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ABDICATION

ABDICATION

BY

EDMUND CANDLER

AUTHOR OF " SIRI RAM "

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TO

MY'WIFE

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE UNVEILING OF LHASA

THE LONG ROAD TO BAGHDAD

THE MANTLE OF THE EAST

ON THE EDGE OF THE WORLD

SIRI RAM: REVOLUTIONIST

ETC

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ABDICATION

CHAPTER I

THE " HARTAL "

I

RILEY was aware of a perceptible lifting of the heart as he rode through the Mori Gate and left Anglo-India behind him. The frank squalor of the city pleased his eye if not his nose. Thompsonpur was efficient, and logically planned to serve the conveniences of life, but unsatisfying whether viewed by the inward or the outward eye. The barracks, the cupolaed telegraph and post offices, the hideous excrescent cathedral with its slate pepper-box spires, depressed him. The new Public Gardens with their half-grown trees, each bearing a zinc ticket inscribed by some sedulous botanist with its scientific name, made him think of real gardens and real trees; the garish flower-beds of homely herbaceous borders in cool lands; and the thinly sprouting turf, of genuine green lawns. The road beyond was straight and broad; one sighted folk a mile before one met them.

The shops and houses on either side were neither of the East nor of the West. Each was approached by an in-an-out drive, bordered by a clipped, dusty,

two-foot hedge of duranta, as ugly as a toothbrush. The plinths were high, the red-brick verandahs spacious. There was any amount of space in Thompsonpur. In the Deputy Commissioner's compound there was camping ground for a battalion; in the Commissioner's for a brigade. Government House was yet in the building, but it was estimated that the grounds would be as big as Bushey Park. One had left it two miles behind before one reached the Mori Gate and the defilement of the city. One had to pass the fire-engine station with the chimneys of the electric power-house behind it; then blocks of houses, shops, and hotels. Here, too, the verandahs were roomy, the plinth high, and on the frieze above the pillars, in glazed enamelled letters, such words as Globe, Empire, British, Victoria, European, caught the eye, canalising the impressions of the Imperial-minded, which run in channels none too broad at any time. The Curzon Cafe, the Minto Motor Works, the Hardinge Home, all spoke of the casual and matter-of-fact way in which we dump our British institutions on an unresponsive and reluctant soil.

Unresponsive, Riley noted, but not consistent in its lack of response. Thompsonpur being an outpost of Progress, had its statuary like other advanced towns. The monument, or effigy, as Samuel Butler would have called it, of Queen Victoria, the gift of Rai Bahadur Muni Ram, O.B.E,, Chairman of the Municipality, fronted the Mori Gate. Riley reined up as he passed it, and watched an adoring Jat prostrate himself on the plinth. The peasant's homage was paid to a feeble amorphous old lady tottering forward without a stick, with a scroll, or proclamation, in her hand, which she held out cajolingly. It might

have been the advertisement of some potent drug. The Jat surmising something divine in the marble of the figure, and its eminence, and dazzled by the whiteness of it, was paying his dues. The old man's reverence for the established token, whatever it might signify, struck Riley as peculiarly pathetic at the moment, though it did not dimmish his mood of abdication. He rode through the gate with a vague sense of squandered opportunities, dreamily, neglecting to moralise, or rather to pursue his moral to a conclusion, as was his wont.

Riley had forgotten what had taken him to the city. He was only conscious that he had left Thompsonpur, " The City/' by the way, must not be confused with Thompsonpur. That was the name of the " Civil Station" and cantonments that had grown up all round it, the headquarters of the youngest canal colony, and the capital of the New Province. The walled city within the gate had been known since the days of the Mahabharata, that is to say, since the dawn of time, as Gopalpura. Yet, though Thompsonpur had entirely eclipsed it, visually and materially, it had been permitted to retain its ancient name. Once, in the Thompson era, the genius of the city had narrowly escaped being deposed. Riley still kept among his office files the letter of Rai Bahadur Muni Ram, Chairman of the Municipality—or was it the Rai Sahib's predecessor ?—in which he suggested that in conformity with fitness Gopalpura should henceforth be known as Thompsonpur City, or Old Thompsonpur. That was when Sir Thomas Thompson (K.C.I.E., C.S.I,) was yet alive, fifty years before Riley had taken over the editorial chair of the *Gazette,* in the happy days when the loyal Indian was not afraid of betraying his honest emotions.

Muni Ram wished to prove himself the agent by which the halo already irradiating the brow of the creator of the youngest canal colony should attain full circle. He hoped perhaps that a ray of beatification might descend upon his own head. But Gopalpura remained Gopalpura. Sir Thomas Thompson cared for none of these things.

Once through the gate Riley left the main bazaar and drifted into the network of alleys, too narrow to admit wheels. By stretching out his arms he could almost touch the walls on either side. On this hot and sultry afternoon Gopalpura was asleep. One moved in an atmosphere of ancient and undisturbed peace. Muni Ram's baptismal zeal had spared the Hindu quarter of the city, which had escaped Thompsonisation in feature, as in name. Few of these houses had been vulgarised by modern hands. The walls of the lower stories were all dead to the street. But in some the doors stood open, huge brass-studded gateways, through which one had a glimpse of a courtyard, a well, a thorn-tree, gentle-eyed cattle, or it might be a small shrine with an image of Ganesh smeared all over with red paste. An old serving-woman would look up from her sleepy work at the sound of horses' hoofs in the alley, or a lemon-coloured skirt glide behind a pillar as softly as a shadow. The lintels of the doors were of shisham wood, the colour of walnut, intricately carved. Many of the windows were corbelled, the lattices and screens fretted, the balconies supported by brackets of wood or stone. In one house, the property of an ancient line of astrologers, the cornice was supported by rows of stone peacocks purple-beaked, with purple golden-starred wings, spread fanwise behind. The passage leading to it

was a blind alley. Riley remembered the guilty sense of prying he had when he first explored these purlieus. The charm of the quarter revived in him feelings which he had almost forgotten, the curiosity, the love of unfamiliar things, the itching for adventure he had felt six years earlier when he first came out to India—" the romance of the East," still exploited by managers of theatres and novelists, though one's sensitiveness to it has been dulled by the war, which has flattened out everything or brought it too near to us; or, as in Rilcy's case, by the hybrid cares of politics, and racial questions which, attractive as they are to certain minds as an abstract theme, have a way of presenting themselves in concrete instances in their naked commonplace, divested of all glamour.

As Riley passed the small kiosk-like Hanuman shrine set in the wall at the corner of the astrologer's street and came out into Sheikh Afzal's bazar, he was conscious of a stir. Evidently during the few minutes he had been loitering in these backwaters, something had happened; something unusual was afoot.

An atmospheric change had come over the city. Everyone was running about excitedly. He met a man charging down the street with a *huqa* in his hand, another carrying a brass mortar and pestle, yellow with pounded turmeric. It seemed that for some reason all the normal activities of life were held in suspense. He heard the jingle of metal-ware and crockery hastily packed away, the bolting of locks, the rattling of sliding doors, the closing down of shutters. He was mystified by the spontaneity of it all. He saw folk running and looking over their shoulders, as if seeking shelter from an unseen hand, as who should say, " It has come." It was like a rustle in the trees before a storm. A

dust-storm or an earthquake crossed his mind. He had seen people running about in just the same way in an earthquake. His sense of something impending was so strong that he even imagined a darkening of the sky. Someone was shouting that the shops were already closed in every other quarter of the city. Then above the confused murmur he heard the cry of "Mahatma Gandhi-ki-jai," and he remembered it was the *hartal,* Gandhi had been arrested. The news had just reached the bazar. Riley had expected it, but he had heard nothing an hour earlier when he left Thompsonpur and the offices of the *Gazette.*

The rhythmic chorus was repeated all down the narrow alleys, tributary to the bazar. Women's voices could be heard chanting it from the upper stories of the houses. Riley was conscious of a stir behind closed lattices; purdah chicks were hold aside an inch's space from the doorways of the balconies, giving glimpses of pale hands and faces, paler than any that could be seen in the street, It was said that the women of Gopalpura adored Gandhi. They had never seen him, but they spoke of him as an *avatar.* Now their eyes, straining through the lattices, were focussed on an Englishman, a rare sight at any time in the purlieus of the city, and at this particular moment more than a little provocative. Riley would have given a great deal to read their fears and hopes, the nature and dimensions of their hostility. They loved Gandhi because they thought him a holy man, and believed that he had the power to rid India of the incubus of which he, Riley, was a symbol; yet Gandhi their prospective saviour, was arrested, while the casual Englishman, of the race of the Mahatma's persecutors, the visible refutation of his pride, was at large, a solitary intruder isolated

among many thousands. And no one laid hands on him. He could imagine rays of malevolence emitted from behind the latticed windows, pricking his sensitive skin like sparks. He was aware of the sullen gloom of the faces in the crowd, the hostile glances thrown at him from the balconies. No doubt they believed all manner of evil of his English soul. Yet their hostility aroused no resentment in him. " It must be beastly being run by foreigners,' he thought; " I should hate it. Of course it was all right before they began to worry about these things. What a bore it must be to be politically minded, if one happens to be of a subject race." He felt less charitable when men spat as he passed. A potsherd thrown from an upper window struck the closed shutters of a shop, glanced against his mare's quarters and set her plunging. He was glad to have a horse under him and to feel again the illogical sense of security he had derived more than once when under fire from being mounted. Some hairy-breasted, half-naked fanatic clutched at his bridle. He struck at the man's hand with his whip and urged his mare on. The crowd yielded and he passed through into the open square by the mosque pursued only by hoots. He heard the cry of " Topi-walla." The chant of mourning became one of hate. All down the street behind him the dirge for the mahatma ceased, and there arose a more sinister and angry chorus, " Hai Hai Rowlatt Bill." It followed him through the square by Amir Khan's mosque and the relative quiet of Hari Mandi. The echo of the rhythmic beat of it sounded in his ears till he passed through the Baradari Gate and regained the complacent security of Thompsonpur.

II

Riley had almost threaded the city when his eye was caught by a signboard emblazoned with the rising sun, and he remembered for the first time since he entered the Mori Gate, what had brought him to Gopalpura. The red ball of fire with porcupine bristles such as one sees on Persian Consulates in the East irradiating the lion, advertised to the world the offices of the *Roshni*—a word of which the literal, though in this instance euphemistic, interpretation is " Light." The particular torch-bearer in Gopalpura was one Barkatullah, a fanatical firebrand who was seldom seen, but whose shrill insistent voice with its message of hate penetrated to every city in the north of India, and even disturbed the peace of mind of bureaucracy in Thompsonpur. Memsahibs had heard of the *Roshni* and Barkatullah. The editor's name was associated vaguely with gathering storms, and in the mind of the provident with such questions as whether it was worth while booking a return passage to Bombay. The Deputy Commissioner knew him, and the Superintendent of Police; his record filled two *almirahs* in the offices of the C.I.D. But apart from the policeman and the magistrate his encounters with Englishmen were negligible. Riley was probably the only member of the Thompsonpur Club who wished to extend them. He believed in contact. If only they met us and knew us, he argued, it would be all right. All this alienation is more than half our own fault. Naturally folk cannot come to an understanding who are always shouting angrily at each other through an impenetrable thick-set hedge; naturally they are blind to any human trait

that may be discovered in the unseen monster lurking on the other side. But " young Riley " was an eccentric, a visionary. His tastes were unorthodox, his sympathies suspect. He was always hobnobbing with riff-raff and poking his nose into queer places. If it had not been for a certain pleasant air he had, and the fact that he had earned an M.G. and a bar to his D.S.O. in Mesopotamia, one might have taken him for a Radical. Most men you met at the bar or in the billiard- or bridge-room at the Thompsonpur Club would tell you that he was letting the *Gazette* down, and that it was a great pity that he had been appointed to act for Willsdon when he was at home on leave. " Willsdon was fine. He let the beggars have it. But you never knew how to take Riley or what he would be at next. That last leader he stuck in about Gandhi was positively anti-British. It might have been written by a Babu."

Opportunities for contact on the afternoon of April loth were not propitious in Gopalpura; or, rather, contact was likely to take the form of collision. Moreover, there was no sign of life in the *Roshni* as Riley rode by. The " Light " was extinguished. The doors were closed and padlocked on the street. The illuminator was away swinging his torch elsewhere no doubt ; the blunder of Gandhi's arrest had added lustre to it. Riley wondered what had happened to Banarsi Das, who, he heard, had become Barkatullah's protege though he was about to be rejected by him. He pictured him in the procession, one of the torch-bearers, crying out with the others, " Hai Hai Rowlatt Bill; Mahatma Gandhi-ki-jai." He, too, would be stuffed full of rumours and lies. It was on account of Banarsi Das that Riley had come to the city. Skene had written

to him from Gandeshwar asking him to look after his old pupil, who had drifted after many failures into the *Roshni* office, though apparently Barkatullah had no further use for him. Skene mentioned two or three appointments he had obtained for Banarsi Das, none of which he had held for any length of time. Riley had openings for proof-readers and had promised to give the young man a chance, though he was not a promising protege. He might, of course, have sent for Banarsi Das, but he preferred to look in at the *Roshni* office casually. Il seemed a good chance of getting into touch with the Illuminator. As a further pretext for his visit ho had a profitable scheme to discuss with Barkatullah which would secure the *Roshni* many columns of advertisements. Riley was one of many whom Skene, the Principal of Gandeshwar College, had asked to advance the interests of Banarsi Das. The collective efforts of heads of departments on behalf of this worthless young miscreant called to mind the birth-pangs of mountains in the nativity of a mouse. But Banarsi Das had a special claim for tutelage, if not for sympathy, and the weight of responsibility sat heavily on Skene. Riley had heard his story. The youth had been the bosom friend of Siri Ram who had murdered Merivale at Gandeshwar railway station and who would have been hanged for it in Gandeshwar Gaol if he had not taken poison in his condemned cell a few hours before the moment appointed for his dispatch. Banarsi Das had been taken to sec Siri Ram in the prison. He had bent over his dead body when it was still warm, and tried to resuscitate it into life. Skene had led him away, weeping bitterly. After that Banarsi Das had, figuratively, fed out of the hand of Skene for a year, a contrite

youth, devoted to his Principal and seeing in him a benevolent impersonation of the Raj. Riley had Siri Ram's story from Skene. A more pathetic history he had never heard. A weak youth, compact of vanity, yet not devoid of virtue, he had become the dupe and scapegoat of the revolutionists, who had dragooned every generous instinct in him and perverted it, and then led him blindfold to the sacrificial stone.

Banarsi Das, Rkene believed, or such was his impression of him as a student, was a youth of the same kidney, the prey of chance influences, equally impressionable, gullible, and unstable. Skene had been faithful to his unspoken vow made over Siri Ram's body in Gandeshwar Gaol, to help the youth as far as he was able. Riley had not all the details of Banarsi Das' record. He knew that he had been a clerk in a Cooperative Credit Society, then a master in a Government School. He had given up this post, quite in the manner of Siri Ram. No one could accuse Banarsi Das of initiative; yet in a sense it might be said of him that he was a non-cooperator before the age of non-cooperation. Now to all appearances he was being swept off his feet by the new tide of agitation. His presence in the *Roshni* office could mean nothing else. He, too, had become a cultivator of the plant " Rumour " in the garden of lies. The disturbance Riley had witnessed in the bazar had been a ripple of the Rowlatt Act. He remembered how the lie had been born, and how confidence in Government had been destroyed in a week. On Monday it was given out that a new Act had been passed against the liberties of the people. On Tuesday they were saying in the bazar, " Indians may never be seen together in crowds. It is forbidden that four persons should talk together in the street."

On Wednesday it was said, " No longer will one be able to follow the marriage ceremonies of one's own relations. The heart of Government is black towards the people. This is the reward of our services in the war." Thursday repeated, " The hated police will supervise the funerals of our dear relatives. Government is about to seize our grain." And Friday, " Even family gatherings and meetings for prayers are prohibited, and if an ill-wisher gives a report to the police about anyone, however false it may be, that person will be arrested and cast into prison without any form of trial'' On Saturday it was darkly whispered, " Our brides are to be examined by doctors; their dowries are to be taxed. Land revenue will be doubled and trebled. Liberty is dead. There is nothing before us but ruin and shame."

Months passed and none of these dreadful things happened, yet .rumour kept resentment alive. How much was deliberately grafted on the plant, how much grew of itself, was one of the mysteries of the East that are never determined. Evidently the will to believe was there. The same kind of talk must have been heard in the bazars in '57 when the story of the pig-defiled cartridges was propagated with its progeny of lies. The nature of the soil, Riley moralised, is more important than the seed that falls on it. Was it our fault, he wondered, that the ground had become too sterile to bear any decent crop? The Rowlatt Act certainly was bad husbandry, a tactless measure at the time. Yet if it had not been that, it would have been something else. Had the Bill never been moved or passed, the agitator would have found some other measure to torture into the expression of bureaucratic malevolence. In the old days he had been content

with the perversion of the intelligentsia; now he was turning to the political education of the masses. It was not a pleasant thing to watch the infection at work. In that lull before the storm when Riley found himself in Sheikh Afzal's bazar he felt as if he had been in contact with some spirit. If he had not heard its voice, he had been watching people who were listening to it. Afterwards he thought of Rumour as a person, lurking in alleys, and behind the great wooden doors of *havclis,* dwelling in temples, and mosques and ruined tombs, an ugly monster, erect or latent, fed with lies, and sometimes—and here was more sustaining nourishment—with half-truths.

Ill

Half an hour after he had passed through the Baradari Gate the club received him, solid, homely, inviting, a fortress against the invasion of hybrid cares. There were times when he hated the place; to-night he was only conscious of its compensations. He approached the bar with stealth, peering through the glass of the folding doors—a somewhat apprehensive reconnaissance. All manner of men were collected there, standing in groups at the bar, or sitting in arm-chairs round little tables, men he would run miles to avoid, and men after his own heart. He looked for Dean the policeman, lately transferred from Gandeshwar. Dean would be able to tell him about the arrest of Gandhi and whether there was any likelihood of trouble; but Dean was away, probably in the bazar stemming the tide.

The *abdars* were carrying round trays of whisky-and-

soda in champagne glasses. Thompsonpur had evolved this system of the *pan,* or quarter-peg, by which one could drink many times between sunset and dinner-time. Certain old stagers were already ensconced in their accustomed arm-chairs and hailed everybody who came into the room : " Have a *pau.* Have a *pau.* Abdar, two more, three more, four more *pans."* The new-comer would be drawn into one of the circles and in his turn would order *pans* all round. And so the groups swelled and multiplied and split up and sorted themselves. A few would drop away to play bridge or pool, or to read *La Vic* or *The Morning Post.* Others who, after playing some ball game, had washed and invested themselves in white evening dress, would stay on and talk, disjointedly after the manner of their kind, until nine o'clock, discussing horses or motors or tennis or golf, deploring the good old days, and discovering again how Government had ceased to govern and how everything and everybody was going to the dogs. Political discussions generally began and ended here. The meaning of the Reforms was but dimly apprehended. It would be too painful to pull aside the curtain; if, indeed, things had gone as far as the staging of them. The reactionary element in Thompsonpur felt that they had played their part when they had damned the Secretary of State, and expressed a pious hope that he might be physically involved in the debris he was pulling down about their ears—hard workers, disinterested, giving their best as a matter of course and expecting no thanks for it, yet utterly incapable of getting inside an Indian's skin and seeing his point of view. Nationalists were anathema to them, and talk of Swaraj,[1] on the immediate

[1] Self-government.

horizon, sedition. Not that there were wanting thoughtful folk in the club who were earnestly scheming how to adjust themselves and the machinery of administration to the new order. Riley noticed at least two of them at the bar. He also noted the absence of youth. The younger generation of Thompsonpur were mostly in the Gymkhana, dancing. Someone had observed that they looked more tired than their seniors, though they were certainly untroubled by political cares and were always ready to dance to a gramophone, after their solemn fashion, if there were no band. If they toiled and spun, it was without zeal, yet they get through their work somehow. As for the dispensations of life, they let nothing go by; they took what came to their hand and consumed it joylessly.

As his eyes explored the hall in search of good-fellowship they fell upon the ample form of Skene filling the most spacious arm-chair. Riley pushed the door open and approached him from behind, feeling at least five years younger as he smote his old friend on the shoulder. Skenc caught his forearm and drew him down gently into the chair by his side. Riley felt as if he were being lowered into it by a crane. The placid strength of the man, his quiet responsiveness, that unexpected rumble of a laugh, that seemed to shake his whole frame though it proceeded from him automatically, without visible effort, delighted Riley. He liked Skene better than anyone in Thompsonpur. His benedictory " young Riley " warmed him.

Hill and Bolton, the two other men at the table, echoed Skene's " young Riley,' though a little quizzically. Riley with his quick sensitiveness detected a note of irony in the intonation of their greeting, a more

qualified acceptance. He saw himself as he appeared in their eyes, his errors in conformity, the kinks in him to be straightened out, the excrescences to be smoothed and flattened down.

"Why didn't you tell me you were coming? " he asked Skene. "When did you leave Gandeshwar? Have you come about Banarsi Das? "

" No, young Riley. One greater than he has called me. Even the Lat Sahib."

"Haven't you heard, young Riley? And you a newspaper man. Skene is our new D.P.I. The reporter of *The Standard* is waiting outside. You must get in your biographical sketch first. Where's *Who's Who ?* Publications, " Misogyny' " Banting," " From Barbarism to Babuism," Clubs, *The Athenceum,* and the " Thompsonpur Pig and Whistle," Recreation, " The Corruption of Youth." Good old Skene. Abdar, four more *pans."*

The bald-headed, eye-glassed, quizzical Hill was in form. Exchange had gone up to one-and-eight.

" But who is Banarsi Das ? " asked Bolton.

" Barnasi Das is a young revolutionist Skene is interested in."

" He turns them out by the dozen," said Hill.

"By the way, have you heard about Gandhi?" Riley asked.

" Now we are up-to-date, young Riley. You will have to decide between him and Skene for precedence to-morrow."

" I was in the city an hour ago. Complete *hartal* in ten minutes. They threw brickbats a me. I was glad to get out.'

" Young Riley been studying the psychology of the Indian masses. We will have Thompsonpur in

The Quayterly, ' The Political Sensitiveness of an Indian City, by Brian Riley. Did they hit you? "

" What does Gandhi think he is out for? " Bolton asked in the detached academic voice of the Secretariat.

" He's out for himself, of course. The man's a prize charlatan."

Riley surveyed Hill's bald pate and colourless eyes with tired contempt. " No wonder they hate us[1] he thought, and he was tempted to say so. But Skene, to whom the face of his young friend was an open book, intervened to avert controversy. " Gandhi is out for Swaraj" he said. " He does not think we are doling it out quick enough." It came better from Skene.

Riley, however, would not be side-tracked. " Have you ever met Gandhi? " he asked Hill.

" No, I haven't. But I know his kind. He is like a mischievous monkey on a tea-table. He upsets everything and doesn't even get away with the cream."

Bolton blinked at the vulgar metaphor.

" *I* gather," he ventured obliquely at Riley, "that Government has never set its face against Con-stit-ut-i-on-al agitation." Bolton was incapable of slurring one of the six syllables of " constitutional."

Hill's directness was relatively refreshing. " You don't imagine, young Riley, that if Gandhi were to upset our apple-cart he could run his own show? "

" I don't. But I can imagine him wanting to. And I can imagine that you or I, if we were under-dogs, might kick a little, and if we unseated the bureaucrats——"

" Metaphors, Riley. Soul of *The Quarterly !* Have it one way, horse or dog."

" Well, we wouldn't worry much what sort of a mess came of it so long as we were left to muddle along in our

own way. I can't forget that Hun policeman I used to see in my nightmares at the corner of Piccadilly. I almost felt him in April '15. In April '18 he filled the pavement. I couldn't squeeze in between him and the wall."

" There is no analogy."

" There never is," Riley exploded, looking fiercely at Hill. The other two regarded him uncomfortably. " Young Riley " was so terribly in earnest. He would like to have added, " Why can't you be honest with yourself? A little imagination. Other people have feelings like us. But you bureaucrats never look at facts. Your vision is bounded by convenience. Nothing contrary to the accepted decencies and traditions has any real existence for you. You can't see, or sympathise with, anything that does not square with your comfort. Yet you think you are honest."

" There never is any analogy," he repeated. " Or rather you refuse to see any."

" Ghost of Thompson," exclaimed Hill. " I believe young Riley is going to whitewash Gandhi in the *Gazette."*

" It is inconceivable to me," objected the Secretariat, " that you can justify this agitation."

" I am not justifying it. I am explaining it."

" Our Aryan brother has not the shadow of a grievance now we have given him the Reforms. What would he have said to the Montagu scheme three years ago ? "

Riley was reminded of the lady, mildly interested in politics, who had consulted him on the P. and 0. coming out.

" But now they are going to have the Reforms they will be satisfied, won't they ? " she asked. Riley had not been sufficiently reassuring.

" Not satisfied! Huge chunks of liberty thrown at them. What wolves ! "

"What I should like to know," said Skene, "is exactly how much they believe of these rumours. I would give a good deal to see the British Raj through the eyes of Banarsi Das."

Riley thought he could see Banarsi Das' bogey personified in Hill. He even pursued the image in its physical outline. " Hill's head is like a turnip,' he thought, " in shape and complexion. A turnip lantern would not be a very far-fetched simile. Only the candle in it shines through the pores of the skin and not through the eyes'[1]

" I think I understand what these extremists feel'[1] he said, unconsciously staring at Hill as he concluded his hostile review of his physiognomy. " Or rather, what they have made themselves feel, and it comes to the same thing. Put it in our own *bat,*[1] and it runs somehow like this : ' We have stuck it out. You've bled us white. We have played the game. And now when it is all over and we expect peace, confidence, concessions, rewards, you have given us the Rowlatt Act'"

" But we haven't bled them white. And the Rowlatt Act does not touch their lives'

" I know. The Rowlatt Act is only a symbol, but they have twisted a tissue of lies out of it. If it hadn't been the Rowlatt Act it would have been something else. The tragic thing is they are determined to hate us."

" And what's your remedy? "

" We've got to make them trust us."

" And how will you do that ? "

[1] Language'

" One way would be to let them run their own army. They will never be capable of self-government until they are capable of defending themselves."

" Incidentally you would give them the opportunity of cutting our throats in the progress."

" Well have to take the risk. If we are sincere we must trust them and go the whole way. If we are not sincere, then the sooner we clear out of the country the better/'

" Good God ! " Hill gasped. " This beats Gandhi. The man's a defeatist. Ghost of Thompson! An anti-British firebrand in the editorial chair of *The Thompsonpur Gazette."*

He rose wearily and drifted to the reading-room, remembering that he had not seen last week's *Capital.* Bolton was speechless. He left the table without a word and followed Hill. Between them they drafted a letter of protest to the Directors, pointing out Riley's unfitness to edit the *Gazette.*

Skene and Riley were left alone. " Abdar," Skene called, " two more *pans."* He admitted his young friend's courage but deplored his want of discretion. " Now, tell me/' he said, " exactly what you mean. I am not quite sure that I agree with your panacea. You say they don't trust us, but can we trust them? "

" Perhaps not. Still we are pledged to self-government and we have got to see it through. They must have their own organisations of self-defence. Otherwise the scheme means nothing; it is mere camouflage. Votes do not give liberty to an unarmed people."

" They would kill us off first, and then begin massacring themselves."

" We can't have it both ways. If we are sincere about giving them self-government we must act as

if we believed in it. You will never get the Indian to believe that he is a free man until you trust him with arms. This scheme of modified Swaraj under an alien military administration won't deceive anyone. We might as well say to them, ' When your hearts and natures are changed we will return what we have taken from you. When the impossible has become possible we will deal it out to you joyously, bountifully, with both hands' "

" Now you are talking like a leading article. For Heaven's sake don't put that in the *Gazette,* young Riley. Your Swadeshi army is all very well on paper, but you know as well as I do that we cannot trust them."

" If we cannot trust them there are only two things to do. Either we must clear out of India and take our army with us, or we must drop all talk of Swaraj, and hold the country by armed force. Then what of the pledge ? Even if the Home Government consented to turning the country into an armed camp it would only be for a year or two. The masses are already being taught to hate us. The nationalist leaders will get at the army next. After that the deluge."

" You do not think about our responsibility to the masses," Skene said, and refused to be drawn further into politics. He saw in Riley's attitude the reverse side of defeatism, a kind of deranged chivalry. He had to remind himself sometimes of his young friend's rare sincerity and independence of thought, to avoid saying things that might hurt him. Besides, one could not reconcile defeatism with a bar to the D.S.O. and a Military Cross. He was weary to death of the racial question and felt that he would be sick and giddy if he let his mind revolve any longer in the vicious circle.

He leant back in his deep chair, still and silent, in a state of abstraction which Riley had come to define as " a Skene-like trance" as if suddenly isolated, very placid to the outward view, though his fixed gaze and the clouds of tobacco-smoke which he emitted with the sequence of rhythm betrayed inward controversy.

Riley felt that it would be an intrusion to speak to him. He put the case to himself for the hundredth time, his mind revolving like a squirrel, seeking a way out, but brought up by the bars at each end of the cage. What is to be done? We must either go back on our word, or betray the masses who still believe in us. Government in its attempt to avoid either evil is falling into both. Why cannot they look facts in the face? The nose of bureaucracy is glued down to files. Simla has not got the pluck of a weevil. All they care about is appearances, making a case for themselves, carrying on a little bit longer. They have no contact with reality, never had any. Not one of them has the imagination of a louse. The Home Government has abdicated. Why cannot the Government of India recognise it and let the people see that we are really handing over? Instead they stand on the brink shivering, afraid to take the plunge. Conciliation by driblets, each new concession wrung out of them by agitation and conceded by fear. Naturally the impression is that we mean to hang on to the substance as long as we can and put them off with the image or shadow. They do not believe in us. Why should they? We do not trust them, and we are not even honest with ourselves. Yet there is not a soul in this club who understands Gandhi's point of view.

" Do not brood, young Riley." Skene had come out of his clouds to wake him from his troubled reverie.

" I wish you were not so politically-minded. Give the city a rest and go to the villages. You will see our prestige is not so dead as you think. My college students are most of them sensible lads. But damn politics ! Come and have a rubber of bridge."

But politics was not to be exorcised. Riley might have allowed himself to be detached if he had not looked up and seen Dean standing at the door of the bar. Everyone was asking the policeman about the *hartal.* There had not been much excitement in the city, he told them. People had seemed rather bored with it. Some of the shopkeepers had put up their shutters sulkily. They did not like closing; yet not one of them had dared to show indifference. Dean had been amused at their tired assumption of woe. He described a *bunniah* locking up his chests, and then his door, with deliberate irony, like an actor forced to play a part that irritated him. The man had put the key of his safe into his pocket with a stage gesture, as much as to say, " Well then, if you will have it, go on with your silly *hartal.* No one can say that I stand aside. But if God does not give you more sense, I hope the Sircar may whip it into you''

The impression Dean gave was of a somewhat perfunctory demonstration. " Of course there were the usual firebrands," he added, " jumping about and working themselves up into a frenzy with an excited mob at their heels, hoping for loot. Barkatullah was one of them. He waved a black handkerchief on a stick. One of my sergeants heard him howling out, ' Handcuffs are ornaments for men. A nation that forgets its martyrs is dead.' "

Riley told Dean that he was on his way to Barkatullah's office when he ran into the *hartal,*

" You would not have found him at home," Dean said. " The *Roshni* Press was closed down this morning. Barkatullah's security has been confiscated."

Skene had a picture of Banarsi Das again adrift. He saw him on the skirts of the *hartal,* a pathetic figure, aping defiance, hugging his vanity with both hands. A little uncertain of it perhaps, and conscious of the disparity of the image he carried about with him and its market worth. Skene could see, through Banarsi Das' eyes, a perspective of petitions, chairs in verandahs, admittance after long waiting into offices, the " sun-dried bureaucrat " inside under the punkah, physically hemmed in with a fortification of files, and morally inaccessible by reason of his thick skin and his inability to appreciate what Banarsi Das had himself described in more than one application as " a winning personality and a commanding appearance"

" Do not forget" Skene reminded Riley. " Banarsi Das is now on your staff. He has enough English for proof-reading, possibly too much. You will get plenty of amusement out of him, if nothing else."

Here Dean was detached by Parkinson, the Chief Secretary, a rare visitant at the bar, evidently drawn there to-night in search of information. Parkinson emerged from his office at least half an hour after everyone else had finished playing games. No, he would not have a *pan* or a vermouth. The care entrenched on his high brow rebuked Dean's idle offer. Riley watched him nod his head mechanically as he noted one point after another in Dean's narrative, and he knew that each nod registered a paragraph in a mental file. He has got it all right, Riley thought to himself. He will have it on paper if he has to compose the file in his sleep. It will be all there, what

they said and did, all the political catchwords and inflammatory speeches, nothing omitted save the essence and soul of the thing. Parkinson would not have the ghost of an idea what anyone of them were feeling. He knew nothing of men. To him Gandhi was a seditionist, Barkatullah was a seditionist, men of the same category, whom it was Government's business to prosecute. He saw no difference between them save that one was more dangerous than the other. Riley would have told him that Gandhi was an *avatar*, a leader of men, an embodied protest quivering with humiliation at being a subject of an alien race; and Barkatullah a vulgar tub-thumper, a notoriety seeker, out for himself, an exploiter of nationalism for his own profit.

" The only thing to do with agitators like Gandhi and Barkatullah" Parkinson was saying, and Riley overhearing him was tempted to bellow his scorn in head-lines : " Gandhi and Barkatullah ! Garibaldi and Guy Fawkes! Mind and Matter! Mercury and Mud ! " But he only gasped, " Poor old Parkinson."

Skene heard him. " Poor old Parkinson," he repeated. " A big brain, but a corpse. If he had not been dead for at least five years he would be the Lieutenant-Governor of the New Province."

The Chief Secretary left the bar with an almost conscious aloofness. Riley thought he looked more melancholy and funereal than ever. He muttered to Skene, " A mute at the obsequies of an empire"

Dean, released from his cross-examination, joined them at their little table as Riley was speaking. " According to old Parkinson," he said, " the procession to the grave has already started. There's been a

rising at Amritsar and shooting at Lahore. At Amritsar they've been killing Englishmen and burning them in kerosene oil and knocking lady missionaries on the head. They say a Miss Sherwood is dead or dying. They've looted all the banks and killed the managers, burnt the churches and destroyed the post offices and telegraph offices. At six o'clock the city was in the hands of the mob, and it was touch and go whether they broke through into the civil lines."

It became known that Dean was the repository of news. As he spoke half a dozen men crowded to his table. Hill and Bolton joined the group again with Galton, the A.D.O., who had the last official messages. " The telegraph wires are all cut," Galton told them. " Lahore is isolated except by wireless. They are sacking and burning railway stations all over the place and pulling up the rails. It looks like a general rising."

Osborne, the G.S.O.I., said that a Gurkha havildar had told him at half-past six that there had been a mutiny in Lahore cantonments. The Punjabis had despatched their British officers and were marching on the city. " How the deuce do they pick up these rumours? We've only just heard about Amritsar ourselves."

"The Punjab is lucky to have O'Dwyer," Hill remarked. " He is the last man to stand any damned nonsense. But what about the troops here ? "

" Our troops are all right," Osborne said. " They'll soon wipe up the riff-raff if there is any trouble in the bazar."

Bolton asked Dean if there was much excitement in the city. Dean did not expect trouble. " Thompsonpur is too busy nuking money," he said. " If it were

a little poorer or a little more prosperous, it would be more dangerous."

" But, of course, if the Punjab goes——" Hill ejaculated. Then he caught Riley's eye. " And this is the crowd you want to arm ! " he added.

Riley returned his stare. He said nothing, but he felt that fathoms had been added to the gulf that divided him from nearly every soul in the room.

CHAPTER II

BANARSI DAS

I

BANARSI DAS sat alone in the *Roshni* office composing articles that were never published. Barkatullah was on tour in the New Province and the Punjab seeking aid from the patriotic for the revival of his Press. He had foreseen that the temporary extinction of *The Roshni* would be no unmixed evil; indeed, his provocation of the official extinguisher had been deliberate, though he had not quite realised how the glamour of persecution would irradiate him. Parkinson and his undiscerrring school were not the only folk who spoke of him now in the same breath with Gandhi.

In Barkatullah's inflammatory articles in *The Roshni* the incitement to bloodshed had been but thinly veiled. He had taken care to be offensive enough to provoke confiscation, yet not so offensive as to endanger the security of his own person. He had steered a happy course. Now he was a popular hero. He had earned the crown of martyrdom, and none knew better than he how to turn a halo to profit. The subscriptions he had collected already amounted to twice the sum needed for the new security, and no one would dream of asking to see the account. Probably it never entered anyone's head that Barkatullah

was not making a good thing out of it. Just as in the days when *The Roshni* first shone on the horizon of Gopalpura, nobody troubled about what came of the fund collected by the editor, and contributed by pious Moslems, in aid of the wives and orphans of Turks murdered by the truculent Armenians in Anatolia. In Gopalpura, when the cause is patriotism, one pays one's mite and automatically becomes a patriot. No true nationalist questions the motives of another. Ideals must not be smirched, not on paper at any rate. It does not do to drag one's fellow-patriots before the tribunal of a superior alien code, or to provide a text for the irony of *The Thompsonpur Gazette.* Besides, what does a little leakage matter? It is by giving that one obtains merit. The main thing is to appear selflessly devoted to the Turk. So when Shans-ud-din, a rival editor, unkindly suggested that the *Roshni* fund had never benefited the widows and orphans in Anatolia for whom it was intended, he was howled down. His patriotism was impugned. From the day of his protest he began to lose in influence and importance. The circulation of his paper, *The Aj,* dwindled. *The Roshni,* in the meanwhile, prospered; its rays illumined an ever-widening field, penetrating far beyond the New Province and the Punjab.

Barkatullah had suffered what he imagined was an injustice at the hands of Government, and now he could indulge his personal resentment and his vanity at the same time. He was becoming a man of consequence. Wherever he halted a small crowd met him at the railway station and he was conducted by a band of volunteers, never more than eight or nine, to the house of some local magnate, generally a pleader. It is true that the volunteers did not march in step,

that they were ragged and unkempt and had no kind of uniform, and instead of arms carried poles over their shoulders with pennons emblazoned with the star and crescent, all sloping at different angles. It was a demonstration that might have been dispersed by a single policeman. Nevertheless it was comforting to pride. Vindictiveness had the sanction of patriotism. Barkatullah woke up every morning with a sense of moral worth. He had also the material satisfaction of the subscriptions. It is not often that virtue is remunerative.

Banarsi Das had none of Barkatullah's consolations. He sat in the shuttered office of *The Roshni,* inarticulate. These were dark days. His friend, Aniba Pershad, when he visited the *Roshni* to borrow Barkatullah's *Who is Who in India,* found the sub-editor in deep dejection. Piles of manuscript littered his desk, written in that round disarming handwriting which Skene knew so well. Banarsi Das rose to meet Amba Pershad. " I cannot utter," he said dolefully, pointing at his unpublished articles with a pathetic effort to appear jaunty and self-assured. Amba Pershad fancied he saw the track of a tear under the rim of his spectacles. Banarsi Das threw his little round cap on the mountain of papers in which his eloquence lay obscured. His eye brightened at the prospect of declaiming a passage or two to his friend. " The British will soon be crossing the sea,' he said. " You have read what the Satans have done at Gujranwala? They are not long for Bharat Mata."

i The Punjab atrocities were the theme of the hour. Nothing else was talked about in Gopalpura. The Rowlatt Act and even Gandhi's arrest were forgotten. The Lahore editors were muzzled under a sterner

regime, but in the New Province authority had set its face against repression. Barkatullah was the unfortunate exception. " They have ceased to govern," Bolton said. " The Press has complete licence and can be as inflammatory as it chooses." And never was there such fuel for a blaze. On April 12th news of the massacre in the Jallianwala Bagh at Amritsar reached the city. A few days afterwards *The Ittihad* published a story which was not easily credited, but which everybody hoped was true. General Dyer, it said, had ordered the people of Amritsar to crawl on their bellies like serpents, in order to humiliate the Indian race. Then one heard of the whipping of students, the handcuffing of lawyers, the internment of patriots who were " rotting in gaol." Now it was the bombing of the innocents at Gujranwala. Amba Pershad had read it in *The Aj*. Happier journals were publishing the details of the Punjab " atrocities" every day. Only *The Roshni* was extinguished. It was galling to Banarsi Das that the beacon alone should be unlighted. Lesser luminaries shed their flickering beams, while the naked light of truth, which should have been intensive and blinding, was darkened by the shutters put up by the police. Not a glimmer reached the multitude through the chink.

"When is Barkatullah coming back?" Amba Pershad asked.

For a moment Banarsi Das wished that he would come back, deposit the security at once, and start again. Then he remembered that his days in the *Roshni* office were numbered, and the hours, which might be made eloquent, were slipping away.

" You are leaving *Roshni?"* Amba Pershad asked.

" Who is Barkatullah going to appoint as his new assistant editor?"

Banarsi Das was flattered. Barkatullah never recognised his editorial capacity. He referred to him simply as " my translator." As a matter of fact very little original work by Banarsi Das had appeared in *The Roshni,* and now he had proved an inefficient translator. His Urdu was too highflown; "it was interspersed with rare Persian and Arabic words; he could not resist the dazzling trope; he let himself be carried away in a flood of rhetoric. Barkatullah wanted a man who was capable of rendering a column of news from *The Thompsonpur Gazette* in language which could be understood in the bazar. Banarsi Das had lost *The Roshni* many subscribers. He was too much in the clouds to promote sales or propaganda.

"Who is Barkatullah getting?" Amba Pershad repeated. " Did he read my articles on Swaraj in *The Kali Yuga?"*

Banarsi Das looked at his friend with suspicion as a potential usurper. Amba Pershad commanded a more biting pen even than he. But he was a Government servant. He held a pensionable post which he was not likely to give up. His contributions to *The Roshni* were surreptitious.

" I do not hit it off with Barkatullah," he explained to Amba Pershad. " I do not know who he is getting to succeed me in the assistant editorial chair. By comparison with me he is a timid gentleman. He is afraid, when I speak openly shaming the Government, because he has not my courageous fortitude. Besides, after all, no doubt he has not my literary abilities."

Amba Pershad defended Barkatullah from the charge of timidity. He pointed out that he was the only

editor in Gopalpura who had frightened the bastard officials into confiscating his Press.

" Oh, yes! He is clever no doubt," Banarsi Das hinted darkly.

It was true that Banarsi Das was master of a more perfect courage at the moment than Barkatullah could command. He would have gone to gaol gladly to be called a hero. The mountain of invective on the office table was a proof of it. He would have welcomed the shadow of the police constable on the stairs if he could have been proclaimed to the world as the author of the work. He had long had a vision of a procession to the Deputy Commissioner's office, himself the principal figure in the crowd. The picture had taken so distinct a shape in his mind that he lamented the absence of chains and handcuffs, a decoration denied to political prisoners. The freedom of hands and feet was altogether too unimpressive. It marred the symbolism of his picture and left him only half a martyr. For Banarsi Das, so long as he trod the clouds, was an intransigeant. It was only when his feet touched earth that he recognised his infirmities. For the moment he was a hero lacking a stage. The pity of it was that there was nobody to listen to his heroics. Banarsi Das felt that he had surpassed himself. Where Barkatullah had chastised the Government with whips, he had laid about him with scorpions.

Banarsi Das had begun his indictment in Urdu with the vain hope that *The Roshni* might be resuscitated, and that Barkatullah, converted by his eloquence, would permit him to " utter." Then, finding Urdu inadequate, -he lapsed into English. The language of the oppressor had a fascination for Banarsi Das. It led him by flowery paths of rhetoric to eminences

to which no indigenous eloquence could aspire. " Give me English column/[1] he had implored Barkatullah. " The newspaper that is bilinguous kills two kinds of readers with single stone/' But the editor of *The Roshni* had been unresponsive. " He gave me the non-posthumous," as Banarsi Das put it. He set his face against bilingual experiments. Banarsi Das had slain enough subscribers with the language at his command. In his disappointment he tried to find vent for his English in *The Gopalpura Standard,* the only Indian-owned newspaper printed in English in the city. *The Standard* was an institution of which Gopalpura was proud. It had its own London correspondent and subscribed to Reuter. It was widely quoted by the Press of Bengal, Madras and Bombay. Riley himself could not compete with *The Standard* in a political leader. The editor, Suresh Chandra Chatterji, a Bengali who had never left India, wrote better English than most English journalists. Even Parkinson admitted the dignity and consistency of *The Standard,* bitter and venomous as it was in its attacks on " the alien bureaucracy" Chatterji was a bit of a recluse, and in his way, something of a seer. A genuine patriot, and a man of principle, he was not easily accessible to the staff of scurrilous and irresponsible papers like *The Ittihad* and *The Roshni,* who gave away the cause every day by their crudeness, inaccuracy and violence. Beyond a letter airing some student's grievance which *The Standard* had published, the importunities of Banarsi Das had gained him no admission into the circle. His articles on the Punjab " atrocities " were neither acknowledged nor printed.

It became evident to Banarsi Das that if his inspired work was to secure the immortality it deserved, it

could only be through oral tradition. He caught at Amba Pershad as the heaven-sent transmitter. Picking up his file of manuscript he began to declaim rapidly. " See/' he shrilled, " what heinous and abominable crimes the tyrannical and blood-sucking oppressors have perpetrated in Punjab." As he spoke he fingered the pages lovingly. When a particular passage caught his eye he fell into recitation. Amba Pershad made a movement in his chair as if to escape, but his courtesy restrained him. Banarsi Das was so terribly in earnest.

" Punjab, the home of lions" he continued, " has become hiding-place of jackals. When the Punjabis have crawled on all fours, when they have been whipped on their bare buttocks in the presence of *demi-mondaines"*—Banarsi Das had consulted his dictionary of synonyms here—" it is useless to speak of them as men. Punjabi heroes, the beastly English have defiled your sacred home, the land of the five rivers where the sacred hymns of Vedas and the Holy Granth were first chanted. How many hundred heroes, whom God made to walk erect, were made to crawl on their bellies like serpents. When a usurper is in one's house it behoves each and every right-minded and self-respecting gentleman to kick him out. Time is not now for talk. Swaraj is not to be secured by begging, it is the birthright of patriots. The haven of liberty is to be attained only by swimming through leagues of blood. If courage is shown and chests are exposed to bullets of tyrants success is sure."

Here Banarsi Das paused with his hand on his breast and looked at his friend for commendation.

" Oh yes ! " Amba Pershad remarked drily. " I admire your composition. It is very eloquent." But

he spoke without conviction. His sympathies for the moment were with Barkatullah.

Banarsi Das was disappointed that his friend was not more impressed. But Amba Pershad found it difficult to feign enthusiasm. What he had listened to was the kind of thing that was being preached every day in the bazar. Only Banarsi Das had memorised the more eloquent passages and embroidered them with his text-book English.

He turned again to the manuscript. " ' Appeal to Punjabi Brothers ' is not half bad," he said modestly. " But after all it is mere flea-bite in ocean. Listen now to my defamation of English. You will see I have reached apogee." Here he picked up a thumbmarked sheet of the yellowish paper used in the *Roshni* office and selected an earlier passage, written in Urdu when he still hoped to persuade Barkatullah to put on the true crown of martyrdom.

" Punjabis, shun all meetings with the English until you can go with *lathis* in your hands. It is sinful to look now upon an English face. We are no longer ignorant children to spend the happy years flying the kite of the Montagu scheme. It was not until the empire was in danger that the British discovered that we were brothers and fellow-countrymen. How do they look upon us now ? They say that we are black men and lower in the scale of creation than they. But who can be lower than the English flesh-eaters, wine-bibbers and ravishers of our women? If an Englishman shoots an Indian and is brought to court, he pleads that the Indian resembled a black bear. India is like a lotus flower that has attracted many poisonous flies. Is it the will of God that Indians should remain under the rule of men who were like beasts roaming in

the jungle when Indians taught them to wear clothes and be civilised? The British claim that they are protecting India is false. Our own troops are protecting us. The British did not conquer India with the sword as the Muhammadans did. They have taken away our arms and now bomb us and shoot at us from the air in safety in their aeroplanes. Even a woman can worry a caged lion. But the English will not be with us long. Are we not united under Gandhi-ji? A large snake can easily be killed when alone, but little ants in number can move anybody out of bed."

" Shabash ! Banarsi Das." Amba Pershad broke in with genuine commendation. He preferred Banarsi Das' Urdu to his English. He had not heard the snake and the ant parable before. The rest of the declamation was a mosaic of coloured scraps borrowed from the speeches of different agitators and worked into a pattern. Very dear to Banarsi Das was the ominous innuendo.

" The English are the elephants, not the sheep, of Christ/' he continued. " When an ant gets into the trunk of an elephant, it bites it and the elephant dies. So also will we bite, and the Englishmen——"

Here Banarsi Das dropped his manuscript and looked anxiously at Amba Pershad. His aposiopesis was effective, if unpremeditated. Somebody was coming up the stairs. The sound of the footsteps was unfamiliar to Banarsi Das. He was accustomed to a light and soft patter of feet, hesitating sometimes on account'of the darkness. If there was any noise on the staircase it was generally the *khatib's* loose dragging slippers which tapped the stone at every step. The tread of this visitor was heavy and deliberate; he wore metal on his soles. No Indian walked like

that or wore such heavy boots. Banarsi Das was convinced that it was the police. " Feringhi officer," he whispered hoarsely to Amba Pershad and began bundling his manuscript into an *almirah,* fear and pride racing in his heart. As the steps drew nearer pride lagged behind. The incentive to it was soon stowed away with the relics of other lost causes on the shelves of the *almirah.* The intruders, whoever they might be, would find the assistant editor of *The Roshni* seated at a white unpolished schoolroom desk with a bench attached to it, looking very innocent and submissive.

A loud English voice dispelled all doubt.

" Hullo ! Banarsi Das ! Are you still a rebel ? "

Banarsi Das looked up and saw the huge frame of Skene filling the door at the head of the stairs. He remembered another occasion when his old Principal had surprised and confounded him in the act of conspiracy. It was in the boarding-house of Gandeshwar College and Siri Ram was one of the company. The memory revived a sense of guilt and he was a little ashamed of it. He was a little vexed and ashamed too of the revival of affection for his old Principal. There was a kind look in Skene's eyes, and his hand was outstretched in greeting.

Banarsi Das grasped it. Skene understood that the almost jaunty air he adopted was intended to reconcile respect with independence. He introduced Banarsi Das to Riley, who had followed him into the room. Amba Pershad, feeling that the *Roshni* office was not the best vantage ground for the introduction of a subordinate Government servant to the head of a Department, slipped quietly down the stairs.

Banarsi Das found himself shaking hands with the

editor of *The Thompsonpur Gazette,* who was glad to meet a member of his profession. He was not proof against this courtesy.

" It is a long time since we met, Banarsi Das," Skene said. " Tell me all about yourself. Is it true that you are leaving *The Roshni ? "*

Banarsi Das admitted that " he did not pull on with Mr. Barkatullah." His tenure of office was on this account precarious.

" And what are you going to do? Are you looking out for work ? I think Mr. Riley has an opening——"

Banarsi Das did not wait to hear the nature of the gap he was to fill. He leapt at it blindly. " Sir" he said, achieving a fortuitous accuracy of idiom, *" I* aspire to commence author.'[1]

Skene smiled. " I am afraid you will find it difficult to square your political views with the *Gazette*," he said.

" Sir, I can contribute. *Thompsonpur Gazette* has become very liberal paper under Mr. Riley."

Riley explained that he wanted a man who understood office work and who was also a competent proof-reader.

" No doubt I am accomplished clerk and proof-reader. But you may try me on editorial staff. I am staunch nationalist, of course. I spurn Rowlatt Act and Punjab atrocities. Nevertheless I can be moderate if, and when, benign Government showers blessings."

Riley had no doubt that the benign Government would afford opportunities for moderation in the near future. Support of the Reforms, for instance, would be quite consistent with Banarsi Das' ardent nationalism. He even promised to consider any contributions that Skene's young protege might send in; but it was

a clerk he wanted, not an assistant editor. Nevertheless Banarsi Das was importunate. With the pertinacity of his kind he refused to look unpleasant facts in the face. Riley had to repeat two or three times that he had no vacancy for him on his editorial staff.

In the end Skene had to step in. " You know, Banarsi Das," he said, " you can't expect to start at the top of the ladder. And you must think of ways and means. What are you going to do next? "

Banarsi Das confessed that he found it difficult to make " the two ends meet' " My bed of roses in this life has Been very thorny, not to say muricate."

" Well, then, Mr. Riley is going to give you the chance of a softer bed. You may be able to pick out all the thorns. What has been your trouble? "

Banarsi Das laid his hand on his short-cropped hair, a familiar gesture when he was in difficulties as to the marshalling of his points and the most effective way of delivering them. " Sir," he began, " I have been outraged by Fortune.' But here he checked himself, hesitating perhaps to betray mankind's concerted indifference to his worth. He had been ejected by the Government school in which Skene had secured him a mastership. He had failed as an agent and advertiser for a firm of Aurvedic medicines. The Cooperative Credit Society discovered that they had no need for him. The revolutionary gang, of which he was to be a paid employe, had discarded him at the last moment, doubting his staunchness. As assistant in the Religious Bookshop, and again as translator in *The Roshni*——

Banarsi Das blinked at Skene and Riley and preserved an inscrutable silence about his past. It was no doubt this rapid mental review of his reverses that influenced his decision. For in the end he accepted the

post that Riley offered him on the *Gazette* with the air of conferring a favour.

He might have remembered that Skene and Riley had to disappoint young men nearly every day who came to them for patronage and employment; but he did not feel in the least grateful. He preceded the two Englishmen to the foot of the spiral staircase. They shook hands with him and he saw them depart, to be merged again in the scheming, acquisitive, material world in which they dwelt, devoid of sympathy, unconscious of ideals. As he brooded over the manuscript, now restored from the *almirah* to the desk, his recollection of the interview became coloured with resentment. Riley's refusal to admit him into the fold of the elect was all part of the concrete barrier which the British opposed to his countrymen's aspirations. The editor of *The Thompsonpitr Gazette* had denied Banarsi Das one more opportunity, and it had seemed almost within his grasp, to " utter."

II

Skene and Riley paused in the square outside the *Roshni* office and admired the signboard emblazoned with the rising sun. Underneath the ball of gold Barkatullah had inscribed a Persian motto, " How can the shades of Darkness resist the Flood of Light? " From the balcony of an adjoining house, inhabited by what Skene called " a vernacular band," a large trumpet proclaimed to the world in melodies unheard the readiness of the hireling orchestra within to satisfy the sensual ear at pomps and marriages. Sun and trumpet, glare and blare, were always associated in Riley's mind

with Barkatullah's stentorian propaganda. The thought of the pathetic figure of Banarsi Das alone and inarticulate in the darkened offices of *The Roshni* was singularly incongruous. Was he still bending over that schoolroom desk? It might have been the very bench at which he had sat, at Skene's feet, when he paraphrased the " Ode to a Nightingale" at Gandeshwar.

" What on earth did Banarsi Das mean by ' muricate ' ? " Riley asked Skene as he got into the trap.

" Heaven knows ! I always have to look up words in a dictionary when I've been talking with Banarsi Das. He has a wonderful memory. I believe he spends hours learning the *Encyclopaedia* by heart'

" I've got it," Skene shouted as they swung out of the square by Amir Khan's mosque. " ' Who fished the murex up? ' "

Riley capped the quotation. " ' What porridge had John Keats ? ' Do all your Arts Students talk English like that? "

" Banarsi Das is a freak. He is out for colour. ' Stokes outdares Nokes in azure feats/ If he had been at Oxford or Cambridge he would have been a decadent or a Bolshevik. No; I think the average student's grasp of English is extraordinary."

Banarsi Das' grasp oJ the language was certainly crushing. At Gandeshwar he had not been reckoned a particularly intelligent youth, as students go. Skene had pushed him up through the Intermediate to the Fourth Year class. He was a failed B.A. He could tell you the names of the Sylphs who attended Belinda at her toilet in " The Rape of the Lock." He could repeat an annotator's rendering in Babu English of the most difficult passages in " Adonais." He could

enumerate the virtues and defects of poets like Wordsworth and Tennyson, and he had mastered the logical sequences of ideas, if not the philosophy, expressed in Keats' " Ode to a Nightingale." Banarsi Das often compared literature to a garden; it was a pleasance in which he trampled freely, a collector and despoiler.

" Did you hear him tell me that he would be at my office at ten o'clock on Monday morning with the punctuality of a tick ? "

" Sounds a bit ominous," Skene remarked drily. " But Banarsi Das was always a pessnnist."

" What on earth is he doing on a Muhammadan newspaper? I thought he was a Samajist."

" He was. Probably he is now. He and Siri Ram were accomplices and sat at the feet of Narasimha Swami. That Barkatullah should have taken him on *The Roshni* is a sign of the times."

" You mean the Hindu-Moslem entente? "

" Yes. It is only just beginning in earnest. It's going to be the biggest political movement of the century. Dean is very uneasy about it. Up till now when there has been any trouble we've had the Muhammadans or Sikhs or Hindus on our side. Next time we are going to be up against the whole combine. Even the Sikhs are disaffected."

" We are making a nation of them all, and the cement is hatred of the British."

" Just so. We've made Indian nationality quite unconsciously. Remove us and they will be at each other's throats in two months."

" Still it is not our business to divide them. If only this Hindu-Moslem entente were genuine it would be the best thing that could happen to them. We could clear out with honour. We don't want India. It's

nothing but a festering sore. I'm all for a White Empire"

" And let the Indians go to the devil in their own way? "

" Td rather they went there alone than that we went with them in a mutually abhorrent embrace."

" But what about the old zemindar? " Skene said. " After all he makes up nine-tenths of the population, and the only person so far to save him from the *vakil*[1] and the *bunniah*[2] has been the British civilian/'

" The zemindar would look after himself all right/'

" With *lathis*, you mean ? Sheer anarchy. Nothing else."

" We must leave him the Government he deserves."

" But he doesn't deserve it. Your scuttle policy is hopeless, Riley. Think of our obligations."

" To tell you the truth, old man, I'm tired of being reminded about our obligations. We've got all articulate India howling out to us to hand over and go, and we tell them ' We're here for your good "

"Well. Isn't it true?

" It used to be true, but with this race-hatred kindling everywhere British rule is a positive calamity. Nothing could be worse for them or for ourselves. They simply don't believe in us. And why should they? I don't believe in Government myself. They hang on to every scrap of privilege and authority as long as they can, and then let it go bit by bit, when they can't hold on any longer. They are afraid to govern and daren't abdicate. And the people are beginning to see that they are frightened. That is quite enough to detach the unpolitical masses. Gandhi will whistle them away like the Pied Piper of Hamelin.

[1] Lawyer. [2] Money-lender.

It must end in revolution. After that, repression. India an armed camp, or the deluge. The sun-dried bureaucrat sees it coming, but all he thinks about is his own umbrella, just to hang on a little longer till he gets his pension. He hopes India will last his time, but it won't.'

" And what is your remedy, young Riley? "

" Tell them that if they don't want us we are going in two years. Call in the native chiefs. Hand over responsibility for law and order to them. Hyderabad in the south, Patiala in the north, Gwalior and Indore in the west. Give the east to Pertab Singh and his Rajputs. Let them make the best of it they can. Everyone who knows the country understands that this democracy business is all bunkum. Yet we can't stay here and go back on our silly pledge."

" And who is going to protect the North-West Frontier? Someone must hold the ring. What's going to prevent the Gurkhas overrunning Bengal? "

" That is India's look-out. There is no reason why we should not hold the North-West Frontier, if they want us there, and they probably will. India of course would have to pay, and the different States could supply troops on a rotatory system to be trained by us."

" I see. You have got it all on paper. The Golden Age again. Have you allowed for the financial crash ? "

" The box-wallah will shake the pagoda-tree, when we have gone, more lustily than ever. Don't you see, as soon as we hand over this race-hatred will die. They'll want Englishmen. As for pensions and all that, we could hold Bombay, Calcutta and Madras as a security. They'd soon pay up and buy us out."

" I like your Utopia, young Riley. You might as

well unchain a lot of mad dogs in a yard and leave them to fight it out. Do you really think our departure would bring felicity to Barkatullah and Banarsi Das?"

" I'm sure it would—relative felicity at any rate. And we've got ourselves to think of. If we stay on like this and drift, there will be another Amritsar every week, white men murdered in out-stations, white women and children knocked on the head. Either that or the Prussian heel and Dyer again."

" My God! " Skene shouted. " If they touched our women I would train monkeys in hell to fight them."

They had passed the Mori Gate and were entering the cantonments. Queen Victoria under her marble canopy held out her scroll to an unbelieving world. Yet there was nothing ominous in the atmosphere of Thompsonpur, nothing to imply any rude awakening from her dream, or rejection of her proffered gift. In the hybrid quarter outside the gate, where the old and new towns meet, the unoiled wheels of bullock carts chanted a drowsy litany of content. The drivers bent forward sleepily over the yoke. Files of soft-footed camels moved like creatures wound up and impelled by necessity, the automata of fate. No human figure stood erect under that blistering sun. Only the *bhisti,* bent over his *mussaq,* attacked the dust with rhythmic sweeps. The rest of the world seemed to be wrapped in a profound uncomfortable slumber. Rumour herself was asleep.

As they passed the Queen's statue, Riley, pointing at this particular facet of " the brightest gem in her diadem," said, " Give me the village green, geese on the pond, duckweed and water-buttercups, and a hairy-heeled old cart-horse dipping her mane in the weeds/'

" Throw in a big shady willow-tree" Skene added, " gorse in blossom and a lark in the sky."

After that neither of them spoke until Skene drew up and dropped his friend at the offices of the *Gazette.*

" Good-bye, young Riley," he shouted back at him. " Give Banarsi Das a chance. And don't publish your new gospel in the *Gazette."*

" Good-bye, old Skene"

III

" Religion is country" Banarsi Das repeated to himself as he pored over the Koran in the *Roshni* office. " Allahu Akbar and Om are one name" He did not find the words in the holy book; they formulated a new and startling creed. He had overheard them in a conversation between Barkatullah and the *moulvi* of Amir Khan's mosque, and he had caught at them with the instinct of a pioneer. The formula was soon to become one of the familiar political catchwords of the hour.

Banarsi Das had travelled far in tolerance since his association with Siri Ram. There had been an Anglophile period after the tragic death of his friend. For a full year after leaving Gandeshwar he had maintained relations with Skene. Then—it was in the drifting phase between the Government school and the Cooperative Credit Bank—he had fallen among revolutionaries again; Ghadr pamphlets and the tales of returned emigrants revived the rancour of old days. He became a member of a Samiti. He was flattered by his confederates. There was mystery and glory in it. Ramesh, a wandering Bengali ascetic, was the

first to fire his imagination. The youth had something of the appeal of Narasimha Swami and aspired to the Mahatma's mantle. A master of pose, he seduced Banarsi Das by ritual. Nothing stood out so saliently in our young friend's memory as the night of his initiation. He was dedicated by Ramesh to Kali. The goddess was conveyed to the place of ceremony wrapped in a crimson cloth in an *ekka.* The night was pitch, and the conspirators walked by the side of the cart, all save Ramesh, who strode ahead chanting *mantras,* and Banarsi Das himself, who rode in uncomfortable state clasping the idol. Kali seemed to be endowed with a divine energy. With every jerk of the *ekka* she lifted Banarsi Das as if to precipitate him in the dust beneath the wheels. After a time his embrace became passive; the goddess grasped him with her many arms; she seemed about to eject him with violence. Long before they reached the burning ghat Banarsi Das was convinced that he was unacceptable; and what was worse, he no longer wished to be accepted. He was shaken and confused, a prey to vague apprehensions, fear of the ceremony and all that it might imply, and the unknown sacrifice to succeed it at which Ramesh had hinted darkly. He longed for his bed in the *serai,* the homely muffled sound of tethered baggage animals, of camels chewing their dry provender, and the prosy snore of merchants and drovers.

As they entered the narrow lane which led into the field of ashes a huge banian-tree with spreading arms made the darkness more intense. Banarsi Das remembered it by twilight as a place so haunted by the spirits of the dead that he was afraid to approach it. The *ekka* pony, an unresponsive, sleepy jade, with

outlines of skin and bone, half-starved into inanition, now became a sensitive. It trembled and snorted and sweated and jibbed, and backed the cart with its holy freight up the *bund* towards the canal. Little owls, disturbed by the commotion, dropped from the branches like weighed *djinns.* A jackal howled carnivorously. Banarsi Das fancied that luminous eyeballs betrayed the presence of the unseen. Ramesh was dragging him to the ground. Kali was thrust into his arms. He had to carry her past the cavernous roots of the tree.

Banarsi Das half-fainting with fear was prompted through the ceremony by Ramesh. The vow of dedication was taken by him before the goddess with a sword and *gita* on his head, kneeling on his left knee. In this, the *pratyalirha* position, he was supposed to represent a lion springing on his prey, though anything more unlike a lion than Banarsi Das, unless it was the terrified *ekka* pony, it would be difficult to imagine. Evidently the conspirators had gauged Banarsi Das' mettle. He was to have been taken the next day to see the national flag hidden in an alcove of a ruined shrine; but he was told the goddess had communicated with Ramesh in the night and rejected him. His vows were not binding, as the ritual was incomplete. His confederates consorted with him no more.

One would think that the memory of his relief at his escape from the embrace of Kali might have sobered Banarsi Das and subdued his inclination for perilous adventure. One of Ramesh's accomplices was in the Andamans; another had been executed; the mutilated body of a third, believed to be a betrayer and victim of the Samiti, was found in a trunk in a railway carriage in Bengal. Ramesh himself had disappeared. But the craving for self-expression in Banarsi Das was

inordinate. A day or two before Skene had brought Riley to see him he had been given a glimpse of another part in which he might figure heroically. The new call was for " sacrificing men." He was persuaded that there was immediate glory in it, though the arena for sacrifice was yet far away. He was tempted to become a conspirator again. He was in two minds about joining the *Gazette.* It would mean promotion and security—more than a mere livelihood. He pictured himself in the office among other clerks, Indian and Eurasian, and was undecided as to whether he should wear " the English costume" Many of his fiiends would envy him, but the greater number would fegard him as a backslider. It was becoming more and more the fashion to apply epithets of contempt to the servants of the English, more especially to Government officials and title-holders. A correspondent of the *Roshni* had recently denounced all Khan Sahibs, Rai Bahadurs, and lsuch-like decorated supporters of Government as a sycophantic tribe, " the *daroghas* (doorkeepers) of hel" And ridicule was still harder to bear. Banarsi Das did not like the idea of being called an *apke-wasti, jo-hookum,* or *khusandi* (lickspittle, time-server, toady). His association with the *Roshni* gave him a certain status among patriots as a chartered revolutionary. He was in a position to despise the infirm who sold their birthright for a mess of pottage. One of the commonest terms of abuse in the Moslem world to which he was becoming initiated was the word " kafir." In the school of Barkatullah any young man who sought the favour of Christians, or mixed with them for the sake of honour, was a *kafir,* as was any who doubted that India under British rule had become *dar-ul-harb,* a land hostile to Islam, or who reconciled obedience to

the Government with obedience to Allah, or who wore a tie and collar, or who did not profess himself ready to sacrifice his life and property for his Caliph. Such was the lip-service paid to religion, and religion with the Moslem was becoming nothing more nor less than a cultivated Xenophobia; not the hatred of the Hindu—he was no longer a stranger—but the hatred of the alien white man, so superior, proud and efficient, who made laws and assessed taxes, and drilled and exploited Asiatic hordes, growing fat on the fruits of the land, and who was now plotting to destroy the garden of Islam.

Hindu and Moslem were in need of one another. Neither would admit the opportunism that prompted such cries as " Allahu Akbar and Om are one name" As the local poet put it plaintively, " Tears always well up in both eyes, not in one *only."* The young Mussalmans of Gopalpura had admitted Banarsi Das into their ranks as a free companion. He had been taken by them to more than one meeting held in the graveyard by the ruined mosque of Ain-ul-Quzzat, a mile and a half outside the city. Here he had heard bolder incitements to rebellion, more confident predictions of the expulsion of the British from the Motherland, than at any of the gatherings of his Hindu associates in Gandeshwar when he was an accomplice of Siri Ram. The red fez and the woolly Astrakhan cap were never seen at those meetings. Now the sword of the avenger was in the hands of Islam. The air was charged with immediate menace. When he listened to these firebrands he could not believe their fulminations were in vain. In the days when he and Siri Ram and Lachmi Ghand had held forth at Gandeshwar it had been like a debating society, in which schoolboys played with a

dream. Their vows were dedicated to an image which they knew was unreal. Siri Ram alone had risen to sacrifice, and he had been pushed and dragged to the altar. These were men of action. Their eyes shone. They had the air of martyrs. Their religion was threatened, and Banarsi Das believed that they were ready to die. Only two days before Skene and Riley climbed the corkscrew stair to his office he had heard a greybeard, who gave himself out to be an Afghan, say that next year the Indians would rule India. The Amir of Kabul would attack the English and drive them over the Indus, and the whole of Hindustan would rise against them, when to escape slaughter they would abandon the country. He added that it was not necessary to admonish Indians of this, as they would receive natural promptings to rise when the time came. When the fiery little man had finished, all the company in the graveyard rose to their feet and cried " Amin."

The inspiration and the prompting, Banarsi Das felt, were not far distant. Defiance was visible on the face of every Moslem in the circle. The desire to court imprisonment and internment and to earn the title of " Hero " and " Martyr " had become endemic in Gopalpura. The old man, however, who styled himself an Afghan, was a stranger. He had seemed the very incarnation of energy amidst the dust and decay of the cemetery where the funereal cypresses, like plumes on a hearse, and the weeping tufted tamarisks with their caked tassels, overhung the innumerable little graves, all pointing one way, in which the faithful lay with their feet towards Mecca. The heat of the afternoon was overpowering. The metallic sky hung low and solid above their heads like a dome or an oven, of the same consistency as earth, and emitting the same hard,

fiery particles that pricked and parched the skin and dried up the moisture in one's throat. It was the kind of day on which one is reminded that the East has been the home of futility for the last thousand years, and that by the decree of Allah and the conspiracy of the elements it could not be otherwise. Yet this grey-beard, who sprung from nobody knew where, and spoke with the voice of a bell, had awakened a sense of life and victory in a scene so dead, that one would think no impulse towards resurrection could survive in it.

The " Afghan " was staying with a Wahabi *moulvi* in Amir Khan's mosque. Jemal Khan, a friend of Banarsi Das and his sponsor in the Moslem world, had visited him there. He had been with him half the night when he met Banarsi Das the next morning and opened out to him a project of adventurous service. The Afghan was an emissary of the Hindustani fanatics who dwelt under the mountain of caves at Asmas, beyond the Indus, in the territory of the Nawab of Amb. There is a verse in the Koran, known to the initiate, which is used as a text to recognise a *mujahid.* When Jemal Khan recited the verse, the Afghan unbosomed himself. He had come to sound the people of India, he said. In every community there were people who hated the English, and who looked to the Afghans to restore Islam. If Turkey were destroyed, the Amir would call the faithful to arms, and all who refused to take part in the Jehad would be denounced as Kafirs by the *moulvies,* and their honour would be the honour of those who had been beaten with shoes. The last time Afghanistan waged war on the English she was a single nation; this time when she raised the flag of the Jehad she would be assisted by every other Asiatic race.

" He has sowed a song and will reap a sword," Banarsi Das quoted aptly from the Persian.

" The harvest is sure'' Jemal Khan told him. " He has come and he has gone, no one knows whither."

Jemal Khan could not tell Banarsi Das his name. " They call him ' the Bulbul-i-Sehwan, the nightingale of Sehwan, " he said. " Sehwan is the shrine of the Malang faqirs in Sind. I do not know what his real name is. Probably he has many.'

But on the morning when Skene and Riley visited him Banarsi Das' enthusiasm for Islam was tempered with doubt. What kind of respect, he asked himself, would the Afghans show the Hindus of his Samaj ? Someone had told him once that when they came to India to help the Muhammadans they would kill all who were beardless, taking them for the enemies of Islam. The Afghans were worse tyrants than the British; the Amir still blew his rebels from his guns. Any sensible Hindu of the old school would tell him that it was foolish to lift the dam that held back the Pan-Islamic flood. One minute he saw himself carried along on it in safety; the next overwhelmed. But the cataclysm, if it ever came, was comfortably remote. In the meanwhile he was attracted by the wandering life, the honour and mystery and uncertainty of his errand. There seemed very little danger in it. The men of violence among whom he would have to mix would honour him, and be his friends. It was national work. He would be a messenger of Moslems to Moslems.

" Men are needed to come and go, for nothing may be sent by post."

Banarsi Das was flattered by the emphasis with which Jemal Khan pronounced the word " men'/' And he

would not go alone. He understood that he would return alone, but that he would go with a party.

" Who are the party? " he asked Jemal Khan.

" Before I make you acquainted with them you will take a vow of secrecy with the Koran on your head. If your decision is clear, and you have removed all doubt, meet me at Amir Khan's mosque on the night when the moon is first sighted in the month of Rajab." Jemal Khan did not think in Kafir dates.

Banarsi Das discovered from the calendar that the moon of the month of Rajab would be sighted on the Monday of the next week. It was the very evening of the day on which he was to join the *Gazette*. Riley's offer complicated his decision.

All Saturday and Sunday he was vexed with doubt. On Sunday morning he found Amba Pershad in his quarters over the fruit market near the Mori Gate. Amba Pershad was a man of the world. He might laugh at Banarsi Das, but he would probably give him good advice. Not that Banarsi Das had any intention of following it; but he thought that by talking over Riley's offer with his friend he might discover something more definite about his own inclinations. He had no intention, of course, of revealing his traffic with Jemal Khan.

As Banarsi Das passed along the sun-baked verandah over the bazar, he heard the dying croak of a gramophone. It guided him to Amba Pershad's room. Amba Pershad was sitting at his writing-table when he saw the hesitating figure of his young friend through the chick. Banarsi Das had the appearance of having drifted there absent-mindedly; his air of uncertainty evoked an encouraging summons from the oracle he had come to consult. Amba Pershad's hearty " Come in,

Banarsi Das" was an unconscious prescription for infirmity. The young man looked as if he might be blown back again like a leaf down the stairs into the street. The Babu rose and lifted the chick for him. Banarsi Das floated in, and stood blinking in the doorway. The room was dark to him after the blinding glare of the verandah. The first thing he noticed, as the possessions of Amba Pershad took shape, was the huge mouth of the gramophone. It stood on a small table beside a desk, which was strewn with sheets of foolscap neatly inscribed. The dark blue table-cloth, the folding cane arm-chair, and the bookshelf, which held more pamphlets than bound volumes, suggested an English interior. A bright new Amritsar carpet covered half the floor. Three plush-seated chairs with gilded backs, probably the discarded furniture of a Raja's Durbar hall picked up in the bazar, gave the room a sense of prosperity, almost of extravagance. Amba Pershad's person bore out the general impression of well-being. He wore a well-cut tussore lounge suit in the English style and a soft collar and tie. The only Oriental thing about him was his neatly-tied turban which he had taken off and thrown on the table by the gramophone, baring his high episcopal brow. He was a handsome man, a Brahmin. His beaked aquiline nose and inscrutable eyes would have attracted notice anywhere.

" Well, what is the news? " he asked Banarsi Das. " Has Barkatullah returned? "

" I am not waiting for him.[1]'

" You will not stay if he requests you? "

" He will no doubt procure another assistant. I have been offered appointment on *The Thompsonpur Gazette."*

Amba Pershad evinced no surprise. Never by the movement of an eyelid, or by any modulation of his voice had he betrayed so vulgar an emotion.

" I have always predicted that you would become famous," he said. " Will you write the leaders? "

" They want an assistant in the editorial chair"

" Mr. Riley has been reading your articles. He has been hearing of your literary ability. You have converted him, no doubt, to share your views. Which was Mr. Riley? the thick man like a buffalo, or the thin keen man like a bamboo ? "

It occurred to Banarsi Das that the simile in Riley's case was apt. The editor of *The Thompsonpur Gazette* was erect and thin like a cane. He was notorious as a castigator. One could credit him with resilience. " Mr. Skene is a corpulent gentleman, no doubt" he explained. " Mr. Riley, on the other hand, is quite the vice versa/'

Amba Pershad pointed to the sheets of manuscript on his table. ' This work is for His Corpulency," he said, " the Director of Public Instruction since the last three weeks. I have not spoken to the gentleman. It was his predecessor, Mr. Richardson, who commissioned me to put together a text-book on Civics for use in Anglo-Vernacular Middle Schools/'

" Oh yes, I see. You are *pucca* Government man. You will be Rai Bahadur in New Year's Honours List and will sit in Durbar on a chair."

Banarsi Das, who had an uncomfortable feeling that Amba Pershad had been laughing at him, could not resist this retort. But the sting had no barb in it. Amba Pershad continued in his even friendly tone:

" We are train-bearers, Banarsi Das, you and I.

Now you have left the *Roshni* you have become one of us. Barkatullah will call you an *apke-wasti."* [1]

" So far as principles are concerned' Banarsi Das declaimed loftily, " I will not yield inch or ell."

Amba Pershad smiled. " Your pen will obey," he said, " when Mr. Riley dictates theme," and he lightly indicated Banarsi Das' political conversion by imaginary quotations from the *Gazette.* " You will be writing about Mahatma Gandhi and saying that it is the English who have set the goal of autonomy before him. You will explain the innocence of the Rowlatt Act, and you will tell the Mussalmans that Islam cannot suffer if the British strip the Khalifa of his territories, since no eclipse of his temporal power can weaken his spiritual authority. You will say that Dyer and O'Dwyer saved Punjab from bloody revolutionaries, that Great War was fought by British to gain self-determination for small nations, and that Reform Scheme is palpable advance along road leading by progressive stages to realisation of self-government."

Banarsi Das made a gesture of protest.

" And when my name appears in Honours List you will write my encomium in the *Gazette."*

" If I were insincere man and turncoat, I might write these things. But, you will see. My intention is to reject offer of editorial chair." The dignity Banarsi Das was rejecting increased with his inclination to sacrifice.

" Oh, you will join all right."

Banarsi Das rose with the air of one wounded in his self-respect and made a movement towards the chick. Amba Pershad did not move, but addressed him from

[1] "At your Honour's service" l. *e.* a toady of Government.

his chair, holding him with his eye like the Ancient Mariner.

" Get down from your high horse, Banarsi Das. You do not believe what Mr. Riley will ask you to write in the *Gazette.* Nor do you believe all that you and Barkatullah have written in the *Roshni.* Neither do the British believe what they write. They used to believe in themselves. They had the will and power to do so. But they believe no longer. The bastard Government has no more courage. In a year or two they will go. Anybody can see that they are frightened. They have the will for repression, but they fear to apply it."

" Yet they say that Reforms are not outcome of agitation."

" The Reforms "—Amba Pershad fell into the pose of academic delivery—" are not the outcome of a demand, but of our spontaneous recognition of the growing political consciousness and progressive development of the Indian people. Agitation may delay, but cannot hasten them. That is Mr. Montagu. You may see it in Reuter. I have got it as peroration in the last chapter of my Civics. But in the next column of the newspaper that reports his speech it is urged that the Bill should be pushed through the House of Commons with all possible speed in order to allay discontent. The English only give when they are afraid. It is the same with all governments. They are humbugs. You too are a humbug, Banarsi Das, and I am a humbug."

" I am man of principle. I will not serve the British."

" If you do not serve Mr. Riley, who else will employ you ? I do not love the British any more than you do,

Banarsi Das. When I see the Deputy Commissioner pass in his carriage with his chin in the air I want to spit. But it does not help us to be angry. It is better to laugh. The white English vultures are going to leave this country. They will not be here long. Do not offend them while they can peck. You will be able to stamp on their necks after a little time. In the meanwhile they must fill our bellies. It is national money after all. Empire-patriotism is given first prize. You will be carrying a flag on Empire Day, Banarsi Das."

Here Amba Pershad picked up a page of the synopsis of his Civics text-book and read it aloud to Banarsi Das. He began modestly with the village, the town, the State—after all the Indians had some sort of Government before the British came; but these early chapters were only an introduction to the swelling imperial theme : " Our pride and privilege as citizens of the British Empire, our rights and duties, our glorious past as the custodians of British traditions, our future heritage, our Emperor, our Empire, our Flag/'

Banarsi Das shuffled uneasily on his chair. He hated Amba Pershad, who made a mock of everything. He knew that these lyrical effusions alternated with the vitriolic articles which Amba Pershad contributed anonymously to *The Kali Yuga* and *The Ittihad.* Not even patriotism was sacred. The man besmirched the garments of sacrifice.

" Now hear the Briton on himself." Amba Pershad turned to the gramophone. " I picked this up with twenty-three other records, sacred and profane, in the bazar. It is better inspiration than fountain of Muses. I turn it on before Civics every day."

After a little attention the raucous, paralytic instru-

ment began to wheeze out " Rule, Britannia! " with a blatancy which might have subdued a bookmaker.

" Rule, Britan-n-nia 1 Britan-n-nia, rule the waves 1
Britons, never, never, never, shall be slaves."

Banarsi Das had not heard the tune before. The words were familiar to him. They provided a text.

" Certainly they will be slaves, but tyrants——" Incapable of entering into the spirit of Amba Pershad, he was launching on one of his sententious sermons, when his friend invoked the gramophone to apply the closure, " Now hear their sacred music" he said; and the instrument responded with " A few more years shall roll"

" It is like an old woman crying for her dead buffalo," Amba Pershad remarked, as the strains died away, and the air became charged again with the buzzing of flies. " Yes. I will be paid five hundred rupees for the text-book. If it runs for two or three years I may make a thousand."

But Banarsi Das did not hear. He was immobilised. He fled to preserve his illusions. He felt that Amba Pershad was a man whom one might trust to do nothing inexpedient, but in whom trust was otherwise misplaced. As he lifted the chick, flooding the room with dust and light, the oracle called out to him, " You will join the *Gazette,* Banarsi Das."

For some occult reason he hoped that he would not.

For two days Banarsi Das had drifted between Thompsonpur and Gopalpura in body as in mind. It was late on Sunday evening when he found himself outside the offices of the *Gazette* and made his first

conscious survey of the building. The block was set back from the road like the neighbouring hotel. As Banarsi Das stood looking over the clipped duranta hedge surveying the potential forcing-house of his genius, he saw an Englishman emerge from a door which he gathered led to the press. He did not like the look of the man, and be became uneasy when he noticed that he had seen him and was changing his course, making towards the gate near which he stood. His short stodgy figure and confident strut with its suggestion of efficiency alarmed Banarsi Das. At close quarters every feature of the Englishman was repellent; his thick neck and tight well-fitting grey suit expanded by his bulging calves, his little stiff clipped red moustache, and gimlet eyes, colourless and porcine, which had never been softened by dreams or sympathy, and over all the hateful topee, crest and symbol of brute power and dictation from above.

This alarming person bore down on Banarsi Das, and asked him for a match. He called it *deer-salai* in his pigeon Hindustani, and Banarsi Das, who never carried matches, did not understand what the Englishman wanted. He stared at him timidly and stupidly, thinking that he was being abused for loitering near the office of the *Gazette.*

The Englishman appeared angry and red. He repeated the word *deer-salai* with an explanatory gesture, striking an imaginary match in the air. Then he turned away disgusted at Banarsi Das' stupidity, muttering crossly, " No, of course, you wouldn't 'ave a match, monkey-face."

Banarsi Das turned back towards Gopalpura and loitered by Amir Khan's mosque. The friendly shelter of the plinth under the minaret refreshed him. He

looked to the point in the sky where the new moon would appear on the first day of Rajab and remembered the verse from the Koran which the Afghan had repeated in the graveyard of Ain-ul-Quzzat: " Praise be to God, Who has brought us away from the House of our enemies'[1]

CHAPTER III

THE CAVE OF ADULLAM

I

THE inside of the club was deserted. Men were sitting under the huge gallows-like punkah outside, which small urchins in uniform were pulling fitfully. The cotton-tree had spilt its last crimson blossom. The brain-fever bird was repeating its shrillest note. The club tennis-courts, which had been lying under two inches of canal water in the morning, had been sucked dry by the sun and emitted a rank and sickly smell. The heat was not yet overpowering, but one knew that it would increase daily for at least six weeks, possibly two months, and one's sense of resourcelessness was aggravated by apprehension.

Skene had been on tour inspecting schools. He had spent the last twelve hours in the train feeling like a steak on a gridiron. As he steered for the white-coated company under the erection that looked like a gallows, the thought of refreshment and companionship quickened his step. The recompense of the day at this stage of the hot weather was the first long bubbly drink after sundown when the ice tinkled in the glass like music. How musically is inexpressible in prose Riley had emptied pails of Helicon in his search for an analogy. It sounded to him as the tinkling of cattle

bells to the lost traveller under the hill, or as the summons to prayer heard by some ecstatic nun.

Riley was sitting under the nearest punkah, with a long glass in his hand which he held out at arm's length as if invoking something, when the burly figure of his friend appeared out of the dust and gloom in response to the libation.

" Skene, old boy ! By Jove ! When did you get back? Have a long drink'' The season of the *pau* in Thompsonpur had passed with the early days of April.

Riley was sitting with the very man Skene wanted to talk to. Farquhar, the Principal of Thompsonpur College, would be able to tell him about the runaway *muhajarin.*[1] The event of the hour in the political world was the defection of fourteen of his Muhammadan students who had gone over the frontier to join " the Army of God/' Riley was trying to get the story out of Farquhar when Skene joined him. " The whole thing beats me'' Farquhar was saying. " I can't make it out. They were steady sensible fellows, among the best I have got. Some poisonous agitator must have been getting at them, Barkatullah or one of his crowd'

" Persuaded them that they were Kafirs," Riley suggested.

Hill joined the group, tumbler in hand, when he saw Skene arrive. Farquhar repeated the story for their benefit.

" They had got all their examination fees, and instead of paying them into the College they pooled the lot. So they are well financed. They took the fast passenger train to Peshawar, travelling third class in

[1] Those who, following the example of the Prophet Muhammad, have fled from their homes under oppression.

separate compartments, and got out at Serai Kala. At Haripur their yarn was that they were Aligarh students on the way out to collect money from the Nawab of Amb. They dodged the police post at a place called Kirplian and crossed the Indus a mile or two up-stream in a boat. Dean has sent an Inspector to Darband. They are still with the Hindustani fanatics"

" Did they ever give you the idea of being hostile ? " Skene asked,

" Not in the least. One or two of them were a bit *mugra.*[1] Jemal Khan, for instance, might have sat for the model of a zealot, an intense-looking youth. But on the whole I should describe them as a rather sporting lot. Niaz Ali played a good game of hockey. Zahur Muhammad was the best slow-bowler in our team, a real head-bowler. In a month or two he would have passed his B.Sc."

Skene remembered being bowled by Niaz Ali in the match between the College and the Station.

" It is a most extraordinary thing. They are the last fellows in the world whom I should have thought would have turned out seditious"

" But don't you find it is generally your young rebel who has most backbone in him ? " Riley asked him.

Hill looked at Farquhar to see how he would receive this sentiment, " a *pucca* Rileyism," and hateful to orthodoxy. The Principal of Thompsonpur College was a good fellow and very sure of himself. His strong clean-cut features and the frankness of his glance proclaimed it. Riley thought of him as the kind of young man to whom his squire, or his rector, or the master of his College would have given a beautiful certificate,

[1] Sullen.

The popular novelist generally provides such a hero a convenient villain to thrash in the second or third chapter. Farquhar was an athlete. He had been a Blue' at Cambridge. He was also endowed with every mental gift necessary to success—a category by the way in which imagination is not infrequently omitted.

Riley's view of the young malcontent had not struck Farquhar before. His silence expressed disapproval. He did not like his students to be politically minded.

" After all," Riley continued, " the youngster must have good stuff in him who believes his religion is in danger and is ready to make sacrifices for it."

This was too much for Hill.

" Does he believe it ? " he objected. " And what is he giving up? He has made a picturesque dramatic exit. Curtain—applause—yells from the gallery. In the next act he is the hero on the stage, and has nothing to do but to pose. It's all play-acting."

" You don't know these students," Riley said. " They are genuine enough. They go to bed every night worrying about the Khilafat and wake up angry in the morning. They believe Islam is being attacked. Jemal Khan thinks he would be a skunk if he did not go to a Muhammadan country and fight for his religion. Nothing outside the Koran counts."

" And do you really believe he will fight ? "

" He probably thinks he will. Anyhow, I prefer Jemal Khan to your spoon-fed youth who laps up the education we dish up for him as if it were jam."

" What you say about Jemal Khan may be true—up to a point," Farquhar conceded generously; " but my experience is that the majority of students to whom this agitation appeals are wasters."

" Banarsi Das, for instance" Skene interposed. His

sympathies were with Riley, but he wished he were not so provocative. " By the way'' he added, " what has happened to Banarsi Das? "

" He never turned up'

"Did he write?"

" Not a word."

" Grateful youth,"

" I will ask Dean if he has heard anything'' Riley said. The C.I.D. man was discovered at a neighbouring table discussing high politics with Wace-Holland, the Divisional Commander, and Osborne, his G.S.O.I. The three men were drawn into the circle. Three more long drinks were ordered to lay the dust in the throat. Everyone seemed interested in the *muhajarin.*

Dean's latest news was that a *tehsildar* had been sent over the border into the Nawab of Amb's territory to negotiate with them to come back. They were offered a free pardon, which they refused with scorn. Their flag was still high. Jemal Khan was spokesman. They were going to Kabul, he said, and on to Constantinople to fight for the Turks. India was *dar-ul-harb.* They were the subjects of God and not of Great Britain. It was their duty to defend the honour of God's house. Otherwise how could they show their faces to God.

" By Jove' Riley exploded. " Isn't that damned fine 1 "

" Gas and vapourings," Hill muttered inaudibly to Farquhar. He did not want the General to hear. But Farquhar was unresponsive. He was fond of his students and he had an uncomfortable feeling that his College was disgraced.

" I wish we could rope in some of their Islamic spirit'' the General said. " We'll be fools if we don't let the Turks down easily."

Riley looked at the General with eyes of affection. He had served under Wace-Holland and he knew the General liked him. The young man and the old had a great deal in common. The contemporaries of both considered them a little mad.

" But what about Banarsi Das? " Skene asked,

" Banarsi Das ? " Dean repeated the name as if he were trying to recall its associations. " Banarsi Das. Oh yes ! I meant to tell you. I fancy I saw your young protege at the railway station one day early last week. I noticed him, because he was trying to avoid me; it's a habit with malefactors. But I doubt if he still calls himself Banarsi Das. He was wearing a black Astrakhan cap with the badge of the star and crescent on it and baggy Muhammadan trousers. Not a bad disguise for a Hindu."

" Can you imagine Banarsi Das brandishing the sword of Islam? "

" It is quite on the cards that he went off with the *muhajarin* and that he is now at Asmas with the Hindustani fanatics. If so it will be difficult to trace him. They all changed their names when they crossed the Indus. The only one the *tehsildar* could vouch for was Jemal Khan"

" Banarsi Das will be about as much use to them as a sick headache/' Skene said. " But what are their tactics now? "

" The same old war-cry—Insurrection or Flight. No Moslem should live under non-Moslem rule. That is for India's consumption. Over the border they are working up the Mohmunds and the tribes of Buner and Swat. They hope the Afghans are coming in. The Turks are flattering them and promising them money. There are two Bimbashis at Asmas now, preaching the Jehad.

The fanatics think themselves the centre of the universe, which is to be forcibly converted to Islam."

This was altogether too much for Hill. It bordered on romance. The bubble Dean blew appeared to him so inflated and iridescent that he was provoked to put a finger through it. " You don't mean to say',' he drawled, " that you G.I.D. men are going to raise that futile old bogey of the Hindustani fanatics again. They have been always flitting about at the back of the stage. My grandfather used to talk of them, but what have they done ? "

" They've been mixed up in every frontier rising since the Ambeyla show in '68. They are not dangerous as a fighting force; they are wire-pullers—financed by Moslems in India, mostly Wahabis—organisations in the Punjab, the U.P. and Bengal, ramifications from Panipat to Dacca, a perennial stream of malcontents trickling through, missionaries collecting funds. Fanaticism is an hereditary trade with them,"

But Hill would not be convinced. He described them as a sponging, lotus-eating breed of fanatics, too lazy to cultivate, dependent on the alms of the pious.

" You wouldn't have called the Hindustanis futile," Wace-Holland said, " if you had been at Shabkadr in 1915. I counted twelve of them laid out among the dead. You remember them, Osborne; they were clothed in black from head to foot."

" Yes, they didn't strike me as an emasculated breed. You have heard of the Ghazi rush at Kot-Kai. Forty-eight of them fell in the attack on the post—the most gallant, hopeless affair."

" Intoxicated with bhang," Hill suggested. " The more of them who obtain the joys of martyrdom the better."

" It doesn't much matter what they are intoxicated with, call it bhang or religion. The point is their heads are swollen with Pan-Islamism. They are working this Khilafat business for all they are worth/'

" I hear the Ghazis have a leather cannon at Asmas, and Mustapha Kemal has promised them a couple of machine-guns"

" You're a bit of a wag, Hill; but this is not all Gilbert and Sullivan. The Ghazi is the fermenting agent; that's all. And he's out for Jehad. He hasn't had such a chance for a century. Not even in '57. Every decent Muhammadan in India is angry and sore and believes that we have betrayed Islam. This is the feeling on both sides of the frontier, and in Afghanistan. Half these tribesmen believe that the British are at Mecca and Medina and are going to set up liquor shops in the Kaaba. Of course, they hate the Sherif like poison, and say we have bought him, and that he is a Kafir and that the Haj means nothing, now the Holy Places are in the hands of unbelievers."

" Is not the Sherif of Mecca a lineal descendant of the Prophet? " Hill asked.

" You tell them that," said Wace-Holland. " Nothing maddens them more."

" By the way," Dean continued, " the fanatics have got another settlement at Charmakand on the Afghan border. They get their supplies through Mardan. Charmakand is to be the tribal base for operations on Peshawar." The G.I.D. man told of mysterious comings and goings on the frontier, and unwove a nexus of intrigue, tribal jealousies, traffic in *fatwas* and rifles, wandering faqirs plying between Kabul and Delhi and Deoband. Certain names, vaguely familiar to Riley,

punctuated this talk. The General asked some pertinent questions about the Haji Sahib of Turganzai, the Jandiwalla Mullah, Nasrulla Khan, and the Bulbul of Sehwan. They talked of Obeidullah's Army of God, the Ghalib-nameh, and the Silk Letter Conspiracy Case. Dean could afford to be communicative. It was all past history now. Even Hill was interested. But Skene had fallen into one of his trance-like reveries, sitting back in his chair, his glass between his knees, staring into the blanket of dust, through which the moon of Rajab appeared dimly like an onion suspended in a loft. He heard nothing. He had a picture in his mind of Banarsi Das among the fanatics, in the camp under the mountain of caves, the timid, faltering, academic Banarsi Das, the victim of some gust of impulse, half paralysed with fear, and longing to escape. He would be drilling perhaps in a black robe, fingering strange weapons, listening to exhortations in a strange tongue. Smaller sacrifice than his had earned patriots the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel in Obeidullah's Army of God. Skene pictured him sitting in a circle by a camp fire under the moon, while some white-bearded mullah expatiated on the sweetness of death by the sword of the infidel, the joys of paradise, the crown of martyrdom, A sprig of camel-thorn thrown on the embers would irradiate the faces of the faithful, and Banarsi Das would shrink back into the shadow, scorched by the flame to which he had lent his feeble breath. Then he thought of him sobbing over the lifeless body of Siri Ram at Gandeshwar. " Poor little devil! I am sorry for him if he is in the Cave of Adullam. I wonder if the *muhajarin* are still there. If he isn't knifed, I wouldn't mind betting that he will be the first of the gang to come back,"

II

Skene's picture of Banarsi Das in Independent Territory, though inaccurate in detail, was true in effect. Indeed, it did not require long acquaintance with the friend of Siri Ram to predict that his days on the frontier would be spent in tribulation. After a day and a half and a stifling night in the train, with thirty passengers in a carriage packed as thick as seeds in a pomegranate, he was deposited limply on the platform at Haripur. According to the pre-arranged plan the conspirators met in a house where a guide from Asmas was awaiting them, and after a hurried meal started at once on their journey. They travelled by night. It was important to get across the border with as little delay as possible and to avoid being seen.

The journey by night from Haripur to Darband, thirty miles including the detour to avoid the Police Post at Kirplian, exhausted Banarsi Das. His throat was parched; his feet were blistered; and his head swam. Two miles short of Kirplian the party left the road, following the guide, and stumbled for hours through rocky nullahs. The soles of Banarsi Das' tennis shoes, which he had bought for the journey in the bazar at Gopalpura, became loose and tripped him up at every unevenness of the ground. The sharp stones cut them to strips. He left one in a prickly bush, the thorns of which, as he tried to extract it, tore his hands and feet. The other he tied up with string. The party moved on relentlessly, in silence, with barely a halt. Banarsi Das, who had fallen behind, every now and then bleated to them to stop. He was terrified at the thought of being cut off from them and

lost, In every bush he saw a policeman, or a tribesman, or a dacoit. The glow of the conspirator, the spirit of adventure, the pride in being a rebel died in his heart. Then after a time fear became merged in a consuming numbness. He was only conscious of being abysmally tired. His body felt like a parcel of dry skin wrapped round a clammy uncomfortable tunnel that stretched from his stomach to his throat. The lower plodding part of him was detached and in conflict with the upper organism, though it too was sensible to pain, and received a new wound whenever he put his feet to the ground.

Just before it was light they reached Darband. Here an emissary of the fanatics was waiting them by the gate of the *serai* outside the village. Without rising from the ground he called out to them the password of the hour. " He who shall equip a warrior in this cause of God shall receive a martyr's reward/' And the guide answered him, " His children dread not the trouble of the grave, nor the last trump, nor the day of judgment/' At this the figure by the gate rose up and intoned, "Enter now the company of the faithful; join the divine leader; smite the infidel. Everything is prepared/' Then one by one they bent low to pass through the wicket of the massive doorway into the courtyard. The alcoves on either side of the arch within the gate were lighted by wicks floating in shallow vessels of oil. In one of the recesses Banarsi Das noticed a merchant poring over his accounts. He followed the *muhajarin* inside, and sinking down on the coping of the verandah leant wearily against a pillar.

Everything was early astir, and in the dim grey light he watched the objects in the courtyard take shape. He saw the pigeons wake in their niches over

the gate and the bullocks harnessed to the wheel at the well. Soon the yard filled with sparrows. They came before the crows. The patient kneeling camels, which never slept, regarded the world impassively as if nothing complex could disturb the eternal scheme of things. The tethered horses whinnied and dragged at their heel-ropes, appealing for their ration of young green wheat, which had been cut and brought in overnight. In the far corner a fire was burning under a thorn-tree, and the savoury smell of baked chapatties mingling with the acrid smoke of the camel-dung fuel revived Banarsi Das, and linked him with the comfortable world from which he was rapidly being borne away—or abducted, as it seemed to him at the moment. For he had no more spirit for the adventure, and dreaded intercourse with the exacting Jemal Khan. He watched the *muhajarin* spread their blankets in the cubicles which opened into the verandah on all sides of the square. He felt an alien among them. They seemed to him strong and purposeful. He had none of their fervour. Many of them even now were bowed towards Mecca, rising and sinking rhythmically and striking their foreheads on the stone, as if that appalling night journey had not been enough to destroy all elasticity of body and soul. At Gopalpura Banarsi Das had been taught to say his *nimaz* by Jemal Khan. He had even shown application in the drill. These posturings meant initiation as a conspirator among the elect and woke no scruples in his Aryan soul. Banarsi Das had no religion. He had long forgotten the teachings of his Samaj. Dayanand[1] meant no more to him than Mahomet. It was true in his case that Allahu Akbar and Om were one name. He might have professed

[1] Swami Dayanand, the founder of the Arya Samaj.

Islam at Jemal Khan's instance if he had not been afraid of the ordeal of circumcision. The little faith he had was comfortless. He believed in nothing unless it were the punitive resources of the Almighty, of which he collated new evidence every day in the web of conspiracy woven by malice and circumstance to his hurt.

A servant of the *serai* brought him a *chatti* of hot milk with which he filled his bowl. The food that was given him he swallowed greedily in gulps. The whole meal did not last many seconds. Then he rolled himself up in his blanket in one of the empty cubicles and prepared to sleep, praying that he might be forgotten and left alone. He removed his *hansli,* the rope purse he had tied to his waist, and the Koran attached to it, on the ninety-ninth page of which the *moulvi* of Amir Khan's mosque had written in Urdu, and Pushtu and Persian that Abdul Hakim—it was Banarsi Das' alias in Independent Territory—was a messenger of the faithful and that his word was to be trusted. This rash attestation was Banarsi Das' passport. It would carry him safely through Buner and Swat, and secure him the hospitality of the Mohmunds and the Haji Sahib of Turangzai. He placed the Koran beneath his head, and held the purse in his hand under the blanket. The custody of neither conduced to sleep. He was afraid of thieves. Every footstep in the verandah was a menace. Above all he feared a new summons to effort. He had a disquieting suspicion that the *muhajarin* were capable of starting off on another stage of their journey before night.

He was unconscious that he had slept when at three o'clock he saw Jemal Khan walking across the courtyard with the steps of a covenanter in the direction of

his cubicle. " Abdul Hakim, Abdul Hakim/' he called. But before he could cross the threshold Banarsi Das was moaning that he was sick, and that he must see a doctor. His blisters were festering. He had fever. He could not continue the march.

" We must not stay here," Jemal Khan answered quietly. " Before an hour has passed we will be starting for Asmas."

Banarsi Das prayed that he might be left in the *serai.* Only a day or two. He would follow the *muhajarin* when his blisters were healed.

Jemal Khan warned him of the danger of the police. " The ferry is but three miles distant'' he said. " When once we are across the Indus we will be safe."

But the security of the camp of the Hindustani fanatics no longer appealed to Banarsi Das as it had done at Gopalpura. He was not uplifted, as he should have been, by the thought that he was a *"* warrior in the Cause of God'' The first night march in the campaign in which he was enlisted had exhausted his spiritual resources. He dreaded being dragged up to the battle-line. He wished he had joined *The Thompsonpur Gazette.*

But Jemal Khan was insistent. In his face of a covenanter Banarsi Das read a dreadful finality.

" We will put your things on a camel," he said. " An ass will be found to carry you as far as the ferry."

" Let me stay here," Banarsi Das pleaded. " It will be but a day or two, until my blisters are healed."

Jemal Khan told him quietly that it was impossible that he should be left behind in the *serai.* Not one of the *muhajarin* would permit. All must cross the Indus.

Banarsi Das repeated that he was unable to move as his feet were sore.

Jernal Khan reproached him, " With the Koran on your head you swore that you were ready to die. Can not you even endure a little pain ? The feet of all are blistered"

" 1 am ready to die, of course," Banarsi Das replied, lapsing into English. " You may try me. I do not shrink from bloody marhrdom; but for the moment I cannot walk."

" If one of us remains, all are undone. We are watched narrowly, Abdul Hakim. In these days even a tree, or a plant, 01 a stone is an informer."

Banarsi Das protested that no hint of the nature of this mission would escape him if he fell into the hands of the police. Jemal Khan turned away. Banarsi Das watched him cross the yard as if he were approaching a conventicle. Each short deliberate step appeared to the convert to Islam to be impelled by the agency that maliciously watrhed over his fortunes. Jemal Khan joined a group of the *mahajarin,* and when he spoke to them they all looked towards the open door of Banaisi Das' cubicle. The unhappy inmate felt that he had lost honour, lie had gained nothing by evasion. Retreat was now impossible. He was already counted one of the weaker vessels. He knew that Jemal Khan, rather than leave him behind, would carry him on his back to Asnias,

An houi passed and Banarsi Das was beginning to hope that the journey had been postponed, when he saw the guide leading a white donkey to his corner of the *serai.*

III

The Bulbul sat in the shade of the only tree on the stony track leading up from the Indus, waiting for the *muhajarin.* The villagers of Jahar clustered round him in a half-circle outside the shadow and watched his every movement with reverence. He was telling them that they were idolaters and that they no longer followed the path of God.

" You complain of drought" he said, " but do you expect the copious showers of heaven to fall on the crops of the unfaithful/' And he pointed to the votive rags they had tied to the thorn-bushes on the path that led to the tomb of the local Pir.

" In the name of the All Merciful be it known to those who seek the way of God that it is forbidden to make offerings to any prophet, saint, or holy man. Adorn not the tombs of Pirs. Seek not thus the attainment of your desires. Would you attribute to any creature the attributes of the All Powerful ? Look not to this departed one to rule the accidents of life. Verily your supplications are in vain. The Pirs and holy ones are helpless and ignorant, even as ye, in respect to the laws of the Universe. The book bids us pray only to God."

The villagers were silent under the rebuke. No one stirred to remove the red tatters on the thorn-bush. They had been placed there by pious hands. In the night perhaps they might be removed, for the Bulbul was generally obeyed. In all his comings and goings he imposed some new exaction on the faithful. Very thorny was the path of discipline he prescribed. It was said of him in the village, " This man knows the seventy-seven thousand, six hundred and thirty-nine

words of the Koran; yet he would have us let the lamp go out at the tomb of our father." A true successor of Sayyad Ahmed, the Wahabi Prophet, he denounced all forms and practices that had come into existence since the writing of the Holy Book. He would have extinguished the taper in the graveyard, banished drums from marriages and abolished ceremonies and festivals. All these things were utterly abominable to God and His Prophet. To the warrior in the cause of Islam he forbade any adornment other than the rifle and the sword.

In Independent Territory the Bulbul was revered as a militant messenger of God. He was an old man, thin and frail-looking, with a long white beard, but far from infirm. His wrists were no thicker than sugar-cane, but hard as steel. The rifle flung over his spare shoulders did not seem to weigh on them as one might have thought. Normally you would take him for a quiet, meditative ascetic. He had a habit of falling into religious trances, and in these unearthly ecstasies he was seen by the people and revered as one communing with God. It was believed that he held mystic intercourse with the blessed Imams, and that in his dreams the beloved daughter of Muhammad and her husband visited him, and saluted him as their son, and bathed him in sweet essences. • He was a Koresh, of a family lineally descended from the Prophet. To his disciples he appeared sometimes as a quietist; sometimes as a scourge of the ungodly; and he owed his influence largely to these alternating moods of the mystic and the man of action. When the spirit was aroused in him you would say that fire was the predominant element in his fragile frame. Sometimes when he addressed his followers, more especially when

rebuking the impenitent, he would be shaken by gusts of passion, which were the more terrible by contrast with the grave taciturnity which they disturbed. At these moments one could imagine him leading the Ghazi rush at Shabkadr.

On the Hindustani side of the border the Bulbul had learnt to curb his reforming zeal. This was necessary for the increase of the Army of God. His divine mission was to preach that the land and everything that grows on it is accursed where the infidel rules. In Lahore, where he had been an unwilling witness of the Mohurram, the Puritan in him had revolted at the excesses of the mob. The dramatisation of the scene at Kerbela was a profane mockery in his eyes. His hand itched to strike down the *tazias* and smite the mourners. He longed to denounce the festival with all its mummery as an abomination to God. So in Gopalpura he felt that the presence of Hindus in Amir Khan's mosque was a sacrilege. In his heart he abhorred the Hindu-Moslem entente and believed that he had the power to destroy the unholy traffic. He refrained because he reminded himself that his first duty was recruitment for the religious war. He could not afford to alienate these unregenerates if they were to be impressed into the Jehad.

To the villagers of Jahar he spoke in low and earnest tones and bade them prepare milk and bread for the *muhajarin* who were already on the road. These young men were following the path of God. Every true Moslem should be ranged against the infidel. " Which of you has fired a shot for Islam in the last twelve months ? What new name has been added to the roll of the Shahids ' of Jahar? "

[1] Martyrs in the cause of religion.

" The Almighty has withdrawn from a faint-hearted generation. When the Moslems with singleness of mind join in the holy war against the infidels their Prophet will return and lead them to victory'

The villagers looked at each other with questioning glances. It was whispered by some that this holy man was none other than the Imam Mahdi.

" When you see the black flags coming from Khorasan, go forth, for with them is a Khalif, the Envoy of God."

The verse the Bulbul quoted from the Koran was aptly inspired. His eyes were fixed on the road leading from the river, and as he spoke the black flag of the *muhajarin* appeared in the bend. The covenanter, Jemal Khan, bore it proudly. He had shaken the dust of defilement from his feet, and was now in tribal territory. He was no longer answerable to the unbeliever. This was the first stage on the road to victory.

One by one the footsore students toiled up the path to the plateau where the Bulbul sat under the solitary tree in the half-circle of villagers. Banarsi Das was the only laggard. The holy man made much of the *muhajarin* and commended their fidelity. He was in one of his gentlest moods. The *malik* of the village had prepared a meal for them. It was arranged that they should rest in Jahar a little while before continuing their journey.

After the meal the Bulbul drew Jemal Khan aside. " Are all here? " he asked.

" All save the Hindu'

" Are all to be trusted? "

Jemal Khan was silent, revolving in his mind the case of a possible exception.

" 1 ask you this question because I have received news of the arrest of Nazir Ullah Shah in Gopalpura."

Nazir Ullah Shah was an agent of the Hindustani fanatics. The Bulbul then told Jemal Khan how he himself had narrowly escaped the same fate at the hands of the G.LD. in Haripur. Their agents had long been watched, but Nazir Ullah Shah was the first to be arrested. He suspected an informer among the *muhajarin.*

" What of the Hindu? " he asked.

Jemal Khan again reflected, damning the absent convert by his silence.

" What does he know? "

" He knows nothing, only our names, and these have been published. He was to have carried the letters back"

It is significant that Jemal Khan spoke of Banarsi Das as if he were always non-existent.

"Is he to be trusted? "

Jemal Khan maintained his purposeful silence. He was well able to weigh the effect of his hesitation. If the Bulbul suspected Banarsi Das he would no doubt kill him. Yet Banarsi Das was an honest agent; of this Jemal Khan was convinced; it was impossible that he could be a spy. But he judged it wiser not to give the Bulbul this impression. Banarsi Das was better out of the way. An impulsive, emotional weakling, who already repented of his adventure, was a dangerous associate. Before leaving the *serai* he had decided that he was not to be trusted with the letters.

" Speak out all that is in your mind, Jemal Khan."

" I do not trust him," the *muhajir* said.

It was a ruthless sentence, Jemal Khan knew that he addressed Banarsi Das' executioner. He told the

Bulbul of the Hindu's malingering in the *serai* and his efforts to be left behind in British territory.

" He has crossed the river? Then I await him on the road" the Bulbul said sternly. " Continue now on your path. The Amir of the Mujahidin [1] has made all preparations."

It was growing dark when the *muhajarin* departed. Banarsi Das observed them from the spot where he was hiding on the cliff above the road. He dared not enter the village until they had gone. He was in a state of great exhaustion, since the owner of the ass he had ridden refused to let it pass beyond the ferry. In his survey of Jahar he marked the tomb of the Pir, the first building on the right as one approached the hamlet from the Indus. He had seen Jemal Khan and his company start off from the neighbourhood of the shrine, and he concluded that it was a resting-place in which hospitality was assured to one of the *muhajarin.*

It was quite dark when he limped up to the tomb, and the moon of Rajab was still high in the sky. As he stood by the half-open door he heard low voices inside. He entered nervously and found himself in a dark cavernous chamber. A fire was smouldering in the corner and he could distinguish two figures bending over it. A voice addressed him out of the gloom.

"Who are you? "

" I am a *muhajir."* Banarsi Das had been assured that the word would prove a passport on the road.

" What is your name ? "

" I am Abdul Hakim."

" Where are you going? "

" I am going to Asmas."

[1] Those who preached Jehad, i. *c.* the Hindustani fanatics.

" What is your errand? "

" I am under the orders of the Amir of the Mujahidin. My companions passed through the village an hour ago. I am sick and unable to walk. Therefore they left me behind"

" Why have you come to Amb ? "

" We are going to Stambul to fight for the Sultan/'

" Do you not come from Gopalpura? "

Banarsi Das admitted it.

" Are you acquainted with Nazir Ullah Shah? "

Banarsi Das answered quite truthfully that he had no knowledge of Nazir Ullah Shah.

Here the inquisitor stirred the embers of the fire and watched the face of the Hindu closely. It was only then that Banarsi Das discovered that he was in the presence of the Bulbul-i-Sehwan. The flickering embers lit up the features of his companion, a magnificent young Shinwari, the finest figure of a tribesman Banarsi Das had yet seen.

The inquisitor continued : " We have come to learn that Nazir Ullah Shah is a prisoner in the hands of the infidel. We seek his betrayer"

Up to this point the Messenger of the Faithful had spoken in a low quiet tone. His voice now became vibrant. It filled the tomb. Banarsi Das was reminded of the graveyard of Ain-ul-Quzzat. He felt that he was in the presence of a judge.

" Do you carry any written script to prove that your word may be relied on? " the inquisitor asked him sternly.

Banarsi Das answered : " My passport is written in my Koran on the ninety-ninth page by the hand of Abdul Rabi, the *moulvi* of Amir Khan's mosque."

" Where is this Koran? "

" It is not with me. It has gone on in front with the *muhajarins'* baggage.

Here the Bulbul spoke a few words in Pushtu to the Shinwari. The two figures bending over the fire assumed the terrible aspect of judge and executioner. Banarsi Das begged them to send a messenger to overtake Jemal Khan, who could not be far advanced on the road.

" Jemal Khan has already spoken of you'' the Bulbul said in a voice that sounded like a knell.

It was not until he heard of this betrayal that Banarsi Das was overtaken by the fear of death. He heard the voices by the fire rise and fall. They were still speaking in Pushtu. Banarsi Das could follow the drift of what they were saying by the proper names that punctuated the conversation. He heard the word Yezid, a name which in all tongues spoken by Moslems can only signify a traitor. Then he heard the name of Nazir Ullah Shah. It was easy to construe this talk. "Nazir Ullah Shah—Yezid—Hindu—C.I.D." The words were as significant as the writing on the wall.

The young giant rose up at an injunction from the Bulbul and approached Banarsi Das, and knelt over him, obscuring the embers of the fire. The Hindu felt the strong hands of the Shinwari searching him all over. " Lie still'' he was commanded, " or your hours in this world will be shorter than is appointed.' Rough fingers were inserted between his waist and the *hansli ;* they unfastened the buckle and the rupees rolled out on the floor. *"* Now sit up'' Banarsi Das was being stripped. He was naked now from the waist up. The Shinwari's fingers exploring his bare chest touched an object which he had forgotten. The discovery doubled his apprehensions. A strong voice echoed in

the darkness over his head like the pronouncement of doom. " Assuredly this man who calls himself a *muhajir* is an impostor. He is wearing the Hindu's sacred thread.[11] The Shinwari tore the emblem from his neck and dropped it on the floor.

Banarsi Das was too overcome to give an account of himself. When he could command his voice he wailed feebly, " It is my disguise to deceive the Kafir police. Inquire of Jemal Khan."

" Jemal Khan has spoken" the Bulbul said with the accents of finality.

The Shinwari held the throat of his victim between the fingers and thumb of one hand. With the other hand he removed the Astrakhan cap with the badge of the star and crescent on it, the *muhajir's* talisman and emblem of pride, and ran his fingers over Banarsi Das' hair. Again the awful voice echoed in the roof of the tomb: " This pious Mussalman, O Messenger of the Faithful, has adopted the *bodi* of the Hindu."

Tugging at the tuft of hair in the centre of the crown which differentiated Banarsi Das from certain less fortunate ones of his race, the Shinwari nearly lifted the wretched youth from the ground. Then he drew his knife from his belt and sawed at the *bodi* until he had severed every hair. Banarsi Das, released by the operation from the position in which he was suspended, collapsed and fell back quivering on the floor. He had shut his eyes, expecting the blade at his throat. Now he lay flat on his stomach with his hands clasping the back of his head, as if he expected a blow. He was subject to further physical examination. He had passed beyond hope, and almost beyond fear, when he discovered that he was alone in the tomb.

It did not at once dawn on Banarsi Das that he was

not dead, that he might yet live. He remembered now that the stony down-hill track to the Indus was less than a mile. If he could cross the river and regain British Territory, no one could compel him to return. He raised himself with an effort, and stumbling to the door felt for a lock or bolt. It was barred from the outside. He peered through the wide chink and saw the two servants of Islam, the old man and the young, conversing in the moonlight: the old man with his long white beard touching his bosom, and his face of a falling axe, and the young man, oiled and curled like a Lothario, a martial youth, beautifully proportioned, with the bearing of a Sohrab. Both had rifles slung over their shoulders. Banarsi Das could hear their voices but not their words. He knew that they were deciding his fate.

He thought of calling for help. If he cried loud enough the *Iwnbardar* of the village might hear him. But he dared not raise his voice. His cries would anger the Wahabi. If he provoked these servants of Islam they might return and complete their work. And the villagers, even if they wished to save him, would be powerless. One had only to look at the Messenger of the Faithful to realise that authority was crowned in him. The young Shinwari was his slave.

The only hope for Banarsi Das lay in their contempt. They might even now depart and leave him in the tomb. What harm could he do them? Why should they return? His heart sank again when he remembered the rupees. The Shinwari would not leave them behind. He turned back into the tomb and began collecting them as if they were safer in a heap. He knelt over the spot where he had been stripped, and

searched the floor with his hands. The action was mechanical; his intelligence responded only to sensation ; he had ceased to think.

Once more he heard the voice of his executioners outside. The bolt of the door was withdrawn. The Shinwari appeared in the entrance with a torch Banarsi Das, as he bent over the floor, dared not look up into his face; he had seen the man's eyes while he was being searched. This light was more terrible than the darkness. " Complete your task" he was commanded by the voice from the door, and he obeyed mechanically. When the rupees were collected in a heap, the Shinwari entered, gathered them up and committed them to his belt. He then picked up the Hindu's *bodi* and sacred thread. Again Banarsi Das felt the hand at his throat. The Shinwari thrust the tuft of hair into his mouth. " Eat it, accursed spy" he said. Then he lifted him up and carried him out of the tomb.

The moon had set. It must have been past midnight when the Shinwari, preceded by the Messenger of the Faithful, carried Banarsi Das down the steep slope to the Indus. He carried him under one arm, and the butt of his rifle rapped the Hindu's naked back and head. A rope dangling from the tribesman's shoulders became entangled in Banarsi Das' feet. He was convinced that they were going to hang him. When he heard the rhythmic murmur of the stream he prayed that he might be drowned.

The Shinwari dropped him on the bank of the river beside a dark object which became associated in Banarsi Das' mind with his dispatch. It was a skin-raft, two inflated goat-skins and a log. Some villager would be deprived of his ferry in the morning.

Nevertheless it was commandeered by the faithful as a conveyance for the Hindu. It was explained to Banarsi Das that he had become a messenger of Islam, though not in the way he had chosen. His carcase would serve as an example to the slaves of the infidel, spies and informers, whether it reached them alive or dead.

" What does he know? " the Wahabi said to the tribesman. " Send him back to the Kafirs. He can betray nothing that is not already known."

The Shinwari bound his hands together and pinioned him to the raft. The cords were drawn tightly round his waist and back, only his feet were left free. He moaned piteously as they pushed him out into the stream, " I did not expect this of God."

IV

Banarsi Das' first thought was that he would drown. His feet were sucked under the raft. For a moment his head was submerged as he was swung round in a swirling eddy. He regained equilibrium with a struggle, pressing the back of his neck on one skin and the ball of his foot on another.

He had not been in the water many minutes when he was carried past the ferry. As he was borne into the bank he saw a man sitting by a fire outside a house where he had rested on the road. He shouted out to him for help. The man stood up to observe him pass, as if he were a spectacle, and then sank down to enjoy the warmth of the blaze and his own thoughts.

Banarsi Das saw no more men or houses, only distant lights twinkling in the hills. He was borne through

inhospitable country. Sometimes he revolved for an eternity in a circle, confronted by objects that appeared vaguely familiar, as if seen in a dream, restored again and again to the stream by the backwater at the point in the current where it had sucked him away. Many times he was washed into the bank, or stranded on rushy islands. The first time the raft ran ashore he found hope in the obstruction. He spent an hour once on a sand-pit. But instinct warned him that the farther he was carried from Independent Territory the better his chance of escape. In shallow water he found that he could navigate the raft, propelling it with his feet; but after an hour or two in the river he was numb to sensation. Nor was he revived at dawn. He was drifting he knew not whither. Sometimes the Black mountains approached him; at other times they receded; at other times he was racing towards the peak of Mahaban. Half an hour after daylight he became aware of firing down-stream. It might be Armageddon. But Banarsi Das[1] dramatic instinct was paralysed. Nothing could add to the cataclysm in which he was involved, not even the trump of Doom.

Round the bend of the river the firing became more intense. He believed that he was entering the theatre of war at which the Bulbul and Jemal Khan had hinted darkly. No doubt the Moslem host had already joined battle with the British, and the rattle of musketry he heard was the Afghan army at grips with the infidel. The Hindustani fanatics would be in the front of the battle-line. The stream might deposit him as an offering to either army. He was already dead and beyond curiosity or care. He was warmed by no hope; yet he was not frightened as he had been in the tomb when the Shinwari knelt over him and held his throat, or

at the dreadful moment when he had been pinioned to the raft.

Then, as the stream bore him rapidly to the scene of battle, the discovery that the numbing paralysis he felt in all his limbs was not due to fear renewed his pride. " I am playing a noble part/' he told himself. " This is the crown of martyrdom" And with this warming thought there returned the physical craving for survival. The rays of the sun on his head and shoulders and back helped to restore him, and he dragged a submerged foot on to the raft. He was now a spectator of the drama in which he played a wonderful part—the sole spectator, it was true, but the larger audience necessary for his apotheosis could not be far distant. Whoever they might be, they would witness the next act. Banarsi Das wondered if they would stop the battle. He thought he heard firing behind him, but the banks of the river were high and he was hidden from the host. As hope revived he was again a prey to fear. He was afraid of being shot at from the bank, or being dragged out of the stream alive, only to be dispatched on dry land. The thing he feared most was falling into the hand of the Afghans. No doubt the *muhajarin* would be with them. Possibly the terrible Shinwari would stand over him again and pass sentence. He quailed at the thought of the tribesman's fiery merciless eye and the rifle slung behind his back. He had been equipped for battle. Banarsi Das had forgotten politics, but for the moment the personal involved the racial issue. He remembered the Bulbul's prediction in the graveyard by the Mosque of Ain-ul-Quzzat and wondered if the Feringhis were being driven into the sea. Was this the day on which the Indian would receive those natural promptings of

the heart which told him that the hour of his deliverance had come ? Banarsi Das hoped that it was not. Somehow the old dream had no longer any comfort in it. He hoped that the Indus would deliver him into the custody of the British. He did not ask himself why he wanted to fall into the hands of his oppressors. Only by some curious and inconsistent freak of fancy his vision of a liberator had assumed the bulky and benevolent shape of Skene.

The crack of a rifle a few yards above his head terrified him. He slid back into the water with an instinct for cover, and his two legs were sucked under the raft. He had been revolving eternally, he thought, in a slow backwater under the bank, when he first heard human voices. The accents were muffled and indistinct and they were succeeded by a volley of rifle fire. In the silence that followed he listened intently, divided between hope and fear. If the men on the bank spoke Pushtu he felt that he was doomed, whereas an English word of command meant release and safety. He heard the voice again. This time the accents were clearer. Banarsi Das' heart fell. The man was speaking in a strange Asiatic tongue, neither Urdu nor Pushtu nor Hindi. Again the volley was repeated. Then another louder voice was heard speaking in a tone of command, still in the strange unknown tongue, but unmistakably English. It sounded a little impatient at first; then, when the first voice joined in and was put through some sort of catechism, it broke into laughter. The pall of tragedy had lifted. Banarsi Das called out from his watery bier to the unseen presence ashore.

" Sir, I am Hindu gentleman suffering from very serious catastrophe."

In a moment the bank was lined with little brown men with Mongol faces. Banarsi Das' first thought was that his nightmare journey on the accursed craft had landed him in Japan or China. Nothing was impossible in his dislocated universe. The little men wore khaki helmets and khaki shirts and shorts, and bandoliers like English soldiers. They were armed with rifles and kukris, or, as Banarsi Das said in describing the scene afterwards to Amba Pershad, with " the bloody panoply.[1]' Yet there was nothing menacing in the appearance of this young draft. They looked friendly and innocent. Some were staring open-mouthed. Others grinned stupidly. They began to swarm down the bank, and as the raft was sucked into shore by an eddy of the backwater one of them caught hold of it. Banarsi Das was hauled up on to the dry land. The cords that bound him were cut by the Gurkhas' kukris, Up on the cliff a havildar was shouting, " Sahib, Sahib. Here is a trussed Babu. We found him drowning."

The god out of the machine bending over Banarsi Das was filled with pity, The convert to Islam looked up into the face of a thin tanned Englishman not unlike Riley. Then he closed his eyes and shivered. He had not a strut left in him for this new stage; even the sources of eloquence were dry; he could not command a metaphor. After the terror and suspense of the last few hours his spirit was as numbed and cramped as his limbs. He had lost the power of them. He lay inert at the bottom of the cliff as if he had been crushed in his tumbling universe.

Banarsi Das was naked save for a cloth tied round his waist and the one dilapidated tennis-shoe which had remained faithful in extremities. Coleridge, the

god out of the machine, felt his pulse and heart. He told his Gurkhas to carry him up the bank and lay him in the sangar. " We must find something to wrap him in," he said. " Bring the colonel's horse blanket."

On the crest of the bank Banarsi Das' carriers encountered another Englishman, Coleridge's subaltern. " Hullo ! " he exclaimed. " What is this? Where's my gun? " and he stared at the pair of feet, shod and unshod, which preceded the procession. Leeson, or Porky as he was called in the regiment, had so much the air of habitually wearing an eye-glass, that anyone who did not know him concluded that he had left it behind. When the head of Banarsi Das came into view he whistled softly and looked as if the supposititious glass had dropped from his eye. " What is it ? " he asked.

" Came down the river," Coleridge explained, " tied to a log, trussed like a fowl. I suppose it's the work of our friends of Amb."

" Dacoits. Like their impudence sending him down to us. A Hindu *bunniah,* or more likely his son." Porky bent over the limp figure and examined him with the same care as the god out of the machine. " Dirty dogs," he exploded, careless of metaphor. " I hope we get the job of smoking them out."

A volley from the next sangar electrified Banarsi Das. He winced and shivered and opened his eyes, expecting to see the ground strewn with corpses. But there was no one in the sangar except the two Englishmen and the Gurkha havildar picking up empty rounds and arranging them in little heaps.

" Have the English been victorious ? " he asked, and then fainted. These were the only words he spoke on the field of Armageddon.

" No wonder he's a bit *behosh"* said the god out of the machine. " Poor little devil! He must have had a rotten time. Where did he pick up his English? When's that ambulance coming? "

" Better wait till this section is finished. It's the last. We can take him home with the company."

The word of command was delivered in Gurkhali from the next picquet.

" On the mound, left flank, eight o'clock, tree. Five fingers right. Enemy trench. Range, 1000 yards"

" That's better. Chandardhoj has got it this time."

The thickest-headed N.C.O. was on his trial. Coleridge turned to the havildar who was picking up empty rounds. " Your picquet would have been scuppered, Jangbir Thapa,[1]' he said. " Your fire discipline is putrid, and you can't judge distance for nuts. When you go home on leave, can you tell how many hundred yards it is to your best girl ? "

" Which best girl, Sahib? " Jangbir Thapa grinned sheepishly.

Banarsi Das' returning wits were conscious of the same jolly laughter that had emboldened him to cry out from the raft. He was again encouraged. This officer, he thought, cannot have a care in the world. It is clear that the English are victorious. Then he resigned himself again to the Stygian stream. He rose and fell on the waves like a floating spar. But the waters on which he was borne no longer buffeted him. He was entering placid seas. As the luminous gulf widened he forgot the Afghan and the merciless grave.

He heard the next volley. It barely induced a spasm. Coleridge looked over the parapet and fixed his glasses on the dummy figures that were being drawn

towards the picquet by ropes pulled by men in the intervening pits. He saw two of them go down.

" Shabash," he cried. He had been training that N.G.O. in fire-discipline for a month, teaching him how to control his section and show his men how to pick up their own targets. He did not hope to inspire initiative; but evidently some of his training had stuck. For the next ten minutes he and Porky discussed their N.C.O.s and calculated how much wisdom, if any, they had hammered into the new draft. It was the last day of the field firing exercise camp and to-morrow they returned to Abbottabad.

" Enemy approaching up nullah. Range, 100 yards. Five rounds rapid, fire."

The words of command preceded the last volley from the adjoining sangar. This time the targets were falling plates. It needed a hit plumb in the middle to knock them over, but three of them fell."

" Well, that picquet has *bached* [1] anyhow" Coleridge said to the havildar. " They held on all right with precious little ammunition. Now reinforcements have come up and we can wipe the floor with the attack."

" Ji, Sahib. Assuredly the enemy have all perished." Jangbir Thapa pointed to the riddled dummies, and fallen plates. "It is a young draft, but before the *pultan* [2] the bravest become like Babu-log."

Coleridge laughed. " Have they brought the horse-blanket for the Babu we saved from drowning? " he asked.

" No, Sahib. The Colonel has returned to camp. The ambulance will be here in two or three minutes."

" I know," Coleridge said, and pointed to a seedy

[1] Survived. [2] Regiment.

black frock-coat in which some wag had wrapped one of the dummy figures.

Jangbir Thapa was trotting off to fetch it, when the hospital orderlies appeared in the nullah with the doolie. The Sub-Assistant Surgeon, also a Babu, had brought blankets with him and reviving rum. Banarsi Das became the centre of an interested crowd. He was lifted into the doolie, still speechless. He rejected the rum with a gesture of disgust.

Coleridge and Porky followed the procession into camp, and the havildar accompanied them chatting about red bears, and markhor and ibex, the forests of Wardwan, the cliffs of Gor above the Indus under Nanga Parbat, and other wild spots consecrated by shikar. He had been with the Sahibs on many a trek in the hills, and in a month's time he would be camping with them again by the Astor stream in ibex country. He knew to an inch the dimensions of every head in the mess, and what Sahib had shot it. But he spoke more often of a greater markhor, a statelier ibex, known to the shepherds of Astor or Chilas. The gesture with which he measured the span of horns in the air was so dramatic that " Colrig Sahib " imagined he had seen the beast browsing on its supposititious cliff. There was not a head to compare with it on the walls of the mess of the sister battalion in Abbottabad.

When they reached the hospital, and the doolie was laid on the floor, Banarsi Das revived and his eyes fell on the god in the machine. " Has the victory fallen to the Afghans or the British? " he asked faintly.

" The victory is always with the British" Coleridge answered, smiling.

" Is it true that a considerable number have given up their ghosts? "

" No, Babuji. You are the only casualty"

Coleridge and Porky laughed again and Porky translated the conversation into Gurkhali for the benefit of the men. The little havildar, when he heard the joke, doubled up with merriment.

" Look after him and feed him well/' Coleridge said to the Sub-Assistant Surgeon. " I expect he would like some boiling hot tea. Or we could send round some ice. Don't worry him with questions until he has had a good sleep. Let me know if there is anything you want. Ill be round again in the evening."

Banarsi Das lay still and watched the preparations for his resuscitation. The kettle was steaming on the *angethi;* he was conscious of the delicious fragrance of tea. He thought of the tribulations of the *muhajarin* in the camp under the caves of Asmas, and thanked God that he was delivered from these bloody-minded men.

V

" Have we won the battle? "

These were the first words Banarsi Das spoke when he opened his eyes in the hospital after ten hours' nearly continuous sleep. It may be inferred that his subliminal consciousness had been in charge during this period. Hence the significant " We." The supraliminal booby took the hint from his mate as he slipped back under the threshold. The sleeping partner is generally the wiser of the two. In Banarsi Das' case the subliminal influence was still in the ascendant when Coleridge looked in again to see how his " trussed Babu " was getting on.

The plural of the first personal pronoun pleased the

Gurkha officer. He felt drawn to this waif who had drifted into their camp from no man's land. The assumption of the rights of British citizenship was quite unconscious on the part of Banarsi Das, though he might have argued that having suffered as an agent of the English, it was only just that he should continue in the unsolicited role that had procured him his eccentric entry on the stage. The Bulbul had given him the cue for his new part.

When Coleridge asked him who the barbarians were who had dispatched him down the Indus, he was able to answer truthfully that he was a victim of the Hindustani fanatics. He did not give a very connected story of himself, only he led Coleridge to infer that he was an agent of the C.I.D., and that it was an every-day event in his adventurous career to be sent on perilous missions, carrying his life in his hands. His reticence as to detail was in keeping with his part of secret agent.

" *I* have served benign Government since infancy" Banarsi Das said.

" And where did you pick up your English?" Coleridge asked him.

Banarsi Das enlarged upon his College days and his benevolent Principal. It was a phase in his life which had taken a pleasant colouring by contrast with his recent tribulations. He only remembered the happy days when he walked " in the groves of Academe " with Siri Ram and Lachmi Narain, and pored over his text-books and construed Shakespeare and Shelley and Sir Walter Scott to his own satisfaction. He remembered the feasts in the dormitories and the College Debating Societies, and the " dramas " in which he had acted minor parts, and the parties Skene gave at the end of the term before the summer vacations.

Coleridge was interested. He had met Skene on a voyage home between Bombay and Marseilles. He asked Banarsi Das many questions about Gandeshwar and the work and the games and the careers that were open to the students after passing their examinations. Banarsi Das admitted that he had failed to pass his B.A. in spite of Skene's genius for instruction. But that was due " to bodily prostrations and the troubles of my family members" In all this conversation Banarsi Das was guided by an instinct to please the god in the machine by a suggestion of reverence, which was genuine enough at the moment, and to create an impression of respect in the Englishman for himself. One end, he imagined, subserved the other. Nor was there any insincerity in his reconciliation with the race of the hated oppressor. It was an old sentiment revived by the play of circumstance. Banarsi Das was soothed and flattered by the interest of this young Gurkha officer. Coleridge was delighted with his English.

" Mr. Skene is very noble gentleman. He has now scaled highest rung of educational ladder. Each and every one of his old students feels personal, not to say individual, pride at his elevation."

Banarsi Das referred to his old Principal's appointment as Director of Public Instruction at Thompsonpur.

" You know Thompsonpur? " Coleridge asked him.

" Certainly. I have resided there."

11 What work did you take up after leaving college ? "

" At first I was teacher in Government High School. Then I joined Police. My work in Criminal Investigation Department is of very confeedential nature."

" Where are your headquarters now? "

Banarsi Das maintained that discreet and non-committal silence which he thought seemly in a trusted subordinate of the G.I.D.

Coleridge did not cross-examine him. " I have sent a message to the D.S.P. about you," he said. " You will probably see him and the Deputy Commissioner to-morrow in Abbottabad. They will want to hear your story.'

Banarsi Das wilted inwardly. He was involved in a new coil. He began to explain that it was important that he should carry back his information to head-quarters as soon as possible. It was " very secret and urgent affair/' he said. But he had no money. He had been robbed by the Mujahidin.

" How far do you want to go ? " Coleridge asked him.

Banarsi Das admitted, after a little hesitation, that his destination was Gopalpura.

" That will be all right''Coleridge said. " Mr. Martin, the Superintendent of Police, will finance you, or you can wire for money from Abbottabad. We'll take you there in the doolie to-morrow. They tell me you still have fever'

Banarsi Das turned on his side and communed with the wall. He shrank from the thought of Mr. Martin. " If I am seen in company with police officer'' he said after a little while, " my services to Government will become impotential. Nobody knows I am secret agent. All my communications are confidential. Besides, if I am taken for an informer they will kill me."

" That will be all right," Coleridge repeated cheer-fully. " I'll bring him round to the hospital. No one will know that you have seen him. Now I must be going. Do you want anything to read? "

Banarsi Das beamed gratitude. He expressed a preference for the works of Mr. Dryden, or Mr. Ruskin, or Mr. Shakespeare.

Coleridge explained that he had not a library with him, but that he might be able to unearth an anthology.

" Garden of choicest flowers, no doubt" Banarsi Das quoted, airing his learning and mouthing the words with an ingratiating wriggle of the neck. He remembered the definition in an annotated text-book.

Coleridge smiled. " What on earth has the New Province to do with it ? "he asked himself as he returned to his tent. " And why can't this half-baked Babu report himself at Delhi or Peshawar? "

When he reached the mess the *dak* had arrived, and a head-line in *The Civil and Military Gazette* gave him a clue. "A New Exodus of Muhajarin," " Runaway Students from Thompsonpur," he read. The text of the telegram was brief. It simply stated that as a result of the Khilafat agitation, a dozen or more Muhammadan students had run away from Thompsonpur College a week before the University examinations, and that it was believed they had joined the Hindustani fanatics in Amb. A reference was made to a previous migration of students from Lahore, most of whom had returned to their homes. An editorial note defined *muhajarin,* the plural of the Arabic *muhajir*—one who, following the example of the Prophet, Muhammad, abandons the country of the persecutors of religion. It was explained in the note that the word was not to be confused with Mujahidin, the missionaries of Jehad, a term generally applied in India to the colony of the Hindustani fanatics at Asmas.

" By Jove ! " Coleridge exclaimed to Porky, who was scanning the illustrations of *La Vie:* "I shouldn't wonder if our young Babu isn't one of the Margarine."

" Margarine " was the variant adopted by Anglo-India for the earlier batch of Lahore students, the pioneers of *hijrat.* It was to become a household word a few months afterwards when the agitators declared that India was *dar-ul-harb,* and that it was

obligatory upon all true Mussalmans to migrate to Afghanistan.

" He doesn't look much like a G.I.D. man" Coleridge continued. " But neither did Kim's Babu friend, for that matter."

" I took him for a Hindu," Porky remarked. " Whatever he is, the police must be hard up if they can't raise a better breed of secret agent on the frontier."

" Did you notice that patch of short hair on his crown ? It looked as if he had just clipped his *bodi."*

" A Hindu disguised as a Muhammadan, then; that would fit in with his C.I.D. story."

" He wouldn't tell me his name."

" We'll see what Martin makes of him. Martin's a bit of a Sherlock Holmes. I wouldn't mind betting he is one of the Margarine."

Banarsi Das in his hospital tent rehearsed his interview with the dreadful Mr. Martin. Rescue had its disabilities. It seemed that the encounter was inevitable. His soul yearned with a great longing for the familiar scenes of Gopalpura. He wandered in the quiet backwaters where the astrologers live. He visited Amba Pershad in his quarters over the fruit market by the Mori Gate. He saw the crowded streets and the Brahminy bull nosing the vegetables at the corner of the Sudder Bazar. Only he avoided Jemal Khan's Mosque and the graveyard of Ain-ul-Quzzat. The spirit of adventure in him was shrivelled up like the wings of a burnt moth. If they did not put him in gaol he would go to Mr. Riley and ask him to take him on *The Thompsonpur Gazette.* He was tempted to make a full confession at Abbottabad. What would Mr. Martin be like ? he wondered. He hoped he would be like Skene or the sympathetic Gurkha officer who had promised him the anthology. Then as the slow hours

passed he took the form of the terrible Englishman who had asked him for a match outside the offices of *The Thompsonpur Gazette.* When he fell asleep the spectre of the fateful Martin straddled his dreams. He bestrode an immense raft like a Colossus, and an image of him, with as many arms as Durga, was reflected in the mist on either bank. He circled round Banarsi Das continually in an eternal backwater, and the stream widened into a sea to make room for his raft. The face, on which doom was written, was obscured in cloud.

Banarsi Das had the vaguest ideas as to the penalties to which he was liable as a member of the party of the absconding *muhajarin.* He saw himself escorted ignominiously back to Gopalpura by the police. He would have confessed outright if he had thought there was a reasonable hope of pardon, but the risk was too great. So he prepared his statement. He would say that he had attached himself to the *muhajarin* at the instance of the Thompsonpur police in order to report on their movements. His rough treatment at the hands of the Bulbul would bear this out. He hesitated at first whether to declare himself a Muhammadan or a Hindu. In the end he decided to give his assumed name. It never occurred to him that there could have been any correspondence about him between Gopalpura and Abbottabad.

When the dreadful Mr. Martin appeared at his bedside with the Gurkha officer the morning after his arrival in cantonments, Banarsi Das was ready with his statement, and without waiting for a hint of encouragement began to declaim in his portentous English the story of his innocence and wrongs. " Sir" he said, " I have been outraged by fortune——"

But Mr. Martin cut short his harangue. This policeman did not fit in at all with Banarsi Das' picture.

He was a little, thin, short man, very business-like, matter-of-fact and peremptory. There was no hint of sympathy in his voice or in his eye, or even of curiosity. He was chilling to eloquence. " You can tell me all that afterwards" he said to Banarsi Das. " First answer my questions. Who are you? What is your name? "

" My name is Abdul Hakim."

" Where is your home? "

"1 come from Gopalpura."

" Where did you learn English? "

" At Gandeshwar College"

" What is your employment ? "

" I am employed by the Police."

" You say you are a Muhammadan? "

" Yes."

" Then how do you account for your *bodi ?* A day or two ago you had a *bodt.* Why did you cut it off? "

Banarsi Das hurriedly put his hand to the back of his head. " It was a disguise," he faltered.

Martin, of course, knew all about the forlorn victim of his catechism. Banarsi Das' appearance on the frontier had created what *The Gopalpitra Standard* was accustomed to describe as " a flutter in the dovecots of the C.I.D." His name was deciphered by the Police in many a coded telegram. In the course of a few days the correspondence between the North-West Frontier Province, the Punjab, the New Province and Delhi in connection with " Banarsi Das (para. 1643), alias Abdul Hakim," had grown to bulky dimensions.

Martin continued his catechism. " Who is your Superintendent of Police in Gopalpura?" he asked sternly.

Banarsi Das could not remember his name. It was quite three seconds before he could remember the name

of any police officer. The first name that came into his head was that of a Deputy Inspector-General of Police who had been associated with the prosecution of Siri Ram. " The gentleman's name is Mr. Hutchinson," he ventured tentatively at last.

Martin looked at Coleridge. " Hutchinson is dead" he said. " He retired and died at home last year. We'll have to send this young man to the police station."

Banarsi Das stared at the police officer like a frightened rabbit. Then Coleridge saw a change come over his face, a tightening and stiffening at the summons of self-respect. Life had two things to offer Banarsi Das. If he could not be safe, he had at least the compensation of being heroic.

" I have been with the *muhajarin"* he said, " by order of a certain person and for a certain object." And he closed his lips tightly, betraying an undaunted spirit, as who should say, " Never will I reveal for what person or what object. Torture will not extract from me the names of my confederates."

In moments of emotion Banarsi Das could attain an almost Biblical simplicity.

" What are you afraid of, Banarsi Das? " Martin asked him. " Speak up. Tell us the whole story."

" Sir, you know my name? "

" Yes, I know your name. You have nothing to be afraid of if you speak the truth. There is no law against leaving the country because you are dissatisfied with Government."

Banarsi Das felt a great relief.

" Then you will not send me to prison? " he asked.

" Nobody wants to send you to prison."

" And I may go back to Gopalpura? "

" You may go back to Gopalpura, but you must first make a true and accurate statement."

" Sir, I am man of principle. I cannot reconcile it to betray my confederates"

" I do not ask you to betray them. I know all their names. Besides, there is no charge against them. They can return to their homes if they like. What I want to know is, who robbed you and tied you to the raft and sent you down the Indus? "

Banarsi Das was now licensed to speak. He dropped the role of the bold and unrepentant conspirator with a certain hesitating reluctance. He emphasised the points where he was at variance with his companions; but he mentioned no names. The story of his adventure glowed with metaphor and colour. When he described the scene with the Bulbul and the Shinwari in the tomb and on the river bank Coleridge wished that he had brought a stenographer. In this part of his narrative Banarsi Das had to make certain sacrifices in the matter of the heroic. The crown and halo of the martyr which he had assumed a few moments ago were palpable misfits. Nevertheless he had attained security, if at the expense of the ideal. He was beginning to learn that he could not enjoy the advantages of these two incompatible parts at the same time. The reflection with which he concluded may perhaps be taken for an obscure admission of this disability.

" You see" he said, " my position here is quite ignis-fatuous."

" Precious little ignis about it" Coleridge observed, though not without sympathy.

So Banarsi Das was free. The fever had left him. The next day he was given an intermediate ticket to Gopalpura, Coleridge saw him depart in an *ekka* to the station, a pathetic incongruous little figure in a Gurkha's discarded khaki shorts and shirt.

CHAPTER IV

BARKATULLAH

I

IT was paradoxical that Riley, drawn to the East by a sympathy with the spirit in which he believed mysticism and faith were still indwelling, should be spending his days in the hybrid atmosphere of Thompsonpur and editing an Anglo-Indian journal. The very name of the capital of the New Province filled liim with increasing weariness, and there were days on which he wished that Sir Thomas Thompson had never been born. He had had glimpses of an India which was still happily sleeping, where folk had no cares beyond the cultivation of their fields, their age-old ritual and the propitiation of their gods. Here everything indigenous that had attracted him to the country was overlaid with accretions, for which his own people were unwittingly responsible. Gopalpura was one with Thompsonpur. Its ancient religions, traditions, legends, myths, had evaporated or become absorbed in the hybrid political atmosphere which he was forced to breathe.

Before the war the East had drawn him with a great fascination. At Oxford, whenever he got away alone on the river to think out and plan what he was going to do with his life, his dreams were of Asia. There was more of the poet in Riley than the man of

affairs. It was not so much from books of travel as from favourite passages in prose and verse that he drew his visions. He saw the Oxus with the eyes of Rustam, where the majestic river floated on

> " Out of the mist and hum of that low land
> Into the frosty starlight, and there moved
> Rejoicing through the hushed Chorasmian waste
> Past Orgunje. ..."

One day he would see Orgunje. He could not explain the mysterious fascination the place had for him, but he felt certain that he would be drawn to it. Malaya was constantly in his mind. He saw it as it appeared to Marlow when he landed at night in a small boat off Java Head, after his tussle with the sea, when he saw the East looking at him " perfumed like a flower, silent like death, dark like the grave." This haunting passage in Conrad's *Youth* became a recurrent picture in his mind. He summoned it at night when he could not sleep. India, when he visited it in 1914 after taking his degree, he regarded merely as a stage on the road further East. Budh Gaya and Benares were halting-places for a pilgrim bound for Boro Budur and Angkor Wat. His idea was to cross the Burmese frontier in Tenasserim and make his way through Siam to Battambong on the Tonle Sap lake and thence by sampan to Siem Rep. The mysteries of Angkor, the ancient city and temple buried in the jungle to the north of the lake, hundreds of miles from civilisation, were familiar to him through the illustrations of Fournier. He had spent hours dreaming of the place in the Mus6e Khmer in Paris. He would pass under the arch in the forest where the roots of the great fig-tree were strangling the image of Gautama, and the stone monkeys leered at the real monkeys from the frieze. He would see the elephant

in high relief, cut in eight blocks of Cyclopean masonry, and the cobra-hooded *amortisscment* of the balustrades, and the corridors where the story of the Rdmdyana is told in stone. Nearly two thousand years have passed since the eyes of the pious rested on them; the invaders from Indropath are forgotten; and the silent ageless struggle continues, between the forest and the monuments they have left behind. From Angkor he would make south by the Mekong through Cambodia and Cochin China to Saigon. He would visit Boro Budur in Java; then Borneo perhaps, or Sumatra; he would read *Youth* again at Java Head.

Nothing came of these Malayan dreams. Riley went down with fever at Gaya, after which he was driven by the heat into the hills. He found the Himalayan peaks above the snow-line irresistible. He was drawn by Nanga Parbat out of Kashmir. Then K^2 threw its spell on him. He had a momentary glimpse of the summit at sunset, ethereally suspended in cloud. He was at Gilgit in August when the war broke out, on the way to the Pamirs, bound for Kashgar, whence by Andijan he was going to make the golden journey to Samarkand. Bokhara would receive him on the road to the Oxus and the mysterious visionary Orgunje which he could find on no map. Did Matthew Arnold invent it, he wondered, seduced by the poetry of mere sound?

Gilgit saw the end of this adventure. He was back in Rawalpindi before September, an officer of the Indian Army Reserve, and for the next three years was with his regiment in Mesopotamia, most of the time in the accursed delta, an illimitable expanse of flat baked mud without a relieving feature, a country in which one seldom saw a flower or stone or tree. The sun of Iraq almost burnt his love of the East out

of him, and when he wooed sleep it was with scenes of an English river, a green willow over his head and his feet in the running stream. ,He remembered a retired Army Chaplain at Oxford telling him that after two or three years of the East, romance would come to mean going into a tobacconist's shop in an old cathedral city to buy a box of wax vestas. The dust and glare and monotony of these years in Mesopotamia, varied only by the occasional neighbourhood of death, flattened everything out and left nothing salient round which he could centre his interests, whether in imagination or in work-a-day life. In the dog days the heat compelled an armistice, and he got away one year on leave for a month to Simla. The next year he was three months in hospital at Poona recovering from a wound. It was then that he began to dabble in Indian politics and write articles for the reviews on the reaction of the West on the East, and how far our political systems are applicable to India. He was strongly biassed against the Europeanising of the Asiatic.

Once or twice only the glamour of Asia revived. At Koweit he saw the vessels of the Gulf, half a league of sailing ships drawn up on the narrow white beach between the houses and the backwater of coral rock, booms and buggalows, kourais and water boats, displaying all the lines and contours that the Arab loves, the same keels that scored the sand when Ur was the port of the Chaldees. The sterns of the buggalows were broad and high, the tallest of them standing thirty feet above the sand, naked in its loveliness, the keels white with lime, leaving the upper part, the rich brown sal wood of the Malabar coast, in splendid relief, fresh-scoured with fish-oil, glowing in the sun like polished oak, and perfuming the air with a fish-like smell beside which rotting seaweed was faint and

ethereal. On each side of the stern were penthouse roofs intricately carved, and windows through which one looked for the head of Sindbad.

Then in the winter of 1917 after the fall of Baghdad he was given staff work which took him on all the " week-end shows" generally with the cavalry, wherever there was fighting. It was mostly a question of rounding up hordes of demoralised Turks, and there were few casualties on either side. The gloom of the three years' tragedy had lifted and war became adventure again. Riley saw the desert shrines of Kerbela and Najaf. He pursued the Turks by the Aleppo road along the Euphrates bank as far as Ana. He crossed the broad swelling plains of Kurdistan with the cavalry to Kirkup and Altun Kupri. He had leisure to drink that country in—walk marches all day with a five minutes' halt every hour to close in, camp in the corn-fields with the slant sun filling the cups of the hollyhocks with exquisite light, the horses happy with their noses all down, tired troopers carrying their swords from the horse lines to their tents. He crossed the mulberry-coloured uplands of Persia with the Dunster Force and was billeted in the lovely mountain-girt city of Kermanshah when the gardens were white with fruit-blossom. Thus he visited the secret places of the East: Luristan, the ancient Susa, Dizful and Shuster on the Karun river, Hamadan—the Ecbatana of the Romans—the rock carvings of Bisotun, the ruins of Babylon and Birs Nimrud. It was a heaven-sent escape from the delta, the oven-like sky, the heat and the negation of everything. Yet most of the time he was thinking that the East could no longer offer him all that he had gone out to seek. The war had brought everything too near; there was " nothing left remarkable beneath the visiting moon." The flowers

of Jemal Hamrin were delicious because they were home-like, the tower at Tauz Kharmatli reminded him of St. Michael's Mount; Easter in Devonshire was revived by the celandines and violets and grape hyacinths under the almond blossom at Kerind. Much of the beauty of earth remained, and the poetry that is woven out of it was not all withered with the garland of war. One day in March he was sitting among the squills and scented irises on a slope above the Euphrates at Haditha, where the Aleppo road skirts the river, when a patch of borage, blue and mauve like viper's bugloss, but an intenser blue, called up some elusive memory. He had traced it to Karshish, " the picker-up of learning's crumbs, the not-incurious in God's handiwork," and was recovering stray words of the epistle of the Arab physician, when the M.O. of the column by his side, a kindred spirit, capped the quotation in his mind, " blue-flowering borage, the Aleppo sort," he said, " aboundeth very nitrous." All that afternoon Riley was as sensitive to illusion as if he had seen the great god Pan.

Then after the Armistice he visited the East Persian cordon and saw Meshed and Merv, and was held up by the Bolsheviks at Annenkovo in the desert, a hundred miles from the bridge-head of the Oxus at Charjui. It was the same wide hummocky, bald-headed maidan that stretches on either bank of the Euphrates and covers nine-tenths of the territory of Islam. Why was the chosen colour of the Prophet green ? Riley wondered, as he surveyed the dun-coloured plain with its tamarisk and its camel-thorn and the little long-tailed jeroboas flicking in and out of their burrows in the sand. He was disappointed not to see the Oxus, and he cursed the Bolsheviks who held him up in the desert a bare hundred miles from the stream

which had become for him an allegory of life. Where was Orgunjè? Was it beyond Charjui that the sands " begin to hem his watery march and split his currents, that for many a league the shorn and parcelled Oxus strains along, a foiled circuitous wanderer, Oxus forgetting that bright speed he had in his high mountain cradle of Pamir " ? No doubt the real Oxus was no more majestic than the Sutlej or the Indus in the plains of the Punjab, as disappointing a river as Merv was a city, and Matthew Arnold knew no more about it than Thomas Moore, who sang of the palms of Baramulla, knew about Kashmir. The poet draws his colour from the inward eye. Riley had looked in vain for " some frore Caspian reed-bed " when he crossed that inland sea, but he did not find it either on the Baku or the Krasnovodsk side.

And now in Thompsonpur the hybrid East made him long for the unspoilt East again. In the office of the *Gazette* the voice of the East shrieked at him through a gramophone with a Babu intonation. There was no trace of the writing of Manu or Gautama or Muhammad in the record. The voice was unnatural, grotesque, and offensive. And yet one had no right to be offended. It was the echo of instruction, ill-conceived, ill-imparted, ill-digested, the product of the century and a half we have spent " whipping and wheedling the reluctant East"

To whip or wheedle ? That was the eternal question. Having ceased to whip, was it decent or politic to take up the rod again ? Parkinson, Hill and Bolton thought that India ought to be whipped; Mr. Samuel Montagu and his school that it ought to be wheedled. Riley at this stage believed with the best of the Indian Extremists that it should be given a latch-key and declared of age. The consequences might be disastrous

for ward and guardian. On the other hand, if the old relations were maintained, tempered grudgingly with concessions, disaster was no less inevitable. Riley had put the case in a nutshell when he said to Skene : " Better let them go to the devil in their own way than that we should go with them in a mutually abhorrent embrace"

Then there was another question. Could one go on whipping the East? The child, though uninstructed, was growing too big for the rod. It was his sense of this that filled Riley with discomfort. It put his countrymen in an equivocal position. It made it appear that they were subordinating the interests of the ward to the privileges, or prestige, of the guardian. It invested every tactical or strategical movement of Government with a suspicion of disingenuousness, ulterior motives, self-interest and cant. Riley acquitted the bureaucrats of dishonesty. He knew that they were genuine enough, and that they believed in the disinterestedness of the work to which they and preceding generations had given the best part of their lives, an honest, straight-dealing, and in many cases a devoted, company, only singularly unimaginative. They had subscribed, some willingly, others unwillingly with regrets and protests, to the Montagu scheme, and they were preparing the complicated machinery of the New Councils with a painstaking conscientiousness. They did not really believe in them. This was not their child, but they were bound to give it every chance. To most of them it was a makeshift that might last their time; that was all; a miserable compromise, born of " funk." And they had no faith in the sponsors at the baptism of the infant. The unctuous words spoken over the changeling sounded to them very much like cant. They were quite con-

vinced that it would never be able to stand unsupported on its own feet.

Riley himself was not over-brimming with confidence, whether in the framers of the scheme, or in the material on which they had to work. The difference between him and these reactionaries was that he believed in uncompromising abdication. Not that he had any great faith in the efficiency of the new rulers, the elect of the people, or in the prospect of an honest or workable suffrage, but he felt that anything was better than this festering race-hatred with the menace in it of new Amritsars and Jallianwala Baghs. The worst thing that could happen would be that as a result of bungling and false notions of prestige the British in India should find themselves in the position of a besieged garrison. Riley foresaw that the newspapers at home and in India would harp on our responsibilities to the Indian people at a time when, to protect ourselves from them, we were dependent on reinforcements from overseas. It is not our custom to let anything go in response to dictation or threats, yet suzerainty or even tutelage on these terms was unthinkable. No civilised Government would accept the situation as permanent. The incidence of the Prussian heel could only be the prelude to Abdication. Riley reminded his readers that our rule in India is based on the will of the Indian people. This is not exactly how the case is put by the casual Englishman. He will tell you that India wants us, or that if she does not, she ought to want us, as she cannot do without us, and that this comes to the same thing. Moreover, if we go, some other Power will have to step in. Riley did not see himself supporting this argument with bayonets, or supporting bayonets with the argument in the columns of *The Thompsonpur Gazette*. He was one of your

Nevil Beauchamps. His countrymen had a very strong case, but he belonged to that growing class of young Englishmen who are incapable of seeing the point of an argument on their own side. He had a subtle nose for cant. He could smell it everywhere, more especially when obligation and duty existed side by side with expediency. He was clearly not a fit person to edit *The Thompsonpur Gazette.*

Riley and his *Gazette* were growing more and more unpopular. The newspaper was boycotted at the club, and the editor was not made over-welcome there, though he still had his friends. A man who is admittedly a " Sahib " with the instincts of a " sportsman," and who is yet perversely given to inconvenient causes, is generally described as "a decent fellow but quite mad." The callow subaltern alluded to Riley as a " pro-native." It was generally agreed that he had killed the *Gazette.* Old subscribers were falling off. They preferred the orthodoxy of *The Pioneer* and *The Civil and Military Gazette* a day late. Riley was given to understand by the proprietors that his contract would not be renewed when it came to an end in June. Willsdon had resigned. A new editor was coming out from home. This gave him time for his propaganda. !He would have resigned his editorship, only he believed, in his youthful conceit, that the obligations due from him to the public were greater than those due to his proprietors. What he wanted to drive home was simple and essential. If the Reforms meant anything at all, we had to realise that British rule in India was at an end save for the maintenance of order while we were handing over. Right or wrong, we were pledged to them. Yet Riley had not met half a dozen men in the Province who understood their significance. The Lieutenant-Governor, Sir Aubrey

Hilton, was one of them, but Parkinson, his Chief Secretary, was a hopeless reactionary. With the old school the old traditions were ineradicable. Hill, of course, was an open scoffer. Bolton, who, it was said, was to be appointed Reforms Commissioner for the Province, was beginning to catch some of the jargon of " the new era," and spoke in his deprecating, academic way of " the acid test of the cooperation received from those upon whom new opportunities of service were to be conferred, and the measure of confidence that might be reposed in their sense of responsibility/' It meant at least a G.T.E. for him, probably a C.S.I.

The Police as a body were stolidly incredulous or antagonistic, as was perhaps natural when one takes into account the disposition of the electors with whom they were most intimately associated. Riley had heard an old-stager of the name of Mills, District Superintendent at Mograon, discussing the political situation with a Judge of the High Court. " I was in Mograon the other day/' the D.S.P. said. " The place is humming with sedition. My head constable tells me that the people are all yapping about Swaraj." " Possibly somebody had read them the Declaration of August 20th, 1917," Riley remarked innocently. But the comment had been made in perfect good faith. The policeman was filled with the same resentment that a headmaster or a colonel feels when he sees the grand old traditions of his school or regiment being sapped by ignorant faddists, who can never be made to understand the mischief, spiritual or material, that they are spreading. His attitude was quite honest. If he gave the Reforms a thought, he regarded them as a dope administered by an over-anxious Government to keep the intelligentsia quiet. The papers had been full of them of late, but the subject bored him. He

never read below the head-lines or thought of the suffrage as having any association with reality. It was a bit of staging, a side show at a fair. If you had told him that in a year's time the people of Mograon would be electing their own Member, who would have a voice in the Government of the country, he would have smiled sadly. Yet he was a wise man in his own province. Nobody understood the people of Mograon better than their District Superintendent of Police.

With this spirit abroad it was not surprising that the Indians did not believe in the Reforms. Even the Moderates were suspicious, while the Extremists were hostile from the beginning. Like the Russian Bolsheviks on the eve of the Revolution, they opposed any concession that might contribute to the peace of mind of the masses and put them out of sympathy with revolt. The Reforms were the bugbear of the irreconcilables; they feared this tentative association of Indians with Government. Without the Reforms, they thought, they might hope to throw off the British and cut away the tentacles that were fastened into their system; whereas, if the scheme were accepted, they believed that the British would never go. It was a trick of the alien bureaucracy, they said, who will hang on to the substance and put us off with the shadow until the end of time. They did not believe in the British. They did not want to believe in them.

Riley did not hope to convert the irreconcilables through the columns of *The Thompsonpur Gazette*. What he aimed at was the acceptance of the fact among his own people that the old order had passed. Skene had once described him as " a reactionary in sympathy and a progressive in practice" Riley admitted it. " All my sympathies are with the old order" he said.

" Yet I have to spend my time persuading my friends that it is dead." It was not a popular gospel, but he preached it eloquently. He was fully alive to his short-comings as an editor and a journalist. He was a dreamer, a lover of the classics, poetry, *belles-lettres,* nature, birds and flowers. He had really no business in a newspaper office. He had let himself be harnessed for a period to *The Thompsonpur Gazette* as part of the price he had to pay for his continued sojourn in the East. He was a fellow of his College and a Double First, and might have entered any service at the end of his term at Oxford, but he was a wanderer by instinct and dreaded a permanent mooring.

The editorship was offered him a few months after the Armistice. Politics was not his *metier;* but he enjoyed a fight. And here was a campaign that appealed to the obstinacy and chivalry in him. In the beginning he was opposed to diarchy and all the theoretic idealism of the Round Table. The scheme seemed to him impracticable. An indigenous constitution for South Africa was all very well, but these dreamers did not know the material they had to work on. He had waded through the Montagu-Chelmsford Report when on service in Mesopotamia and had been struck by the chapter on " The Conditions of the Problem" The extreme frankness of the author of this statement read like an indictment of the main proposal, and he tried to reconcile the candour of it with the pious hopes expressed in the concluding paragraph, that when we had taught the people of India to be politically-minded all obstacles would be swept away, and the road to Self-Government would be made smooth. As if by an Act of Parliament the three hundred millions could be made European-hearted. He noted that the Report promised to protect

the ryots during this period of ferment until they were able to protect themselves. He learnt afterwards that " The Conditions of the Problem " had been written by an expert on the spot, and the pious hopes inserted at the end by the framers of the scheme. That the body of the chapter should have been left uncensored was at least an earnest of honesty. Riley's comments on the Report in a monthly review had been read by one of the proprietors of *The Thompsonpur Gazette,* with the result that he was offered the acting editorship of the paper. He stipulated for a free hand.

The stalwarts behind the *Gazette* were disappointed in him. By the time he reached Thompsonpur the Reform Scheme was a live thing. He had no illusions as regards the obstacles in the way, but he had vision enough to see that any evasion of the spirit of the Act, or whittling down of its provisions, or jibbing at its consequences, must be disastrous. We were pledged to Self-Government. There was no turning back. If we did not deserve the confidence of the Indians in this, we had no right to stay in the country. He went further than the Secretary of State and supported the Reforms with an uncompromising thoroughness that alarmed even the Progressives. He scoffed at the system of checks and safeguards prescribed by the physician as an antidote to paralysis after the dose of independence had been administered. As if Indians, having attained their enfranchisement, would be any more likely to submit tamely to autocratic vetoes imposed on the popular will. He was tempted to quote the wordly-wise Mr. Blackburn Tuckham in the *Gazette. "* As for sending them (the British proletariat) to school after giving them power, it's like asking a wild beast to sit down to dine with us—he wants the whole table and us too. . . . It's

a delusion amounting to dementedness to suppose that with the people inside our defences we can be taming and tricking them/' Riley agreed in the main premises with Colonel Halkett's mentor. If it had become a point of honour, or expediency, to invite the wild beast to the table, it was no part of our obligation to offer ourselves at the feast. We must either keep him out or, if we let him in, we must make a timely and inconspicuous exit as soon as we have said grace.

The Thompsonpur Gazette was no longer an extremist Anglo-Indian paper, Riley with his intuitive sympathy could understand the nationalist's point of view. To the type of bureaucrat who honestly believed that he was out to materialise the spirit of the Reforms, and who yet instinctively clung to every precaution and welcomed every incident that could delay the perilous moment of handing over, Riley's attitude was not a little galling. On the other hand, he was a source of strength to Government in his exposure of the insincerities and cant, the lies and misrepresentations of some of the leading Extremists. He stripped the Khilafat question of the humbug in which it was wrapped, and laid bare the real nakedness of the charge of broken faith and the alleged drain of India's wealth by the blood-sucking English. There was no hint of patronage or racial arrogance in his encounters with the irreconcilables. He fought them as if they were English; yet there was not another journalist in India who could administer so splendid a castigation. All this carried weight, as his nationalism was above suspicion. But his real service was his insistence on the reality of the Reforms. To the Indians he said, " You have got Swaraj" and to his countrymen, " We've abdicated/' And it was clear that he meant

it. The *Gazette,* in spite of its downright support of nationalism and its occasional gibes at the bureaucracy, did more to restore confidence in Government than Royal Proclamations or official harangues. Riley had earned a reputation for independence. Other Anglo-Indian journals might reason and expound with the clarity of Burke, but their arguments carried no weight, their sympathy was suspect, their inspiration tainted at the source. Nobody believed in them. They were the gramophones of the bureaucracy.

II

Six months had passed since the flight of the *muhajarin,* and things had gone steadily from bad to worse. The Extremists were making a dead set at the masses. For years the Congress leaders had neglected them. They had had little or no personal contact with the rural population. They now discovered that without an organised campaign " to awaken the political consciousness of the people " they could do nothing. In this they professed the same aim as the framers of the Montagu Report. The ideal, therefore, was, in the abstract, unexceptionable. The only difference between the point of view of the Extremist missionaries and the Secretary of State lay in its practical application. Both agreed that it was necessary to disturb " the placid contentment" of the masses. Their ultimate aim was identical, the Government of India by the Indian people. Only the Secretary of State in his uninstructed idealism was for laying the foundations of political responsibility while the Extremist missionaries aimed at stirring up the irresponsible against the existing system.

A charge that the bureaucracy often makes against the educated classes is that they do not represent the voice of the people, that their claims, as often as not, are opposed to the interests of " the inarticulate masses." The average District Officer would tell you in all good faith that the Civil Service mainly existed to protect the people from the *bunniah* and the *vakil.* The mere suggestion of this benevolent guardianship naturally exasperated the intelligentsia, and there was more than a suspicion of truth in it. Their obvious retort was to associate themselves politically with the masses. The Civil Servant, in nine cases out of ten an Englishman, was still regarded as the " Ma Bap/' or Father and Mother of his District. The first thing to do, then, was to alienate the people from their District Officers, to create a feeling that Government was hostile to them, and that the agitator was a necessary intermediary. There had been movements in this direction, of course, ever since the British had come to India, but the activities of the agitators had been tentative and sporadic. What they aimed at now was a political centre in every village through which the people might be taught their shameful condition as subjects of an alien Raj. Here, again, the difficulties of the Extremists were the difficulties of Mr. Montagu. It was almost impossible to awaken in the contented villager any interest in politics. He was lamentably wanting in public spirit. Not one in sixteen knew how to write his name; not one in a thousand knew or cared how he was governed. The machinery of the Sircar began and ended for them in the incidence of the revenue collector and policeman. The promoters of the Reform Scheme would have been disappointed if they had visited the districts of the New Province. It was impossible to explain

to the people of Mograon, for instance, the meaning of an election or a vote. The zemindar, if he were told that the British intended to hand over the government of the country to the people, would be merely puzzled. He probably would not believe it; or if he did believe it, he would take it as a symptom of decadence, a point of view that he would hold in common with the majority of the members of the Thompsonpur Club. *" Sircar dar-gya,"* he would say, " Government is afraid/' and contempt would soon take the place of wonder in his mind, only to be followed by indifference. His elected member, whoever he might be, would appear to him a man to be propitiated, as he would no doubt be given autocratic powers in his own district.

It was not quite so difficult for the agitator to interest the zemindars in the iniquity of the British Government. Political subtleties were lost on them; but there was always the appeal to passion. The Rowlatt Act, for example, was a measure too remote to touch their lives; yet it had been easy to persuade them that a new Act had been passed depriving them of the most ordinary liberties and exposing them to arrest or imprisonment at the caprice of an informer without evidence or trial. They were told that Government had passed a law forbidding more than four persons to gather together in one place, that there were to be no more family gatherings or marriage processions or meetings for prayers, that their brides were to be examined by the Civil surgeon, and their funerals supervised by the police. A wave of fear and anger had passed over the country which was mainly responsible for the outbreaks in the Punjab. The people of the New Province were less affected. They had now no doubt forgotten their imagined wrongs. Nevertheless a vague feeling of resentment was left behind, which

was fed from day to day with new inventions. Some of these stories might be true; others false; generally some of the mud that was thrown stuck. One was no less ready to believe a new wrong because the last one had proved to be an invention. In Mograon, for instance, the hitherto-contented district in which Mills, D.S.P., had lately discovered disaffection, the zemindars were suffering a great deal of distress on account of the stoppage of the canal water. The Sircar could not be made responsible for the drought. Yet there had been a riot since Mills visited the place, and a certain amount of anti-Government agitation. Two or three Zilladars had been injured. Riley sent an Indian on his staff, one Gopal Chand, to inquire into the origin of the trouble. It turned out that the villagers had been told that they would get no more canal water that year. Government, it was said, had cut off the supply as a mark of displeasure because Mograon had contributed fewer recruits than any other *tehsil* in the district.

The author of this story, no other than Barkatullah, editor of *The Roshni,* was able to quote chapter and verse from a speech of the Lieutenant-Governor to prove his point. This carried conviction. Everyone remembered that Sir Aubrey Hilton had been to Mograon and that he had made a speech there. He had thought it due to the district which had proved itself the best recruiting area in India outside the Punjab. His address to the zemindars had been one of undiluted commendation, though it was unfortunately true that he had quoted statistics. His figures showed that of the four *tchsils* in the district, that of Mograon was last on the list in the number of recruits; nevertheless, as he was careful to point out, it had given a larger return than any other *tehsil* in proportion to

its population. Barkatullah did not think it necessary to quote this part of the context, nor did he state in so many words that the zemindars had been penalised. He only pointed out that Government were displeased with them and had cut off their canal water. The story grew out of that; he left it to the zemindar to apply the inference. He knew exactly how far he could go without risking a conviction under the Defence of India Act. It was a clever move. The zemindars, many of whom were demobilised sepoys and had spent years in the trenches in France or Mesopotamia, were angry and sore. The injustice of the insult rankled. And their land was crying out for water.

Riley did not attach much importance to the Mograon grievance when he heard Gopal Chand's account of it. " Surely/' he said, " the D.C. has only to explain that there is no water in the canal because the rivers are dried up. The zemindars are not fools. Besides, he can quote the whole text of the Lieutenant-Governor's speech."

But the case was not so simple as it seemed. " The Deputy Commissioner is seeing the zemindars to-day," Gopal Chand explained. " Probably they will pretend to believe him. One or two of them may really believe him, but I doubt if his story will convince many. The others will say, ' He is bound to make up some story like that to save the face of Government/ When an official goes out of his way to deny a charge the presumption is that it is true."

" But if one of their own people were to talk to them'" Riley asked, " wouldn't they believe him? "

" They might possibly believe him, but they would be more likely to believe the story against Government."

" It seems that the zemindar is credulous in the case of lies only," Riley observed. " He has never been let down by his D.O., and he would probably

trust his last pie with him, if it were a case of personal relations, but he won't believe him where Government is concerned. Yet when these lie-mongers come along who contradict themselves every ten minutes, and are quite obviously out to make a case against Government, he will swallow anything they have got to say. I don't suppose one of these zemindars would trust Barkatullah with a five-rupee note. How do you explain it? "

It was a question he often asked himself. The explanation seemed to be that the Indian masses believe anything they want to believe. This led to the further reflection : if the Will to believe anything against Government is so deep-rooted an instinct, is it because the Government is an alien one? If so, this attitude of the masses lends some support to the claim of the intelligentsia that they represent the voice of the people. Riley knew that nine Indians out of ten, when their personal interests are concerned, would rather take their case to an Englishman than to one of their own countrymen. Such is the experience of the English civilian in India, and out of it grows the root idea of our responsibility to the masses. With the reactionary this is the stock argument against self-government, a conclusion honestly arrived at, though without the assistance of sympathetic imagination. " When Atma Ram or Rahim Bakhsh is in trouble he will come to me with perfect confidence" he argues. " Therefore it must follow that he prefers the British as his rulers to his own people. He knows which side his bread is buttered." But there is a lack of imagination in this deduction of the universal from the particular. Because self-interest directs Atma Ram or Rahim Bakhsh to the Deputy Commissioner for the settlement of a dispute, it does not

follow that he is content to be under-dog to the end of time. Wherever brown is ranged against white there is no doubt where an Indian's sympathies lie. " Watch a polo match between a British cavalry regiment and an Indian Native State. One has only to listen to the shouting to know which way the game is going, and the loudest hullabaloo comes from the syces and the riff-raff of the bazar." Riley used this illustration in an argument with Bolton. " Any point a black man scores over a white" he said, " is chalked up on the board to the credit of the race. Don't dope yourself with the idea that the Indian masses go to bed praying for the continuance of the White Raj."

At Mograon Barkatullah only touched lightly on the Khilafat question, as most of the colonists of the district were Jats and it was difficult to interest them in the wrongs of Islam. In Muhammadan centres the Khilafat was his trump card. The will to believe was strong in the editor of *The Roshni.* He was an adept in the faculty of self-deception. He could persuade himself that the British had entered Mecca and Medina and that the Union Jack was nailed to the Prophet's tomb. It was necessary to believe this in order to convince others. For Barkatullah was an earnest seeker after truth. As soon as he had collected his facts he repeated them to himself two or three times a day. In this way he drew a vivid picture. He saw the black pall of the Kaaba with the red, white, and blue British ensign pinned to it. The idea had been suggested to him by a picture of Lord Roberts' coffin in an old copy of *The Illustrated London News.* Imagination embroidered it. " The Sherif of Mecca has again converted the Kaaba into an idol house" he declaimed; and he added with a fine irony, " Hindu-

Moslem unity should now be rendered easy" As he spoke his voice was harsh with conviction, for through his half-closed eyes he saw a picture of the gross images in the niches in the wall. But he did not make this statement in the presence of Hindus.

It was this illustrative faculty that had earned Barkatullah the foremost place among the agitators of the New Province. What he could see he could make others see, and so he was able to reach a lower stratum of the people than many rival orators, just as a pictorial paper carries further than unadorned letter-press. He was not at his best with an educated audience. The intelligentsia saw through him. Honest Extremists were a little afraid, and ashamed of him. His crudities were too glaring. Suresh Chandra Chatterji, for instance, the editor of *The Gopalpura Standard,* recoiled from certain flagrancies of Barkatullah which he felt were discreditable to the cause. He could not ignore them in the *Standard* as they were items of current political news. He even had to appear to endorse them. It was painful to Chatterji to see Barkatullah's name associated with Gandhi in the Anglo-Indian Press. The man was too great a force to ignore, while opposition was out of the question; any aspersion of the popular idol would lay the *Standard* open to the charge of anti-nationalism. To the vernacular Press Barkatullah was a devoted and self-sacrificing patriot. So when the *Roshni* Press was confiscated, which happened more than once, the *Standard* joined the popular outcry against the repressive and reactionary policy of the autocratic Government.

Barkatullah was one of the few agitators who could gain the ear of the demobilised Moslem Sepoy. Dean showed Riley the report of a speech he had made at

Ain-ul-Quzzat. He would have been arrested for it a week earlier, but the proclamation of the King-Emperor's amnesty to political offenders gave him his chance. He knew that no Government would dare to stultify the spirit of it when the ink was barely dry. He had the courage of " the offensive with immunity." He began with a picture of the desecration of the Prophet's tomb which moved his audience to tears. He might have been an eye-witness. Then he dwelt on the religious aspect of the war as an anti-Islamic crusade. " The Khalifa alone can save Islam," he said, " but the British have made the Sherif of Mecca Khalif in payment for the assistance he lent them in their attack on the Viceroy of God. He is a wicked man and an idol-worshipper, gorged with bacon and wine. But what of the Indian Muhammadan soldiers who had fought on the Kafir's side against the Khalif? They were not Muhammadans at all. They had become Kafirs and should be excommunicated; their funerals should not be attended; their wives should be considered divorced from them. Many had surrendered their faith and their lives in the war, and had been made to eat horses and drink dung-water. Thus they filled their bellies by wielding the Kafirs' sword. But they would be torn up before God after death. They would go straight to hell.

Then he told the story that had come from the Punjab of an Indian Muhammadan soldier who had fought against the Turks and been killed, and whose face had been turned into that of a pig. " So also will the faces of all men who enlist in the infidel army to fight for the British against the Turk become the faces of swine." Those who had fought against Islam should now attack the destroyer of Islam. In this way alone could the evil they had done be remitted

so that they could show their faces to God. " But the time is not long. From one end of India to another a flame is spreading in which the infidel will be consumed. Are they not becoming impotent? The British in India are so few that if all the Indians spat together they would be drowned in a sea of saliva."

theywouldbedrownedinaseaofsaliva.' Such force " of the people. Or so it appeared to the bureaucracy in Thompsonpur. The spiritual side of the movement was not so apparent. The idealism of Gandhi was lost on them. It was picturesque, but unpractical. The man might be a saint, or a disciple of a Tolstoy, but he was a positive danger to the State. And it was difficult to believe in his sincerity. " Passive resistance " and " revolution without bloodshed" were mere catchwords. They meant nothing and could serve no one save the incendiary, to protect his person, as he applied his match to the charge at the gate of the fort. The Western mind was impatient at Mr. Gandhi's talk of *satyagraha.* For who can remain passive when his heart is inflamed? It is idle to stir up violence in the heart and forbid violence by the hand. Yet, very slowly, the conviction gained ground, even among those who were least willing to admit it, that Gandhi was an honest and sincere fanatic, whose soul yearned with a great pain for the purification of his country from the contagion of the West. In Thompsonpur, however, it was difficult to recognise the saintly influence of the Mahatma among his professed disciples. The Indian civilian, with his back to the wall, in loyal defence of the citadel, only saw a gang of unscrupulous agitators sapping the foundations of Government, poisoning the minds of the people out of envy and malice, and precipitating them down the incline which must land them in the plane of misery and anarchy

from which they had been uplifted by a century and a half of British rule.

Riley was as disgusted as any bureaucrat at the poisonous vapourings of the Extremists, but he was open-minded enough and sufficiently conscious of bias to realise that there was danger in the mental rebound of disgust he felt in hearing Barkatullah's presentment of the case, a rebound so violent that it might land him safely, and falsely, if he were not on his guard, in the old convenient Anglo-Indian convictions. The more he listened to Barkatullah the more he loved his own people. After reading *The Roshni* or *The Kali Yuga* he was almost reconciled to the Anglo-Indian Extremist. He turned with relief from these exhalations to the old-world piety of Hobbs, who regarded the Englishman as divinely appointed to chasten and chastise the heathen in a land in which the Almighty had planted them in His inscrutable providence to aggravate the trials of a numerically inferior but God-fearing race. Was Barkatullah responsible for Hobbs, or Hobbs responsible for Barkatullah? Any night of the week the retired officer of cavalry might be found at the bar of the Thompsonpur Club inveighing against Government. Hobbs might have stepped straight out of '57. To him Indians were still children to be meted out reward or punishment according to the convenience or inconvenience of their conduct as it affected British interests. He was convinced that the Reforms were part of some Hun-inspired Semitic intrigue to undermine the British Empire, for which sole purpose Mr. Montagu had been treacherously appointed Secretary of State. A crony of his, Colonel Bruce-Swinnerton, generally ensconced in an adjacent chair, would endorse these judgments with appropriate expletives and portentous

nods. It was consoling to believe that the worm in the wood responsible for the nation's decay was exotic or Semitic, or at any rate parasitic, and that the true heart of the country was still British oak. Self-respect in a period of national adversity is often maintained by a sense of betrayal, it demands dissociation in blood, as well as in spirit, from the authors of the decline. Riley had sat next Bruce-Swinnerton one night in the hotel at Thompsonpur, when the Hunter Commission dined there on their way through to the Punjab. " Is that the Commission or the vernacular band?" the Colonel asked him, as the British and Indian inquisitors filed into the room to take their places at a table set apart from the common herd as a safeguard against intimacy with the presumably biassed. " By Jove, I wish they would have me up and ask me what I think. I'd make 'em sit up. Let them ask me the cause of this uppishness and I'd tell them straight. Concessions ! We concess a darned sight too much. The only concession they understand is a whack on the ear with a big thick stick. I haven't been thirty-seven years in the country without learning something about the natives."

Riley told Skene afterwards that he had felt drawn to " the old buffer." Bruce-Swinnerton had commanded one of the best cavalry regiments in the Indian Army and he swore by the only type of Indian he knew, the Awans and Tiwanas of the Punjab. " I wouldn't mind giving these fellows Swaraj," he would say when there was talk of " the scuttle." " They know how to look after themselves." When Bruce-Swinnerton went north, his retired Indian officers would troop to the railway station to meet his train. These splendid old veterans would regain the alertness and erectness of youth as they stood to attention on the platform

when his carriage drew up, sunning themselves in his smile. " Yes, Bruce-Swinnerton is all right,' Riley said, " so long as he sticks to his Tiwanas. No doubt if you told them that India was to have Swaraj they would ask him to be their Padishah."

wouldaskhimtobetheirPadishah.'' Riley discovered and sympathy in his attitude to the old school. They were rooted in their convictions, and it was as impossible to dig them up as to induce a bigot to change his religion in his last hours. And there was something fine about them. They had lived clean lives, single-minded, consistent, sane. In all direct, personal relations with Indians their influence had been wholesome. In a curious way he cared for their opinion. He was hurt and depressed afterwards, in the days of the Dyer controversy, when Bruce-Swinnerton scowled at him as if he were a pariah, whenever the two met in the club. For Hill's or Bolton's contempt he did not care a hang. He returned it with interest. Bruce-Swinnerton was a person, an elemental force, far from despicable. Bolton had spent his days in the Secretariat, poring over files; he had no living contact with men. His self-sufficient and academic imperialism, his cultivated blindness to the real issue, annoyed Riley even more than the reasoned and intelligent arrogance of Hill.

" I want to throw a brick at that fellow" he said of Hill. " I should like to scrape Bolton's belly with red-hot nails. Hill never had a soul; Bolton, if he ever had one, has locked it up in an iron box."

" A dispatch-box," Skene suggested.

Riley nodded. " As long as the Secretariat have got their rotten arguments on paper," he said, " they think they are governing. Government is Babuised from top to bottom. They've no relation with facts/'

III

Riley felt a little apprehensive as he climbed the corkscrew stair to the *Roshni* office. He half expected that Barkatullah would spit at him. Every utterance of the man, written or spoken, that he had heard was venomous. " The rabid swab will probably bite you/' Hill had warned him. They had discussed Barkatullah at the club, and what Bolton called " the etiology of this particular breed of Extremist" Bolton was as fond of long abstract words as Banarsi Das.

" What's the maggot the fellow has got in his head ? " Skene asked.

Hill summed Barkatullah up as a successful tradesman. "Poison pays" he said; "the stronger the dose the bigger the sale. There is no money in praising Government/'

" The Moderates are having a rotten time"[1] Dean observed, " especially the Moderate editors. Poor old Shams-ud-Din came to me the other day and complained that the circulation of *The Aj,* the oldest paper in Gopalpura, had fallen to 450, and asked me why Government could not help their friends. ' What can Government do for you? ' I asked him, and he said, ' Take action against *The Roshni*, *The Ittihad* and *The Kali Yuga.* Put Barkatullah in gaol. How can a loyalist compete with this sort of thing ? ' And he produced a handbill with which Barkatullah had plastered the walls of the city. ' Hindus, embrace your Muhammadan brethren; they are going to leave you *The Roshni* sales went up to 6000 the next morning. Barkatullah works on the same plan as an Afghan agent I met in Peshawar the other day. I asked him why he sent such absurd and extravagant yarns to

Kabul. No one would believe him, I told him, and he would be discredited. ' But, Sahib,he explained, ' it is what they want. If I do not provide exciting and interesting news they will become tired and displeased. I will receive no more money. They will appoint someone else' "

" Shams-ud-Din has his title and his grant of land from Government/' Hill explained; "he can't have his cake and eat it."

" A good many of them do, all the same" Dean said.

" But surely" Bolton objected, " there are one or two good Moderate papers that have influence/'

" Not in the New Province"said Riley, " and can you wonder! Moderate ! The very word is a knell to enthusiasm. One can't get excited about being Moderate. If you were an Indian, Bolton, would you be a Moderate ? "

Bolton protested that he would most certainly be a Moderate, and Riley believed him. " Shams-ud-Din/' he reflected, " is a poor sort of creature. You won't find a bigger reactionary than an Indian with vested interests who has burnt his boats." " The worst of these Moderates," he said aloud, " is that whenever they come out into the open they expect a reward from Government. You can't make them understand that it is themselves they are working for and not us. That is the slave mentality, I suppose, which Gandhi says we are responsible for. There is probably something in it."

" Go to a Native State," Hill said, " if you want to study slave mentality, you will find a Maharajah's Durbar a good object lesson."

For a moment Riley felt that Hill had relieved his countrymen of an unpleasant charge. Then he remembered that Gandhi, Muhammad All and Shaukat

Ali, the most unslave-like trio, were all by birth subjects of Native States, and so was Barkatullah for that matter. He pointed this out to Hill. But Hill only said, " Why can't Government repatriate them then? or if they don't like us, why can't they go back on their own if they want to enjoy the blessings of Swaraj ? The Nawab of Dharampur would have a short way with Barkatullah."

" Slave mentality is not the product of our education," Bolton observed, " it is an incident of the system, the contact of the dynamic with the static. The static does not resist, it is carried on obediently. The trouble now is that we have taught the East to be dynamic, hence the collision. And we have done it with our eyes open."

For once Riley agreed with Bolton. He thought this quite the wisest thing the Secretary for Government had ever said. The inference was as obvious as an axiom of Euclid. The two dynamic forces must move on the same lines or one would sweep away the other. There was much abstract wisdom in the Montagu solution, on paper at any rate.

" It follows then," Skene said, " that Gandhi's soul force is a product of our education. You can take that as a text for your next leader, Riley."

" I am not going to blaspheme the Vedas in the *Gazette,"* Riley said. " What I should like to know, though, is exactly how much soul force we or Gandhi have contributed to Barkatullah. There must be some sort of inspiration in the man or he wouldn't have a following."

" I can't quite associate Barkatullah with any of the Christian virtues," Dean said. " The last time I saw him he gave me the impression that some heavy Englishman in hob-nailed boots, fourteens, had just

trodden on his toes. His race-hatred is probably genuine enough, only it pays him to exploit it. It is an attractive game, this beating of the big drum, especially now. The glory increases as the risks diminish. Most of the Gopalpura agitators court prosecution and conviction. Their idea is that after a fortnight or month at most in gaol, they will be released by some Amnesty or Remission Order, and accepted as consecrated saints or martyrs. It is a cheap price to pay for a halo."

cheappricetopayforah a l o ' ' . "Andtheirworldlyap same time," Riley reflected. " Saints and martyrs are fed. They are fêted ambrosially. And they've only got to thump tubs and beat drums, which they love."

" Why don't you smoke Barkatullah out and size him up yourself? " Dean concluded.

" By Jove, I will," Riley exclaimed. And it was then that Hill said, " The rabid swab will probably bite you."

Riley wrote asking for an appointment and received a curt letter from the editor of *The Roshni* consenting to see him.

Barkatullah, listening to his ascending footsteps, was both flattered and suspicious. Riley was the first Englishman who had called on him. His only contacts with the dominant race were official. He had been summoned to the Deputy Commissioner's Court, and he had stood sullenly before the D.I.G. of Police in his office, denied a chair and inwardly fulminating. As Riley expected, he found Barkatullah prepared to be on the defensive. He was sitting alone on a mat in the middle of the room, entrenched behind files of yellow and brown foolscap which looked like packing paper, copies, as Riley learnt afterwards, of the evidence before the Unofficial Inquiry Commission into the

Punjab Disturbances. The schoolroom bench and desk at which he and Skene had found Banarsi Das was unoccupied. Through an open door he could see the *khatibs* in the next room, squatting on the floor at their little doll's-house desks, diligently inscribing the lithographic sheets which were to transmit Barkatullah's venom to the stone.

The editor of *The Roshni* rose stiffly and consequentially to receive his visitor. Riley sized him up physically and mentally as he crossed the floor. His first impressions of Barkatullah apart from his general uncouthness were very much what he had anticipated, and they were little modified by further acquaintance. Riley saw a sad, sullen, square face like a trap, not without strength, but the strength of bigotry and ignorance, a strength derived from the instinctive elimination of any scruple or doubt that might injure the growth of the ego. Riley recognised the inherent bacillus. He had seen the cultured product of it in the face of a cardinal. But Barkatullah was a son of the people. One could picture him in a greasy red cap, with a torch in his hand illuminating the unchained devil in him as he led the mob to the barricades. " The first fellow who would stick a knife into you,'/' he said to Skene afterwards" if there were a revolution"

Physically Barkatullah disappointed Riley's expectations. He was jerky, restless, self-conscious, and lacking in composure and grace; unusually so for an Indian. The humblest Hindustani Mussalman of the Punjab or the New Province is often clothed with a dignity to which the aristocrat of other countries cannot aspire; but Barkatullah would have looked a plebeian beside any of his *khatibs,* more vital perhaps, but less impressive. There was certainly nothing static about him. Riley in his search for figurative

illustration was reminded rather of a fluid, permanently arrested in precipitation, which he knew could never dissolve or congeal. That was the fault of our education, he supposed, and it occurred to him that if Macaulay could see this hybrid product of his system he would turn in his grave. The integuments of Barkatullah were in keeping with their physical contents. He wore frayed shoes, turned up at the toes, no socks, dirty baggy trousers, a dirty homespun coat and a dirty little cap, the kind worn by cooks and scullions in the galleys of coasting steamers, the pattern affected by the Hindustani Mussalmans of Delhi, in Barkatullah's case effeminately embroidered and gummed to the head. One oily little wisp of hair protruded from under it. He had abandoned the fez as a tribute to the Hindu-Moslem entente. As he held out his hand Riley received the impression of a wronged and embittered man. Barkatullah had not intended at first to smile, but reassured by Riley's easy and disarming approach he returned courtesy for courtesy. Barkatullah's smile was deliberate and summoned, as light is let into a closed room by the unfastening of a shutter.

Riley had rather dreaded the preliminaries of the interview, but he need not have had any misgivings, Barkatullah took the initiative from the first. He was glib and fluent. He began by complimenting Riley on the attitude he had taken up in the *Gazette* on the Amritsar question, the massacre of the innocents in Jallianwala Bagh and the culpability of General Dyer.

" The whole of India congratulates you, Mr. Riley," he said, " on your bold and uncompromising exposure of the dastardly and heinous nature of the crime committed in the Jallianwala Bagh."

Riley listened to this praise impatiently. He would

not be drawn into a discussion on the subject. He refused to deliver alternate blows with Barkatullah on the corpse of the reputation of General Dyer.

Barkatullah pointed to the files of manuscript scattered on the floor. He gloated over the atrocities. " There is a mountain of evidence here'' he said, " to prove beyond doubt that General Dyer——"

" I do not defend General Dyer," Riley said simply.

He had seen the whole case so clearly from the Indian point of view, and he had stated it without fear or prejudice. He understood that it was not the massacre that rankled, the mere killing. Jallianwala Bagh was a national humiliation. General Dyer's evidence before the Hunter Commission in Lahore had stirred India from one end to the other. He admitted that he had fired into the mob until he had exhausted his ammunition, that he had given them no warning to disperse, that he had not stopped firing when they were running away, that he had taken no care of the wounded. He repented nothing. He boasted that in the same circumstances he would do the same thing again. The people needed a lesson, was his argument, and he was afraid that if he let this gathering disperse they would come back and laugh at him. Prestige must be upheld. The massacre of these law-breakers was justified. The hundreds who died saved thousands. That was exactly what the German Junker had said in Belgium; and how the British nation had raged. Those who cried out against the Hun and now defended General Dyer could only say, " In our case the end justified the means'' The good name of England was blackened, Riley wished General Dyer had never been born. No wonder India writhed. It seemed that the tentacles from which she hoped to free herself by service and sacrifice were forever fastened into her

soul. The crawling and salaaming orders, the public whippings, the bombing by aeroplanes were symbols of frightfulness—on the one side racial arrogance, on the other national degradation. If it had been a massacre of ill-armed Abors or Tibetans on a frontier show, in legitimate warfare, the officer responsible would have deserved to be cashiered, but this gathering of Punjab peasants, the kith and kin of the men who stood by us through the war, who had responded chivalrously with offers of service when we were in need———To the Indians it seemed that we had betrayed them; their loyalty had saved us. Had India not been loyal we could not have been free. It is true that we might have survived in Europe, but not in " the Dependency" We had used the freedom she had given us to make her more dependent. We had shaken off the grip of the Hun to adopt the Prussian heel. The long jack-boot, iron-shod with horseshoe and nails, with which we trod at Amritsar, was indirectly the gift of the Punjab. That was the view of chivalry vicariously besmirched. And to the reply, " Ranting fool, we must put down a rebellion, we owe it to the Indians themselves" Riley answered, " Hang the rebels or rioters by all means; but don't insult and trample on a whole Province and break out into panicky frightfulness like a Hun."

Riley had said all this in the *Gazette* and it had brought down on him a storm of abuse. Old Bruce-Swinnerton had written to him, calling him " a fouler of his own nest." Riley had published the letter with such comments as the un-British nature of the act he repudiated made easy. He had had a certain amount of support from his own countrymen. Wace-Holland for one was on his side. Now, to his disgust, he found himself hunting in the same pack as Barkatullah.

Here was this canting hypocrite yapping by his side, an accomplice by some trick of irony, making him sick with his hysterical clap-trap about " heroes " and " martyrs/' as if these poor devils who had been killed had done something noble in failing to get out of the way of the bullets.

Riley thought of all the things he might say to Barkatullah about General Dyer. He did not say them, but for the first time it occurred to him that he might have been unjust in his judgment. He hoped in his heart that he had been unjust. He searched for evidence of this injustice with curious eagerness, for if he failed to find any, he was the more associated with this poisonous fellow at his side. After all, he reminded himself, General Dyer acted honestly according to his lights. And there was nothing crooked about the fellows who supported his surgeon's argument of a limb amputated to save a life. A calculation of the kind in cold blood would not have been easy early in 1914, but the war had brought us all down to realities and hardened us and given us the faculty of holding compassion in abeyance. Perhaps we were a little hysterical about " frightfulness " at the start. The Hun learnt to rub his nose in blood and filth earlier than we did, that was all; though, thank God, we were not in the habit of saying, " I am frightful only to be kind/' Still Dyer and his school believed in their decency and kindness, and that was the main thing. Anyhow, Dyer was straight about it. He was British enough when it came to cross-examination. Riley pictured Barkatullah in his place, how he would have lied and shuffled and prevaricated in his evidence and wriggled like the worm he was.

But Riley did not use any of these arguments. He turned to Barkatullah, to whom he had not been

listening, though he was aware that his rantings were still unctuously elegiac, and shocked him by saying:

" Mourning ! it is the biggest bit of luck you've had. It puts you in the right. If the victims of the Jallianwala Bagh were to come to life so that it could be proved that no wrong had been done the Punjab, and there had been no massacre at all, there would be real mourning in your camp. It would blunt the sharpest weapon you have. Don't pretend you would lift a finger to bring them to life."

" How can you say this of me, Mr. Riley? " Barkatullah protested.

" Nothing would disappoint you more," Riley continued, " unless it were the settlement of the Turkish Peace Terms in such a way as to take the edge off the Khilafat grievance."

" All true Muhammadans would die for the Khilafat/' Barkatullah answered, and Riley wondered why this witness-bearer was only deprecatory when he should have been angry. This was not the firebrand he expected to see.

" You are determined to blacken the name of the English," he said, " if it were not the Khilafat it would be something else. Why I came to see you, Moulvi Barkatullah, was to ask you if you really believe all the unpleasant things you say about my countrymen. Do you believe, for instance, that we introduced plague into India and foster it ? that we cut off the fingers of the Dacca weavers in order to encourage our own industries? that we drain India of its wealth and deliberately impoverish the country in order to emasculate the people? It was *The Roshni,* wasn't it, that made the Meteorological Department responsible for the cyclone in Bengal? Or did you bring that charge into your speech at Mograon ? By the way, I

hear you told the zemindars that Government were penalising the Mograon *tehsil* by cutting off their canal water/'

Barkatullah looked pained. " The bureaucracy never hear the truth" he said, " their mind is poisoned by the C.LD. subordinates, who invent these things and put them into the mouths of public men and patriots in order to please Government."

" But *The Roshni P "*

" Mr. Riley, I am a single-minded seeker after truth. If you can find a single word in *The Roshni* that you can convince me is untrue, I will withdraw it."

" Do you really believe,"Riley asked him, " that the British flag is flying over the Kaaba? "

Barkatullah regarded him with a pitying smile as one deluded by prejudice. " Can you believe this of me ? " he said. " I have never made such a statement."

Riley quoted the passage and the date of publication.

" That was a poetical contribution," Barkatullah explained indulgently. " The poet used metaphor, ' Breetish fla-ag is flying over Mecca' " He mouthed the passage unctuously. " That is to say, British political influence is paramount in Muhammadan Holy Places. The poet Shakespeare also uses metaphor, ' the slings and arrows of outra-ageous fortune.' By slings and arrows he does not mean missiles of wood and stone, but weapons used to injure soul. It is soul of Islam that British want to destroy by desecrating Holy Places. All Muhammadans are ready to die for their religion. Christians do not understand this. No, it is spiritual flag, the poet means, not striped cotton Imperial emblem."

Again Barkatullah's smile implied a world of pity for the groping, unintelligent materialism of the

Western mind. It was an implication of forbearance that he had borrowed from Gandhi. He had observed it in the Mahatma when Re was reasoning with those in outer darkness. Only it was less effective in an eye that was alternately shifty and intense.

" The masses don't understand metaphor" Riley said, " they will think you mean the Union Jack. Besides, there has been no desecration of the Holy Places."

" Not physical desecration," Barkatullah explained, "it is spiritual injury. The pilgrimage to Mecca is no longer acceptable to God, because there is no independent Imam. The Sherif being a rebel and usurper is not a true representative of the Khalifa, and the Khalifa is not independent because he is puppet in the hands of the Allies. Did not the British persuade the Sherif to fight against the Khalifa? Was not this treachery to Islam? "

" The Sultan has never exercised more than a nominal control over the Hedjaz," Riley said. " Naturally they joined the Allies in the war; they needed no persuasion. The Arabs have been fighting the Turks for their independence for generations. As for the guardianship of the Holy Places, the Moslems must settle it among themselves. Anyhow, they remain in Moslem hands. The Sherif is a *Koresh* after all; he is a lineal descendant of Muhammad, and the Arabs of the Hedjaz are the Prophet's own people."

Riley would not have emphasised this unpalatable truth in the *Gazette*. It only irritated Indian Moslems. It is no good telling the Muhammadan who his Khalif is, he will choose his own Khalif. Riley once heard an English official explaining to a Muhammadan of Delhi, a poet of some reputation, that the Sultan of

Turkey was only *de facto* Khalif, whereas the Sherif was Khalif *de jure,* whence it followed that the dedication of the Indian Moslem to the Sultan as his spiritual head had more politics than piety in it. The argument and its application gave Riley the text for one of his " Imaginary Conversations" in the *Gazette. "* The spiritual home of Shakespeare is Berlin," said Treitschke to Rupert Brooke, " the English neither understand nor appreciate him."

Barkatullah, however, was not a pious Moslem. His sensibilities need not be considered. If he had cared for the Turk, he would not have embezzled the funds he collected for the widows and orphans of the victims murdered in Anatolia by the truculent Armenian.

Riley expected indignant repudiation, but Barkatullah only smiled sadly at his championship of the Sherif. Evidently the editor of *The Roshni* was not the zealot he supposed. It was difficult to explain his mildness. Bolton's diagnosis was probably not far from the mark. " Barkatullah is a tradesman : poison pays." Riley remembered that he was not in the *Roshni* office as a customer or client, but as one to whom the editor was eager to legitimise his trade. Therefore Barkatullah exhibited no samples of venom. He had no inclination to attack or confound Riley, only to lead him gently to the conviction that he, Barkatullah, was a consistent votary in the temple of Truth.

" I do not care for handcuffs or chains," he said. " I know that one day Government may arrest me. In attacking the Khilafat they leave me the choice of either being a British subject or a Moslem. I prefer to be a Moslem. One cannot serve God and a Government that is *dar-ul-harb* at the same time."

Then he told Riley that whenever he woke up in the morning he expected to find a policeman by his bed. He was ready to go to gaol for his country and his religion. But if religious liberty existed Government ought to be ashamed to punish pious Moslems for their convictions. Soon every Muhammadan in India would be prepared to sacrifice his life and liberty for the Khilafat, but there would not be room for them all in the gaols. What would Government do then? Did they intend to take action against the agitators ?

Riley gathered that Barkatullah was sounding him as to how near he was to the brink, what further rope Government would give him; and he told him he was lucky to be at large and that he probably owed it to the Royal Amnesty to political offenders. " Government are very patient and long-suffering" he said, " but when your propaganda begins to take effect they can't very well avoid putting you in gaol. When the zemindars of Mograon, for instance, knock their D.C. on the head, or when the Moslems coming out of the Mosque after Friday prayers practise jehad on the first Christian they meet, it would be clearly safer for everybody if you were out of harm's way. Personally, if I were the Governor, I would have you locked up before any of these things happened."

" But I always preach non-violent agitation" Barkatullah protested.

Riley's smile was more eloquent than contradiction. "It is not worth spilling blood about it," he said; " you have got Swaraj. It's begun and can't go back You'll see whatever the new Councils decide Government will pass as law, unless it involves a condition of anarchy or bankruptcy which a child might foresee."

This was not at all the Utopia that Barkatullah desired. It precluded haloes and ruined trade. He

smiled incredulously. " But, Mr. Riley" he said, in tones which he might use to a merchant in the bazar who claimed a preposterous price for his wares, " the reforms are only a toy after all, no doubt—what real liberty has India got? Repeal the Press Act, the Seditious Meetings Act, the Rowlatt Act, the Defence of India Act. . . ."

" You'll see/' Riley interrupted, " in a year or two your legislators will repeal any Act they like"

Barkatullah smiled again—it was a duel of incredulous smiles; and if the facial expression of incredulity is any test it must be admitted that Barkatullah won. But it was all very good-tempered. The editor of *The Roshni* followed Riley down the steps and stood with him in the square outside under the signboard of the Rising Sun, the crest of the " Illuminator/' The porcupine beams shone down on him, and the emblazoned motto, " How can the shades of darkness resist the flood of light? " From this vantage he addressed the back of the editor of *The Thompsonpur Gazette* as he mounted and walked his horse towards Amir Khan's mosque.

" Send me your article on the Reforms, Mr. Riley. I will publish it in *The Roshni,* provided, of course, I am convinced that what you say is true. You too are man of principle. You will understand my position. You will not ask me to publish anything I cannot reconcile with dictates of conscience."

Barkatullah felt that he had vindicated his faith.

CHAPTER V

THE PARIAH OF FORTUNE

I

BANARSI DAS occupied a small room adjoining Riley's in the editor's block of *The Thompsonpur Gazette*, He had learnt to typewrite and correct proofs. His English was a credit to Gandeshwar and Skene. He had interviewed his old Principal more than once in connection with University news. He had even attended political meetings for the *Gazette.* The editing of his reports was a hobby of Riley's, a pleasant diversion in routine. The flowers of speech that perished in the proofs he preserved in an anthology, probably the only relic of Thompsonpur journalism that exists.

Eight months had passed since the Indus restored Banarsi Das to the secure paths that he forsook for perilous adventure at the instance of Jemal Khan. He was completely whitewashed in the eyes of the benign Government. Dean, as ultimate arbiter, announced him harmless. A pardon had been offered all the *muhajarin* who were willing to return to their homes, and there was no reason why it should not be extended to Banarsi Das, though it might be objected, of course, in the spirit of the counsel for the prosecution, that his return had been involuntary, and the manner of his restitution to British citizenship, to say thejeast

of it, unorthodox. Still it was generally recognised that Banarsi Das' being at large did not constitute a serious danger to the British Raj. Nor was he suspected of any hankering to revisit the inhospitable approaches to the Cave of Adullam.

Even Jemal Khan had returned, pardoned but impenitent. Banarsi Das had met him once outside the *Gazette*. He was very satisfied with himself and all the world that morning until his encounter with Jemal Khan. The twelve-o'clock edition of the *Gazette* had published his half-column report of a Municipal meeting, and Riley had only made fifteen corrections in English and eliminated ten lines. Jemal Khan stopped dead when he recognised Banarsi Das, who at the moment of contact had visions of the editorial chair, and was walking, or floating, abstractedly in his dreams. He was carried by them unconsciously through the gate into the premises of the *Gazette* like a weed in a current, and would not have seen Jemal Khan had he not been standing on the edge of the pavement, right in his path, where the in-and-out drive takes off from the road. The Wahabi, scowling deliberately, muttered the single word " Yezid " and raked him with the battery of his scorn. Banarsi Das shuffled off the pavement and hurried down the drive to the office, as if real shrapnel was spattering the ground behind him. He dared not look twice at Jemal Khan. The day was spoilt for him; the Wahabi's witness-bearing contempt had withered his pride. He remembered the oaths he had made before Jemal Khan with the Koran on his head. The scene of the *serai* at Darband came back to him, his physical exhaustion, Jemal Khan's covenanting footsteps, the discovery of the hopelessness of his living up to his dedication, Jemal Khan's ruthless betrayal of his

weakness to the Bulbul at Jahar. He felt the Shinwari's fingers at his throat in the dark tomb, and the dangling rope entangled in his feet as he was carried down to the Indus, too terrified to struggle or speak. He lived through again the sacrificial trussing on the raft until the type in front of him became blurred. At these moments the damp pulpy smell of the galley fresh from the press was sweet and comforting. Jemal Khan had been to Kabul, he heard. He was glad that he had come back. It diminished the spiritual gulf between them, and the Wahabi's privilege of contempt. But he dreaded another encounter.

Three weeks after this he saw the Shinwari. The brothers Shaukat and Muhammad Ali were passing through Gopalpura, and the local Khilafat Committee had prepared an ovation for them at the station. Riley sent Banarsi Das to report. Banarsi Das had seen little of Gopalpura since his return from the frontier. Riley, no doubt advisedly, had found him quarters at the back of the *Gazette ;* he was translated physically as well as mentally to Thompsonpur. The crowd waiting on the platform at the railway station revived many ghosts but few regrets. Some of them had thrilled to the eloquence of the Bulbul in the graveyard of Ain-ul-Quzzat. There was Abdul Rabi, the *moulvi* of Amir Khan's mosque who had testified to Banarsi Das' trustworthiness as a *muhajir* and a missionary of Islam on the ninety-ninth page of his Koran. Banarsi Das gave him a wide berth. But it was not easy to give a wide berth to everybody he did not wish to meet. The crowd was so compact that one had to move with its impulses, and in trying to avoid Abdul Rabi he nearly collided with Jemal Khan. Then as he recoiled from the covenanter he saw a new danger-signal ahead; the white Delhi cap isolated among black and red

astrakhans and fezes was the unmistakable headgear of Barkatullah. Banarsi Das had not met his old employer since the day he received Skene and Riley in the *Roshni* office. He feared and hated him. There was peril and embarrassment for him on all sides.

Soon the rumble of the train was heard, the platform began to shake, and the packed throng moved solidly towards the engine. As the train drew in the followers of Shaukat and Muhammad Ali stood in the doors and crowded to the windows of the carriages, but the great men themselves did not appear and no one was quite certain which part of the train was consecrated by their presence. The surging towards the engine was followed by a reverse movement towards the guard's van. Then a subdued cheer indicated the compartment next the dining-car as the sanctuary, exactly opposite the position taken up by Banarsi Das. Shaukat Ali stood at the door of his carriage smiling graciously in the attitude of a prirna-donna, making rapid dabs at his forehead by way of salute, not at all the haggard and careworn figure Banarsi Das had expected, emaciated by an agony of apprehension for the Turk. He had the appearance of a jolly fat Russian monk. Muhammad Ali behind him was obscured by his bulky presence. As the crowd surged towards the carriage, the section that held Banarsi Das was pressed in on both sides. The Khilafat Committee forged a way through, and once more Banarsi Das was dismayed by the proximity of Abdul Rabi, Barkatullah and Jemal Khan. In the excitement, however, he was not regarded. All was confusion. The Khilafat volunteers, who were present to restrain the crowd and keep a passage open for the Committee, were now a helpless rabble only distinguishable by the black bands over their shoulders

and the poles they carried with the pennons of the crescentade. No speech could be heard in this hubbub. Banarsi Das could see that Barkatullah was reading an address from a scroll which, for want of elbow-room, he held up above his head on a level with the straggling banners. His periods were inaudible, and Banarsi Das as a conscientious reporter began burrowing his way towards him.

He was barely three yards from the Ali brothers when he looked up and saw the Shinwari standing on the footboard of the carriage beside Shaukat Ali. Banarsi Das was recognised. The magnificent young tribesman fixed him with a glare of angry surprise, which seemed to say, " You have escaped, betrayer of Islam, but wait till I go hunting again." He touched the sleeve of the man by his side, spoke a word in his ear, and pointed a minatory finger at the abject figure on the platform. Banarsi Das felt that the eyes of the multitude were turned on him in hate. For a moment he was too paralysed to move. Then he dived like one taking cover from fire and wriggled his way through the feet of the crowd to the other side of the platform. Here he took refuge among a group of sepoys who had made a barricade of their bedding. Behind it they squatted, chatting and smoking, while they waited for some other train, apparently incurious and indifferent as to the meaning of the excitement in the station. Banarsi Das cowered behind the barrier of kit they had raised, expecting to see the face of the Shinwari emerge above it and his long arm stretched out to grip his throat. The tribesman had intended him to die; he was angry that he had escaped. Banarsi Das looked at the sepoys and wondered if they would protect him. They had rifles and the Shinwari was unarmed. He thought of appealing to them, but the instinct of the

hunted warned him to conceal himself, to lie still and inconspicuous like one of the rolls of bedding. The sepoys, a draft of Dogras, were not interested in Banarsi Das. The one nearest him was gazing at himself contentedly in a hand-mirror, adjusting a fold of his turban, correcting an irregularity in his moustache. Another was reading the *Fawji Akhbar,* others were playing cards. For all the interest they took in him he might have been a station sparrow searching for crumbs.

From where he lay curled up at the foot of the pile of sepoys' kit he could see the Khilafat banners tilt and bob above the heads of the crowd. They neither approached nor receded. He listened for the cry of pursuit. The index finger of the Shinwari had been pointed at him, it was a scornful and princely gesture; and he had been denounced in the ear of the champion of Islam who had boasted that he could overthrow alien Governments, and make or unmake Viceroys and Secretaries of State. Was it possible that he, Banarsi Das, was minute and inconspicuous enough to escape? He curled himself up more tightly, embracing his knees, and buried his head in its little round felt cap under a fold of loose blanket. The sepoy with the hand-mirror had ceased his meticulous toilet and was regarding him impassively; he would not have denied the same shelter to the station dog. No cry of the pack reached the fugitive. No individual voice was distinguishable above the din. The hubbub was only punctuated by the shriek of engines and the shunting of heavy goods trucks. The train by which the Ali brothers travelled was timed to stop at Gopalpura twenty minutes, but it seemed hours before the engine whistled and the platform shook again. Banarsi Das watched the oscillating pennons from under his blanket; he had come to hate the star and the crescent.

It was not until at least half an hour after the hostile crowd had disgorged itself and the Khilafat volunteers had re-formed and marched away that he dared to emerge from his bolt-hole and make tracks for the security of Thompsonpur and the *Gazette.* The laconic brevity of his report puzzled Riley, who for the first time observed in Banarsi Das' English evidence of literary restraint.

For the first month or two after his acceptance by Riley, Banarsi Das found happiness and relief. Ambition revived in him. He felt safe and established on the *Gazette,* and he looked forward to the days when he would edit his own journal. It would be a nationalist organ, of course, but strictly Moderate in tone. Riley's sympathy with nationalism was appreciated in the Moderate camp, and Banarsi Das could not understand why his connection with him should màke him so unpopular. For he attributed the sour looks he received from his old associates to his employment on the *Gazette.*

After his return from the frontier he was seldom seen in Gopalpura; he had no communing with the Khilafat party, and he avoided the neighbourhood of Amir Khan's mosque. He kept away at first from the politically-minded am/ong his Gopalpura friends because it was difficult to explain his reappearance among them so soon after the part he had played in the *Hijrat.* It seemed to betray a lack of spirit in him that he should be the first of the *muhajarin* to come back. Appearances always conspired against Banarsi Das. Yet he could say quite truthfully, when cornered and catechised, that his rejection by the *muhajarin* had been due, not to any faltering of the spirit, but to weakness of the flesh. He had been very unjustly treated. Jemal Khan, he explained, was angry with

him because he was exhausted and could not keep up; his feet were blistered, and he was suffering from fever and in great pain. For this reason Jemal Khan had abused him and denounced him to the Bulbul-i-Sehwan, who had sent him back. Banarsi Das did not say how he had been sent back. He only hinted that this ill-treatment had estranged him from his fellow-conspirators. He was no longer in sympathy with the Khilafat agitators. He had made a great sacrifice for his brother Muhammadans, because they were his fellow-countrymen and suffering under the same unjust foreign Government. In return he had been shamefully used by them. He had no doubt that Jemal Khan was his enemy, because he was a Hindu. It was true that he was a Hindu, and Hindus had no concern with the *Khilafat* or *Hijrat.* It was not their affair. He fiad acted blindly through excess of zeal.

This was convenient heresy. Banarsi Das could not expect and did not wish to be taken back into favour by the Gopalpura Extremists. But he was a staunch nationalist all the same, though on the Moderate side. The Moderates ought to respect him, yet his treatment by them amounted to something like boycott. What had he done ? he asked himself. Banarsi Das was not in the habit of introspection. The kaleidoscopic pictures thrown on that sensitive film-work at the back of his brain which did duty for a conscience were his only spiritual education. In one of them Jemal Khan figured in the posture of Judas or Yezid, in the act of betrayal; in another the Shinwari appeared as a dacoit slitting Banarsi Das' purse with a knife which at any moment might be turned to his throat; in a third as an assassin pinioning him to the raft. And the Bulbul was the instigator of persecution. The recurrence of these pictures absolved Banarsi Das of all obligation.

This is how it appeared to him in the early days after his return. Through his misfortunes he had found himself. He was entrenched in an unassailable position, though he did not like to dwell on the incidents that had led him to it. He wondered how much of his story was known. The humiliating details would reach Gopalpura through the police. Anyhow, the Bulbul would tell the *muhajarin,* and the story would become common property when he returned.

For a month or two Banarsi Das continued in happy ignorance of the things that were being said about him. He had been troubled by certain misgivings at first. He was uneasy when he remembered the conversation between the Bulbul and the Shinwari in the tomb, but he had never understood its significance. As to the charge of complicity in the arrest of Nazir Ullah Shah, he had never heard the man's name before or since, or given it a thought. The *muhajarin* could not suspect him of betraying them. They had told him no secrets, so there was nothing to betray. He recalled the words of the Bulbul on the banks of the Indus : " What does he know ? Send him back to the Kafirs, he can betray nothing that is not already known."

He thought the Bulbul had been angry with him because Jemal Khan had called him names and denounced him for his lack of zeal. The Bulbul did not understand why he, a Hindu, should be of the party, and suspected treachery. Jemal Khan ought to have explained. If the Bulbul had any doubts as to his loyalty, surely Jemal Khan would clear them away. All the *muhajarin* knew why he had joined the *Hijrat.* And there was the evidence of Abdul Rabi. Banarsi Das had told the Bulbul about his passport. Jemal Khan had the Koran in which the *moulvi* of Amir

Khan's mosque had written that he was to be trusted on the page that tallied with the ninety-ninth name of God. Surely when the Bulbul joined the *muhajarin* at Asmas he would consult Jemal Khan and discover his mistake.

Thus Banarsi Das wove a web of illusion into which he retreated when assailed by doubts. He was innocent, and there was nothing against him; therefore all unjust suspicions, having nothing to sustain them, must die a natural death. He persisted in believing that his unpopularity was due to his employment on the *Gazette.* Abdul Rabi, however, and Barkatullah and others read his conduct in a different light. On the face of it Banarsi Das' story was improbable; who would believe that he had been stripped and pinioned and committed to the Indus to float or drown, simply because he had lagged behind on the road? The Bulbul-i-Sehwan was a pious man, and just if severe. He kept a rigid account of his soul with God. The sentence which he passed on Banarsi Das could only mean one thing, that the Hindu was a Government man and had insinuated himself into the company of the *muhajarin* as an informer. This is how it appeared to Gopalpura. Then it became known that Banarsi Das had been seen with the police at Abbottabad; he was favoured by Englishmen; and soon after his reappearance certain agents of the Hindustani fanatics in Lahore, Delhi and Panipat, who had carried on their traffic as intermediaries for years without hindrance, were arrested.

After this encounter with Jemal Khan, Banarsi Das' uneasiness increased. Why had Jemal Khan called him " Yezid " ? It was the word the Bulbul had used in speaking of him to the Shinwari at Jahar. The scorn and hatred in the Shinwari's eye at the railway

station repeated the judgment. Banarsi Das had no luck. He was innocent of double-dealing. He had betrayed nobody. He refused to give the name of one of his confederates when confronted with the police, he would have endured torture rather than betray them. Yet the men for whose cause he had suffered, and who should have respected his patriotism, looked at him as if he had a brand on his forehead. He became more and more aware of the displeasure of God. " Allah hates me," he would repeat in moments of despondency. He discovered that he was a pariah of fortune. The inspired phrase occurred to him when interviewing his old Principal. The day after the ovation to the Ali brothers, Riley, who never lost a chance of throwing Banarsi Das in the way of Skene, sent him to the office of the Director of Public Instruction to collect details of the new scheme of University lectures. Skene greeted his protegê in his old familiar bantering way.

" Well, Banarsi Das ! How's the world been treating you ? Are you still a rebel ? "

Banarsi Das regarded the Director of Public Instruction with doleful affection. " Sir," he said, drawing academic inspiration from memories of the class-room, " formerly I was under displeasure of benign Government ; subsequently it is the nationalists who look upon me with the black eye."

" I shouldn't bother about the black eye," Skene said cheerfully. " Stick to Mr. Riley. There is nothing anti-nationalist about the *Gazette.* And don't worry your head about what the Extremists say."

" Sir, they will do me some injury."

" Why should they injure you ? "

" I am surrounded with enemies."

" All honest men have enemies, Banarsi Das."

Banarsi Das agreed mournfully with this truism. He quoted a Persian proverb to the effect that honesty not only begets enemies but endues them with arms.

When he got back to his room in the *Gazette* he found new proof of this adage. There was an envelope on his table addressed in the Roman capitals affected by the anonymous scribe :

LALA YEZID BANARSI DAS,
C/o MR. RILLIE, ESQ., B.A. OXON.,
THOMPSPUR GAZETTE.

Banarsi Das regarded the letter with misgivings. How could one be a Lala and a Yezid at the same time? The " Yezid " pointed to Jemal Khan or an accomplice, the Roman capitals to an assailant who struck in the dark. Banarsi Das opened the letter and looked at the signature. The second inference at least was correct.

" Remember Gosain who turned King's evidence and was shot in gaol. He is dead. His name is execrated. The hero, Kanhya Lai, who shot him is also dead. His name lives in Glory. He knew the intention of God and became his instrument. His funeral was carried to the burning Ghat amidst a nation's mourning. Women fasted on the day of his cremation, and his ashes were collected by the people and kept in silver and gold vessels. Repent, leave the service of the hated Mllecchas. Do the work of BHARAT MATA. Your end is not far off. If you heed not these words your infamy will be that of Gosain.

" One who may be your
" KANHYA LAL."

II

Amba Pershad had left his quarters over the fruit market by the Mori Gate. He was now established in a small bungalow behind the church in Thompsonpur. You might recognise it by the bright stripes of gamboge and terra-cotta, newly painted on the gate and on the trellis-work of the verandah.

Behind this riot of colour, on walls hitherto modestly distempered, other pigments contended in brightness, buttercup yellow and azure blue. The same principle of decoration might be observed in the garden, where alternate layers of blue, green and black glass, fragments of broken bottles, variegated the borders of the flower-beds in geometrical designs. The flowers growing in them, a profusion of marigolds, hollyhocks and nasturtiums jostling with tomatoes and leeks, indicated, what one might expect in the inmate of the bungalow, an aestheticism tempered with utility.

This migration to Thompsonpur did not imply, as in Banarsi Das' case, any translation in spirit. On the contrary, for the last six months at least, the current of Amba Pershad's spiritual sympathies had been travelling rapidly the other way. His orientation, to use a word of which he was fond, swung him appropriately towards the East. His angle of vision, to employ another favourite phrase, had suffered a change. Amba Pershad was now a champion of the popular cause. He declaimed against things British and anathematised the unspiritual West from the housetops even as Tartarin cursed the East from his minaret in Algiers.

He had resigned his appointment in Government service, as Skene believed out of pique on account of

the bureaucracy's rejection of his text-book on Civics. Skene had an idea that he had converted a loyalist into an enemy of Government by his firm attitude in turning down this primer on Empire-Patriotism which Amba Pershad had written, as a model of instruction for youth. Amba Pershad was clever enough to encourage the inference. It suited his book to let it appear that he had resigned Government service in a fit of pique. As a matter of fact he was growing mysteriously rich, inconveniently so, for a man in his subordinate position. His peculiar cross at the moment was that he could at last afford a motor-car, but that as he was only drawing a salary of two hundred rupees a month he could not afford to be seen in it.

Amba Pershad was making a name as a lecturer and publicist. He steered an extraordinarily astute course. He wrote books and pamphlets, no longer anonymously, anathematising Government. His series of articles in *The Gopalpura Standard* on " The Punjab Atrocities " was particularly damning. Yet he managed to leave an impression that under altered conditions the bureaucracy might discover in him a potential friend. In the meanwhile he had become so far committed to the Extremists that any recognition of him by Government, inclusion as a Minister, for example, in the machinery of the new administration would be accepted as a concession to the popular cause. He had wit enough to see that there was little prospect of advancement in the career of a Moderate, for it was evident that Government were out to placate their enemies at the expense of their friends.

Banarsi Das, though he had met Amba Pershad once or twice, had had no private talk with him since the day he sought his advice about joining the *Gazette* and was routed by his gramophone and his cynicism.

He knew that he had nothing to fear from Amba Pershad as a political enemy. The Brahmin could be virulent on paper, but he was mild and tolerant in his social relations. People who only knew of him politically were surprised, when they met him, at his complete lack of fanaticism. Banarsi Das knew that it would not matter to Amba Pershad if he had joined the *Gazette* or were still on *The Roshni,* whether he had gone to Kabul with the *muhajarin* or had come back by the first train. In Amba Pershad's sanctum at least he was safe from the recoil of outraged principles. He had avoided it since he had taken service under Riley. There was an undercurrent of irony in Amba Pershad of which he was always vaguely conscious and which made him feel uncomfortable; he was never quite sure whether his friend was laughing at him. Now, eight months after his last visit, it occurred to him to approach the Oracle again, more with the idea of unburdening his soul than with the hope of any practical help. He did not trust Amba Pershad and had little confidence in his sympathy, but he had a great idea of his worldly wisdom, and he knew nobody else with whom he could discuss the anonymous letter.

Amba Pershad, now that he was a man of growing importance, would not be likely to seek out the failed B.A. and rejected *muhajir* in his quarters in the *Gazette.* Banarsi Das was reminded of the gulf that had widened between them, when he turned the corner by the cathedral and saw a line of carriages and motors drawn up outside his friend's bungalow. The two gates had been converted into triumphal arches decorated with evergreens and banners. Over one flew the national flag; over the other the Star and Crescent. Under each of these the ambiguous H.M. emblazoned in large gold letters had no royal significance, as the

casual observer might suppose; it merely symbolised the Hindu-Moslem entente. On both sides of the drive from the road to the porch a blaze of orange and vermilion pennons suspended on gilt wire increased, if that were possible, the normal sense of giddiness that was communicated by a glance at the fa9ade of Amba Pershad's bungalow through the brightly painted gates as one passed by.

Banarsi Das had chosen an unfortunate hour for his visit. He ought to have remembered, a fact that was known to all Gopalpura and half Thompsonpur, that it was the afternoon on which Amba Pershad was entertaining Sir Antony Greening, a globe-trotting Labour M.P., who was making a cold-weather tour of India " to study the conditions of the problem at first hand." He found himself standing at the entrance to the drive with a small group of loiterers, arrested for a moment by all this colour and magnificence. What brought home to him more than anything else the distance between himself and the man who had attracted the crowd was the contemptuous stare of the two policemen, who nonchalantly directed the traffic in the road, it included him with these other loiterers. With them he watched Barkatullah drive up in a *tonga*, looking very important, and Rai Bahadur Muni Ram, Chairman of the Municipality, all becks and smiles. The irreconcilable, as well as the half-reconciled, èlite of Gopalpura were among the guests of Amba Pershad. A Sadhu, a splendid anachronism in his saffron robes, with his staff and begging bowl and necklace of coral beads, arrived in a motor-car. The frock-coated figure in the car behind, who looked like a habitu6 of Bond Street, was recognised by Banarsi Das as Mirza Tajumal Hussein, the doyen of the Thompsonpur bar. Behind him a Nawab's son in an old-world

yellow chariot, drawn by two trotting camels caparisoned in red, blocked the traffic. The carriage was too enormous to pass through the gate, and the scion of the nobility, a shrunken, apathetic little figure in an inconspicuous *choga,* had to alight and walk up the drive, followed by an orderly in uniform with facings only less dazzling than the processional pennons and the painted gate. Banarsi Das did not wait to see what other guests were bidden to the feast, but drifted aimlessly back the way he had come, past the cathedral to the offices of the *Gazette,* wondering if he would have the courage to return when the gathering had dispersed, and feeling more lonely than he had ever felt in his life.

III

The man whose excessive sympathy with the underdog finds vent in baiting his fellow-countrymen who are administering a subject race often has a good heart, but he is not as a rule overburdened with a sense of humour. Sir Antony Greening was quite aware that Anglo-India would fail to discover in him the salt that savours the dish of life. They would dub him at best a biassed crank, if not a dishonest one, and carelessly accept the fact that they were prejudged. " A Labourite, what can you expect ? " And in the presumption of the horny hand and the hornier manner, and the intelligence encased in a like integument, there would be no disturbing consciousness of the prejudging and unanalytical mind. " They naturally class me,[11] Sir Antony reflected, " with the type of itinerant M.P. who, after three weeks at Calcutta, or Bombay, and a short visit to Delhi, is reputed to say, ' Asia has unlocked her heart to me. . . . To me the Muhammadan mind is an open book/ "

It was a pity that Banarsi Das could not unlock his heart to Sir Antony Greening. The Labour Member would have learnt more of the miscarriage of our good intentions from his simple history than from any of the political leaders collected in Amba Pershad's bungalow. He was now maldng his salaam to the Sadhu, smiling and bowing low, his folded palms touching his forehead as in the obeisances which he had observed the devout paying to Mahatma Gandhi. It was too much perhaps to expect a commensurate smile from the spiritual ascetic. Sir Antony was uncomfortably conscious of his grey flannel coat and trousers, in which he felt the more *depayse* as he was garlanded like a sacrificial bull. The garlands hung so thick about his neck that when he caught a glimpse of himself in one of Amba Pershad's mirrors he was reminded of a groom grinning through a horse-collar. He felt that he was rather overdoing the part of the *bon camarade.* The Sadhu and the Nawab's son were singularly expressionless. But Sir Antony was spared the embarrassment of making conversation by the loud comments and explanations of Barkatullah, who stood at Amba Pershad's elbow and introduced one guest after another to the Member of Parliament. The editor of *The Roshni,* whom he had heard described as a dangerous demagogue, seemed for the moment to have chained defiance; Sir Antony felt that he would have preferred it to the emotional substitute which he paraded. Barkatullah, who persisted in addressing him as Sir Greening, called out the names of the guests consequentially, as if he had summoned the gathering, while Amba Pershad, the host, stood by, secure in his Brahminical dignity, too well-bred to apologise for his steward. " He looks as if he had hired the ill-mannered fellow and rather

wished that he hadn't/' Sir Antony thought; yet there was no betrayal of annoyance on his episcopal brow.

Babu Suresh Chandra Chatterji, editor of *The Gopalpura Standard,* Barkatullah announced, and Sir Antony found himself shaking hands with a frail little Bengali. The friends and admirers of the Extremist in London had told him to make sure of " cornering Chatterji." The elusive significance of the word was immediately justified, for before Greening could pin him down or make any appointment with him, " the scourge of the bureaucracy," who might be depended on to give him " a truer estimate of the political situation from the Extremists' point of view than anyone in India," had slipped away, modestly regarding himself as one of the procession. Chatterji was a lion on paper, and as honest and direct as Gandhi, though in the flesh fugitive, shunning society, seldom seen. Sheikh Hassan Nizami was of a more sociable type. He shook hands with Sir Antony like a boulevardier. With his spectacles and severely-cut white beard he looked like a Turk of the old school, the cosmopolitan sort, whom you might find sitting next you at dinner any night at Yanni's or Tokatlian's in Constantinople. He probably understood the Labour Member better than anyone in the room. " I have been reading your article on ' The White Man's Burden,' " he said, " in *Nothing but the Truth." "* How do you get *Nothing but the Truth? "* Sir Antony asked him; " I thought it was confiscated like all the other Labour papers, excluded by the censor." " Press agencies" Nizami whispered mysteriously. An understanding was already established between them when Rai Bahadur Muni Ram, O.B.E., Chairman of the Municipality, bore down on Sir Antony with benedictory smiles

and explained that he was the donor of the statue of Queen Victoria opposite the Mori Gate.

Then Dina Nath was presented, a precise Kashmiri Pundit, with the triple caste mark of Siva on his forehead and a perpetual deprecating smile. Greening had noticed him hovering gracefully in the middle distance and looking like an illustration in one of Shakespeare's Venetian plays. He wore a *choga,* or toga as Greening called it, and carried a handsome enamelled stick, from which he would not be separated out of doors or in. He held it in front of him as erect as his own figure, his hand resting on it on a level with his waist. The support he seemed to derive from the staff without leaning on it at all added to the detached, appraising look the Brahmin had. Pandit Dina Nath greeted the M.P. with gentle courtesy, and a compliment on a speech he had made at Amritsar after the National Congress. He had doubted if he could come to the party, he said, as he was a Brahmin and could not eat and drink with others, and so could not profit by the entertainment. " But I sometimes go to parties," he added, " for the sake of the society I can enjoy there"

" You must taste my mangoes, Pundit ji," Amba Pershad said, " and these apricots, they are fresh from Kulu. The Kashmiris are very orthodox/' he explained to the Member of Parliament.

Barkatullah, who was still at Sir Greening's elbow, remarked that caste exclusiveness would soon be extinct in the New Province. " It was dying," he said, " not to say, moribund, when Dyer and O'Dwyer united all classes. Now Hindu-Moslem entente will give it deserved quietus."

Amba Pershad smiled philosophically, " You will have opportunity to observe, Sir Antony," he said,

" as you continue your tour, how the autocrats of this country are becoming the servants of democracy. We owe a great deal to our Dyers and O'Dwyers."

Greening was conscious of a delicacy in his host's use of the first personal pronoun. He would have felt even more uncomfortable if Amba Pershad had said *11* your Dyers and your O'Dwyers"

" Unity is observed on all festivals and mournings," Barkatullah continued. " On Ashra Day Hindus supplied drinks to the Muhammadans. Every evening you may see Hindu gentlemen at the *kabab* stalls in Hari Mandi. They make it a point to go there and eat Mussalman *kabab,* and when their lips are burnt with chillies they soothe them with Mussalman sherbet close by."

" I can quite understand," Sir Antony said, " that the caste system stands in the way of independence."

But to the Kashmiri Brahmin this fraternisation which Barkatullah described so glibly was distressing and indelicate, an invasion of the temple. The vulgar throng threatened the immemorial barriers. It was too big a price to pay, even for independence. He edged away from Barkatullah, as from something profane and unclean, preceded by his mace.

The editor of *The Roshni* retained the ear of the Member of Parliament. His harsh voice was the loudest in the room. Others could not compete. Amba Pershad could hear him as he moved among his guests.

" Certainly the Government is oppressive. Patriots are persecuted without trial owing to false information given to officials by the police and informers. They do not mix with the people or know what is in their minds."

Here Amba Pershad button-holed Mirza Tajumal

Hussein, the doyen of the Thompsonpur bar, and asked him to sit on Sir Antony's left at tea. He glanced significantly at Barkatullah as he made the request, and Tajumal Hussein understood what was in his mind. " This thrusting fellow will never do. A man of the people, self-assertive, intrusive—Sir Antony will carry away wrong impressions." Tajumal Hussein was agreeably conscious that in manner, appearance, breeding, knowledge of the world he could offer the exact corrective of Barkatullah that his host desired.

Everybody in the room was now aware that Barkatullah was talking about Riley and *The Thompsonpiw Gazette.* The name of the Anglo-Indian editor and his journal echoed harshly, punctuating other talk. " Mr. Riley has charged me with instigating the Mograon cultivators against Government. It is C.I.D. story invented to please officials that they may oppress patriots. Government tricked and deceived zemindars; consequently there was riot. It is false and base allegation that Mr. Riley brings against me in *Thompsonpur Gazette.* No doubt he will be made to apologise and eat his nasty words.'" Barkatullah had been boasting that he was going to bring an action against Riley, but everybody knew that when it came to the point he would be afraid to stir up the mud.

" Will he prosecute ? " Amba Pershad asked Tajumal Hussein.

Tajumal Hussein shook his head. " I would not touch the case" he said.

Barkatullah continued to dominate the conversation. His tone was alternately aggressive and ingratiating. He had apparently passed from the personal to the Imperial theme, for he was saying, " In 1907 it meant imprisonment to talk of freedom. To-day the men are the same and the laws are the same, but the spirit

is no longer the same. Indians not only claim Swaraj, but they claim that they will have it outside the British Empire."

The editor of *The Roshni* was becoming an embarrassment. Sir Antony Greening looked cornered and tired. Amba Pershad, with the Brahmin's subtle reading of character and temperament, divined the best approaches to the Englishman. He had detected a genial strain in Sir Antony which was being starved. The plebeian was queering his pitch. He touched Tajumal Hussein on the elbow. " Come," he said, " it will not do for Barkatullah to monopolise our distinguished visitor." He led the barrister up to Sir Antony and tactfully interposed.

" You are discussing the Empire," he said. " Do you know, Sir Antony, why it is the sun never sets on the British Empire? "

Sir Antony welcomed his host with a smile of relief. " I give it up," he said, " is it a conundrum ? "

" The sun never sets on the British Empire because the Almighty, in His infinite wisdom, knows better than to leave any corner of it long in the dark."

" Capital! " Sir Antony exclaimed, " capital! " He had heard a French variant of the gibe, but Amba Pershad brought it out so neatly, with such a delicate play of irony, without a gesture and with barely a twinkle in his eye.

" Splendid fellow ! " Greening thought. " What charming manners! and what a head! Like a cardinal's. In spite of being rough-ridden by these bureaucrats he keeps his sense of humour." And catching Amba Pershad's eye he knew that his deliverance from Barkatullah had been deliberate.

Amba Pershad ushered his guests to the table. Sir Antony sat on his right, and Tajumal Hussein on

Sir Antony's left. Barkatullah, thwarted, made his way to the other side of the table, and took the seat opposite " Sir Greening," the next best position for advance or attack. On one side of him he had the Sadhu and on the other the Nawab's son. As these were the least articulate of the company and unlikely to detract from the attention that he intended should be centred on himself, he felt that his dispositions were in some measure retrieved.

Sir Antony turned to Tajumal Hussein. " I am trying to get to the bottom of our loss of prestige," he said. " I can perfectly understand the feelings of the political classes. You know my sentiments in that direction. What I don't understand is the attitude of the masses. They seem to have lost faith in British justice. What is wrong with the administration ? Barkatullah was telling me that he is the victim of a false charge trumped up against him by the police. He might have bought himself off, he said, but as a matter of principle he refrained."

Tajumal Hussein looked quizzically at Barkatullah across the table. " Certainly" he said, " the police are very corrupt.''

areverycorrupt "Ihearthesamestoryeverywhere,"theMem of Parliament continued. " It seems that the bitterness against Government in the case of the masses is largely due to the petty actions of the police, and in the case of the educated classes to the espionage of the C.I.D."

" There is a certain amount of truth in that'' Tajumal Hussein admitted. " But it is not only the police, it is the same with subordinates in every department, canals, revenue, public works. Even in hospitals, where treatment is free, the patient doesn't get his medicine until he has oiled the palm of some menial."

" Then, if this horde of corrupt subordinates is at the bottom of the trouble, the sentiment is not so much anti-British or anti-European as anti-Government. After all, if the peasant is mulcted and bullied, it is by his own people."

" That is true, but it is a British Government, and therefore the sentiment is anti-British. Everything is charged to the Sircar/'

" But before the British came, weren't things as bad? The peasant was bled white in the time of Aurangzeb, I gather."

" The best apology for British rule will be found in the Memoirs and State Papers of the period preceding it. Unfortunately the zemindar doesn't read them and he has forgotten what his grandfathers had to tell him."

" You admit improvement? "

" Of course, under British rule, the lot of the zemindar has improved. But he is not as contented as he was. In the old days the Deputy Commissioner had time to look into things more and control his subordinates. But now he has too much to do. He is busy and overworked, snowed up in files and reports. Yours has become a paper Government, Sir Antony, out of touch with the life of the people."

" Very short-sighted of Government," Sir Antony remarked, " and in a way they are responsible for the corruption which you say is prevalent everywhere. They ought to double the pay of the subordinate grades of the services. This would attract a class of man to the police who would not be tempted to eke out a living by bribery and false evidence."

Tajumal Hussein smiled. " No," he said; " I don't think that would answer. In the first place it would double the burden of taxation; then indirectly

it would mean that the classes who are being fleeced would have to pay twice as much as they did before. You see, the bribe the subordinate demands is in exact proportion to his official position, which is determined by his pay. It is the same in Russia, I believe/'

Sir Antony recalled a story—it was in Tchehov, he believed—of an Inspector-General who was morally indignant with an underling for presuming to accept a bribe " quite out of proportion to his grade in the Department/' " I am afraid you will find the same sort of thing in other countries besides Russia," he added with an instinct to mitigate invidious inferences by making the specific appear general.

Tajumal Hussein, however, had no illusions on this point. " Every country has the administration it deserves" he said. " If the people did not offer bribes, or submit to blackmail, they would not have a corrupt police"

" Ah, you are asking too much of human nature" Sir Antony said. " The appeasement of authority is a primitive instinct that is almost universal. But in this country, what particular remedy would you prescribe? "

" Contact, superveillance. I would double the administrative staff, at least one Deputy Commissioner for every two *tehsils."*

" Not Englishmen ? "

" Why, yes, Englishmen, of course 1 "

Sir Antony gasped. " More Englishmen ! My God, what a coil I I thought the salvation of the country depended on our quitting it."

" That is your own prescription, Sir Antony."

" Yes, yes. We have done it with our eyes open. We have been perfectly honest about it. We might have put the hands of the clock back. But the ques-

tion is " (he reflected), " are we equally honest about it, now it has come to the point ? "

He looked inquiringly at his neighbour. " I thought you were a red-hot Nationalist" he said. " What would our friends think if you aired these reactionary sentiments among them? "

" It doesn't matter much what they think" the barrister said drily; " they've got to tolerate me. As a matter of fact they find me extremely useful. One or two of them would not be here if it were not for me."

" Where would they be ? "

" They wouldn't be at large."

" They would be in gaol you mean? "

" Exactly."

Sir Antony chuckled.

Barkatullah, observing the easy and friendly relations that were being established between his frock-coated *vis-d-vis* and the Member of Parliament, felt himself neglected. He leant across the table and shouted in a heckling voice:

" What will the Labour Party do for Indian independence, Sir Greening? "

" The Labour Party will do everything in their power," Sir Antony said, " to put India on a footing of equality with the other Dominions of the Empire."

Amba Pershad hinted at conflicting industrial interests. " Manchester," he said, " is afraid of the cheap-labour market in India."

The Sadhu, to whom Barkatullah's question was translated, protested that independence could be the gift of nobody, whether coolies or kings, and that it was useless unless it was wrested from the despotic rulers by the people themselves.

The Member of Parliament observed the Sadhu with interest and asked Amba Pershad what he was saying.

Amba Pershad whispered tactfully in his ear that His Holiness hoped that the British Labour Party would join with the oppressed Indians in their struggle for independence.

" Tell him" Sir Antony said, " that the first Labour Parliament will give India her Magna Charta."

" The Member of Parliament is of opinion" Amba Pershad interpreted, " that Swaraj can come only from within."

" We ask no boons," the Sadhu intoned. " Benefits issue from repression, as henna gives out its colour when crushed and betel-nut when chewed."

His Holiness neither ate nor drank. Fruit was offered him and sherbet at the hands of a Brahmin, but he waved it aside. All through the meal his eyes were fixed on Sir Antony with embarrassing intentness.

"What does he say?" Sir Antony asked Amba Pershad.

" He is talking about the Reforms."

" Dissatisfied, of course? "

" He says they do not go far enough."

Barkatullah, who overheard his host's euphemism, exclaimed to the Sadhu, " The votes of a disarmed population are as fruitless as beating husks for rice." He then repeated the adage in English for the benefit of Sir Antony.

The editor of *The Roshni,* jerky, restless, irritable, explosive, his sullen square face the index of disturbed emotions, reminded Sir Antony of Raemaeker's cartoon of a Bolshevik, a vitalised impersonation of misdirected energy, planted between two graven images. Neither the Sadhu nor the Nawab's son on his left and right betrayed by the relaxation of a muscle what was passing in their minds.

The Member of Parliament despaired of carrying

away any impression of a homogeneous India. After three weeks he had conceived no image of the country. Yet a figure of kinds with some sort of definite outline must be evolved. Without it the empirical politician was like a tailor who has received a royal command to drape the statue of Liberty without being given the least idea of the measurements. Sir Antony had travelled in many lands and he knew of none in which the psychology of the people was more baffling. One could think of France as a person, or Italy, or Germany or Spain. The Arab, the Turk, the Afghan, the Russian, he had individualised like characters in a play, probably quite erroneously; yet they were sufficiently of a piece to fit a system to. But India, it was like a huge jigsaw puzzle with the pieces all broken and scattered and chipped. He surveyed the guests at the table. They represented but a small fraction of the microcosm of a single province.

The severe inscrutable Sadhu continued to fix him with his impassive gaze. Sir Antony would have given a gold mohur for his thoughts. " Is His Holiness interested in politics? " he asked Amba Pershad.

" He is superficially disturbed by the political current, perhaps" Amba Pershad said, smiling, " but inwardly he is at peace. His head is deep in the ocean of being or not being."

Dean would have told him that the Sadhu was one of the most dangerous men in the Province, but that might have meant to the idealist one of the most worthy.

His Holiness, though he stared at, and through, Sir Antony, was not thinking of him. He had none of the European's divine curiosity, the interest in things for their own sake. Save as a means to an end,'it would never occur to him to analyse or classify his

vis-d-vis or anyone else. If one could formulate his impressions the result would be something between indifference and contempt. He regarded the Labour Member as the emissary of a people who were once strong, but who had now become weak. The conquerors were compelled to make terms with the subject race. Naturally they would try to trick and deceive the Indians and get the best terms out of them they could. Impossible to explain to the Sadhu Sir Antony's sympathy with the under-dog, which amounted almost to a religion, his instinct of chivalry deranged.

" We must have National Army, Sir Greening. Real power does not go with votes but with arms."

Barkatullah had returned to his guns.

Sir Antony admitted it. He hoped that the coming session would see a more generous policy in regard to the army in India. He would fight the question in Parliament. The nationalisation of the military system was an essential part of Swaraj.

" I quite agree with Barkatullah," he said to Amba Pershad. " The weakest point in the Montagu Scheme is that it provides for self-government in the civil administration, while the defensive forces of the country remain outside civil control.'[1]

" Until you give us our National Army," Amba Pershad said, " nobody will believe that you intend to part with a vestige of real power."

He affected to despise the Reforms. " They don't touch the minimum of our demands," he said. He described them as inadequate, unsatisfying, disappointing. It was the Congress verdict. He indulged his irony on the Statutory Commissions, " We are to be examined every ten years," he said, " to see if we are fit. In some remote glacial epoch

India may pass the test. I can't quite imagine the bureaucracy that will be satisfied with our qualifications. Personally, my own idea of Reforms is a change of examiners."

Greening asked him if he intended to stand at the elections.

He might, he said. At present he was undecided. He was not quite sure whether he could more efficaciously tilt at bureaucracy from within the charmed circle, or open a broadside on it from without.

" You will see, Sir Antony" Tajumal Hussein said, " Amba Pershad will be one of the new Ministers."

His host demurred. " If Government can satisfy me——" he began; [but Barkattillah had returned to the charge.

" Indians demand free citizenship, Sir Greening; Indians demand equality under the law. Indians demand——"

But Amba Pershad, with an understanding glance at his distinguished guest, pushed back his chair.

Once more Sir Antony was delivered. " Splendid fellow ! " he thought. " What tact ! What delicate intuition ! I am sure Government will be able to satisfy him. A born Minister ! "

But Barkatullah was not to be denied. It was understood that at Sir Antony's request there were to be no speeches. Nevertheless he leapt to his feet, and in a voice trained to cajole multitudes held the guests in their chairs. " I feel called upon," he said, " to move a resolution of thanks, in the first place to Sir Greening, who has graced the occasion with his presence "—Barkatullah had prepared an encomium on Sir Greening, but had reluctantly decided to omit it as inconsistent with his uncompromisingly independent attitude towards British politicians—" and

in the second place to Mr. Amba Pershad, to whom we are indebted for this grand, not to say sumptuous, entertainment. Mr. Amba Pershad stands alone in the foremost ranks of Indian patriots. Mr. Amba Pershad had the nobility to resign Government service, scorning the emoluments that were tainted at the source. His eloquent and formidable indictment of the alien bureaucracy has brought that satanic body grovelling to its knees. The acts of repression have become more numerous, but——"

" Shall I stop him? " Amba Pershad whispered to Sir Antony.

" No, let him go on."

But Tajumal Hussein, wishing to be at least on an equality with Amba Pershad in the good graces of the Member of Parliament, called out :

" No speeches, no speeches. Sit down, Moulvi Barkatullah. The resolution is that there should be no ' resolutions. "

" Thank you, Mr. Hussein" Sir Antony whispered in the barrister's ear. " You remember Daniel's consolation in the lions' den was that he would not have to make an after-dinner speech."

Then to the surprise of everyone, while Barkatullah was still hesitating and explaining that it was not a speech he was making, but only a resolution of thanks, it was realised that the meek little Kashmiri Pundit was on his feet.

Pundit Dina Nath felt that a word should be added. Barkatullah's tribute had been a little materialistic and lacking in grace. After all it was the feast of reason and the flow of soul that counted rather than the satisfaction of mere animal appetite.

" I should not say it was a grand entertainment," he began, and here he paused, to the discomfort of

Sir Antony, who felt that his host had done him remarkably well. " I should not say it was a sumptuous entertainment" he added, and here he paused again with a deprecating smile, his hand out on his planted mace, and, to Sir Antony's growing discomfort, his eyes on the table as if appraising the flesh-pots he had disdained. " I should say rather it was a pleasurable entertainment" And he sat down, smiling faintly, amidst a burst of relieved applause, feeling that he had vindicated the spiritual values against the material.

" A very decent crowd" Sir Antony was thinking as Amba Pershad saw him into the motor, once more an accomplice in his escape. " Amba Pershad and Tajumal Hussein have more brains and better manners than nine Englishmen I know out of ten. And what a charming fellow Nizami is. Yet I don't suppose one of them would be admitted into the Thompsonpur Club. They would boycott me for that matter. No wonder the Extremists are rabid. If I had my way I would give them everything they want after first shutting up that poisonous fellow Barkatullah"

Sir Antony did not reflect that he was thinking bureaucratically. If he shut up Barkatullah he would be taking away everything they wanted him to give.

The spirit of Toryism must have smiled sardonically at the facile descent. The idealist perverted by touch of the metal he would transmute.

Then as he drove through the gates—" But I don't think much of my host's decorative taste. Those colours seem designed to attack one another. Stripes. They chastise the eye. One is buffeted by them till one feels giddy and sick. I always thought the Indians were an aesthetic race" Then, in the open road, " I wonder what they all thought of me? "

On the whole Sir Antony had been a success. The Nawab's son up aloft in his camel-carriage was thinking: "What a wonderful people they must be, if even their coolies are like that."

It was the only reflection that disturbed his tranquillity during the afternoon.

IV

It was dark when Banarsi Das returned to the scene of festivity, and he was nearly run over by the motor that bore away the last of Amba Pershad's garlanded guests. A peon ushered him into a room opening on to the verandah. Here he found his host alone among the debris of his entertainment. The fragrance of jasmine wreaths still pervaded the room, mingled with cigarette smoke. The table was spread with dishes of cakes and sweets and fruit, mostly unconsumed. These and the ice-plates and china indicated the hand of Uzielli, the leading confectioner in Thompsonpur. Amba Pershad was standing by the table heavily garlanded, looking more pontifical than ever. He received Banarsi Das with courtesy and condescension, picking up the conversation where they had left it when he had applied the closure of the gramophone eight months before.

" So you did join the *Gazette,* Banarsi Das, after all. I told you that you would go to Mr. Riley."

He tactfully ignored Banarsi Das' traffic with the *muhajarin.*

" Eventually I joined the *Gazette* after all, no doubt" Banarsi Das admitted.

Amba Pershad pushed a plate of chocolate towards his guest. "Do you like chocolates, Banarsi Das?

Mr. Riley's political principles do not agree with yours? Perhaps you have not the same angle of vision."

Banarsi Das shuffled uncomfortably under his host's irony. " No," he said, " I share the greater part of Mr. Riley's political platform. He is strong supporter of Nationalists. I too am Nationalist. There are differences of opinion, of course, but——"

" The differences are increasing, I understand, Banarsi Das. Mr. Riley is losing his sympathy with the National leaders. I hear he has become reactionary. Is he not attacking the Extremists ? What is this about a libel suit Barkatullah is bringing against him ? The *Gazette* will soon become the gramophone of the bureaucracy."

" Barkatullah is not a true Nationalist. Mr. Riley says he is fouler than his own nest."

Amba Pershad did not bother to defend Barkatullah; he was staring apprehensively at Banarsi Das. *"* Take off the silver paper, Banarsi Das," he said, "it is not easily digestible."

Banarsi Das had just swallowed a chocolate in its silver wrapping and was on the point of swallowing another. He hesitated, confused, rejected the retrievable part and restored it to the plate. " One must discard the integuments, of course," he said, hoping that Amba Pershad would think his breach of social etiquette was due to absent-mindedness.

Amba Pershad nodded. " Instead of leaving *The Thompsonpur Gazette,"* he suggested, " could you not use your influence with Mr. Riley? A little guidance perhaps and he might become a *pucca* Nationalist like Sir Antony Greening, who was here this afternoon. You are sitting in his chair, Banarsi Das."

Banarsi Das brightened. The oracle was not alto-

gather comfortless. " Mr. Riley consults me in political matters," he said. " You saw the Dyer articles? "

" You wrote them, Banarsi Das? "

Banarsi Das hesitated. " I prompted them," he amended modestly. " Even the *Standard* praised Mr. Riley's attitude."

"Then why do you leave him? Continue your prompting. Soon you will dictate the policy of the *Gazette.* You will become a great political force. No—you mustn't let Mr. Riley become an anti-Nationalist"

" As I was not safe from Government when I worked on Nationalist paper, so I am not safe from Nationalists when I work on Anglo-Indian journal."

" What do you mean, Banarsi Das? "

" They threaten my life, if I do not leave *Thompsonpur Gazette"*

Banarsi Das, fumbling in his pocket, produced the anonymous letter and handed it to his host.

Amba Pershad laid it on the table beside his plate. As he read he mechanically severed the sugar-and-almond top from a slice of cake. It was a large cake, cut into sections which stood upright on the dish. Banarsi Das noticed that his host had almost entirely denuded the sugar-coating, so that the crown of it looked like a Himalayan peak in June, bare save for a single patch of snow.

After an interval the Pythian spoke.

" If you remain on the *Gazette,* Banarsi Das, they may do you some injury, as you say. If, on the other hand, you leave the *Gazette,* how are you to support yourself?"

Amba Pershad was unsatisfying as an oracle. This left Banarsi Das exactly where he was before.

" I think the letter is written by Jemal Khan/' he said.

" So Jemal Khan has come back''

" All the *muhajarin* have come back."

Banarsi Das forgot his imminent trouble for a moment, remembering the pride of their exodus, how they believed they were going to return with a victorious Afghan army, and while the British resisted the invasion, the Hindus and Muhammadans, at last united, would rise and assert their independence.

" They have all come back'' he repeated. " Our patriots could achieve nothing."

" We don't want the Afghan in India, Banarsi Das, they are worse than the British."

But Banarsi Das was lamenting the futility of conspiracies. " If the British go, why must the Afghans come?" he said. And he quoted Burke: " ' Noble people will be governed nobly, and the ignoble ignobly.' Are the Indians, then, ignoble? Why is it that nothing ever, comes of Nationalists' schemes for independence? "

" How can anything come of them, Banarsi Das, when we Indians are what we are ? You and I cannot make the sun set on the British Empire."

Amba Pershad's light and cynical assumption of inferiority jarred on Banarsi Das. Others had said the same thing and he had not felt hot and angry. He had felt shame only when he had heard the Bulbul sorrowfully rebuke the assembly at Ain-ul-Quzzat.

" If you had the courage to conceive any plot," the Wahabi said, " and work together unitedly, and carry it out with resolution, the British would never have fastened on to this country."

" You and I, Banarsi Das," Amba Pershad con-

tinued, " are not fighting men. Our independence will come when the sepoys think as we do. It is only through them that the British hold on to this country. We are educating them to pluck the feathers of the white poultry of Europe. When they are graduated our deliverance will come spontaneously. You and I, Banarsi Das, need not distress ourselves to take part in the plucking. We are men of peace, or, as the English say, emasculated."

" Rather the English have emasculated us, and made us the impotentials."

" No, Banarsi Das. They discovered the impotence and traded on it. It is a commercial asset like the jute and sugar-cane of this country."

Banarsi Das was reminded of a saying of Skene's at Gandeshwar. The Principal used to get up a football game every afternoon. He made out a list of the players and their places in the field and pinned it to the notice-board. As a rule he would start the game himself and referee. But when he was not there, the students used to kick the ball about aimlessly until it was almost dark. The players from the city would wait for the boarders to come out of the hostel, and the boarders from the hostel would wait for the city students to begin. Skene was very angry one day when he turned up on the football ground to watch the end of a game and found they had not even made a start. " If only you fellows could learn to pick up sides," he said, " and kick off at the proper time, there wouldn't be any need of Englishmen to run the country. You would have Swaraj to-morrow." Some of the politically-minded reported this speech, and made capital out of it. It was typical of Skene's frank, careless utterances. His students came to realise that there was nothing

calculating in their Principal. When he told them anything there was no ulterior motive at the back of his mind that he did not speak out. His directness begot confidence and gave speech a new value.

Banarsi Das pursued the melancholy reflections evoked by his old Principal, while Amba Pershad mechanically returned to the cake and divested the last pinnacle of its snowy top. It was a depressing theme, and if pursued to its logical conclusion might well dissipate hope. " Mr. Skene blamed the Indians that they do not organise," he said aloud.

" When they do organise, Banarsi Das, the English are not pleased. Their gaols are full of our organisers."

Banarsi Das thought of Jemal Khan. The *muhajarin* anyhow were exempt. He would have been happier if his persecutor were in gaol.

" Do you think Jemal Khan will act? " he asked Amba Pershad, " or is it a plot to frighten me? " Inwardly he had little doubt of Jemal Khan's murderous intentions. He remembered his ruthlessness at Darband.

Amba Pershad picked up the fateful letter again and examined it carefully.

" There are others besides Jemal Khan in it," he said. " Mllecchla, Bharat Mata—these are Hindu words. Not only have you offended the Khilafat workers, but also the Hindus who are engaged in the work of independence. Why did you join the *muhajarin,* Banarsi Das? "

" I was persuaded there was call for sacrifice."

" Why did you desert them? "

"I did not desert. It is baseless charge; they sent me back."

" But if they accepted you, why should they send you back? "

" I was sick man."

" They say Bulbul-i-Sehwan nearly killed you, Banarsi Das. Was that because you were sick? "

The words were as terrifying as the eye of the Shinwari. It was clear that even Amba Pershad believed that he had betrayed his companions.

" He suspected me unjustly," Banarsi Das faltered, unable to return the Brahmin's clear gaze. " Jemal Khan is my enemy. He brought false charges against me."

" It is not politic to be seen with the C.I.D., Banarsi Das."

Das "I did not go to the G.I.D. They visited me when I was sick in the hospital of the Gurkhas at Abbottabad. They asked me questions, but I told them I was not afraid of handcuffs or gaol. Even if they dragged me to torture-chamber I would not become base informer."

" Perhaps Jemal Khan heard you had been to Mr. Dean"

" Mr. Amba Pershad "—Banarsi Das adopted a tone of injured reproach—" Jemal Khan went to Mr. Dean. All the *muhajarin* were summoned to office of G.I.D. for surety of good conduct. You address me like judge or magistrate. But you know my character. Is it possible you do not believe me? "

" Oh, I believe you, Banarsi Das. When you tell me these things, what motive have I to doubt your word? Besides, I have not charged you with anything. No doubt you acted rightly. Young men have to look after themselves when they are in trouble."

Amba Pershad did not care whether he was innocent or not. Banarsi Das saw this, but drew no comfort from the indifference of his judge. It was enough that

Amba Pershad had judged him. If this Laodicean was so easily convinced of his guilt, who would acquit him? Not the fanatics. There was no escape from the net in which his innocence was involved.

It was hopeless to argue or protest. No one would believe him. Amba Pershad, wondering at his silence, regarded him curiously, with more interest than pity. He could not help noticing how drawn and wilted Banarsi Das was looking,

"Are you sick, Banarsi Das? " he asked. "You are going to vomit? I will send to Babuji for an emetic. It is the chocolates. You should not swallow the silver lining."

The pariah of Fortune was conscious of an abysmal emptiness stretching from his throat to his stomach. " If only my cloud," he reflected, " had a silver lining." For it was not the integuments that disturbed Banarsi Das' inside. It was a spiritual nausea, the ebbing of all sustaining humours, loss of faith in the ultimate repairing of the balance of justice, that was so cruelly weighted against him.

Amba Pershad rose as if to summon the Babuji; but Banarsi Das, as soon as his host was out of the room, slipped into the verandah and made his way through the painted gates, conscious that there was no refuge for him behind them.

CHAPTER VI

CHATTERJI

RILEY'S visit to Barkatullah revealed this class of extremist in a new light. Their consistency in abuse and reiteration of catchwords damning to the English had persuaded him that they believed the things they said. And in a way they did believe them, because they wanted to believe them. But it was largely a convention, and there was not half so much bitterness behind it as he had supposed. Afterwards he came to know the editors of the *Ittihad* and the *Kali Yuga.* The *Kali Yuga* editor, he discovered, whose ravings had made him despair of the civilising mission of the British in India, was quite pleased to meet an Englishman and talk with him on equal terms, and as prone to flatter, provided he was alone with him, as a subordinate in a Government office. " The pathetic thing about Barkatullah," Riley said to Skene, " is that he is afraid he is a worm, or that he may be taken for one, and he wants to prove that he is not. I discovered that underneath all his assurance."[1]

Cross-examined by Dean as to the impressions of his visit, he described Barkatullah as " a crackbrained fellow who goes in for believing he is straight, and runs this streak of moral originality, like an acrobat, for all he is worth. He has gained much credit for his antics. I have an idea that in his efforts to twist or untwist himself into directness he may without knowing it

torture himself into the genuine attitude." This was before the *Gazette* implicated Barkatullah in the Mograon incident. Riley meant that the demagogue's powers of self-deception were so great that in trying to square his posture, or imposture, with fact, just to prove his open-mindedness, it was quite possible he might be useful to the other side. " I am going to get him to publish some of my stuff in *The Roshni*," he said. But Riley did not know Barkatullah.

The Extremist camp was not well represented in the New Province. Barkatullah was regarded by the habitues of the Thompsonpur Club as a typical nationalist. Hill would have told you that Mr. Montagu and Lord Chelmsford had been frightened and bluffed into the reforms by men of his kidney, an unscrupulous gang of tub-thumpers, who had their own axes to grind, and did not represent any of the true interests of the people. Parkinson, with his eye on the same crowd, dismissed Indian Nationalism as a movement to exploit the inarticulate masses for the benefit of the intelligentsia. He could not sec himself a party to the substitution of an inept, self-seeking, indigenous bureaucracy for an administration whose efficiency and disinterestedness were proved. It was the business of the Director of Information, he thought, to explain popularly the relative value of the home-bred and exotic systems; he looked to the Educational Service to indoctrinate the youth of the province with the elementary ideas of citizenship. Skene, apparently, with all his virtues, was not a good political propagandist. That Civics text-book, for instance, to which others beside Amba Pershad had lent a hand, had not yet materialised. There was more hope in Farquhar, the Principal of Thompsonpur College. Farquhar, whose sympathy with the more docile of his students

was well known, had no patience with the politically-minded. On the other hand, he expected them to listen patiently when he enlarged upon the benefits that their countrymen owed to " the British connection." Directly, or indirectly, this was the theme of half the essays he set them and of most of his *obiter dicta* in the lecture-room and playing-fields. His students in the meanwhile read the lives of Mazzini and Garibaldi surreptitiously, though Farquhar would have been unconscious of insincerity in endorsing the hero-worship they felt for these liberators of another age and clime. Had not the best historians subscribed to their apotheosis ? He barely gave a thought to the existence of Indian patriots like Mahatma Gandhi or Arabindo Ghose, in whom the flame of nationalism burnt with an equal brightness.

This want of sympathetic imagination was largely the fault of the Indians themselves. Lip-service to Gandhi was the password of the Extremists of the New Province, but the spirit of the Mahatma did not dwell in their councils. So when Gopalpura accepted Barkatullah as a leader and guide, Thompsonpur remembered its responsibility to the masses. There was no middle course for bureaucracy : it must either " infringe the rights of the citizen " or abdicate. The picture of the editor of *The Roshni* as the standard-bearer of Liberty was enough to put more liberal-minded Anglo-Indians than Hill and Farquhar out of sympathy with Nationalism.

Riley had few politically-minded friends in Gopalpura, though he had many in other provinces. When he felt the need of a corrective to Barkatullah he would pay a visit to Suresh Chandra Chatterji. The long implacable feud between the editors of *The Gopalpura Standard*, " our contemporary of Hari Mandi," and

The Thompsonpur Gazette, " our contemporary of Empress Road," had degenerated into an armistice. Riley, of course, made the first overtures. He felt that he must get into personal touch with the best of the other side if he were ever going to understand them.

He called at the *Standard* office in Hari Mandi one evening soon after he joined the *Gazette,* and found Chatterji sitting alone in a large room correcting proofs. The Bengali was evidently surprised to see him. Riley's predecessor would have thought it damaging to his prestige to call on the editor of *The Standard.* If he had wanted to see Chatterji he would have summoned him to Thompsonpur; Chatterji, of course, would not have come, and they would have been no nearer meeting than two Hindu Rajas between whom visits are inhibited by incompatible family traditions which prescribe the number of steps that one may advance without loss of dignity towards the other. Riley, however, walked straight in, ignoring traditional barriers.

His first advance was a tactical blunder. Chatterji's nervousness was infectious; and Riley, who was only nervous with very shy men, as a result of his embarrassment made it appear that he had come on a matter of business, to discuss joint action in bringing pressure to bear on the firm of news-agents who monopolised the railway bookstalls.

Chatterji nervously suggested that he should see the Manager.

Riley agreed, but sat down on the chair opposite Chatterji at the editorial table.

Chatterji was secure behind his defences. He would not come out into the open. It was clear that if there was to be any advance, every step would have to

be made by Riley. This was just, for he had brought the embarrassing encounter on himself.

To Riley's attempts to open conversation he replied politely but monosyllabically. The Turkish Peace Terms? Yes, he agreed with Riley in the hope that the Sultan would be left in Constantinople. The proposals for the new constituencies? He too was opposed to the residential vote. Assent or dissent recorded, the barrier of silence returned.

Riley began to fear] that his visit was futile. Chatterji's reserve was instinctive, not deliberate. The Bengali had no thought of adding to his embarrassment by his silence, but he was evidently wondering why he had come. Patronage, conciliation, a deal, a stratagem, a refutation? Riley could imagine the review of motives in his mind. He felt that he had bungled his visit. There was only one way out, to say now what he had meant to say at the start, that he wanted to make Chatter ji's acquaintance and had dropped in to pay him a friendly call. This meant that the bookstall business would have to be relegated to its proper place; his futile diplomacy would be exposed; that is to say, if he was ever going to know Chatterji, he must be prepared to present himself as a bigger fool than he already appeared.

As it was the two editors faced each other like a couple of suspicious hedgehogs. It was a problem of " Bristles down." Riley believed that his own had no existence save in Chatterji's imagination, whereas Chatterji's were merely defensive, created by the illusion.

" I have been wanting to meet you for a long time," he began with the schoolboy's simplicity that the situation seemed to demand.

Chatterji murmured that he was very kind.

" My idea was that if we saw something of each other

occasionally and talked things over, a great deal of unnecessary misunderstanding might be avoided. I hope you won't think this an intrusion. We belong to different camps, of course; but as editors of the two leading journals in the province, it seems rather absurd to presume hostility, when——"

" Certainly," Chatterji said, " certainly," I appreciate you kind motive in coming to see me."

Chatterji was responsive. So much was gained. But in the embarrassed silence that followed Riley felt that he had cast his last fly, and that he must return spiritually supperless. Things might never have got any further if he had not noticed a chessboard on the divan by the window.

" Do you play chess? " he asked.

Chatterji nodded.

" Will you have a game now? That is, if you are not too busy."

Riley was aware that he was behaving like a schoolboy. Perhaps it was the best role into which he could have fallen. The very simplicity of it was disarming. Chatterji by this time had probably desisted from the review of his visitor's motives; patronage, at any rate, must have been excluded.

Chess rather bored Riley. While he appeared to be deliberating moves he was absorbed in the personality of his *vis-d-vis.* He saw a frail little man in a *dhoti ;* bareheaded with bare calves. The casual Englishman in the street would probably have looked first at the calves, the white socks, black shoes and incongruous black suspenders, covering a portion of the nakedness beneath the garment which is responsible, more than anything else, for the stranger's lack of sympathy with the Bengali. The middle of Chatterji was unremarkable. His round head, though small, was too big for

the body, but the plainness of feature was relieved by the eyes of the star-gazing idealist. Chatterji always looked upward with the rapt gaze of one communing with the skies. Though he talked rapidly, when he spoke at all, his tone was gentle save in moments of indignation, when the explosive element in him was subject to irruption.

Chatterji did not explode once that afternoon. In the game of chess Riley was ignominiously beaten. " You must give me my revenge" he said. " I will drop in again if I may." These chess encounters, however, were soon abandoned. When the two met again confidence was sufficiently established; they discussed politics freely. The great advantage of knowing Chatterji was that he would tell you exactly what he thought. His disinterestedness and sincerity were above suspicion. He could be fair even to Englishmen. He counted them no worse than other imperialists, only he insisted that there could be no cooperation with them until Indians had a determining voice in the government of the country. The Reform schemes might have converted him into a Moderate, if they had not left the Central Government absolute. The fact of subjection was a constant irritant. Chatterji was a kind of Indian Labouchere. In his broad view of Nationalism he was saner, faker, and more consistent than other Extremists, but the sense of racial inequality stung him to fury. Individual cases of injustice or arrogance, true or alleged, were reported to him from every corner of India, and the daily pillory in the *Standard,* with its restrained and delicate irony, did more to exacerbate Indian feeling against the Government than the ravings of the irresponsible. Even Parkinson felt uncomfortable under the lancet,

Riley listened sympathetically for the most part when Chatterji expatiated on the racial question. He had not forgotten that vision of the Hun policeman—a nightmare in 1917—at the corner of Piccadilly. He even apologised for the Empire. We had tumbled into it more by accident than design, he explained, at a period when the spirit of evolution sanctioned government by those who were most competent to govern. He believed that in many instances a strong case might be made out for annexation. He would have been glad to serve under John Lawrence. Now that the spirit of self-determination was in the air, we were doing our best to uncoil. Mesopotamia was a case in point. There the amputation was relatively easy. In India we had to devise a slow and delicate operation attended with certain grave risks. Of the two consulting surgeons he was convinced that the Moderate was the wiser. The Moderate and the Extremist had the same interest in the patient; the only difference was that the Moderate prescribed a cure that at least deferred amputation.

" You will have to bear with us for a time," Riley said.

Probably he was the only Englishman who could have said this to Chatterji without the shadow of a suspicion of interested motives.

" I have no wish to be any part of the white man's burden," Chatterji said. " Can't you understand our feelings ? Wherever we go, enclosures, reserved spaces, privileges " For Europeans only." You breathe our air and complain that we taint it."

Riley protested.

Chatterji described how, only a week before, he had been thrown out of a second-class railway compartment by a British corporal. " The man had been drinking,"

he said, " but that did not make it any better. He wanted the whole seat to lie down on, and told me—didn't ask me—to clear off to the other side. I told him that I had as much right to the seat as he had. Then he threatened me, and pointed to his rifle, breathing in my face. ' I'll put a hole through you if you give me any more trouble,' he said; 'you Indians are getting a damned sight too uppish. What you want is a little more Jallianwala Bagh. "

Riley felt hot with rage. " What an infernal blackguard" he said. " Didn't you make a row, have the guard up, get the man's name ? "

" I got into the next carriage," Chatterji said. " The man's foul breath in my face disgusted me. The smell of liquor made me feel sick"

Riley himself felt sick. " My God," he thought, " Chatterji of all people." He understood why the Bengali did not call the guard. There would be a scene. Racial subjection would be personified in him. Every Indian would be humiliated. That was why there had been no reference to the incident in the pillory in the *Standard.*

He could think of nothing to say to Chatterji. Commiseration would be an insult. The scum of Empire could not be excused or explained away. There is no room in a country, he thought, for a dominant and a subject race. Each is bad for the other. One of the reasons why he had so little sympathy with the Imperial idea, was that he believed Empires were the nurseries of cads. No doubt the Romans in Syria and Asia Minor were cads. He could imagine the proconsular escort in Antioch jostling St. Paul into the gutter, and threatening to put a hole through him if he did not make way quickly enough. The Normans, too, were bullying cads. *Ivanhoe* had been set as a

text-book by the University, and the youth of the New Province went to bed sympathising with Cedric and Gurth. They drew their own inferences; and so long as Chatterji's truculent corporal was at large, one knew what these must be.

Reflections incommunicable to Chatterji. It was not for Riley to offer him chapter and verse for his indictment, still less to point to certain indigenous products of the Imperial nursery. Barkatullah, for instance, and the young men in the bazars of Gopalpura who spat ostentatiously when unattended English ladies passed by. The expectorating Indian could not be dumped in the scale as a set-off against Chatterji's corporal. The Bengali would trace the genealogy of both to the Imperial idea. Or as Riley would have said, " It is not good for the upper-dog and the under-dog to bark at each other in the same yard. The racial bacillus carries distemper."

It sometimes carries rabies. To Riley, as to Chatterji, the corporal became an obsession for months. Riley had a tremendous belief in the British soldier. He had observed him in the war and was convinced that he approximated more to the ideal of a gentleman than the rank and file of any other race. One would think that the " parcere subjectis et debellare superbos " tag had been rubbed into him at school. He had watched a sergeant in charge of a gang of Arab coolie women repairing a bund on the Tigris; they laughed and chattered as he directed them firmly but paternally, encouraging the laggard with a tolerant " ither bint." In the fire at Salonica the behaviour of the British soldier had raised our prestige all over the Near East. The Greek women, half naked and panic-stricken, scurrying about with the valuables they had collected, were the prey of the Levantine, but they knew they

were safe when they saw the khaki-clad figure by the salvage van. It was, " Here, you have dropped your locket" or " Don't go off without your diamond brooch" as they were lifted into the van and a cloth thrown over them to hide their nakedness. It was the same with the British sailor in the evacuation of Odessa—the incentive of toll, loot, and brutality apparently did not exist; and with the military policeman at Constantinople, who, amidst flaunting and truculence, pursued his way, cool, kindly, casual and incorruptible as his brother in Piccadilly. In the war the British soldier was the best diplomatist we had.

It was not a theme on which one could expatiate to the Bengali. Chatterji would neither be soothed nor convinced. The tradition would not hold in Gopalpura so long as his corporal was at large.

" I wish we could trace the blackguard," Riley said. " I'd put his O.O. on to him. Half the trouble in India is due to scum like that."

" Would you say," Chatterji asked him, " that racial arrogance is confined to any particular class? "

" I sincerely hope so."

The Bengali smiled sadly. "It is not my experience," he said.

" Do you mean that our civilians and officers are ill-mannered as a class? "

" I would not say that. Nevertheless Anglo-Indians generally give me the impression that they despise Indians."

Riley protested.

" Take the martial law in the Punjab," Chatterji continued. " What of the officers who made Indians salaam, and get off their horses, and crawl on their bellies and salute the flag? Was not this deliberate national humiliation? "

Riley felt like a prisoner in the dock.

The Bengali pursued his advantage. " You can imagine the Indian's feelings when General Dyer made his shameless admissions before the Hunter Committee at Lahore. How did his conduct appear to Englishmen? At first the London papers affected horror at the atrocities, but when they realised that they could not rule India without frightfulness they changed their tone and commended his resource. Government, it is true, as a sop to Indian sentiment, stigmatised General Dyer's action as ' an error of judgment'; liberal-minded Englishmen, such as yourself, repudiated him; but what was the judgment of the nation as a whole ? They patted him on the back. Dyer is a bit of a hero. They have put him on a pedestal. Subscriptions are being raised for him in the newspapers ; sympathy has been expressed in both Houses of Parliament. Thousands of pounds have been contributed by his grateful countrymen—as a reward for what? The crawling order and the massacre of the Jallianwala Bagh—that is, for keeping Indians in their place."

" No, it's not that. You don't understand," Riley protested.

" The English ladies of Simla, I believe, are subscribing their own token of appreciation. For the Indians the Bagh is a national mausoleum. The peasants carry away bits of earth as sacred emblems. Sadhus sprinkle the dust in their hair. I think you will admit that the Dyer case is the acid test of the professed sympathy of the British public for the Indian people. My countrymen have no longer any illusions as to the Englishman's real feelings towards us. '

" Let me explain," Riley broke in. " I am not defending General Dyer. What I want you to understand is that you have entirely misread the spirit of

the class who are supporting him. It is not ungenerous or anti-Indian. Their idea is that he has been thrown over by Government to appease popular clamour. In a way it is a test case. Can't you see their point of view? Amritsar in a state of bloody revolution, Englishmen murdered, unoffending English ladies knocked on the head, the prospect of a general conflagration, ghastly reprisals everywhere, a repetition of '57. They think Dyer saved the Punjab. The perspective is all wrong, I admit, but there is nothing anti-Indian about it."

Chatterji, of course, was unconvinced. Riley, on the other hand, saw the Indian interpretation of the miserable affair more clearly than he had seen it before : Dyer's service, a cold-blooded massacre followed by a systematic humiliation of the people, both admittedly deliberate; his reward, the applause of the majority of his countrymen and a purse of thirty thousand pounds; the sequel, advice to India from an interested bureaucracy to forgive and forget, profuse assurances of sympathy and goodwill.

" Apart from parliamentary grants," Chatterji observed, " I believe thirty thousand pounds is the largest sum ever received by an Englishman for any public service." It was his only comment on the reward.

" You think we Indians are bitter," he added, observing Riley's dejection. " But tell me. Can there be any genuine fellowship or sympathy between my countrymen and the English as a race until your people show a change of heart ? "

Riley admitted that it was difficult.

" And you ask why we are not satisfied," Chatterji said. Riley, as a matter of fact, had never asked any question of the kind. He had refused to open a

subscription to the Dyer Fund in the *Gazette,* though he had received angry letters from the proprietors on the subject. They demanded explanations, and he went over the ground once more in a leader, making it quite clear why he refused to subscribe to a memorial in sympathy with the author of Jallianwala Bagh.

Riley knew that Thompsonpur would not hold him long. He felt that he had not done with Asia, but that if he was to draw any happiness from the East he must take it as he found it, and let the East take him as he was. It was not his mission to " police people efficaciously, more to their profit, most of all to his own." He could not see himself whipping and wheedling the Asiatic and forcing the exotic down his throat. We had taught the Indian to desire independence; we had started the Juggernaut car of liberty, and it was a thankless business putting on the brake. As if having taught them that we had something which they had not got, we could explain to them that it was not good for them to have it, or rather not yet not good for them, as it might appear, because it was inconvenient for us. Riley was as impatient for Swaraj as a Nationalist. The earnest and orthodox Progressive no doubt found comfort in the proclamation of India's liberties, in " the advance along the road leading by progressive stages to the realisation of responsible self-government." But these sonorous phrases always left Riley with an empty, uncomfortable feeling inside; they were as wearisome to him as to the average Indian. He preferred Banarsi Das' unconscious pessimism when with inflated chest he declaimed, " The goal of Swaraj is certain, what to say inevitable. We are progressing towards it with momentum of ball rolling rapidly down-hill."

" But you must first learn to make yourselves fit."

Thus the bureaucrat, with threats or cajolery, as the occasion demanded. It was all very well for Parkinson, but Riley could not see himself in the pulpit when this was the text. He was lacking in missionary zeal and congenitally unfitted for the spade-work that was needed if the Reforms were to be put through without the shedding of blood. He recognised his limitations. His sympathies were all with the primitive East. The intelligentsia of India did not want him and he was too sensitive to thrust himself in. He had other ideas of his relations with Asiatics. The life of a missionary on the frontier or among the aboriginal Santhals or Sawarahs or Bhils rather appealed to him, provided that one had no gospel to preach or designs on their faith. If ever he lived among them it would be as a healer. Riley understood the instinctive distrust of the Asiatic for the European, especially in Moslem countries, in Persia, Afghanistan and tribal territory, where the idea was spreading that we were the enemies of Islam. The accents of the Prophet survived in the Bulbul-i-Sehwan when he denounced the subverters of the Faith. " Oh, you who rely on your apparent weapons ! Oh, you whose pride has excelled that of Pharaoh ! Where now are the forces of Pharaoh and Samar? You also shall pass over to the other side from the cage of this world. In reality all land and water, hill and dale and sky belong to that real Master." And he called upon the faithful to rise up and arm themselves against the infidel, that " they might either sit together on the throne of kings or lie on the cold board of death.

Even in translation the eloquence survived; the accents of sincerity rang true in every word. Dean showed Riley a copy of the Wahabi's appeal to the tribesmen, and he reflected upon the tragic muddle we

have made of our civilising mission to the East when we have to open machine-gun fire on men who can think and speak in accents like these. In the school of the Bulbul-i-Sehwan eloquence is drawn direct from the Koran, as was the eloquence of old England from the Bible. Words stand singly for an idea, and have not become clotted in the mosaic of a formula, which may mean anything, but which generally means nothing at all. In Yagistan no one is afraid of the bugbear of banality, and the knowledge and faith that is imparted fall as fresh as dew. Our ancestors were masters of this inspired speech once, in generations long gone by, but in the pursuit of Progress we have lost it. Thus the kith and kin of the Shinwari or the Bulbul-i-Sehwan, when they are drawn into our schools on the frontier, learn to lisp in the text-book English of Banarsi Das.

Riley pitied Skene and Faiquhar and all educationists and civilians who slave to Europeanise the East. The Englishman whose gift he most envied in India was a Civil surgeon in the Punjab—an eye-specialist, who was reputed to cure on an average three hundred cases of cataract in a week. He would like to wander through Asia as a healer of the blind—a friendly magician, accepted everywhere. He would carry with him a serum for zenophobia; that was the best passport for the East. No one could fear the gifts he brought. The Kirghizes would drag him into their felt kabitkas and weep when he departed, and implore him to stay. The Lamas would drone prayers for him in the gompas of Tibet. He would hunt deer on horseback with the Cambodian and play polo in the streets of Hunza, a pagan among pagans, offering no spiritual prescriptions or good advice.

His days on the *Gazette* were numbered and he looked

forward to his imminent supersession with relief. In the meanwhile he derived a certain mischievous satisfaction from steering his ship in hitherto uncharted waters. The old school, of course, spoke of the vessel as already on the rocks. But rocks or port—the figurative terms were interchangeable—the thought that warmed Riley was that he would soon be free. He longed to be out of the hybrid muddle, in a land where people were all of one complexion and the trees shed their leaves at the same time, and one could enjoy the sweet unpolitical smell of meadows, cut hay, sheep's parsley and meadowsweet by the river, thyme and marjoram on the downs. Whenever he shut his eyes he saw the English river, as in Mesopotamia when he wooed sleep. It was a particular stretch of river. It began with the mill-race. There was a delicious damp smell of flour and hot waterweed. At first he was carried swiftly down-stream between islands of rushes, the dark tapering kind, past the promontory ash to the deep pool. He knew that if he failed to fix his mind on the picture he would wake up. He could remember the grouping of the dark alder bushes where t'he little black whirligigs darted out of the shadow into the light. It was generally spring, cuckoo-flower and ragged robin, whole fields of ragged robin, and the marsh violet, that dream flower, glimmering palely at the entrance to the dykes. If it was evening a snipe would be drumming, veering and diving over its nest. The reed-warbler builds in the rushes by the submerged willow; the parents are chattering and complaining a hundred yards down-stream. Vain subterfuge; one knows that the nest is in the tall dark rushes, not in the sedge. Look over the boat's edge and watch the barred perch nosing through the weeds. One may land if one likes, so

long as one keeps to the river and doesn't miss a reach. If one skips one has to start again. In the coppice the elder blossom is coming out, a different smell in flower and leaves; there is a glimmer of yellow from the iris in the rushes. You can walk up that leaning pollard willow, soft and rotten underfoot; the smell of the goatsucker moth caterpillar is like decaying wood. One year a turtle-dove built in the hawthorn underneath, and would let you survey her speckled coat as she sat rapt and brooding and would not budge. A helpless young jay has tumbled out of its nest in the ash, and is vibrating between the bark of the tree and a twig, wingless and tailless. It is a season of helpless young things. The small white hand of a mole appears out of the earth———But that was far away from the river. You have skipped. So back again to the mill.

Or it is a month earlier when the marsh-marigold and the blackthorn open the year, or a month later when the water-lily stem has burrowed up to the surface and unfolds its crinkled leaf, a flaming month of purple loosestrife, hemp agrimony and willow-herb, meadowsweet and the smell of hay.

Or if it were not the English river it would be a Himalayan scene, a forest track in cedarn cover, or an orchard under the mountains, pink almond blossom, white snow, and blue sky. There was a low spur of the Pir Panjal on which he had basked one morning in April gazing across the plain of Kashmir. It was in 1914 when he was on the way to Gilgit. He remembered three enormous hawthorn trees in full blossom, reeking in the sun like an English hedgerow in May. Lambs were bleating, cuckoos singing; the thyme was warm and fragrant on the bank. It was before the snows had melted, and the irises were all out, the small purple kind, growing in thick clusters

in the meadows below, so close together that they looked like a blue crop; they flooded the graveyards outside the villages, and made flower-beds of the flat grass-grown roofs of the houses. It was like a home spring. A golden oriole was singing in a chemar tree in short catches like a thrush in June. His tent was pitched by a round pond covered with duckweed and bordered with young willows. On the far side of it lay a bright yellow mustard field, sweet-scented and humming with insects; and beyond over the tops of cedars he looked down on the broad valley, radiant with the variety of the soil, the red of the karewas, the brown and mauve land turned up by the plough, the green cornfields, the yellow scarves of mustard, and the Jhelum serpentining through it all and losing itself in the Woolar Lake under the shadow of Haramokh. He could see the dark gorge in the hills through which he would pass to Gilgit and the Pamirs, and farther east by the hill named Ahtang another gap whence by the Sind valley and the Zoji-la the road wound to Leh and Western Tibet. His mind was full of unpolitical pilgrimages, and into the paradise of his dreams, whether in mountain solitudes or by the English river, no bore, brown or white, ever entered.

CHAPTER VII

THE MAHATMA COMES

I

IT was April again. The grasshopper once more was a burden. Riley was sitting alone in the library of the club, idly turning over the pages of *Blackwood* with that agreeable feeling one has in the booking-office of a railway station on the first morning of a holiday. The table of contents on the familiar brown cover offered him a mental ticket to Nigeria, Mount Olympus or Szechuan. He had not decided on his travelling companion when he heard the swing door open and, looking up, saw Parkinson.

He became wrapt in " Maga " again, feeling that he would be left behind if he did not make up his mind as to which of these guides could translate him the more rapidly, and the farther away, from Thompsonpur. Olympus somehow was eliminated. The mountain had come to Muhammad. Szechuan——?

But the Chief Secretary had marked him. Thompsonpur reclaimed him in its most immanent and menacing form. Parkinson was rarely seen at the club; still more rarely did he seek out the editor of the *Gazette.* This evening, however, he bore down on Riley with ominous deliberation. Riley, without looking up, was aware of him solemnly adjusting his angularities to the folds of the lounge chair next his

own; he prepared to receive a lecture on the political situation; " Maga " slipped from his knees on to the floor; he knew that *The Plibbert Journal* which Parkinson had picked up from the magazine table was merely part of his academic insignia.

" You were quite right about Barkatullah," the Chief Secretary began. " He was entirely responsible for the Mograon disturbance."

" I hear you are going to arrest him."

" Barkatullah, certainly, and, I hope, others. Our hands have been tied, as you know, by the Government of India. But I think it will be admitted now that the agitators have abused the amnesty. The Extremists have been given their chance. That is to say, they have had rope enough to hang themselves on. Conciliation, Licence, Repression. The usual sequel."

" Like the old three-volume novel."

" Exactly. And the Home Government continue to be surprised at the *denouement"*

Riley agreed that they had brought it on themselves.

" We are sending a detachment of troops to Mograon," Parkinson continued. " The situation there is serious. India at the present moment is suffering from a form of insanity like a sick person with whom one cannot reason. You know Le Bon's *Group Psychology ?* "

Riley nodded.

" Well, the people of this province, and more particularly the people of the Punjab, afford an illustration of the effects of the group idea. In dealing with them the same treatment is needed as in the case of mental derangement in an individual. We must try suggestion first; if suggestion is not effective, we must resort to shock."

Riley looked a little puzzled.

" In the case of mental derangement, the application of a shock is often very effective." Parkinson leant forward in his chair and applied to an invisible barrier a rapid, energetic push with his open palms. It was the only gesture Riley had ever seen him make.

Parkinson, regaining the stiff, erect posture which was habitual with him, eyed Riley as a professor of science might eye his students after demonstrating the efficacy of some chemical experiment. There was nothing dead about his eye. It was authoritative, a stationary light, never ranging, but fixed and set. Riley was aware of the impotence of any illumination from outside to bear upon it.

" If they don't come to their senses," the Chief Secretary continued, " we shajl have to apply the shock treatment, and if that does not bring them to reason——"

The consequences were too inconvenient to pursue, and quite outside the province of files. The soldier-man no doubt would deal with them drastically in his own way. Parkinson, in the meanwhile, returned to the logic and ethics of the case, burying his head in the desert sands of official illusion. " The Indians," he said, " are very mistaken in thinking that the Reforms and the coming elections constitute a material step in progress definitely attained. This misconception has been largely due to the weakness and vacillation of Government. It should have been made clear to them at the beginning that the Reforms were merely tentative, an experiment to try their fitness. If they prove themselves fit, then well and good. If they fail in the test, they can no more expect any reward as a result of it than an unsuccessful candidate at an examination. They will have to learn to make themselves fit."

Parkinson was evidently impressed with the patience of a long-suffering Government.

" If they fail in the first trial," he added, " the test will be repeated. We are pledged to guide their advance upon the road leading by gradual steps to responsible self-government."

" Poor old Parkinson," Riley reflected, observing the Chief Secretary's look of worried pomp. " He hasn't the ghost of an idea that he is up against flesh and blood."

" All this agitation is fictitious," the Chief Secretary continued. " The Khilafat, for instance——"

" I am afraid the Muhammadans are genuinely sore about the Khilafat," Riley interrupted.

" A trumped-up grievance. You are probably as conversant with the political origin of the movement as I am."

" Yes. I can see how they have been worked up to it. The political exploitation of the sentiment has been very clever, but the sentiment has always been there."

" Read Syid Ahmed. The theory that the Muhammadan ruler of Turkey is the spiritual head of Indian Moslems is a creation of the late nineteenth century. You won't find any recognition of the Sultan earlier than that. The modern idea has been instilled into Indian Muhammadans by the Lucknow wirepullers. It's a purely political move to embarrass Government."

Parkinson drew a hard-and-fast line between politics and religion and expected the Asiatic to observe it. It was no good explaining things to the Chief Secretary. He had read many books and was well versed in Moslem lore. He would have argued with Moulvies and Ulemas about the interpretation of a text in the *hadis.* As for the Khilafat, if it was objected that an erudite

Muhammadan was likely to know more about his own religion than an interested unbeliever, Parkinson would have stiffened the official case by extracts from Syid Ahmed, whom he quoted copiously. " It is the height of ignorance and folly to associate Islam with such affairs as pertain to this world, and are regulated by material cause and are always fluctuating" Or, " To style the victory of a Moslem ruler as the triumph of Islam is to betray utter ignorance of the dignity of Islam" Or, " Islam has achieved a victory that is real and everlasting; it can never suffer a defeat'['

Unfortunately the gospel of Syid Ahmed was a dead letter in India. Parkinson would have been more in touch with current Moslem sentiment if he had listened to the brothers Muhammad and Shaukat Ali. Indian Moslems were clay in their hands, and they maintained that Islam would be divested of all its dignity and glamour and prestige by the fall of its spiritual head. Turkey was the last stronghold. Every other Moslem kingdom had been swallowed up by the rapacious Christian Powers.

" Don't you see ? " Riley said, searching in vain for an imaginative flaw in the Chief Secretary's logical armour. " If Turkey goes they have nothing left to hang on to. Imagine the whole of Christendom over-run by the Jews—synagogues, old clo' shops, Yiddish schools, one small peninsula left unsemitic. You'd fight for it like a Crusader, even though you happened to be an agnostic."

Parkinson eyed Riley as he might a mental patient affected by the group idea. His case was the more serious in that the derangement was aggravated by habitual attachment to the wrong group.

" hear Gandhi is coming to Gopalpura," he said. " Can you explain his connection with the Khilafat?

I think you said that Gandhi was straight; but if anything shows the man up it is his alliance with the Muhammadans for the support of Turkey. A Hindu who calls for sacrifices on behalf of the Khilafat must be an arch-humbug/'

" Gandhi does not pretend to be interested in the Turk'' Riley explained. " He has stated quite frankly that by helping the Muhammadans of India at a critical moment in their history he wants to buy their friendship. So long as he believes in their wrongs it is a perfectly straight deal. The Hindu-Moslem entente is the first essential in Indian Nationalism''

" India is not a nation'' Parkinson remarked.

" Convenient catchword'' Riley thought. He had his own answer to it and other parrot cries of the bureaucrat, but the approach of a club servant with a message for the Chief Secretary averted unprofitable discussion. Parkinson rose stiffly from his chair and opened the door into the verandah. Riley saw a Babu attended by a scarlet-coated *chaprassi* with a tray of files. The red slips, he knew, meant " Urgent." Parkinson would be immersed in them till midnight.

He picked up " Maga " again and returned to the other Olympus. Greece. Why not Greece on the way home? He remembered Christmas at Delphi, the mulberry and plane in golden leaf, a fine crest to the grey Parian marble of the treasuries and temples. Late December, and the scarlet anemone and cyclamen glowed under the sheltered rock. Eternal summer. One looked down on the purple olive-groves and across the rich veined terraces, variegated like a patchwork quilt. How jolly the Greek girls had looked shaking down the olives with their long sticks and loading the panniers on their donkeys. Bells on their donkeys. Blue-shuttered windows. A glimpse of the gulf like

a little still lake in the hills. The Phaedriades, twin shining rocks, like the wings of victory uplifted. They must have appeared to the pilgrims all of a sudden, evoking rapture, as the cave of Amarnath or the temple of Jawala Mukhi where fire springs from the earth.

Then at night lost in the silent olive-groves. Not a sound save the hooting of the owls. Thoughts of Socrates and Minerva.

Gandhi was like Socrates, dedicated to the pursuit of truth. He had the gentle obstinacy of the seer, unarmed but unafraid, courting martyrdom. There was a great deal in Gandhi that reminded Riley of Christ, virility and meekness, flinging out the money-changers, turning the other cheek. Naturally Parkinson would not believe in Gandhi. The Mahatma had got Government between his teeth and was worrying it as a terrier a rag ball. Selfless. So was Parkinson for that matter. Riley could picture him at the moment up to his eyes in files. At seven o'clock Mrs. Parkinson would see that the bearer took him in his iced barley-water. A devoted public servant. Parkinson and his school were as meritorious in their dedication to an ideal as a self-denying religious order. " I have been unjust to the old boy" Riley thought. " There is not a grain of selfishness in him. He'd work himself to the bone for his rotten old machine without a thought of anything but the job. He has given his life to it. Thompsonpur has sucked up his youth like a sponge"

Riley wished that he could segregate Parkinson and Chatterji on a desert island for a month; not that either of them would convince the other, but it would do Parkinson good. Parkinson was dead, ossified.

" Files are the film between the bureaucratic vision

and reality" he moralised, and his thoughts turned to the Himalayan Olympus where he had spent a month's leave in the war, to young men in immaculate Jodhpur suits with gardenias in their button-holes, budding Parkinsons, content with the image of things, statistics, minutes, reports, cut off from the substance, cushioned and secure, far removed from life and its rough impacts, satisfied with themselves so long as they could make out a good case on paper. He thought of Simla as the last stronghold of the bureaucratic system and the academic manner.

" Bound with red tape about the feet of God." Here Riley remembered that he was " a fouler of his own nest" Old Hobbs and Bruce-Swinnerton, his accusers, had at least moulded men. They could point to their Awans and Tiwanas. Riley was not sure that he had done anything to justify himself since the war. He had even doubts about the usefulness of the *Gazette.* He must get away and do something, build a clean nest for himself somewhere else.

These melancholy reflections were disturbed by a commotion in the bar. He heard Skene's loud rumble of a laugh and Hill's voice raised in challenging assertion. He remembered there had been a meeting to discuss a proposed East and West club, a hobby of the Governor's, which could never be got to amble. The committee had evidently returned.

Riley pushed open the door and saw Skene in the bar streaming with perspiration. It was a stifling evening and he had walked all the way from the Secretariat. Even the collar of the precise Hill was disarranged and his bald turnip head seemed to be smoking at the top.

" What about the mixed club ? " Riley asked Skene. " Has anything been done? "

" We have not bridged the gulf yet, young Riley." No one but Skene called him " young Riley " now.

" Been bridging the gulf ? " Hill said. " Skene looks as if he had fallen in."

"What are the obstacles?" Wace-Holland asked Skene.

" Chiefly funds. And there is no site. Nobody seems keen on it."

" There must be something jointly to do," Farquhar suggested. " Games——"

" We know all the Indians who play games," Skene objected. " It's the others we want to get hold of."

" You wouldn't get them to come," Hill said. " We bore them just as much as they bore us."

" Personally," Farquhar said, " I think a mixed club would do more harm than good. There's the election difficulty. Imagine the rumpus there would be if anyone were black-balled. It would become a racial question. There must always be more outside than in. The excluded outnumber the exclusive, ten enemies to one friend. Besides, who'd go to it if there were no games ? It might catch on for a week or two, but one can't keep an artificial show like that going for long. One's dog-tired after the day's work, and wants to haver with one's own people."

" I would go to it for one," Bolton said. " I would make a point of dropping in at least twice a week."

Riley smiled. He could imagine the conscientious Bolton's entrance. You would see the gulf by the way he stepped over it as he came in at the door. The Indians would hate his patronising manner.

" It seems that it's a cantilever bridge," Wace-Holland remarked, " and the two ends don't meet."

" Why can't the University run a union, like Oxford

or Cambridge? " Bolton suggested. " Or a Literary and Debating Society? "

" I remember a garden-party at Flagstaff House/' the General said, " at which a number of Indians were present. Two or three of them asked me to secure promotion for their relatives. Another solicited a chit."

" The whole question of social relations hinges on the Indians' attitude to the zenana," Bolton observed. " Let them learn to emancipate their women. Until they do so, they cannot expect to be admitted to our social system on terms of equality. Of course, when our Aryan brother is prepared to bring his woman-folk to the club——"

Skene chuckled and glanced at Riley. He had a vision of Bolton's and Mrs. Bolton's change of heart, their smiling countenances at the invasion of the zenana. Whenever he had heard the vexed question discussed, somebody had raised the purdah objection. It was the seal of exclusiveness, and put the Indian entirely in the wrong. Bolton was glad that he had remembered the argument from the point of view of the zenana. He had done his imperial best and it absolved him from failure. He would emphasise the point when explaining the difficulties of the committee to Sir Aubrey Hilton.

" Did you get any practical suggestions from the Indian Members of the committee ? " the General asked Skene.

Skene smiled sadly. " The most practical comment came from an Indian" he said. " We had been discussing ways and means for at least an hour, subscriptions, site, donations, library, cards, refreshments, election of members, and all that, when a barrister—what was his name, Farquhar? "

" Umrao Bahadur."

" Umrao Bahadur. That's it. Umrao Bahadur, who had not spoken a word all this time, remarked drily, ' Of course, if any of us Indians were to join the club, we'd be boycotted' That put the lid on it."

Hill emitted a hen-like chuckle.

" Seems pretty hopeless," the General said. " The Governor will be disappointed."

" There is one very simple way out," Riley observed, " and that is to admit Indians into the Thompsonpur Club."

"Why not? Why not?" Wace-Holland agreed sympathetically.

Hill muzzled himself out of respect for the General. The suggestion was a pure Rileyism, of course, perverse, revolutionary, springing out of the spirit of contradiction.

" Have you met Greening? " Wace-Holland asked Riley. " I was talking to him yesterday. A good fellow. Very sound on certain points, though inclined to be eccentric. A gentleman, by the way."

Riley had not yet met the Labour M.P. He was dining with him, he said, and on Monday he was going to show him round the canal colony.

Bolton looked pained. The worst possible cicerone, he thought.

" He was talking to me about the Reforms," the General continued. " What he had to say seemed to me very much to the point. In the war I always found the best improvised officers were schoolmasters, solicitors, stockbrokers. They had the habit of making up their mind. The worst were clerks and subordinates, who had always been told what to do. Better wrong decisions than none at all. So far I am with Montagu. Without training in responsibility a people must be

hopeless. What can you expect of the product of irresponsible generations ? By our system the Indian is, and must be, an adept at evading an issue"

" I met Greening once on board ship, sir," Farquhar volunteered. " People seemed to think him a very decent fellow, only, of course, quite mad."

" A labour capitalist," Hill exclaimed scornfully.

Wace-Holland ignored these interruptions. " Greening was very bitter about Dyer," he said. " By the way, Riley, I am glad you have not opened a Dyer subscription in the *Gazette."*

This from the General warmed Riley. Hill and Bolton retired, disgusted, to the reading-room. Wace-Holland an anti-Dyerite ! And there was every chance of them offering him the Northern Command. " I hear Riley is going to get the boot," Hill said to Bolton. " I wonder he has not the decency to resign."

Half an hour later Hill looked in at the bar and saw Skene and Riley hobnobbing alone.

"Have you heard, Riley?" he called across the room. " Your unscrupulous saint is coming to Gopalpura. They are going to make O'Dwyer Viceroy, and Dyer Commander-in-Chief. Put that in your pipe and smoke it."

" Back to the Stone Age," Skene shouted after him. " Where's my axe? "

Going home Riley felt sorry for Parkinson. The Chief Secretary reminded him of " old Wilks " who used to take the Upper Fifth in Greek and Roman History at school. What would " old Wilks " have said if, at the end of his service, the Head had told him to stand down and let the boys take the class in turn ? Yet this was what had happened to Parkinson. In his eyes the Reforms were sentimentality run mad, responsibility without control, meddling without force.

He was quite right to arrest Barkatullah. Barkatullah was for upsetting the apple-cart while Government were handing over the reins, or, as Parkinson would have said, " flinging them over the horses' heads."

At lunch the next day the Chief Secretary commended the tone of the leading article in the *Gazette.*

" The difficulty before Government," he read, " is to retain control during the period of transition. There can be no control where concession is born of intimidation. Once it is realised that the political classes can force the hand of Government if only they raise sufficient outcry, Government has ceased to govern. On the other hand, the politically-minded are so sensitive, suspicious, and resentful of checks, that firmness in adhering to necessary, but unpopular, measures may lead to a state of things in which armed repression is inevitable."

Parkinson felt that his harangue on the political situation had borne fruit, he saw a potential convert in Riley. But Gopalpura shook its head. " Mr. Riley is becoming reactionary," it said. " The bureaucracy has captured the *Gazelle."*

II

On the day that Gandhi came to Gopalpura, Riley gave Banarsi Das a holiday. " You have not seen Mahatma Gandhi? " he said. "Then you ought to see him for the good of your soul. Take a day off. Gopal Chand will do your work."

Riley had observed Banarsi Das' despondency. He had discussed him with Skene, who had so far betrayed the young man's confidences as to reveal his discovery that he was a pariah of Fortune, and that the National-

ists were looking at him with the black eye. Banarsi Das seemed to have lost all interest in his work, but he had not so far unburdened his soul to the editor of the *Gazette.*

" *I* would write to Mahatma Gandhi if I were you" Riley added, " and ask him to see you. He is the busiest man in India. Yet he finds time to see everybody. He is a healer, remember, in every sense of the word/'

Banarsi Das silently regarded the floor, wondering if Riley had diagnosed his spiritual wound.

" You are troubled about something? " Riley asked.

" Sir" Banarsi Das said, no doubt with reminiscences of Amba Pershad and undigested " integuments" " I have a cloud to my silver lining."

" I understand," Riley said sympathetically. " It's your position on the *Gazette.* You are afraid your friends will think that you are not a good Nationalist. Take my advice, Banarsi Das. Consult the Oracle, and do exactly what he tells you."

Banarsi Das, released from office, found himself wandering in the streets of Gopalpura long before the Mahatma was due. Gandhi was motoring from Gandeshwar, it was said, with one or two of his disciples; but it would be difficult for any vehicle to make a way through the packed mob. The city was a hive. Women and children crowded the balconies and roofs; behind every lattice some veil was moving. Peasants had come in from the villages all round, carrying long staves and bundles of sugar-cane, their women behind them in full accordion-pleated skirts, with babies under their arms, hungry for a glimpse of the Mahatma, praying that they might be allowed to approach and touch his feet. To the peasants Gandhi was a tradition, a legend. They would go a long way to see a holy man.

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They knew not where he would lead them, or whence he had come; they only knew that he was reputed to be a saint, an *avatar,* a manifestation of the divine energy, witnessed once in a thousand years, and that wherever he passed, the country was awakened. " Caravans marched at the sound of his bell and followed the voice of his pipe."

Banarsi Das, leaning against the coping of the well in the square outside Amir Khan's mosque, heard the peasants discussing him.

" They say no sword can cut his body. He can receive no wound. Bullets aimed at him fall harmlessly from his coat."

" Neither can fire touch him; he can receive no burn."

" The Sircar cannot touch him. Magistrates are afraid. He has come to overthrow the Government."

" Will he be king? " a small boy asked.

" He is a holy man and does not wish to be king. Kings will obey him. Rajas will visit him with bare feet."

" Has he not forbidden the use of arms? "

" Ah, Arjun-ji."

" How then will he overthrow the Sircar? "

" He is a holy man and can work miracles. The *mantra*[1] of the Guru is more powerful than bullets or swords."

" Barkatullah says arms will be used, but not yet."

Banarsi Das recognised the voice of a citizen.

" May he not be too holy," an old Jat said, " to look after our canal water when the British have gone."

" The British are already shutting off the canal water," the citizen said. " They are angry with the zemindars. Clearly you are not from Mograon."

Here the high throaty voice of a Babu punctuated

[1] Spell.

this simple talk, rolling his vowels and mouthing and emphasising every other syllable as if the alien tongue were honey on his lips.

" Of ca-arse, after all, no doubt, if there is boycott of English cloth, the vested interests of the weavers will be con-sid-er-ably am-el-ior-ated; but then, on the other hand, of ca-arse, after all, no doubt, the vested interests of the merchants will be con-sid-er-ably det-er-ior-ated."

It was a piece-cloth merchant sententiously reviewing the economic aspects of the Mahatma's visit. Banarsi Das could not see him; he was jammed too tightly against the wall. Anyhow, it was not a moment to weigh or appraise the mandates of the Mahatma. Distant shouts told of his approach. The pariah of Fortune began to despair of the healing vision. As the crowd thickened, he could not see the road; the broad backs of the zemindars interposed a screen. Soon he found himself squeezed into the angle between the well and the *chdboutra* [1] of the peepul-tree that gave the only shade in the square. With a pious effort he clambered up on to the coping of the well, and swinging himself on to a branch of the peepul, wriggled along it until his back rested against the trunk. The tree was already burdened with figures like a vulture-haunted banyan in a burning ghat. He looked down on to the signboard of *The Roshni.* Barkatullah, he knew, would be with Gandhi. The din was growing louder, as the crowd was being pressed into the square along the tributary streets and alleys. The Mahatma was now evidently in the main thoroughfare of the bazar leading to Amir Khan's mosque. Slowly moving flags and

[1] The platform of stone or concrete, built as a resting-place under the shade of a tree.

pennons marked his progress. The cries of the procession, " Mahatma Gandhi-ki-jai," " Hindu-Mussalman-ki-jai," were caught up and echoed in the square. At last the car came into sight; it was packed with the Mahatma's disciples, fezes and white Gandhi caps; the turban of the driver made a purple spot as he steered desperately; the engine had been stopped; the crowd pushed at the back and sides.

Outside the steps of Amir Khan's mosque the procession halted. Banarsi Das recognised Barkatullah in the car, even in the presence of the Saint trying to look important, aping affinity, his reverence sullied by the gestures of the showman, trying to look as if it were he who had brought Gandhi to Gopalpura.

The Mahatma sat cross-legged on the folded hood of the motor like a diminutive Buddha, still as a graven image, gentleness personified. The people bowed low before him, folding their hands. His physical frailty intensified their love. Flowers were showered on him, jasmine and marigold smothered the car like the sweepings of a temple, but he refused to be garlanded. The crowd surged towards the motor, but only the strong could cleave a way through and touch the Mahatma's feet. For a long time no voice could be heard above the babel. The car was marooned. Mats had been spread for the Mahatma and his disciples on the steps of the mosque, but it seemed there was no way of reaching them except by walking on the heads of the crowd. The Khilafat volunteers, who had been appointed to act the part of police, and to form a ring round Gandhi to save him from being crushed by the mob, had become an undisciplined, disorganised rabble. Instead of keeping the crowd back they pressed in with it and aggravated the ecstatic chaos.

Suddenly the babel was stilled, Gandhi, by simply raising his hand, had produced silence in the square. He was standing in the motor, and wherever his frail form could be seen the uproar died away like a rustle in the trees.

" Ah ! " the Jat said. " Behold Krishna-ji. It is a miracle. Surely he is an *avatar "*

Gandhi rebuked Gopalpura. He told them that he did not care for shouts of Mahatma Gandhi-ki-jai or Hindu-Mussalman-ki-jai; he wanted something practical from them, if they had any regard for him. It was not the hour for noise or boasting. So far they had little to their credit to make them feel proud. Thousands flocked to the Congress *pandal* and made resolutions, but how many acted up to them when they came away? The words "sacrifice" and " discipline " were on every lip, but where was the spirit of sacrifice and discipline? They were unable even to conduct gatherings in a disciplined manner. Patience, humility, self-restraint, solid and silent self-sacrifice were needed, if they were to attain their liberties. If they possessed these qualities; if they were true to themselves, they could obtain Swaraj in a year.

But not by violence. Gandhi preached the shamefulness and wickedness of violence, the impotence of violence in a cause where the struggle is for a spiritual end. Were Indians to become no better than Dyers or O'Dwyers ? Non-violence was a creed with him—he would not injure an Englishman to obtain a kingdom; with others it was a policy. But, creed or policy, " Swaraj depends on our ability to control all the forces of violence on our side."

The Mahatma then explained that non-cooperation was a religious and purifying movement, neither

punitive nor vindictive, nor based on malice, ill-will or hatred; it was a struggle between religion and irreligion, between the powers of light and the powers of darkness. Every day it was strengthening the nation, which still had the capacity of preserving its honour, its manhood. The path was so easy from helplessness and servitude to self-respect. It was a matter of shame that a hundred thousand foreigners should rule and exploit three hundred and fifteen million Indians, emasculating them, indoctrinating them with the spirit of materialism and a sense of their racial unfitness. India for the last century and a half had been suffering a species of hypnotism. Absolute equality, absolute freedom was the birth-right of every people, but Indians are denied freedom, equality and even justice. They had bound themselves with their own chains; it was easy to cast them off. No Government could exist a day without the cooperation of the people. " Dissociate yourselves from the satanic Administration and you will bring it to its knees. You will not have to lift a finger, let alone a stick or sword.

" Only there is no room for expediency, or fear, or half-measures. Cut yourself off from the evil in disregard of all consequences. Have faith in a good deed, that it will produce a good result. Be prepared to lose all and you will gain everything. And after all what is the cost? A little sacrifice, a little suffering, a little discipline. And you have it in your power to paralyse the Government that flouts your wishes, insults your honour, tramples on your manhood. You may become a people again. Without an act or thought of violence, you may be the authors of the most peaceful revolution the world has ever seen."

Banarsi Das in his tree could hear every word. All his old aspirations revived. The Mahatma spoke very gently, very persuasively; none who listened to him could doubt his detachment from anger, or fear, or hatred, or pride. What was the secret of his magnetism? There was no hint of forcefulness or command in his diminutive person. It was not so much a person as an embodied type, that essence of selfless spirituality that is personified in the Buddha, of which Banarsi Das had read in the sacred books of the East. When the Mahatma raised his hand Banarsi Das was full of pride. The Vedas, the Bhagavat Gita were no legends. Here was the living incarnation of the spirit that had made his country great. All who heard him were affected. Not one of them would have hesitated in the presence of the Mahatma to commit himself to any sacrifice. Amba Pershad would have given away his motor-car. Banarsi Das would have undertaken to beard the Shinwari; he would have started walking from Haripur to Amb; he would have overcome the terrors of the Cave of Adullam. Even Barkatullah was uplifted, and arrogated to himself the mantle of the Saint. Henceforth he would think and talk like Gandhi. He saw himself panting in the pursuit of truth. He too was a spiritual leader, one to be worshipped by the herd, an illuminator. His eye caught the signboard of *The Roshni.* Piety had doubled his sales. He began to calculate. Had he been uncompromising enough? What if he were even bolder? To increase the candle-power——? But with the risk of extinction——? His mind became a balance sheet as he repeated, " How can the shades of darkness resist the flood of light? "

When the Mahatma ceased, the cries of salutation were raised again, " Mahatma Gandhi-ki-jai and

Hindu-Mussalman-ki-jai" and among them Banarsi Das could distinguish an occasional tribute to some local leader. The " Gandhi-ki-jai, Barkatullah-ki-jai" on the lips of certain lusty Mussalmans shocked him as the association of the Saint with the charlatan had shocked Riley. Did Gandhi see through Barkatullah? he wondered. No doubt the Mahatma saw through him. Probably he had a great compassion for the editor of *The Roshni,* and pitied him as he pitied Dyer and O'Dwyer and other agents of the Spirit of Evil. For he was tolerant and wise like all inspired reformers. And he could read the mind of the masses. He understood this hunger for dedication, and knew exactly what it was worth. He did not disdain it. Even though it were merely an appetite unsatisfied, was not that something gained for the cause? And were not the streets of Gopalpura paved with pious resolutions?

The Mahatma descended from the car and passed through the chastened crowd to the steps of the mosque. He had invested the undisciplined volunteers with a momentary authority. Banarsi Das could no longer hear his words, but he clung to his perch on the tree and watched the people come and go. He saw a group of Muhammadans bring up a garlanded cow. It was a gift to the *sabha,* and it meant that henceforth they would sacrifice sheep and goats instead of kine.

" Ah" it was cried. " He has made the mosque and the temple one. Allah and Brahm are one name"

Then he saw a sweeper-woman approach the Mahatma. His disciples tried to keep her back, but he beckoned to her with a humble brotherly gesture. " Let her come" he called to his disciples, and he made room for her by his side.

The multitude were impressed. Banarsi Das heard a voice above him in the tree :

" Look at this Prophet with clothes not worth five annas in all on him and with the top button of his shirt gone, before whom the followers of all religions in India bow low."

And a student below him quoted Iqbal:

" He slept on a mat of rushes; but the crown of the Chosroes was under his people's feet."

And so all day the Mahatma inspired the citizens of Gopalpura with his faith. It was a triumph of the spirit; he was charged with a vitality drawn from his devotion. When Riley saw him he looked weak and frail and tired, as if a woman might have lifted him up in her arms like a child and put him to bed. When Banarsi Das saw his car drawn in triumph into the square by Amir Khan's mosque, he had motored a hundred and twenty miles from Gandeshwar, where he had held a meeting in the early morning after a night without sleep. At every station his adorers had collected in crowds on the platform to greet him. It was explained to them that he was exhausted and needed rest, but they were deaf to these appeals. They climbed on to the footboard of his carriage to have a peep at the Mahatma. Many of them had walked twenty miles just for a glimpse. When the lights were put out by his disciples, they brought in lanterns; when the wooden shutters of the windows were let down, they tried to pull them up from outside. It was useless to feign sleep. Night and day he was the centre of an ecstatic crowd, deafened by their acclamations.

In the afternoon he saw the students of the city in the courtyard of the Hindu Ashram. He advised them to shun Government employment and to follow

some trade, to lead independent lives, to wear home-spun cloth only, and to speak the truth. In the evening the ladies of the city visited him and found him sitting at the spinning-wheel and working with his own hands. He exhorted them to go back to the simple household ways and spin their own cloth. " Weave for your brother a new warm coat, a coat not sewn with foreign thread, or by machine, but with country thread by hand. Thus the six crores of rupees that are spent every year on foreign cloth will be saved for the poor. In the old days of the spinning-wheel India was prosperous, but since the people have taken to European fineries the country has become degenerate, and *imam* and *dharm*[1] are fast disappearing."

The ladies agreed. They tore off their ornaments and gave them to him for the Swaraj fund; but when they got back to their homes they shook their heads and talked over his advice as a piece of gossip. They toiled not, neither did they spin; nevertheless they spoke of the Mahatma as an *avatar*.

When the ladies left him he received visitors, by or without appointment—journalists, politicians, workers, wire-pullers, worldly and religious men. At night somehow he got through his exacting correspondence, the editing of his weekly journal, his address for the next day. He was two and a half days in Gopalpura and he saw everyone : he saw Riley; he saw Sir Antony Greening; he saw Banarsi Das.

Banarsi Das apparently had been advised to stay on the *Gazette*. Possibly it was because his English employer was approved. Riley discovered that the Mahatma rather liked Englishmen. The thing that separated Gandhi more than anything else from other

[1] Religion.

political leaders was that he had the courage to stand up in a great assembly and utter unpalatable truths. The herd followed him because they recognised that he was without moral or physical fear. Riley's sympathies were first drawn to Gandhi by the chivalrous way he had protected Mrs. Besant from the pack. " How English ! " he thought. But if he had put that in the *Gazette*, how the Indians would have raged 1 Gandhi, however, could admire Englishmen. In one of his speeches he reminded his countrymen that they were offering battle to a nation which is " saturated with the spirit of sacrifice whenever the occasion rises." He asked them to go through the sacrifice that " the men, women, and brave lads of England went through." They believed him now when he told them that Government was material and godless and that it was sinful to associate with it, because a few months earlier, when he still had faith in the Reforms, he had dared to say creditable things about it.

" I do not blame the British," Gandhi said. " If we were weak in numbers as they are, we too would perhaps have resorted to the same methods as they are now employing. Terrorism and deception are weapons not of the strong, but of the weak. The British are weak in numbers; we are weak in spite of numbers. The result is that each is dragging the other down."

This was Riley's argument: " We are neither of us good for the other." Gandhi's picture of India, the slave of a handful of British " who dare not trust us with arms and only feel safe under the shelter of their forts and guns," had more than a shadow of truth in it. " The system is vile," the Mahatma said. " The Englishman is contaminated by it, a slave of the system; we too are degraded by it." He was going to fight it by soul-force, that is to say, by non-

cooperation. " The moment the Englishmen feel that although they are in India in a hopeless minority, their lives are protected against harm, not because of the matchless weapons of destruction which are at their disposal, but because Indians refuse to take the lives even of those whom they may consider to be utterly in the wrong, that moment will see a transformation in the English nature in its relation to India, and that moment will also be the moment when all the destructive cutlery that is to be had in India will begin to rust." That is Gandhiism in a nutshell, and the Mahatma in his infinite optimism believed that it would be digested in Gopalpura and understood in Thompsonpur.

The difficult thing to believe was that the Apostle of Peace was innocent of the incitement to carnage, that he did not foresee the inevitable harvest he was sowing.

" A too sophisticated saint, to my mind" was Skene's judgment; " too much of the Jesuit about him''

Skene was surprised when he heard that Banarsi Das had seen Gandhi and was to continue his work on the *Gazette,* Banarsi Das wouldn't disobey the Mahatma; his decision therefore implied the pontifical sanction of Riley. But Riley was soon to hand over. Where would Banarsi Das stand then?

The proprietors of the *Gazette* had dispensed with Riley's services. " The Dyer Fund was the last straw/' Riley explained to Skene. " In a day or two I am a free man."

" And only the other day the *Standard* called you a reactionary" Skene said. *"* I should have thought that would have whitewashed you in the eyes of the proprietors"

Riley smiled. " Poor old proprietors! Between them they haven't got the imagination of a louse."

" Anyhow you've had a good run for your money, young Riley; I believe you have convinced Thompsonpur that Gandhi is straight. Hill, of course, still speaks of him as ' Riley's unscrupulous saint'"

" I am glad I stuck to the ship as long as I did," Riley said. " Yes, Gandhi's all right. He reminds me of Newman's definition of a gentleman."

"Modest? "

" Modest and unself-conscious. He denies his saintliness. ' I am of the earth, earthy' he says, ' a common garden man'"

" His saintliness is getting a little inconvenient," Skene said. " Barkatullah and his crew take cover under it and flourish like the green bay-tree. Why doesn't he cast them out? "

" Gandhi would never cast anyone out. He has too much faith in his gospel of purification."

" Have you discovered what places him among the Prophets? "

" I have been trying to think it out," Riley said. " Sincerity. Single-mindedness. I was going to say simplicity, but it is not that. In some ways he is as wise as Macchiavelli. I think his secret is that he is a visionary void of self-deception; Gandhi does not compromise,—at least, not with his own conscience. You will find him consistent all through. Compare him with the average Godfearing Briton. The Englishman loves sport but he is tender-hearted. So he says: ' The fox likes being hunted. Have you ever seen old Reynard loping along behind a hedge with his tongue in his cheek when he has given the hounds the slip? Such a sly old boy, and so game, so British' "

Skene laughed. " Of course," he said, taking up the parable, " the Indians can't run their own show. All this agitation is fictitious. They really want us

here. They know perfectly well that if we went, somebody else would come. Besides, they would begin cutting each other's throats to-morrow."

" The trout has a hard mouth" Riley continued. " The hook doesn't hurt him. The worm is an adventurous beast. We will give him the opportunity to explore the trout's stomach."

" Don't give yourself away, old man. Where did you fish for trout with a worm? " Skene exploded.

" But to Gandhi the trout and the worm and the fisherman are one. He says it is sinful to take life, and he abstains. He would not be an accomplice in the death of a fly, much less of an Englishman."

" Perhaps he does not want to take life," Skene said.

" There's more in it than that. The Englishman can't develop Gandhi's detachment, because he has a too interested sense of proportion."

" Do you think Indians are more disinterested than we are? "

" No, I wouldn't say that. Not in the aggregate. I don't forget Barkatullah at the other end of the scale."

" At the top of the scale, then? "

" What I mean is," Riley explained, " all the world's seers and prophets come out of the East. It is easier to be born undetached in Asia."

" Because there is less to be attached to? "

" Possibly."

" Our greater materialism," Skene said, " only means that we are more vital, more dynamic. We are more everything. If it came to the measure of spirituality, you would probably find we were more spiritual too, certainly more moral."

" I believe Gandhi would admit that."

" I have been reading his writings," Skene observed.

" He has modelled himself on the Gospels and Tolstoy. Tolstoy after all was half an Oriental."

" I was discussing him with Parkinson," Riley said. " The Secretariat would discount his spirituality on the grounds that he is a politician."

" Of course he is a politician. Was there ever a Prophet who was not a politician ? Take Muhammad, the most astute politician——"

" That was Gandhi's reply to the scoffers. ' Jesus' he said, ' in my humble opinion, was a prince among politicians. He did render unto Caesar the things that were Caesar's. The politics of his time consisted in securing the welfare of the people by teaching them not to be seduced by the trinkets of the priests and Pharisees' Gandhi argues that the system of Government is so devised as to affect every department of the national life. ' If, therefore, we want to conserve the welfare of the nation, we must religiously interest ourselves in the doings of the governors and exert a moral influence on them by insisting on them obeying the laws of morality' "

" In other words, he hopes to civilise us" Skene said, smiling.

" Gandhi's mission is to conquer the greed and cruelty of the West by soul force" Riley explained; "while ours, if we are to believe our politicians, is to devote ourselves to the elevation of India's backward millions."

" And the conscientious bureaucrat is ground between the upper and the nether millstone."

" Imagine a Martian come to judgment," Riley suggested; "some supremely wise, detached being with no bias from mundane experience. Which would he believe? "

" I think his sympathies would be with the Mahatma," Skene said.

" And so are mine, I am tired of our battle to elevate one another. We've got the machine-guns and the police and the Acts of Parliament, but I would give Gandhi a free field. To tell you the truth, I don't believe Gopalpura is any the happier for Thompsonpur——" Then, after a pause, "I'm packing, old Skene. I wasn't built to civilise anybody. Get eight months' furlough and come with me to Tibet."

CHAPTER VIII

THE MEETING IN THE SQUARE

MONTHS after Riley's disappearance from Thompsonpur, Barkatullah was still at large. His arrest had been imminent at the time of Gandhi's visit, but conciliatory counsels had prevailed, though one looked in vain for the pacific influence of the Mahatma in the columns of the *Roshni.* The public utterances of the editor were, if anything, more inflammatory than his Press. Egan, Riley's successor, made a point of collecting samples of the venom for the delectation of readers of the *Gazette.* He thought it politic to convict the local Extremist out of his own mouth. Barkatullah, of course, was an easy prey, and deserved all he got; only he did not stop at Barkatullah. Any Indian who did not see what Government was doing for him, or what a hopeless mess he would make of his own affairs, if left to himself, was fair game. Egan could not understand why the Nationalist did not love the hand that chastened him. " Sua si bona norint" was his constant theme; and his editorial notes had a racial bite in them which did not help much towards the entente.

Nearly every day he crossed swords with Chatterji. Anglo-India chuckled, but did not see the *Standard,* which generally had the best of the bout. Old Hobbs and Bruce-Swinnerton nodded their heads in approval. " Egan let 'em have it," in the manner of Willsdon in the good old days; he didn't mince matters and wasn't

afraid of calling a spade a spade; not like that finicking young Riley, who thought Gandhi a saint, and couldn't see a point on his own side. A six-of-one-and-half-a-dozen-of-the-other sort of fellow. Seemed to think the junior partner had as much right to run the firm as the boss. Egan had his head screwed on the right way. Unfortunately he joined the *Gazette* too late to open a subscription for General Dyer.

On the other hand, it had to be admitted that socially Egan was " not quite."

Riley had disappeared and was almost forgotten in Thompsonpur. Dean and Wace-Holland sometimes asked Skene for news of him at the club, Skene was not very communicative. He told them that Riley was in Calcutta working in some hospital. " He didn't say much about himself, but it looks as if he were going to practise out here."

" Riley a quack! " Hill chuckled at this new proof of " young Riley's " dementcdness. " I always said he was mad. If he wants to take up medicine, why can't he go to a London hospital? "

It was generally agreed that Riley, as a journalist, had missed his vocation.

Wace-Holland put the case for his young friend sympathetically. " He saw too many sides of a case. That's a vice in journalism, and in politics kills propaganda, though I rather like him for it. He was an extraordinarily gallant soldier."

Farquhar demurred that he had always found Riley a little too intense.

"He did not bear fools gladly," Wace-Holland reflected.

Riley was missed in the *Gazette.* Egan was a very different type of Englishman. The tight-drawn lines about the new editor's mouth and the hair brushed

straight up above his forehead frightened Banarsi Das at their first encounter. The penthouse brow with no reassuring smile beneath it, dismissed at once the hope of a genial employer. And Banarsi Das' instinct was true. Egan talked to him as if he had been an automatic type-writing machine. He missed Riley's early morning smile which greeted him as a trusted coadjutor, one of the team. Egan was unresponsive, never commendatory, though forbearing and considerate out of principle. He tore up most of Banarsi Das' manuscripts and never explained why. The comforting thing about Riley was that he often seemed more pleased with a report that he did not use than with one which he published. He seemed interested in anything that was at the back of Banarsi Das' mind, and in leisure moments would draw him out and even commend his figures of speech. Banarsi Das deplored the gulf between literature and journalism when he was told that his language was too flowery for the *Gazette.*

Riley would never have insisted upon Banarsi Das going to hear Barkatullah. The possibility of having to attend a political meeting was a nightmare to Banarsi Das. Jemal Khan and his associates might be there; a note-book in anyone's hands would be provocative, in Banarsi Das' it would be damning. A C.I.D. man who had been discovered with one at a Khilafat meeting, had been lynched. So far Banarsi Das had escaped. Egan had made him a kind of understudy to the kindly, competent matter-of-fact Gopal Chand, who attended all the big political meetings and reported speeches in the vernacular. This left Banarsi Das very little to do, until Egan, who was dissatisfied with his proof-reading, insisted that he should go everywhere with Gopal Chand. " The youth is a shirker,"

he explained to Skene when he asked how his protege was getting on; "he doesn't pull his weight. He ought to be grateful for the apprenticeship"

Banarsi Das, of course, ought to have been grateful, but he was not, and when Egan curtly refused to listen to his pleadings he sat down and " penned " a portentous resignation. It was in twenty-nine paragraphs, modelled on the style of Dr. Samuel Johnson, balanced and antithetical. The figurative embroidery derived from a later date provided the solace of a narcotic during the period of composition. One of the reasons why he found it difficult to continue his " admittedly learned and ostentatiously laborious "—Banarsi Das meant that it ought to be clear that he had taken pains—" lucubrations in the *Gazette*, was the sad, not to say reactionary and degenerate, tone of that journal, which was now hastening with rapidity of meteor—or was it meteorological rapidity?—to its political nadir.[11] In the end it was delicately insinuated that the junior vernacular reporter scorned to dip his pen " in the ink of anti-climax"

He showed the finished document to Gopal Chand.

" But what are you going to do, Banarsi Das, if you leave the *Gazette"?* " Gopal Chand asked him.

Banarsi Das had nothing to do. He was again adrift.

" Tear it up, Banarsi Das. Gome with me to the meetings. You will see, you will be all right."

After a little persuasion Banarsi Das said that he would sleep on the horns of the dilemma. He slept on them many nights. The resignation was not submitted to Mr. Egan; neither was it destroyed.

When it was announced that a monster Khilafat meeting was to be held at Gopalpura after Friday prayers, Banarsi Das was in great distress. On the Wednesday night he was impaled first on one horn,

then on the other, of the bovine beast of his imaginings. Sleep was impossible. On Thursday morning he was perilously near sending in the resignation. But Gopal Chand again intervened. " Come with me," he said, " I will get Tilok Ram and Har Prasad to join us"

" Tilok Ram is a very corpulent gentleman, no doubt" Banarsi Das remarked after a little reflection.

Gopal Chand looked puzzled He did not understand that Banarsi Das was calculating the precise amount of cover afforded by Tilok Ram's person. He was thinking of the niche between the coping of the wall and the *chabontra* of the peepul-tree into which he had been squeezed by the pious crowd when he waited for the Mahatma. Barkatullah was to address the multitude from the steps of Amir Khan's mosque.

Banarsi Das explained to Gopal Chand the strategical advantages of the position. " If we went very early" he said, " and Tilok Ram stood in front of me, and you and Har Prasad on each side of Tilok Ram, I might escape notice"

The meeting was to be held after prayers in the mosque, but Banarsi Das would have had his friends in position at dawn. Gopal Chand good-naturedly demurred. " Tilok Ram would not come," he said. " Let us go at ten, Banarsi Das, you will meet nobody on the road at that time." And Banarsi Das, reflecting that Tilok Ram, so far as his purpose was served, was worth the other two, agreed.

They were all three late of course, and on the way to the city Banarsi Das was afraid that his coign of vantage would be taken. When they reached the square, however, they found it filling; the crowd was still fluid and the niche accessible. It was a very different crowd to that which had awaited Gandhi. Banarsi Das' saw a frankified youth, who ignorantly

flaunted an English tie and collar, rough-handled and stripped of them. He was glad of the obesity and opacity of Tilok Ram. The feeling grew on him that he was trapped and surrounded by his enemies, who must in the end spy him out. He asked himself miserably why he had come. The square with all its unhappy associations, overlooked by the windows of the *Roshni* office, and shadowed by the minarets of the mosque under which he had been inducted by the Khilafat workers, had become a place of expiation. It was a stage on which he was a hunted victim. Why had he returned to it against his warning instincts? Crouching behind Tilok Ram, he recalled earlier forebodings until he was convinced that his return was ordained. The stage had been designed for him from the beginning and was prepared for his last exit. This was the work of the supreme architect, the arbiter of being and not being. The square was haunted now by the spectres of the Shinwari and Jemal Khan. He saw himself dangling by a rope from the peepul-tree. The rope was cut and his body fell into the well.

The first speaker had come out of the mosque on to the steps. There was a stir in the square, a rustle of subdued excitement. " Who is it? " Banarsi Das asked Gopal Chand. He knew it was not Barkatullah—Barkatullah was a practised demagogue, master of the homely phrase " one of the people." He would be greeted with noisy irreverent shouts, the applause of a mob with an appetite for sensation. This awed murmur in the square was evoked by reverence.

" Who is it ? " Banarsi Das asked Gopal Chand again.

Gopal Chand bent down over him and whispered, " It is Bulbul."

Banarsi Das shrank deeper into his niche. The clear bell-like voice of the Wahabi rang out in the square.

" Muhammad is the preface to the book of the Universe; all the world are slaves and he is the master. Moslems, break the chain of bondage that is round your weak necks with the strength of your religion and the sharp edge of your faith, so that you may become masters of the rights of your existence. Were you not once conquerors? Your holy places are now in the hands of Christians and Jews. Your Khalifa is an outcast, a captive among the unbelievers, brought to shame. Crosses are hung in the mosques and Christ and Mary are being worshipped in them. The Moslems of the whole world are part of the same body. If any part is hurt all feel it. Islam is in danger; its garden is being despoiled. Moslems awake from your sleep. Hold fast to the rope of Allah unitedly. Otherwise how can you stand unashamed before God?

" Are you content with your bondage and humility? Have you submitted your necks forever to the yoke of the infidel? Fie upon you if you help not the cause of the Khilafat. Is it that you hope that by becoming Christians you may be spared? Have you fear that otherwise you will be disgraced and brought low? Shame has already fallen upon you. Raise up your heads and cast aside impotence, or in a year or two you will be compelled to believe in the Trinity. So far you have been spared on account of one Islamic Power—the Turkish Empire—but the Khilafat which you helped to destroy cannot help you now. It was the Muhammadans alone who, siding with the British, were shameless enough to fire upon the mausoleum of the Prophet. The wrath of God is the result of this. You are doomed. The only atonement you can make is to pray for God's forgiveness. When the consciousness of shame returns to your hearts, ye may once more be conquerors.

" In the Jallianwala Bagh the white-skinned devils bayoneted newly-born children. Remember how your mothers and sisters were dishonoured, unveiled and spat upon; how your brothers were made to crawl on their bellies in the dust. Will any of you uphold their honour? "

Here Jemal Khan, who was sitting under the steps of the mosque, leapt up and declared that he was ready for immediate sacrifice. Niaz Ali and Zahur Muhammad, his companions in the *Hijrat,* sprang up at his side. A student of Thompsonpur College threw off his English cap and swore that he would join the Army of God.

The Bulbul called for all caps of foreign make, badges of servitude, to be surrendered. At least fifty were thrown to him. These were collected in a heap and burnt. Frenzied shouts acclaimed the blaze. As the flame died away, the Bulbul lifted his hand and stayed the clamour. There was something godlike in the gesture. The multitude were silent. In the stillness that followed he exclaimed, " This signifies that ye will give your heads if called upon" He spoke softly, but every word was audible, and his voice, like the muezzin's call to prayer, rang with such conviction that it was felt that Islam was vindicated. The die had been cast on the steps of Amir Khan's mosque. The issue hereafter was certain.

" Are any of you willing to sacrifice your lives for the Motherland? "

" We are ready"

" Is there one among you who is ready to pour out his life's blood for the Khilafat, the Vice-royalty of God ? "

All cried out that they were ready.

" Two roads only are open for you to pursue. On one is heard the chinking of handcuffs, the tread of

jailers, the rattle of the planks of the scaffold; on the other is heard the acclamations bestowed by selfish and worldly men on the rich, the title-holders, sycophants, slavish minds, betrayers of their country and their Faith. Which road will ye pursue? "

He paused, waiting for the answer of the multitude. They shouted with one voice, " We will pursue the first road"

" At the end of the first road the Holy Prophet is waiting to receive you, and the blessed martyrs Hazrat, Umar, Usman, and Hussain. At the end of the second road stand Sir Michael O'Dwyer and General Dyer, wine-bibbing, bacon-fed Englishmen, murderers of your countrymen, with gifts in their hands. Which road will ye pursue? "

From the courtyard, the square, the walls of the mosque and the roofs of the adjoining houses there went up a roar of acclamation. With one voice the faithful signified which road they would pursue.

" God has bestowed His faith on me. You can do everything if only one-thousandth part of my faith is in you. When the enemies of the Prophet were pressing him hard and his life was in danger, he was directed by God to leave Mecca. He did so and went to Medina. The time has now come for you to leave India and go to Afghanistan. The Amir has opened the door of his country to you. God loves a red colour. The sun and moon are red. So is blood. God loves him who has a red scarf round his neck and a red face. Shave not your beards. Keep them because those who wear them are coming. Wear big *shalwars* because they are clad in them. When you return you will return with God's chosen, the upholders of the Faith. I do not preach Jehad this day. The hour has not yet come——"

Here Jemal Khan cried out, " Nay, the hour has come"

" Ask not, ' How shall we go, and whither and how shall it be permitted ? ' All such thoughts are wrong. Do but make ready; the Almighty God will provide. Perhaps you may never reach your goal, but fall on the way. If so, be content. In Kabul three million men are required. But go not in the thought that you will there eat grapes and melons and fat rice. Go rather with the purpose of returning to this land with the people of Afghanistan in victory. Hold up the Khilafat, that your very existence be not jeopardised. It were better that ye were dead than suffered to dwell in shame"

In the murmur that rose in the square after the Wahabi's oration, Banarsi Das repeated to himself the only words in it from which he could draw any comfort: " The time has not yet come" He prayed that it might not come. Other Hindus by the wall shook their heads. They did not like the passage about the *shalwars* and the red scarves and the colour of blood and the beards of the tribesmen. The Bulbul was not a politician. " Nothing so fiery has yet been heard," they said. And they asked, " How did he come ? How will he make his escape ? Is he not the forerunner of the Afghans ? Are the police sleeping ? Is the Sircar afraid? " And Banarsi Das felt his hairless chin. He had taken no notes; he was too paralysed with fear. He thought only of escape. How long would it take for the crowd to disperse? Would Gopal Chand and the others stand over him ? What witness-bearers might he not encounter on the way back to the *Gazette ?*

After the Prophet—the politician. That the time

had not yet come, was the note of Barkatullah, who followed the Bulbul.

" I am stirred to rebellion," he began. " I come of a martial race "—his father was an Accounts Clerk in the Supply and Transport Corps—" but the order has been issued by Mahatma Gandhi, whom all respect, ' Swaraj by non-violence' Therefore I stay my hand. There are Muhammadans among you who have helped to destroy the Vice-royalty of God for eleven rupees a month. Now, when their own religion is being destroyed by the infidel whom they protected, they are bidden to sheathe the sword/'

" Nay, we will unsheathe it''

" Nay, there must be no violence. Mahatma Gandhi is our leader and he is a holy man''

Barkatullah turned to a group of demobilised Moslem sepoys, who had been staged at the foot of the steps.

" Did they think they would fill their bellies by wielding the sword against Islam? Verily they will be torn up before God after death''

" Nay, they are brave men and have been deceived" Jemal Khan interrupted. " They will destroy the destroyers and so receive the forgiveness of God."

But the politician rebuked him. " The time for violence is not yet'' he said; " we must bare our chests to bullets and our necks to the yoke. The war against the infidel must be won by submission"

He pointed to the sepoys. " See how the Kafirs have rewarded them," he cried. " They have been given horse-flesh to eat, and they have drunk dung-water"

Here a thin, consumptive-looking sepoy in a torn khaki shirt, with no coat or boots, and an empty sleeve hanging loose, was pushed forward, limping in front of Barkatullah.

" And now what dog's treatment do they receive? Their land lies fallow; their cattle are sold, after a winter without rain. How will they pass their days ? "

He pointed contemptuously at the forlorn and contrite figure standing before him on the steps of the mosque. Such was the fallen condition of Moslem chivalry after the war of irreligion.

" What true Muhammadan soldier can join the army of infidels? " he demanded. And he repeated the story of the Mussalman who fell at Gtesiphon, and whose face became as the snout of a pig.

" Behold the reward that is meted out to you in this world for slaying your Muhammadan brother, for which you will assuredly burn in hell! How has the Kafir Government welcomed you home? Each sepoy when he returns is discharged and cast adrift. The Sircar takes from him his warm coat. Even his boots are taken off his feet, and his body is searched like a thief's lest a single cartridge may be concealed on his person'

Barkatullah paused as if overcome by emotion. [11] The Kafirs were not miserly with their ammunition in Iraq and Palestine" he continued. " Was it not carried in carts and handed to you rapidly that you might slay your brave brothers; while the English remained in Baghdad and Jerusalem, gorging bacon, swilling wine, defiling the House of God, and violating Moslem women? Now they grudge you a single cartridge. And why do they grudge it ? " He paused again. " They grudge it because they are afraid. The Kafirs fear the vengeance of Islam. The killing of the enemies of the Prophet is a virtue. But are we not pledged to non-violence? "

An angry howl vibrated through the square. Another khaki-clad figure, a mere lad, was detached from the

group and thrust forward, weeping hysterically. He threw himself at Barkatullah's feet crying : " It was I who was the cause of my brother's death. And now as a reward thereof, the Kafir may wipe my existence off the face of the earth and bury his weapon in my loyal heart. Let rny sin as a Moslem be atoned thereby/'

Barkatullah raised him to his feet beside the other penitent in the centre of the stage.

" Assuredly this young man is the dupe of the infidel," he cried. " His sin is beyond atonement. He is already damned. These wrongs stir in me feelings of rebellion and revenge, but Mahatma Gandhi has forbidden vengeance. We must submit our necks. The Mahatma is a holy man."

Banarsi Das quailed in his corner out of sight. He could only see backs and feet, but he could imagine that the eyes of the Moslems were red and that their hands itched for violence. He could hear the sobbing of a man of strong lungs the other side of the well.

Barkatullah knew that he had Islam straining at the leash. Of the Hindus he was not so sure. The Bulbul had neglected them; in his Islamic zeal he had forgotten the entente.

" Do not the Kafirs fear the vengeance of Islam? " he continued. " Have they not tricked the simple Mussalman ? And well may they fear it. Formerly they separated us from our Hindu brethren. Had we united in the past no third nation could have ruled over us; but being separated, our condition became that of the donkeys of a potter, who drives them by beating and does not give them chaff to eat, but leaves them on a dunghill to graze. Now we are one people; the mosque and the temple are one. Allahu Akbar and Om are one name. Gandhi and Shradha-

nand have offered their lives for the Khilafat. Blood has cemented the two communities in indissoluble bonds. You are unarmed, but without arms you shall overwhelm them. The Kafirs are so few that if every Indian were to collect a handful of dust and throw it at them they would be buried under a mountain of hate."

Barkatullah paused, and, smiling sadly, dropped his uplifted hands to his side.

" But Mahatma Gandhi has forbidden you to employ violence. Freedom is not now to be obtained by the sword or the gun, but by resignation."

He turned from the Khilafat to Amritsar and the Jallianwala Bagh. This was ground that touched the Hindus more nearly.

" According to the Shastras," he said, " every man has three mothers : his own mother, the mother cow, and the motherland. The first mother the English have outraged; the second they are murdering; the third they have already murdered. The first they have outraged," he repeated; "the veils were torn from your sisters, whose faces had never been bared to the sun. When they heard this all patriots were bent upon rebellion, but Mahatma Gandhi has taught us to obtain Swaraj by quiet and orderly means."

Jemal Khan rose up from the audience and cried, " Tell me, whom shall I kill? I cannot bear to think the wrongs of our sisters are unavenged."

Barkatullah rebuked him. " There must be no stirrings of revenge in your hearts," he said, " Were not our brothers made to crawl on their bellies like snakes in the dust, so that every Indian is branded with shame? "

There was a surging in the crowd towards the west end of the square,

" The spirit of your ancestors stirs in you" Barkatullah cried out, " but you must suffer and not act."

" Nay, we will act."

" Mahatma Gandhi——" But Barkatullah's voice was drowned in cries of " Allahu Akbar," " Hindu-Mussalman-ki-jal" " Mahatma Gandhi-ki-jai."

Banarsi Das realised that the crowd were moving in a solid mass on Thompsonpur. He feared murder and havoc. Most of them carried heavy iron-studded sticks. He raised himself on his feet to drop the notebook, in which he had not written a word, over the coping of the well. Looking over Gopal Chand's shoulder, he saw Barkatullah slinking like a fox along the wall of the mosque in the opposite direction to the crowd. He crouched down again and implored Gopal Chand to come in nearer to the wall and stand over him so that he might be completely hidden. Tilok Ram and Har Prasad had melted away in the confusion.

All the riffraff of the city were streaming past into Hari Mandi towards the Baradari Gate. There was nothing English in the square by Amir Khan's mosque for them to destroy, only a pith helmet which a frightened Eurasian had discarded and dropped surreptitiously at his feet. Banarsi Das had a glimpse of it, carried aloft ironically on a pole, crushed and battered, as the head it had covered might have been crushed but for its timely rejection. The suggestive inference was seized by the mob—a chapter-heading in the book of hate. A battered Feringhi topi, at once a symbol and a sanction. They pictured the brain-pan under it, insensate pulp, left on the road somewhere, nosed by dogs in the gutter. The empty topi, associated with arrogance, jerked and bobbed ignominiously over their heads. The rim was torn, the crown was bashed in; the futile relic twitching on the pole was more

diabolically eloquent than Barkatullah. Once it had masked superciliousness, but that had been clearly a mirage. The bogey was now exposed, divested of respect; to some, laughable and pathetic; to others, quickening the appetite for blood. Thus are hounds fleshed. The hat awakened an ecstatic lust in Jemal Khan. In others, listless and indifferent, who had been quite content with things as they are, it discovered unsuspected emotions. They foresaw daily parades of disjected topis, and began to calculate how the elimination of the heads that had filled them might effect their lives.

To Banarsi Das the parade of the topi was terrifying. In the eyes of these fanatics he was a betrayer, worse than an Englishman. He clutched at Gopal Chand's legs. The two were alone now by the well. " Come in closer. Stand over me," he panted. But Gopal Chand alone could not hide him. " Come away, Banarsi Das" he said; " you will be safer in the crowd. You will draw attention here, trying to hide. The square will not be empty till dark."

" They will kill me."

" No, you will be safer in the crowd."

" What are they going to do? "

" Murder Europeans. They are in the mood. I heard one of them say that they would burn the cathedral. Is Mr. Egan in the *Gazette ? "*

Cries of " Hai Hai, Topi-walla! Mahatma Gandhi-ki-jal," marked the progress of the pole and its hatchment in the direction of Thompsonpur. The scum of Gopalpura were invoking carnage in the name of the Apostle of Peace.

Banarsi Das refused to budge from his niche. " Cover my head," he said; " if anyone asks who I am, say I am sick."

Gopal Chand hesitated. The square was emptying fast. Groups of two or three were running in the direction of Hari Mandi.

" Stay with me," Banarsi Das pleaded. " The troops will be called out, and there will be a battle. If we go with the crowd we will be shot by the English soldiers." But it was not of the English he was afraid.

Gopal Chand saw the wisdom of this. Certainly there would be firing. He suggested that they should go the other way, against the current into the city. Jemal Khan and Banarsi Das' other enemies would be with the rioters in Thompsonpur. They might be killed or arrested.

This was counsel of hope. Banarsi Das accepted the compromise. He agreed to go with Gopal Chand into the city. They might hide somewhere. The enemy's camp, now it was deserted, was safer than the battle-field. They could wait in the house of a friend until it was dark. Then they could leave the city by another gate, cross the railway and work back by the brick-kilns to Thompsonpur. " That is—eef the battle is finished," he added. He thought of his quarters in the *Gazette* as his last asylum. What if the revolutionists were already in possession?

Banarsi Das rose stiffly, straightened his cramped limbs, and followed Gopal Chand into Sheikh Afzal's bazar, away from the din that was growing more insistent in the neighbourhood of the Baradari Gate, like the roar of the Mohurrum. The city had not yet emptied itself and they were opposed to the current flowing west. The danger seemed past for the moment. No one regarded them. The folk who were left behind appeared dazed and frightened. Some of the shopkeepers were closing down their shutters. They

feared loot. There were amazing stories abroad. The Muhammadans of a class-company regiment in Thompsonpur had mutinied and killed their officers; the police had melted away before the mob, and were in hiding; Scriven's, the gunsmith's, had been broken into, and the arms and ammunition distributed among the rioters; Queen Victoria's statue had been broken in half; the house of every C.I.D. subordinate had been burnt to the ground. Barkatullah was leading the mob; by seven o'clock there would not be an Englishman left alive in Thompsonpur.

The suckling Rumour, which Riley had visualised eighteen months earlier when he rode through Sheikh AfzaTs bazar during the *hartal,* was now the monster that he had predicted. Banarsi Das listened to all the dreadful things he heard, shouted or whispered. He did not exactly believe or disbelieve them, only they left pictures in his mind as vivid as truth.

Gopal Chand kept his head. " There can be no foundation to these stories" he explained, with the logic of the experienced reporter. "It is not much more than a quarter of an hour since Barkatullah finished his speech. They can have hardly reached the Baradari Gate yet. It is impossible that they can have done any damage in Thompsonpur."

Banarsi Das listened indifferently. He did not much care whether the stories were true or not. Somehow he was less frightened than he had been, though infinitely more mazed. He remembered the hour on the raft on the Indus when the dawn broke over the mountains. His spirit was chilled, but he had left behind fear. It was as if the roof of the sky had fallen in and was smothering him softly in billowy cloud.

" You need not be afraid, Banarsi Das," Gopal Chand continued. " If the police cannot cope with a

disorganised mob, the troops will be called in. A small detachment of British soldiers——"

But Banarsi Das floated through Sheikh AfzaTs bazar in dreamy inattention. Gopal Ghand was being reasonable, and reason in the face of the inexorable was no more helpful than rumour. It might help if the gods were reasonable, but they were not, or if they were, their reason was hidden. He was more numbed than frightened. Since he left the square his presentiment that the sky was falling in had deepened into something like a conviction. " Whatever happens" he repeated to himself, " to-morrow I will know nothing"

" Mr. Egan will not expect a report" Gopal Chand remarked consolingly. " Circumstances were no doubt beyond control."

beyondcontrol"Thewordspenetratedtothefatalist inBanarsiDas. He saw Mr. Egan dead on the office floor. " To-morrow there will be no *Gazette"* he murmured abstractedly.

The matter-of-fact Gopal Ghand was expostulating when a volley of rifle-fire cut him short. He stopped dead as if he had been shot. There was panic in the street. They had now reached the small kiosk-like shrine of Hanuman at the end of the bazar, and bolted into the stationer's shop opposite. There was a cry that the cavalry were coming. Rumour, the monster of Riley's imagination, was on her back, a cowed and whimpering beast, vocal still but with a new intonation. Banarsi Das was aware of a change of mood in Sheikh Afzal's bazar. They were saying now that there had been a massacre of Indians outside the Baradari Gate, Barkatullah had been arrested, the artillery were training guns on the city, aeroplanes would drop bombs.

Two Brahminy bulls began fighting and upset a vegetable stall. Someone shouted, " Rissala! The cavalry have come! Lances!" The streets were

emptied. There was a burrowing into passages and the interior of shops. Banarsi Das and Gopal Chand shared the divan at the back of the shop with Mool Chand, the stationer, under the mirror that reflected the gross image of Hanuman from over the way.

" How long is a lance ? " the stationer asked. " But it is impossible. They will not injure law-abiding merchants."

" Not the troops," Gopal Chand reassured him. " They are coming to protect you"

But the long minutes passed and the cavalry did not come. Not a shot had been heard after the first volley. Banarsi Das gazed at the image of the monkey-god rudely smeared with red paste, and his mind dwelt on irrelevant things. Between him and the road were barricades of annotated University text-books, *Morte d' Arthur, Ivanhoe,* the same selections from Tennyson that he had read at Gandeshwar, Stevenson's *Inland Voyage,* with the immoral passage in it where the girl waves her hand at the author in the boat; the first book of *Paradise Lost, "* Sing, heavenly mouse." He thought dispassionately of Siri Ram, now a spirit. Or was the spark extinguished ? Skene—would they kill Skene ? He was as strong and solid as a tree. Banarsi Das was lost in imponderable abstractions. He watched the progress of an enormous spider on the wall. An insect beyond a certain size, he reflected, though innocent of nature, would not be permitted to live. All life hung on the caprice of the arbiter of being or not-being. Why should not insects be as big as men ? He could extinguish the spider. The thing that intrigued him was his sense of the unimportance of being or not-being. He thought of Coleridge and " Porky." Once when he was sinking they had pulled him out of the abyss. He was in a deeper abyss, but

he did not hope for a re-incarnation of the god-in-the-machine; he did not hope for anything. He looked out into the street and wondered when the lancers were coming, an incurious observer of the twitching hand of the arbiter who had baffled him.

Half an hour passed, and the lancers did not come. The din in the direction of Thompsonpur had increased if anything, but there had been no more rifle-firing. Folk whom Banarsi Das had met in the street came padding back. The tide was ebbing to Gopalpura. Gopal Chand and the stationer called out to the passers-by. They knew no more than those who had stayed in their shops. The troops had fired. Or was it the police? they had heard thousands had perished. " Reprisals ? Inshallah ! Heaven alone knew the heart of the Sircar, half tiger, half lamb." The general impression was that it was safer to sit still. Banarsi Das, steeped in the narcotic of indifference, listened to their chatter. Rumour was like a beast, exploring the four walls of her pen, crouching, uncertain. One had forgotten that she was ever rampant.

" Let us go on'' Gopal Chand said to Banarsi Das; " Thompsonpur will not be safe. We can spend the night in my brothers house in the *mohalla* of Piara Lai, on the other side of the city''

Banarsi Das followed him like a child. He had lost all will. They crossed the street and entered one of the alleys on the far side. Gopal Chand thought it safer to avoid the main thoroughfares. They were now in the purlieus which Riley had explored on the afternoon of the *hartal*, in a Hindu quarter. The street of the astrologers was very still, no one was stirring. Through the open gateways they saw walls painted with faded geometrical designs, pictures of elephants and tigers and bowmen, and Rajas in their chariots going

out to war. In the spacious courtyards, motionless figures sat listening to the distant roar, rising and falling, like the commotion of the Mohurrum. They appeared quiet and detached, as if they had had no business in life save to mark the fall of sand in an hour-glass. Solemn little urchins were playing listlessly with bricks of dried cow-dung and mud. No sound of angry breakers could disturb this backwater. It was a home of ancient peace. To Banarsi Das the quarter recalled careless forgotten hours, a film of childhood flickering before a drowning man. It revived in him a poignant longing for life. All his old cares returned. He became a child again, a prey of fear. The arbiter of being or not-being was unkind to Banarsi Das until the last.

As he threaded the network of alleys, emerging every now and then into a crowded thoroughfare, he became as sensitive to apprehension as when he was crouching in the square behind Tilok Ram. Gopal Chand ran on prosily by his side, as if the pillars of his world were not tottering.

" It is a pity that you destroyed your notes, Banarsi Das. Mr. Egan will ask for detailed report. To-day, of course, is too late, but to-morrow——"

Banarsi Das had taken no notes. In his tumbling universe there was no to-morrow, no Mr. Egan, no *Gazette.*

" Mr. Riley will be distressed when he hears of the outbreak. Barkatullah professes to be a disciple of Mahatma Gandhi"

Mr. Riley was safe, Banarsi Das reflected. And Skene? Banarsi Das could not conceive of anything happening to Skene. In his rock-like strength and gentleness his old Principal appeared impregnable,

immortal. It was impossible that Barkatullah could injure Skene.

They were now in a Muhammadan quarter. The slender minarets of a mosque were visible over a blank wall on their left. Banarsi Das noticed a purdah ekka with a red campanula-shaped awning drawn up outside.

" Barkatullah is very clever" Gopal Chand continued. " That speech! He has been studying Antony. I know it. We had Shakespeare's *Julius Ccesar* in our M.A. course. Everything was arranged like theatre. Mool Ghand told me that the sepoys received ten rupees each from the fund'

But Banarsi Das stood transfixed on the pavement staring at the back of the agile old man who had left the ekka and was ascending the steps into the house. It was the Bulbul.

Gopal Chand saw him at the same moment. " The Bulbul-i-Sehwan" he whispered, clutching Banarsi Das' shoulder. " Come back, Banarsi Das, or he will do you some harm'' and he disappeared down a side alley into the next street.

But the pariah of fortune was too terrified to move. The faithful Shinwari had descended to mount guard over the prophet. Banarsi Das faced his executioner, leaning like a condemned prisoner for support against the wall.

The Shinwari glared at him in pious rage. " Yezid ! Betrayer ! Accursed Kafir spy ! " he cried.

Banarsi Das, seeing the lathi in his hand, turned his face to the wall, and covered his head with his hands. He recognised in the Shinwari the appointed agent of that arbiter whom he had never understood.

CHAPTER IX

RILEY

I

" RILEY is well out of it," was Skene's first thought when he heard the details of the outbreak from Egan.

Riley was free at last from hybrid cares. When Banarsi Das was sleeping on the horns of the dilemma he lay awake, forgetful of politics, in his dunga on the Dal Lake in Kashmir. He no longer wooed sleep with thoughts of the English river. He had only to lift the reed screen by his bed and stretch out his hand to feel the same water-weed that grew in the pool below the old mill. The sweet unpolitical smell of the marshes rose from the bank. He watched the moonlight glistening on the lotus leaf, and listened to the frogs' hymn to dankness until he fell asleep. When he woke up in the morning the reed-warblers were chattering in the rushes. A golden oriole was singing in the willows. A kingfisher dropped into the water like a plummet, a yard from where he lay in his tub, and rose and hovered and perched again on a snag, regarding him with a sideways, trustful, contented look, his neck sunk in a breast of flame. Riley watched the kingfisher dive again and emerge with his minnow, his sapphire back glistening in the sun. He sang as he splashed in his bath. He had found a way of happiness in the East.

Yes, young Riley was well out of it. Skene knew that he was somewhere on the road to Tibet. And now he would have to write and tell him of the tragic thing that had happened to Banarsi Das. He had given the address of the Political Agent at Leh, but the letter would probably take months to reach him. " Banarsi Das has quite lost his reason" Skene wrote. " When I went to see him in the hospital he was making sawing movements with his arms in the air, first on one side and then on the other. The intelligence has completely gone out of his *eyes."*

Skene could not discover what had happened to the Pathan. Dean was depressed and uncommunicative, though the police had handled the outbreak remarkably well. They held up the mob in Empress Road three hundred yards from the Baradari Gate, and only fired one volley over their heads.

Old Hobbs, however, disapproved. " Firing over their heads is no use," he said. " What this country wants is a damned good revolution. Look at the casualties, three Englishmen finished off before the mob got to the Baradari Gate, the only Englishmen they met, inoffensive young shop assistants riding about on bicycles. The police fire one volley and the crowd runs away. An old woman is hit in the leg a mile off. The only rioter killed was that Ghazi fellow, Jemal Khan. He asked for it. Running amok with a knife ! He would have finished Mills if he hadn't been handy with his revolver. The other casualty, Egan's reporter, doesn't count. He was knocked on the head by his own people.

Bruce-Swinnerton, too, was dissatisfied with the casualty list. " They must learn their lesson," he said. " Until you wipe the floor with them they won't understand who is top dog."

The talk turned to the " scuttle

" On the first of January I am going to pull out my shirt and black my face" Hill said. " I wouldn't be a District Officer under the New Councils for five thousand a month"

Wace-Holland, who now joined the group, overheard the cynic. " We've got to look facts in the face" he told Hill. " We've had our innings. It is the Indians' turn now. Riley was quite right. We have abdicated."

Hill had no retort.

" We could hold them down if we liked/[1] the General added; " though perhaps not permanently. But that sort of government is out of date."

" We have put their house in order" Skene said.

" Yes, we have done that for them, and it is something to be proud of. I wish we could go on putting it in order"

" Is Gopalpura any the happier for Thompsonpur? " Skene remembered the times he had discussed the problem with Riley. " Somebody had to put their house in order," he would say. But Riley would not admit it. He was perversely out of sympathy with the Thompsonisation of the New Province.

"What have we done for them?" Riley would say. " Efficiency, Hygiene, Education, Police. Has it made them any happier ? Our schools have destroyed their traditions and filled the country with hordes of hungry, unsatisfied youths like Banarsi Das, with nothing to do. Hygiene, Sanitation, Drains; we spend too much on them. Increased population; it is the curse of the country, especially among the intelligentsia. ' Thou hast multiplied the nation, but not increased its joy'"

" Not of the intelligentsia perhaps," Skene admitted. " But it's hardly fair to take Banarsi Das as a typical

product of our system. Go into the districts. The people are perfectly happy. They don't understand the Reforms and they don't want them. They'd like us to stay. After all, our first obligation is to the zemindar. The tillers of the soil make up ninety per cent of the population, and if it wasn't for us they wouldn't have any soil to till. Not in the Canal colony."

And Riley, who a few days before had taken Sir Antony Greening over the Canal colony, knew that Skene's picture was true. They went alone and nobody knew who they were. It was impossible to mistake the friendliness of the villagers; they were made welcome everywhere simply because they were Englishmen. " The respect our fathers earned," Riley said to Sir Antony. " You see the agitation has not passed beyond the railway yet. These folk judge us as they find us. The only Englishman they know is their District Officer, and the D.O. has always been their father and mother." " One can see that," Greening said, " their welcome is so jolly spontaneous." A whole hamlet had turned out to greet them and spread a mat for them in the shade. It was then that Riley told him about Barkatullah and Mograon. They would meet with sour looks from the zemindars in the disaffected *tchsil.* The Labour Member's comment was a trifle reactionary. " By Jove," he said, " if I were a District Officer I should loathe the agitator."

And that was exactly what everyone felt in the club.

The tragic part of it was that the millions, the real backbone of the country, were very much happier for Thompsonpur. Yet Thompsonpur and all that it stood for had to go because it could not be reconciled with an abstract principle which meant nothing to them.

The deflated Hill recovered himself sufficiently

to say to the General, " But the masses don't want Swaraj, sir."

" The masses; no, I don't suppose they do, but they'll have to have it whether they want it or not. We are pledged to it and there is no going back."

The General's uncompromising acceptance of the " scuttle " shocked everyone in the room. With him the whole question was fined down to a point of honour. Riley had said much the same thing to Skene, only he had added—to the Anglo-Indian a blasphemous assertion—" In every country the voice of the intelligentsia is the voice of the people. The masses may not want Swaraj, but they will soon be made to want it."

The odd thing was that nobody in the club would have admitted that he was out of sympathy with nationalism. Skene would have argued that it was not the principle he quarrelled with, but its application. " If only these boneless agitators would come out into the open and explain to the masses that it was unmanly of them to submit to be governed by a handful of aliens I should respect them more. And let them admit what we have done for them. Barkatullah with his lies and trumped-up grievances makes me sick."

Barkatullah's trial was impending. The politician who roused the latent reactionary in the Labour Member was not likely to get off with a light sentence. He was Thompsonpur's standing argument against Swaraj.

" The poisonous fellow ought to be hanged," the General said. Here Wace-Holland was in agreement with Hill, who reminded him that even Riley could not stomach Barkatullah.

" Where is Riley? " Farquhar asked Skene.

Skene was a little vague about Riley. He was off trekking somewhere in Tibet or Turkestan, he believed. His letters were to be sent on to Leh.

"He didn't stick to his hospital long" Hill's chuckle betrayed satisfaction. One knew he was thinking, " Riley is a waster, he will never do anything."

Nothing more was heard of the failed journalist and physician until a month or six weeks afterwards. Osborne, Wace-Holland's G.S.O.I., who had been on leave, turned up in the club and mentioned casually that he had met Riley in Ladakh.

" You saw Riley? " the General asked.

Skene thought of Waring. " A man upstarted somewhere as a god, hordes grown European-hearted."

But that was not Riley's way. He would be more likely to cultivate the protective colouring of the Asiatic.

" Yes, I saw Riley," Osborne told them. " It was at a place called Shyok, near where I shot my big Ammon. I had pitched my tent among some bushes in a sandy nullah, and I was strolling out before supper to smoke a pipe and look at the sunset when I came across an encampment of Ladakhis. There seemed something familiar and shipshape about the camp, a regular mule-line, heel-ropes, iron pegs. The men were squatting outside their black tents over a yak-dung fire. I noticed one of them, a spare figure, dressed like the others in a yellow skin coat, but of much lighter build. He had a short skimpy beard, thinnish, yet a trifle thick for a Mongol. I was looking at him a little curiously when his eyes caught mine and he started. He jumped up and skipped across the nullah as jolly as a cricket. ' Hullo, Osborne' he shouted. At first I didn't know him from Adam. ' Hullo, Riley' I said, when it dawned on me who it was. ' Where are you off to, and who are your pals ? ' ' Oh, we are pilgrims', he said; ' come along and be introduced/

" They made room for me by the fire and were very jolly and hospitable. I liked everything about Riley's pals except their smell and the filthy tea they would have me drink with lumps of butter floating in it, but nothing seemed to worry Riley. They were going to the Mansarowar Lake in Tibet, and were pushing on to be in time to circumambulate Kailas before it was too cold. They are probably padding round the mountain now."

Hill was sceptical. Riley would never get through; the Tibetans would stop him at the frontier.

" Oh, will they? You don't know Riley. He is a sort of Mahatma among them. They are praying for him in all the monasteries. I believe he could walk straight into Lhasa if he chose. He is an eye-doctor, you know; cataract is a scourge in Tibet. Two of those Ladakhis——"

But this apotheosis of Riley was too much for Hill. "Riley an eye-doctor! That explains what he was doing in Calcutta. The fellow's a quack; he couldn't have spent more than two months in the hospital. I am sorry for the Tibetans."

" You needn't pity them; Riley has learned the trick all right. He is a specialist. Mind you, he only touches cataract, and he hasn't bungled a case since he left Srinagar. His fame precedes him. The Lamas are waiting for him all along the road ! "

" They are lucky to have Riley," the General said; " the only eye-doctors the Tibetans are likely to get are the Kauchas or their local equivalent. They used to come up to Quetta, I remember, and the poor devils they blinded were taken into our hospitals. The Kaucha operates with a rusty knife. The immediate effect is that the patient sees, and thinks he is cured. Then in two or three days septic poisoning sets in and he is completely blind. The Kaucha has

decamped with a big fat fee; he is an itinerant quack and takes care not to cover the same ground twice. I had them all arrested when I was in Beluchistan and sent them down to Sibi by train.

" Beluchistan is one of the few places where the British still rule" the General added. " One can do something to help the people there."

Skene smiled. He could imagine Hill saying, " Put that in your pipe and smoke it, young Riley." The General in accepting Swaraj bowed to necessity, but he evidently had no illusions about it.

Osborne said that Riley's greatest difficulty was in getting his patients to keep their bandages on. They wanted to tear them off every ten minutes to see if they could see. That was why he generally had two or three blindfolded Lamas in his caravan on led horses. He insisted on keeping his patients under observation until they were cured.

" Two of the Ladakhis in his camp had their eyes bandaged. One of them was so pleased with life that he was going to make the pilgrimage of prostration, as they call it. Riley got him to show me how it was done—down on his knees, then flat on his face, his arms stretched out to mark the spot where he would toe the line for the next advance, and so all the way round like a green looper-caterpillar. It would take him twenty days, he told me, and he seemed rather to look forward to it."

" It would be just like young Riley," Hill said, " to do the belly-crawl with him."

Everybody laughed. " Just like him," Osborne said. " I always liked Riley, though of course he is as mad as a hatter."

The General remembered seeing the pilgrims circumambulating the Lingkor in Lhasa in just the same

way when he was there with the expedition in 1904. He had heard the ceremony was still observed in Benares. But he was concerned about Riley. He turned to Osborne. " Do you think he has everything he wants? " he asked.

Osborne laughed. " Riley doesn't want much, sir. He is travelling light—got all his kit on one mule. As for supplies, I don't suppose the grateful populace let him pay for anything. By the way, though, I have a message for you, Skene; he doesn't like their 'baccy. He wants twelve pounds of some mixture. He told me he was sending a man to you with a letter"

As the club was emptying, the General ordered four quarter-pound tins of Club Mixture. " Put them in Skene Sahib's motor," he told the *abdar*. Skene was one of the last to leave. Wace-Holland passed through the door with him and paused on the steps discussing the probability of rain. Then after he had said good-night he called, " You will find some tobacco in your car. It is for young Riley. May as well make it a baker's dozen. Tell him———No, I'll write to him. I'll send the letter over to-morrow—and a pipe or two. He won't have any use for the Lhasa brand."

II

The General's gift lay on a shelf in Skene's office for two or three months. Skene had almost given up hope of hearing from Riley when he was disturbed one morning by a loud, strange noise in the hall. He opened the door and discovered a sturdy Tibetan in the passage who, unimpressed by the authority vested ui the bureaucratic scarlet, was arguing his claims for admission with the office *chaprassi*. " Let him in," Skene called to the man, and the Tibetan entered, grinning

cheerfully, and dumped his long *kilta* [1] on the floor. He had come from Gartok over the Shipki Pass by the Hindustan-Tibet road, but had fallen ill at Pooi, where he had been tended by the Moravian Missionaries. He had left his " Sarb," as he called him in his northern accent, at Gartok in good health, and was to meet him at Leh on his return from Kailas. He spoke with the loud bell-like intonation of the wilderness, where men call to one another over wide spaces—not very intelligibly, but Skene gathered that Riley had given him sight. The musty smell of ancient blankets, butter lamps and barley beer pervaded the office of the D.P.I., as the Tibetan, delving in his *kilta,* produced, first his " Sarb's " letter, then a shining bronze image of the Buddha, and presented them to Skene with pious pride. Skene placed the Buddha on his writing-table with becoming reverence and opened Riley's letter.

He had written from Gartok, not a hundred miles from Kailas. Apparently he was having difficulties with the officials, but he barely touched on them. " Please give Phuntshog twelve pounds of 'baccy," he began prosaically, " different mixtures, and some Keating. Don't forget the Keating. Every Mongol is a conductor of vermin." Skene had dismissed Phuntshog after satisfying himself as to his needs, but he was already conscious of a fiery itching under his sleeve. "——also my Arrian and Strabo, which I left on the shelf of the office in the *Gazette.* How's Egan getting on ? I hope he is kind to Banarsi Das—not sitting on him too much. I particularly want the Strabo, as I have been thinking a lot about the old Susa Persepolis road by Ahwaz, Ram Hormuz and Bebehan. I wonder if there is much eye trouble in Southern Persia. The road will keep, of course, but I like to picture it. And

[1] A wicker basket carried on the back.

please throw in a *Golden Treasury. I* want a copy of *Lycidas* badly. For the last week or so I have been trying to piece together the passage beginning, ' For so to interpose a little ease.' I have six complete lines and some fragments, but they won't fit in, and on the march I find myself repeating them impotently all day,' Whether beyond the stormy Hebrides,'—and then at the end, ' Looks towards Namancos and Bayona's hold.' How does this join with ' Where thou perhaps to our moist vows denied, visitest the bottom of the monstrous world ' ? No. That's not it. By the way, what a presage of Kitchener ! A jagged old castle on a cliff put the passage in my mind like St. Michael's Mount, and very like the fort at Tauz Kharmatli. But at Tauz Kharmatli I had my *Lycidas.* Remember, old Skene, if I don't find a *Golden Treasury* at the bottom of the *kilta,* my ghost will haunt you, even if it has to suffer the contagion of Thompsonpur."

Skene smiled. Incorrigible dreamer ! he thought as he took down his Milton from the shelf. Riley's spiritual vagrancies were as incalculable as his physical. Where is he? When does he hope to reach Kailas? What is his trouble with the officials? But most of the letter was like that. Stray, irrelevant thoughts, jotted down casually after the day's march, generally about birds and flowers—how the ravens hopping pertly round him thought his notebook was something to eat, an intelligent, curious, black-coated congregation, fat and prosperous; the sheen on their wings was like polished ebony; their approaches and retreats, stratagems, rivalries and affectations were a parody of the *Comcdic humainc.* He had spied a blue poppy half a mile from the road, a Meconopsis six foot high, blue flowerets on a prickly stalk; it stood up among the splintered boulders on the bank of a tarn like a *calvaire.*

Riley was off again. The *calvaire* evoked Brittany; Brittany Treguier; Treguier Renan, and Renan by a train of oblique association planted him, quite by accident, where he happened to be.

" I hope you like the Buddha. It is the Bodhisat Padmapani seated on a lotus leaf, the gift of a grateful patient, a monk of Tashigong. I am glad I learnt the cataract operation. It has made all the difference. I can't just loaf. I am a competent idler when I have got work, but I am no good at it when there is nothing to do. I have chewed the lotus and found it a tasteless herb. I thought of surveying, but that would not bring me into touch with the Tibetans; it would only make them more suspicious. Besides, scientific details bore me, sounding lakes, measuring the cubic feet of water in a stream, and all that. If one lives with people one must bring them something more than curiosity. The thing I have brought them is the best I could think of. I wonder I didn't think of it before. It is so easy to give sight to people who have lost all hope of seeing, yet it is such a tremendous obligation that, when I think how little it cost me, I often feel a fraud. They think it a miracle, of course, and me a mage. There is a merchant in Gartok who wants to adopt me, and an old Lama in Galdang Tso who, when he saw his Buddhas and Bodhisats in a row on the altar, burst into tears; for years he had only known they were there by the touch and seen nothing but the flicker of the wicks burning in butter lamps, and these were becoming dimmer. For the first time since he came to the monastery when he was quite a young man he was able to distinguish the figures in the Wheel of Life frescoed on the wall. He looked out into the courtyard and watched the ravens and the blue pigeons lovingly. The old Lama was not without attachment.

I wonder how much he remembered of light and shade and colour" Here there was more about flowers. He had found the Alpine yellow poppy " *Nudicaule*, very rare. You remember the Walberswick kind between the salt marshes and the sea.

" Thank God, I haven't got to write Tibet up. The only thing that would spoil this country for me would be having to describe it, but I will have some things to tell you about human nature, especially Lama nature, when I get home. I think it is true that religious people are more wicked than others, but this is natural, and as it should be, because people who are good already don't want any religion. Here religion is all Mantras, Abracadabra, Mumbo Jumbo, or, as in the case of the immured monks, what Hill would call ' the scuttle ' from life. Yet humanity is preserved in spite of it."

Riley wanted to go home by Turkestan, over the Karakoram Pass by Leh, then by the railway from Andijan. He meant to get down to the Oxus by Bokhara and Samarkand, to Orgunje if the Bolsheviks did not circumvent him. He had discovered Orgunje at last in the derelict village of Aurganj, the old capital of Khiva, spoiled by the Moguls. He reminded Skene that his gift of healing carried him a long way. He was dying to see an English spring.

" Dine with me at the club on June 3Oth. You will be at home on furlough then. I may be late. I hope not. Leave a note for me with the hall-porter. Anyhow, I will be in time to hear the last blackbirds singing, between the flowering of the white and purple helleborine. Join me on a wherry on the Norfolk Broads. We will have the whole summer before us; the loosestrife and the meadowsweet will be coming on, the hemp-agrimony only in bud. Ill stay at home

until the late autumn. Then I think of going to the Malay islands and Siam. I want to see Angkor"

" What about funds, young Riley ? " Skene reflected, but the economical problem was dismissed lightly in the next paragraph. " I shall have saved quite a lot by then. Living is dirt cheap," Riley explained. He hoped he would never have to take a fee from a Tibetan, though his grateful patients wouldn't let him pay for sheep and chickens. As soon as he left Leh his expenses worked out at less than thirty shillings a week.

He seemed to have forgotten Thompsonpur and the *Gazelle.* Hardly a word of politics. Only at the end he asked for news of Gandhi. "If we are sincere" he said, " we ought to welcome him. He has opened a door; whether his countrymen pass through or not we shall see; the Englishman who would bang the door to, or deny that it exists, is either a knave or a fool. Give them Swaraj. What does it matter if they knock one another on the head, or neglect their drains, or leave their dead animals in the middle of the road ? Race-hatred, which is the one thing that ultimately matters, would disappear. We are too practical and cocksure. The curse of the country has been our gospel of efficiency. We have done everything imaginable for the Indians in a very superior and disagreeable way. Parkinson's predecessors may have set their house in order, as you say, but if you were an Indian, would you like to have your house set in order by Parkinson? "

Skene smiled. How far young Riley was from earth and Thompsonpur! Up in the clouds there under the shadow of Kailas with his verminous Tibetans no doubt he was happy.

But Phuntshog would be waiting for his letter. Skene drew out a sheet of writing-paper and inscribed at the top:

[" We are here by our own moral superiority, by the force of circumstance, and by the will of Providence. These alone constitute our charter of Government: and in doing the best we can for the people we are bound by our conscience and not theirs."—JOHN LAWRENCE.]

" So much for politics. Put that in your pipe and smoke it, young Riley, as Hill would say; I am not arguin' with you, I am only tellin' you; nevertheless I will spend July with you on the Norfolk Broads or anywhere you *like."*

Skene had come across John Lawrence's simple declaration of faith soon after Riley had left, and he had been longing to fire it off at him ever since. He imagined the young Radical digesting it with his back to a *chorten* and his feet on *mani* wall, while the streamers of the praying flags rustled in the wind, and there were only the Lamas and ravens to listen if he felt moved to debate.

" John Lawrence said the last word, young Riley, about the rights of our position in India, and it would have been better if we had left it at that. But, as you say, we've abdicated, and we can't have it both ways. Our conscience perhaps is not so robust as it was. Let us then hasten the wheels of Swaraj.

" Gandhi's great bluff, as everyone calls it, continues. It is likely to be put to the test in the next few months. Gandhi is an optimist. He will not admit that he is heading for anarchy. He believes his cause is just and that Government will submit. We shall see Your Mahatma is becoming a too sophisticated saint, to my mind—too much of the Jesuit about him.

" My letter about Banarsi Das must have gone astray. The poor little devil was knocked on the head by a Pathan in a riot at Gopalpura. There had been a

big meeting on the steps of Amir Khan's mosque. The Bulbul-i-Sehwan and Barkatullah made inflammatory speeches, and the mob saw red. Banarsi Das was laid out by the Pathan with his *lathi* and left for dead. He has quite lost his reason." Skene repeated the sad story of the hospital. " The Pathan escaped. Dean tells me he is somewhere in tribal territory. Barkatullah was arrested. He is in the Andamans, I believe. He deserves to be hanged a dozen times. He is as responsible as anybody for the wreck that is Banarsi Das. Of course there is the usual howl about ' repression.' The Bulbul-i-Sehwan apparently was disgusted with Barkatullah and his crew. He fell in a Ghazi rush on a picquet in Mardan; they attacked in broad daylight; six of them, all Asmas men, were laid out in their black robes. He was a crescentader of the old Wahabi school, in which you find the spirit of Narasimha Swami translated into the terms of Islam.

" Amba Pershad is one of the New Ministers. He is responsible for Education, which means that he is my boss now. You remember his text-book on Civies which I turned down and he was so angry about. I hope he doesn't try to get his own back. He has been very civil so far. Bolton got his G.S.I, all right, and is cultivating the manner of a K. Parky really has a K. Lady P. is immensely pleased at her elevation. She wants him to retire, and is preening herself for the conquest of Wimbledon or Ealing. Old Wace-Holland was discussing you in the club last night, He loves you dearly. Hill, of course, says you are mad. He always did, but now he chuckles at his perspicacity, 'Riley an eye-doctor!' By the way, among other things you are a quack. He is going to write to the Dalai Lama to have you arrested for practising without a diploma, or whatever it is. Wace-Holland

says the Tibetans have a Medical College in the Potala. Why not go through the course? "

In the evening Skene collected Riley's Arrian and Strabo, stole a copy of the *Golden Treasury,* and looked in at the asylum to get the last news of Banarsi Das.

" Banarsi Das did not recognise me when I went to see him last night. He thinks he is a *manjhi.*[1] He sits on the end of his bed or on a chair all day and steers his craft with a curtain-pole past imaginary obstacles in the stream. There was a row about the pole at first. Banarsi Das used to abstract it surreptitiously from the window at night, and the ward orderly used to take it away from him. I had to get written sanction from the Civil surgeon to allow him to retain it. Just like them. I believe the Babu has started a file on the case, which will no doubt go up to the Government of India and the Secretary of State. The vacant, unattached look in Banarsi Das' eye makes one pretty miserable. After I left him I felt as if I had been listening to a *pirrhai*[2] ' Fortune is like a bird that lights on a wall. In a moment it comes, and in a moment flies away.' You know the kind of thing; it makes one want to throw back one's head and howl like a dog. No one really realises that we are born and die in futility until he has heard a *pirrhai.* Banarsi Das' is a placid vacancy. So long as he has got his curtain-pole he seems content. The doctor says it is a lesion, and there is just a chance that he may recover, but what the poor little devil will do if restored to an unsympathetically sane world, God only knows.

" He is a more pathetic figure than Siri Ram."

[1] Boatman. [2] Bard.

THE END