was too polite to criticize. He said that he thought Europeans must often be lonely and that was an affliction unknown to the East, for, besides all the different forms of divinity

## THE MOST BEAUTIFUL THING IN THE WORLD

inherent in the One God, satisfying to every need of the Hindu temperament, the Hindu religion ordains every form of personal, family and caste obligation. From the beginning to the end of his life, the Hindu is bound to his fellows and he could not repudiate his obligations without impoverishing his spiritual quality and imperilling his future material incarnations. Because of this close-built system of family and social life, India can dispense with the dole and poor relief and she can sincerely believe that one man can atone for the sins of many. Religion to the Hindu is not a matter of this life or the next, but of all time.

While the Maharaj Kumar talked as a philosopher familiar alike with the Sermon on the Mount as with the inspiration and solace of the Bhagavad-Gita, I looked round for the friends with whom I had come to the festival. They were walking behind us, at the distance which they considered not so much respectful as suitable. For to them the social system was as unassailable as the Hindu religion of which it is a part. The caste of the warrior is above that of the merchant. I effected introductions in Western fashion and conversation moved on stilts. Between my friends there was courtesy, understanding, appreciation and a gap that neither wished to bridge.

With my Bunia hosts, I wandered back along the quays and I thought it would be interesting to broach the subject which had turned the much-travelled heir-presumptive of 1938 into a disciple of that timeless Brahminism which raised the temples of Angkor on the edge of the known world. Much more practical than the descendant of Kings, they spoke with enthusiasm of Arya Samaj, the national religious movement founded, I believe, by Swami Dayananda Sarasvati just before our century. This Indian Brahmin, "a cultured, polite and speculative man", attacked

polytheistic forms and the caste system, neither of which are authorized by the Vedas, insisting that all men were equal. This suggestion, naturally enough, was turned against the British, whose gentleman-ideal had first attracted and then disillusioned Indian imitators. From the Dayananda College came the call for a national rather than a European education, so that Indians might become "the best possible members of their own community" rather than bad copies of Europeans.

The lovely girl who had reproached me for putting my foot through the hem of my sari, finally told me that English literature had done a great deal for India by broadening the outlook of its readers, but that her countrymen were "wasting their time trying to model themselves on the West. Arya Samaj had revolutionized Indian thought and quite probably, if sufficiently studied and understood, might lead not only to the solving of Indian spiritual problems, but of those material ones from which the West was suffering even more than the East."

Throughout what was quite a long speech, made under considerable difficulties because of the crowds, the girl's voice remained gentle and deliciously modulated. She was very pretty and had taken a degree in law before marrying a railway official and becoming the mother of several children.

In India, it seems to me, there are two great influences of which we are comparatively ignorant. There is the influence of the women, immeasurable and unaccountable because it is scarcely conscious. It works, for the most part, very quietly, although occasionally a Begum Shah Nawaz or a poetess like Sarojini Naidu gives expression to the power by the hearth. There is also the influence of religion. If the beggars and hermits, the priests, dervishes and wandering friars, the holy men of India were counted, the list of those who eat

## THE MOST BEAUTIFUL THING IN THE WORLD

without working, who live free on the generosity of their fellows, would astonish the economist.

Like the Brinjaras, the carriers who wander up and down India, too busy to talk or to sit down for a meal, so busy that children may be born on bullock-back, we of the West hurry about our business. We have no time to think.

From the steps of their monasteries, ascetics in saffron yellow watch our passage, unperturbed. It is to them no more than one of many processions which has passed across the Indian earth. They take no notice of our motors and our railways. They do not talk of the philosophy which deprives them of individual names. They say, after a 40 years' novitiate: "I am the little knowledge that I have acquired."

They sit in the dust, heedless of the world, muttering "Ram Ram". What we ask of parliaments, they leave to a familiar God.