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FOREST LIFE IN INDIA

By

THE HON. JAMES W. BEST, O.B.E.

(late India Forest Service)

Author of "India Shikar Notes," "Tiger Days,"
"The Marked Man-eater."

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To

A Fortunate Man's Best Friend

HIS WIFE

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INTRODUCTION

IT is natural that the main theme of a forest officer's book should be an account of work and sport in the forests that he has visited. I was fortunate in having opportunity to study tiger, buffalo, and bison as well as the many deer to be found in the forests of the Central Provinces of India. Their slaughter was of less interest to me than their pursuit, for which reason I have tried to give so far as possible the point of view of the native hunter, whether as a tracker or as an unarmed beater in a tiger beat, both of which I have experienced.

There is, too, a great human interest in those vast forests of India where man is still primitive, and it is possible to contrast their state with that of the highly developed civilization of the more populated parts of the country. I have given my own experiences of the bribery, extortion, nepotism, and forced labour from which the humble millions of India suffer at the hands of their better-placed fellow-countrymen. A hundred years ago there was talk of the " pagoda tree," and although the officers of the existing civil services of India are as clean in their administration as any to be found in the world, we should not be too ready to throw stones. Perhaps a more representative system of

government may improve the lot of the ryot and the forest vallager.

My comments on matters not connected with my forest work may be unwise, and probably are, but, small creatures in the grass and little birds in the herbage see many things that escape the notice of those with the loftier view, and sometimes a little bird whispers. If what I have dared to write and publish will bring about better safeguards for the welfare of the jungle men and those least able to look after themselves, then indeed I shall feel that my work in their interests did not finish when I left the shade of the Indian forests.

I owe much to friends who have helped me by criticizing my typescript. In addition I must thank Mrs. R. Wilson for permission to reproduce her charming sketch of Gaurlgarh Fort, the Rev. C. A. C. Streatfield and Captain the Hon. E. R. Drummond, M.V.O., R.N., for permission to use their photographs.

Because these friends have helped me, it must not be assumed by readers of this book that they are in agreement with the views expressed in its pages.

CHAPTER I

CHANDA

A glance at the map as it was in the year 1904 will show between the Nagpur and Raipur Districts of the Central Provinces and the Madras Coast the largest area, or at any rate one of the largest areas, in India devoid of railway communication. In those days the rail ended at Warora in the Chanda District, and at Dhamtari in the Raipur District. Between these two places and the coast, a distance of some three hundred miles, the sole means of communication was either by rough temporary cart track or the more uncertain way of the rivers. I was told when I arrived in Chanda that the forest extended from the verandah of the forest officer's bungalow to the Bay of Bengal. That huge area of forest was then, and probably still is, one of the wildest bits of country in India proper. Railways and roads have since been made to cross it. Yet it remains the unspoilt land of my dreams. It is the country where all the races of men in India seem to meet. They talk Hindi, Urdu, Marhatti, Telagu, Tamil and the aboriginal Gondi, as well as a dozen other languages in those parts. Men are not only bi-lingual, but tri-lingual. My camp

clerk knew Hindi, Marhatti, Urdu, and English to read and write, as well as a few sentences of the Telagu. In our timber depots we dealt with Sikhs, Punjabi Mussalmans, merchants from Bombay, swaggering Marhattas, and men from Rajamandry who worked their way from the Madras coast up the mighty Godaveri River. Because it is south of the line generally recognized as the boundary of the Deccan, I always think of the Chanda District as the Belgium between the Deccan and Hindustan. Telagu is the language of the South, and there was more Telagu talked in the South Chanda District than Hindustani. The Nizam's Dominions of Hyderabad which lie beyond the Godaveri River in the south of the district is still known as the Moghulai, the land where the break up of the Moghul Empire is not yet known, the survivor of that once great realm. Looking across the wide expanse of the broad river one thought of the romance of the Nizam's court, the armed men swaggering strangely garbed in the Hyderabad bazaar, the bodyguards of black-skinned Africans, and the stories of the intrigue and splendour of the court of His Majesty's faithful friend and ally, which all men know the Nizam to be.

We found not only all the beasts of other parts of the Province in those forests such as buffaloes and swamp deer, spotted deer and mouse deer, tigers, leopards and wild dogs, but the birds as well. Here the two kinds of jungle fowl lived together in the same scrub, scratching the ground

alongside one another. The golden cock of the North, the grey of the Deccan. Where the tall twining canes grew there the Imperial pigeon had its home, and the little love birds nodded and cuddled in the branches. The South Chanda forest division is a long strip of forest country between the Wainganga and Pranhita Rivers on the west, the clear-watered Indrawati to the east and the huge slothful Godaveri that flows over the sands in the south. In those days the reserves went farther beyond the Indrawati along the Godaveri to what was known as the lower *taluks* or the Cherla Reserve, and the forest officer had a heavy charge, the farthest limit of his responsibilities being over two hundred and fifty miles from the rail at Warora and more than two hundred miles from his headquarters. His correspondence was in many languages, each with its own script. There were no made roads except for the first two days' march south from Chanda. When I went down to Sironcha on the Godaveri, the road-making had been started and rest-houses were finished as far as Ashti on the Wainganga. The rest of the journey required tents—a good introduction to the nomadic life that I was to lead for the next nineteen years in India as a forest officer.

And what a country for a boy keen on shooting and the romance of the wild ! Chanda town has an appeal to the patriot and the historian. It sheltered the great Duke while he was making his name as the sepoy general ; the stout walls and great gates stand to this day as witness to his prowess.

But it was the jungles that appealed to me; the great mass of forest that extended over the land of dreams to the coast. The country of the huge black buffaloes with their wide sweeping horns, fierce in attack and defence; the land of many tigers, of bison and deer.

Chanda station itself was different from others that I was appointed to later on in my service. Perhaps it was the influence of the good padrés of the Scottish Episcopal Church that had a strong and healthy mission there. It may have been the very remoteness of the place that made European officers realize that they were all strangers in a strange land and must pull together; for Chanda was essentially a happy family station. One heard of no rows there in spite of its appalling heat. This I did not appreciate until later; but when I visited it again after many years when roads and rail were made up to and beyond Chanda —it boasted two railway stations—there was still a Scotch padré, whose influence, social and religious, tended to the smooth running of the place. The padré ran the club; there were fines for swear-words for the good of the righteous; but there was no pie-jaw or "goody-goody" talk, and no restriction on drink. If a man wanted to lose his money at snooker, or take a hard pummelling from a tough boxer, the Scottish Episcopal Church was ready to oblige him handsomely. We met in the club on Sunday evening, a mixed crowd of officials, coal miners and manganese prospectors, exchanged drinks under the eye of the secretary,

then out of loyalty to the padré who ran the club so well we went to church to hear sound doctrine. Chanda owes much to those same padrés. Willcocks, Wood and the two Mackenzies. It is presumption on my part to praise them.

Let us leave the station however. I write of the jungle.

A line of telegraph ran to Sironcha on the Godaveri where the road now goes. It was said, I do not know with what truth, that that same line of wires was laid to help control the dacoits that raided across the Godaveri from the Moghulai beyond. The story added romance to the country that I visited, travelling along rough cart tracks in a bullock cart shaded with bamboo matting so low as to make upright sitting impossible for a tall man. Not comfortable perhaps, but I was young and madly keen to see the country and its forests. I followed the telegraph line almost up to Sironcha, a distance of about a hundred and twenty miles.

Alla Pilli was reached in five marches. The distance of the march for each day being decided by the capacity of my transport. It took time to strike camp in the morning, load up the carts, and then crawl the twelve to fifteen miles to the next camp. I carried a gun with me and managed to shoot green pigeons and peafowl for the pot. I remember so well being taken out by a man who knew a little English, more of it than I knew of Hindustani. We reached an artificial pond, generally spoken of as a tank. No sooner had we arrived than the Babu pointed excitedly at what looked

like the top of a log barely floating on the surface of the tank.

"Sir," he exclaimed, "a *maggar*!"

"What is a *maggar*?" I asked, though I had a shrewd suspicion what it was.

"A *maggar*, sir," he stammered in his excitement, "is a *maggar*."

This explanation did not help much.

"What does it do?" I inquired, with the idea of helping him.

"Sir," he said, taking a deep breath, "she eats both males and females."

From which my suspicion was confirmed that the Hindustani for crocodile is *maggar*. It was also my introduction to the humours of Babu English. I expect that the Babus find our Hindustani just as amusing, but are too polite to show it. They are a gentle race, the Babus.

On the next day I might have provoked a smile from the Babu. Curiously enough, although I had been some ten days in India I had not yet seen a monkey. We were just going to cross the wide sandy expanse of the Wainganga River at Ahsti when I saw some twenty or thirty beasts with long tails, looking enormous in that uncertain misty light of the early dawn, and bounding towards us over the sand. I seized my gun ready for any emergency.

"Bandar!" observed the scribe gently. I knew that word from the jungle book; now I knew the beast. The Babu did not even smile, but I know he wanted to.

I must admit that those first forests that I passed through were not up to my anticipations of the conditions in a tropical jungle. The contrast to an English country-side at that time of year, December, was great. What struck me most forcibly was that the grass was dead and brown while the trees and bushes were a vivid green, not leafless as one would expect a forest to be in the coldest season of the year. They were to be leafless enough later on. There were few high trees as we should reckon high trees in Europe. The scrub was thick enough, and the thorns made it in many places impenetrable. As one went farther south the tree growth improved, and when I reached Alla Pilli where I joined the Divisional Forest Officer, I found real forest trees with climbers to match.

At Alla Pilli the huge teak logs were collected and sawn into balks for export to Warora some hundred miles to the north. Transport by slow bullock cart is expensive, and the sawing was a great saving in bulk since it did away with the necessity for sending that long distance wood that could have no value, and was certain to be wasted in conversion. So we heard all day the high-pitched rasp of circular saws cutting the logs into balks, battens, and standard shapes required by the trade. The saws were driven by steam engines of very ancient origin. Tradition had it that they were originally sent to those wild parts to help in a scheme for converting the Godaveri River from a shallow expanse of flowing water into a navigable river. There were rocks to be blown up at

the rapids lower down. What an engine suitable for driving a circular saw could do to help in such work is beyond my comprehension. But then I am not an engineer. Anyway, there they were, and working well on waste wood fuel in spite of their hoary age. A few years previous to my arrival an expert engineer was invited to inspect and report on the condition of the engines. The story goes that he gave one look at the nearest, saw the complication of bootlaces and old wire that held it together, then fled in panic to the shelter of the tiger-infested forest. He knew the perils of a man-eating tiger, but thought the risk of being near that engine with its steam up was greater.

His report condemned the engines and all the machinery connected with them. But the wood had to be sawn up somehow. Alla Pilli is a long way off, and when it is a question of finding money for new machinery one government is no quicker than another in sending it along. The engines were going strong when I reached Alla Pilli; there might have been puffs of steam coming out of odd places for which there was no original design, but what did that matter so long as they did their work? A year or two later they were scrapped.

We had another toy, a monorail. This was a single rail laid temporarily on rough sleepers or anything else handy along which trucks carrying timber were supposed to pass nicely balanced. It was a most ingenious idea, but it did not work

in the way it was intended. That nice balance was a bit too much for the crude ways of an Indian jungle. So wooden cart wheels were fixed alongside to prevent the trucks from falling over. Forest officers of that time were trained at the Royal Indian Engineering College at Coopers Hill. The one thing that they did not teach us there was engineering. Certainly nothing to do with leaky steam engines or nicely balanced monorails. Still, the forest department got on very well, perhaps because Alla Pilli was so far off and had so bad a reputation for the worst form of malaria that none but the most hardy critic ventured near the place.

Its remoteness was its chief charm. I remember writing home to my mother that I was shooting in a place where there were no boundaries; a great advantage in the eyes of a boy who had learnt his woodcraft on a small shoot, where the one thing above all others that had to be remembered was not to frighten birds over the boundary, which was always too close.

The village consisted of one main street where the few forest officials were housed, and all around, covering many acres was a confusion of strewn logs, timber carts, draft oxen or buffaloes, and temporary camps of cartmen and coolies. That was in the open season; in the rains the place was deserted, except for a few fever-stricken forest subordinates wellnigh prepared to sell their souls to get away from the place. Needless to say, it was not a popular locality with the native forest staff.

In the middle of this huge cleared camp were the elephant sheds and saw-mills standing together like some ancient abbey in a modern town. There was a post office, gardens where we grew vegetables so necessary for the forest staff, and a dispensary, where, barring a few accidents, the only medicines needed were those required for dealing with malaria. It was merely a case of castor oil, then possibly phenacetin, and plenty of quinine. Like everyone else in the place, the native doctor spent much time and anxious thought in trying to convince those in authority at the other end of the line of communications that an immediate transfer to a better place was due. Working in the forest, we used elephants and he-buffaloes. It was well to keep an eye on either when near them. One of the elephants had a playful way of throwing logs of teak at people he disliked. That was when he went *mast*. He was a real man-killer and not safe even when tied up. The bull buffaloes were almost as bad.

A single elephant can pull a big log over rough ground; sometimes it will roll it along by pushing it with its nose, getting its head well down for the purpose, but usually the work is done with long chains. The buffaloes worked in teams up to ten pairs, and they were useful and not so expensive as the elephants to keep. A *mahout* on fifteen rupees a month, a *chakatta*, or *mahout's* assistant on about half that pay, twenty-four pounds of rice or flour with salt and butter every day, with as much green leaves as the elephant

can carry on its back, make up the cost of keeping an elephant.

I spent a week in Alla Pilli where I had to help check some of the timber lying about in the depot; generally in the evening I was sent out with an experienced *shikari* to try to stalk a stag. I was keen but clumsy. All that I experienced of any deer in that dense mass of twisting creepers and thorny undergrowth was the noise of them crashing away from me!

Meanwhile, I was learning the language. Examinations, which I loathe, loomed ahead, and like nasty medicine, the sooner they could be dealt with the better.

We took the route towards Sironcha, then turned east to the Indrawati River. There at Somanpilli I shot my first tiger, which I have described elsewhere. A few days after Christmas, 1904, I was allowed, or rather sent by the kindest of chiefs, to go after buffaloes. I had a bearer who could speak a few of the most necessary words of English, a cook, an orderly who was no mean *shikari*, and a professional *shikari* lent me by the Divisional Forest Officer. With so much help I had no possible excuse for not killing a wild buffalo, more particularly as "K" had lent me his double-barrelled eight-bore rifle, a veritable cannon, with which to wage war on the buffs. My own 500 express was not considered sufficiently heavy to carry into action against the huge beasts, although a few years later I killed one with a single shot from this weapon—a risk that was utterly unjustifiable,

We started out on our buffalo hunt at four o'clock in the morning after my arrival at Damarincha on the Indrawati. I think that my experiences at that place are the most firmly impressed on my memory of any in India.

Camp was only a few steps from the river's edge. A hasty cup of tea with porridge and buttered toast, a few seconds of whispered consultation at the camp fire, and I was signed to follow the trackers who, casting off their night blankets were shivering in the chill of earliest dawn. My guides carried, in addition to my rifle and cartridges, their own axes from which the man of the jungle is seldom separated. Beyond a cough or two we made no sound as we approached the river's edge, indeed those Maria hunters hardly ever spoke once they had started out on their business of hunting. It was so dark that when we reached the river I did not see the dug-out canoe that was waiting for us. If I had known what the exact plans of the day were I should have been on the look-out for it, but, since I did not know the language, they had not consulted me about plans. I do not suppose that they wanted to in any case. I was the tyro, the fool to be led up to slay the buffalo, and since I was a Sahib and had a gun it was to be presumed that I could shoot straight. No one would be such a fool as to hunt a dangerous animal like a buffalo unless he could. The reasoning was sound.

By the time that we had squeezed ourselves into the narrow and very wobbly dug-out canoe, the

crudest and most primeval form of craft imaginable, scooped out of a large log, there was the faintest suspicion of greyness in the sky. There was no breeze and no sound except for that made by the cautious dip of the paddles in the dark waters and the gurgle of the stream pushed away from our bow. We were crossing a big reach of the river. The sun does not dawdle in the tropics. As we altered course, up-stream and slightly eastward, there was an indication of light to come. The very slightest sign of paleness in the sky beneath a brilliant planet.

The forest that fringed the river showed where the water ended, the trees at first black, then tinged a dark grey ; the bamboos that overhung the banks in graceful curves displaying their lighter-coloured foliage. We could now see thin wisps of grey ghost-like mist lying flat on the water or slowly rising to veil the tree-tops. The men rested for a moment to listen and there was the drip of water from their paddles. Still no other sound, not a whisper in the leaves of the forest on either side of us. One man raised his paddle as though again to break the surface of those quiet waters, but he paused and listened. Then he pointed up-stream towards the growing light. There were a number of shining ripples on the surface of the river where the light caught them looking like a few stones breaking the force of the stream. The men grew excited, plucking my sleeve and pointing. I looked again. The ripples were moving across the river to the Bastar bank, leaving behind

them a trail of glistening water and over each ripple were what looked like two long black sticks curved backward over the water.

It was a herd of buffaloes crossing the stream. Quickly the men paddled to the shore and we ran to meet them. We had plenty of time but stopped under cover a hundred yards below them.

I had never seen a wild buffalo before. I had imagined these creatures to be bony, emaciated, and in poor condition like their domesticated brethren, with horns, long it is true, but curved back over the coarse neck with little beauty in their sweep. My father, who was a horse gunner, used to tell us the story of the old Bengal artillerymen who were held in great contempt by the horse gunners. Apparently they wore beards, which in a gunner's eyes are horrible, though I have seen horse gunners of the very smartest wearing dreadful beards in the jungle; but then the jungle, like paradise, is the place of miracles. The ancient joke with the Bengal artillery was to ask:

"What is more ugly than the Bengal gunner?"

"A camel?"

"No."

"A water buffalo?"

"Yes."

Then the trouble began.

There is no beauty in the domestic buffalo, and for that reason I was all the more impressed by the huge well-proportioned black creatures in perfect condition that slowly rose from the deep water, paused in the shallows, then moved quietly to-

wards the bank. The light was better now. The bull led. He paused on the bank, turned towards his consorts putting up his head.

"Err-err-err," he grunted; and even that sounded well in the wonderful dawn.

As his head swung round again, I could see the full sweep of those marvellous horns against the rising sun. The cows and calves followed, twenty-two of them. The *shikaris* wanted me to shoot. But I did not fire, the beasts were a hundred yards away, the light into the rising sun was bad, and I was not certain of an accurate shot with my eight-bore cannon. So I decided to wait, fascinated, as I watched the huge creatures with the water dripping from their shining wet flanks; it is so rarely that one sees wild animals in the open.

Never in the whole of my service did I see such a sight again. I saw, in the Banjar, hundreds of deer—*bara singh, sambur* and *chital* grazing together with a small herd of bison on the fringe of the trees, but the sight and its setting could not compare with my first view of wild buffaloes in the light of that still early dawn on the silent river.

With a final "err, err" in satisfaction of the river crossed and the early morning bath accomplished, the herd moved quietly into the shade of the Bastar forest.

Though we were still in the shadows, the tree-tops were now touched by the golden light of the early morning sun. With the vanishing of the herd into the tangle of undergrowth and tall coarse grass, the blood lust came upon me. We always

want what is the most difficult to get and I was now mad for the chase. I learnt afterwards that my companions thought I had been afraid to fire.

Following the tracks of the herd, we were soon wringing wet from the dew. I carried my 500 express as being the lighter weapon, meaning to change over to the young cannon when the chance came for a shot. The herd were unaware of our presence and we took our time, but the trackers chanced a short cut, hoping to cut them off. We were feeling our way through high grass that wetted us to our heads when a black body with a white horse-shoe mark on its chest rose from the ground almost beneath our very feet. The trackers drew back in panic. The bear came on and I fired, crumpling it up below me. The buffs crashed away, and that was the end of the first day of buffalo hunting.

Knowing what I do now, I realized that I missed a splendid opportunity. But I was very much of a novice. For years I regretted the chance that I had let go. Later I killed a finer beast, and since then I have felt glad that I did not disturb the magnificent view of those huge animals on the river.

The rest of the day I spent in regrets.

Next morning we went out again at the same hour, going down-stream by the light of dawn. We landed on the Bastar side of the river, and when it was light enough to see, we looked for tracks in the mud along the banks. We soon found them; huge great round slots as big as

soup plates ; I can so well remember being amazed at their size. Accustomed to the slots of deer on hard ground where there is a natural tendency for the impression to be small, those buffalo tracks in the soft yielding mud seemed to me to be incredibly large.

They were fresh, and the buffs had obviously crossed the river, two of them, both bulls. So we launched forth again in our wobbly canoe and hunted in the mud on the other side.

Here there were plenty of tracks, but old, though none the less huge. It took us half an hour to find the new tracks of our two bulls. I say that it took " us " that time ; I did nothing, of course, being the fool of the party ; my job was to keep out of the way and not spoil other folks' chances with my clumsy feet. Then the beasts showed that they had entered the river again, but only for a time ; they did not cross but landed on the Chanda side, their slots leading us up over a steep bank of mud to where there was short green grass. Here too we found some small tobacco plants, about the only thing that the villagers could grow and the buffaloes would not eat. The two bulls wandered about a lot on this rich alluvial soil, their tracks obviously confusing to the hunters. In time they found where they led into the jungle, and we took up the chase in earnest. The sun was well up now and I was glad to get into the shade of the forest. The ground was hard and the tracking was very different work compared to what it had been in the soft soil along the river

bank. The two beasts had avoided the dense thickets and wandered about in an apparently aimless sort of way in the grass of the more open forest. There was method in their roving, of course, since they were hunting for the most succulent of the green under-grasses. I found it very difficult to see any signs of tracks on that iron-hard ground. Sometimes one would find a few dry leaves crushed, or a piece of recently bruised green herbage, but such traces seemed too scanty and occasional to show a definite line. But those keen-eyed men followed a line, though at first I thought that they must be fooling, since I could see nothing that could guide them. I was very puzzled to know how they managed to keep that trail, and a very confusing one it was too, twisting and turning in a way that would shame the worst fox in England. Those wretched beasts in their search for food turned and doubled on their tracks like polo ponies. If we came to a patch of green grass of say half an acre in extent, both trackers would skirt its edges, one taking each side, meeting again at the farther end. They knew that our quarry would leave that patch somewhere and that it was waste of time trying to follow the twists and turns of the beasts on their pasture. So they cast ahead and to the sides. One rather wondered how much time the buffs spent on each patch and consequently the amount that we were gaining on them in the long chase. Frequently there were considerable distances between the grass patches where they grazed, the intervening spaces being park-

like forest well shaded with a growth of grass varying from a foot to six feet in height. And while I was yet wondering at our progress we came on an enormous cow-pat into which one of the trackers thrust his bare toes, then shook his head at his mate. Clearly some way off yet. To convince me that there was no chance of coming up with them for a while one of the men took the lighter rifle that I was carrying. It was past ten o'clock, and after six hours' tramp even a 500 express is heavy. I had had some porridge with my early morning tea, but porridge though satisfying at the time, is not what one might call a lasting food. I felt hungry and tired. We went on for another hour, after which we rested until three o'clock. Although I thought at the time that the rest was decided on out of consideration for me, I know now that it was not so. The trackers knew that the buffaloes would be lying down in the heat of the middle of the day chewing the cud. They would hear our approach and be gone before I could get a shot. So we lay down and I ate my only biscuit.

Soon after we started again the trackers had proof of their wisdom. We came on steaming dung. The beasts were quite close. We had found where they had lain down in the shade of an overhanging tree and moved their positions twice with the altering shadow from the tree. I discovered now that I was very tired indeed, more particularly when the man who had been carrying the heavy eight-bore handed it to me, at the

same time signing that I should load both weapons. Then we went on again. The trackers' main guide in following the animals through the grass was not so much their footprints as the green grass that the beasts had torn from the tussocks. An old tear showed a yellow fringe where the cut blade had dried ; freshly grazed, there was a green edge sometimes with a drop of glistening sap. A tracker found a spray of saliva, then some very fresh dung. He listened and pointed. I could hear the swish of grass as some animal was brushing through it, the sound of a horn hitting a bamboo.

We waited in a place screened by low bushes, watching a patch of grass in front of us. I cocked the hammers of the eight-bore rifle, my heart thumping against my ribs in excitement. Then twenty yards away I saw the backs of two black beasts moving across the open patch of grass broadside on, their enormous shining horns waving slowly over the tops of the rank herbage. Raising the young cannon I fired at where I thought the shoulder was ; there was the most terrific crash and much smoke. Both barrels went off at the same time. I had been warned against such a possibility, but in the excitement forgot the caution. I went over backwards one way, and, alas ! the buffs went forward another. Picking myself up, we followed carefully ; wounded buffs are dangerous beasts. We hunted for blood ; if the heavy bullet had hit there could not fail to be a blood trail. But we found none. I had missed.

I had made the common mistake of the novice

shooting in heavy jungle when it is possible to see only the top part of the beast, of firing with too much foresight and visualizing the part of the animal that I could see without making sufficient allowance for the lower portion that is invisible. So ended my first buffalo hunt which began with the bright hope of obtaining one of the finest trophies that are to be found in any part of the world, and ended in disappointment to those clever little Maria trackers, and my own humiliation. But I had learnt much that was to be of great service to me later on, and I had seen what very few have been privileged to witness.

CHAPTER II

BUFFALOES AGAIN

AFTER the failure of my first attempt at buffalo hunting I hardly deserved another chance. Six years later I was given it. There was a block of forest south of the Mahanadi River included in the Bilaspur forest division of which I was then in charge and it held buffaloes. It was rather a business getting there, meaning five days' march including the crossing of the Mahanadi River, which was a big undertaking. It was the biggest river that I ever had to get my transport over and I have no wish to find a larger or more sandy and difficult passage. The nearest part of this forest was about sixty miles from headquarters and as I had no time to get there before the rains broke I had hitherto concentrated on the Baiga country to the north.

The rains finished early, and I started camping before I ought to have. November is early enough and from then till June should give one ample time to see all that one need of the forests in the year, with a trip out for a few days in the rains.

We went due south over the great wide Chattisgarh plains till we met the Mahanadi River. In the hot season those flat plains strike me as being

a most dreadful country, but in the early part of the cold weather they are teeming with the most interesting feathered life. Here is the home of the great bustard, a proud bird. As one approaches the wide river one can see acres of fields grey with cranes that squeak and squawk in ordered flights to and fro in the mornings and evenings. And everywhere there are to be seen almost every kind of bird of prey; homely kestrels, peregrine falcons, strange foreign hawks, falcons and harriers hovering and skimming the ground in all directions. But there seems to be nothing for them to prey upon, unless they are all looking for the bustards which are none too common. I could find very few quail, no partridges, and in only one place did I find duck and snipe. It is a mystery to me what the birds of prey find to feed upon. Even doves, that usually abound near Indian villages, were scarce. Except round the villages, trees are rare. In fact, a clump of trees in the distance is a sure sign of human dwelling. It is hard to believe that all the birds of prey were only hunting bustards and cranes. I never saw any of the cranes in the least upset by the presence of the falcons, and should imagine that it would take a stout hawk to take on a sharp-billed crane. Presumably they are migrating birds which take the same line every year; which line must be a poor place for game birds.

Beyond the Mahanadi there is a small pond that holds a few teal. Each time that I have shot it a peregrine has cheated me of my supper, taking

the teal that fell in the water before I could retrieve it.

The last march into the forest leads through the very abomination of desolation. Except possibly along the Red Sea, I have never seen such absolute desert. The long horizontal strata of rock crop out in ledges, forming short steps. There is no soil except in the very thin cracks of the rock, where there are dead grasses and a few thorny bushes, and the going is bad for man and beast, the ground being covered with innumerable small stones. At that time the surface of the road (so called) was awful, of which the numerous broken axles cast away on the roadside bore witness.

Yet it was the only outlet for the timber and firewood in the valuable forests to the south for which the plains were crying out. The large and flourishing town of Sheori Narain, a day's march to the north, would take all that we could supply if we unlocked those forests by making a road and devised a working plan to throw a constant supply of timber, firewood and bamboos on the market. A year later we tried to improve it, but it was the most difficult road that I ever had to make. There was no trouble about the gradient, but the making of a decent surface was an awful problem. There was nothing on those bare slabs of stepped rock to hold metal. It simply slipped away as soon as the traffic began. If we smoothed off the steps, the bumping of the carts soon formed them again and more broken axles were strewn about as evidence of our failure. It was a nasty place.

THE JONK VALLEY

Once over the crest into the valley of the Jonk River there was a great change. For the last hour the scenery consisted of a wilderness of bare black rocks unrelieved by any but dead vegetation. Beyond the crest was the valley closed in by forest-clad hills. Down the middle of the glen one got occasional glimpses of the blue waters of the Jonk River peeping between the green of the trees. In the hot season the contrast was more marked. There would be a riot of colour from the red flaming *palas*, gentle coral-tinted leaves of the budding *kusum*, the soft green of the fresh leaves of the bamboos, and beyond, where the *sal* forest prevailed, the shimmering green of spring where the sun shone over acres of bright sparkling foliage.

The Jonk Valley is a veritable fairyland of changing verdure and home of the wild beasts of the forest. On the plateaux above there is open park-like land orcharded with fruit-bearing *mohua*, *tendu* and plum, where black bears roam, sleeping where they eat of the plenty provided, not caring to retire to the thousands of caves at hand save in the stress of weather. Farther down the slopes mighty bison live in peace among the bamboos and sheltering boulders. In the lower valleys there is teak forest of giant size, evergreen *sal* forest, and masses of almost impenetrable undergrowth where a man must often go upon hands and knees to pass through and chance exchanging grins with a tiger. Here there are deer in plenty, the heavy dark *sambur* of massive horns, the swamp deer with his forest of tines, and the beautiful

spotted deer. And the tigers follow them. In the deep natural ponds called *sarars* near the river wild buffaloes swim and wallow in the sucking mud while frogs rest upon their backs.

I sat over one of these *sarars* one day in the hot weather, feeling no inclination for slaughter. I did not sit for long ; a couple of hours or so, I suppose—time is of little account in the jungle—I wanted to see the buffaloes without frightening them or their frightening me. So I climbed into the fork of a tree and watched from a position almost overhanging the water. It was the time in the afternoon just before the jungle wakes from its siesta and thinks of food, and the time when the beasts are thirsty. There were birds innumerable ; and masses of bees of all kinds crawling on the shallows at the edge of the pool. The birds were mostly turtle-doves of great variety, but there were brightly coloured bee-eaters that flashed in the sunlight, honey-suckers so small that they make their nests of cobwebs, kingfishers that splashed in the water ; and many other kinds of birds. What impressed me most about the pool was its peacefulness, not only the atmospheric peace, but a real peace between the different creatures. The bees did not show resentment at the birds nor even the heavy-hoofed beasts treading among them. Nor did the beasts seem to mind one another.

First came a sounder of pig, rude creatures that jostled one another in their haste to the wallow, stirring up the mud. A timid barking deer chose the opposite side of the pool to the pigs, drank

the rapids lower down. What an engine suitable for driving a circular saw could do to help in such work is beyond my comprehension. But then I am not an engineer. Anyway, there they were, and working well on waste wood fuel in spite of their hoary age. A few years previous to my arrival an expert engineer was invited to inspect and report on the condition of the engines. The story goes that he gave one look at the nearest, saw the complication of bootlaces and old wire that held it together, then fled in panic to the shelter of the tiger-infested forest. He knew the perils of a man-eating tiger, but thought the risk of being near that engine with its steam up was greater.

His report condemned the engines and all the machinery connected with them. But the wood had to be sawn up somehow. Alla Pilli is a long way off, and when it is a question of finding money for new machinery one government is no quicker than another in sending it along. The engines were going strong when I reached Alla Pilli; there might have been puffs of steam coming out of odd places for which there was no original design, but what did that matter so long as they did their work? A year or two later they were scrapped.

We had another toy, a monorail. This was a single rail laid temporarily on rough sleepers or anything else handy along which trucks carrying timber were supposed to pass nicely balanced. It was a most ingenious idea, but it did not work

daintily, then retired to the shade where it stood motionless, almost shapeless in the deep shadow, as it watched the pool with gentle eyes. In striking contrast to the red of the barking deer came a dark *sambur* stag that looked huge compared with its little cousin. It looked foolish too, since one of its antlers had been shed. The stag did not wait long, it drank deep with frequent glances up for enemies, then retired quickly along a game path to the deeper forests. There followed a herd of swamp deer with one stag as leader. These were lighter in colour than the *sambur* and not so big. Without hesitation they went straight into the water, swam to the middle of the pool, and wallowed about luxuriously, sometimes sinking, sometimes rolling on their sides. The pigs still fouled the outer edge of the pool. Then came what I had waited for; though I had already enjoyed my fair share of entertainment. A herd of buffaloes filed slowly down to the pool, their long black horns shining and their dark hides sleek. They walked slowly and fearlessly, their tails twitching rhythmically as warning to the flies, their long horns waving slightly with the motion of their bodies. At the brink they stopped. Then paused in luxurious anticipation of the drink to come, lowered their dark muzzles and sucked.

Their thirst slaked, they walked slowly into the depths, past the pigs that took no notice of them except a grumble at being disturbed, deeper and deeper they went till at last only the tops of their backs and the sweep of their great horns showed,

and even they went under as the beasts sank and rose again in the luxury of the bath. The frogs sat on their backs till a white egret alighted on the ribs of the leader of the herd frightening them, in splashing panic, into the muddy pool. That was the only disturbing element, and so trivial as not to be noticeable except as the one sign of fear in that peaceful scene. To man a buffalo is a dangerous beast, swift, well armed and fearless. To the deer he is just another grazing animal. To the frog he is a resting-place and a diving-board. In my man's conceit I feared for the deer so near those huge beasts, and I envied them their familiarity with nature. I think the little nervous barking deer must have had much the same feelings, for I could see it watching the bathing party rather wistfully like a small child that is too frightened to bathe but who cannot resist watching its more venturesome companions.

When the beasts repaired to their pastures for the evening meal I returned to my tent a quarter of a mile away.

I have never seen such a forest as that for animals. It is the ideal Yellowstone Park for India. It holds every kind of wild animal known in the Central Provinces except elephant. I have seen them all there. I have met a tiger that watched me idly (I was unarmed), then lazily leaped without apparent effort on to a rock twice its own length in height. There seemed to be no preparation for the spring, none of that hesitation of " can I do it ? " but just a casual jump, and a glance back at me, almost

in contempt. Another time while fishing in the river a tiger found me in possession of its normal drinking-place. The tiger told me in no uncertain tone to clear out. Again I was unarmed—I cleared out.

What a dream of a place, you will say. It is; literally gold flows in its rivers. I have watched the local gold seekers scoop mud from the side of the stream into a wooden pan, wash it in water, pour out the lighter mud, tilt the residue for me to see, and there with a jet-black fringe of iron sand on the outside would gleam the precious gold within.

Gold nearly ruined the place. One shudders to think of ugly shafts and wheels and spoil heaps ruining the scenery; yet it might have come to pass. The shaft was sunk, three white men, they say, toiled for a few months looking for the treasures of the earth, and the shaft only remains, the sordid sight hidden by the jungle. No one could show me where the three adventurers were buried.

Not so very far off were some of the famous diamond mines of the ancients whose stones were the envy of the Romans. But the real treasure of the place is in its natural beauties, unspoilt by the hand of man. So far that treasure has been guarded by the fevers of the forest. Malaria in its worst form. I was to learn something of that on my first visit.

Ever since I had made a mess of my first chance at buffaloes, I had been hoping to have another try. Now came my second opportunity. It was

November, and a bull buffalo, solitary and fierce, was reported at Sarai Paili in the *sal* forest. I had no qualms about going after this beast because it had been a great nuisance to the villagers; it had eaten the best part of their crops and, although they did all they could to frighten it away, it refused to move until it had satisfied its appetite for the time. None dared approach it; and the cultivators' only chance was to put a poisoned arrow into it, which I believe that they would have done if they had not heard that I was coming.

By the time that I reached Sarai Paili half my camp was down with malarial fever of a very bad type. I had quinine, castor oil and aspirin in my medicine chest and managed to cure them. My turn came next.

Dasrat, a Binjwar tracker, had been ahead of me spying out the land. He was a little wizened man of few words and the most marvellous tracker that I have ever had the pleasure to watch. I believe that he would almost track a fly over a clean window-pane. He met me on arrival in camp with a grin on his face, his arms spread wide to indicate the size of the buffalo's horns. I thought that he was exaggerating. Subsequent events showed that his arms were not long enough to do the buffalo justice.

My tent was pitched a few yards from the village of Sarai Paili under some large *mahua* trees that shaded a field of very poor-looking dwarf millet. The forest man has at any time a pretty hard struggle to raise such a crop; it is a case

of endless warfare with raiding animals ; all night so long as there is a crop left worth protecting, one can hear the cultivators yelling at beasts and rattling stones in old tin cans to frighten them away. Here the wild creatures had won in the contest, man had given it up in despair, the field was left to the victors trampled by buffaloes and deer, its surface uprooted by pigs. The short millet stalks were flattened to the ground, and what the beasts of the forest had left the birds had pecked up ; overhead in the trees that shaded my tent the parrakeets mocked despairing man with shrieks of derision. The wild buffaloes had been the worst offenders, we could see the huge slot-marks of a large bull on the farther edge of the field nearest the jungle. This, they said, was no beast to be trifled with, so fierce he was that he had chased men into the very sanctuary of the village. He was the worst offender ; to him was ascribed the ruin of the crops ; a beast whose death would bring compensation to the village in a huge supply of coarse beef.

No wonder that the Sahib was welcome.

I woke next morning at four o'clock, feeling none too bright ; I had a shivery feeling for which the chill hour of dawn could not be solely accountable. A wise man would have taken his temperature and returned to bed. I did nothing of the sort ; I had been hoping for another chance at a buffalo ever since I had left Chanda, and had no intention of letting the opportunity slip. With the trackers carrying my 450–400 high-velocity

rifle and my 500 express, we slid silently from camp before dawn and were soon wet through from the heavy dew in the high grass. Solid nickel bullets were the order of the day, hard metal that would get through the tough hide penetrating well into the vital parts.

After a tramp of about a mile we silently approached a *sarar* brimful of muddy water.

West of us was the Jonk River, and about a mile from the river, on the east side and running parallel with it, was a cart track which in the hot weather served as a fire line. The pool was between the road and the river. By the time that we reached it there was sunlight, since we had spent some time searching round the village fields. The buffalo had been to the pool to drink, then turned back towards the road, passing through some of the very thick undergrowth that I have previously mentioned. We were some way behind it which, perhaps, was a good thing since the covert was very dense at head height, entailing much crawling beneath. Not a nice place in which to receive a sudden charge. The beast was obviously travelling, since it took a direct line, not pausing to feed ; we followed swiftly, tracking being easy beneath the scrub. After crossing the road we came to open *sal* forest with glades of green grass. Here the beast had begun to feed, wandering about in circles, turning on its tracks as the various grasses tempted it. The confused tracks slowed down our pace, but we had the consolation of knowing that the buffalo's move-

ments were not fast. Dasrat had an assistant to help him; this man cast ahead in the hopes of striking the line. Once or twice we were lucky and saved much time. We found steaming dung and wet saliva where the beast had grazed. Then it seemed suddenly to have made up its mind to take a straight line. The tracks were not particularly well marked and there was no reason to think that we had alarmed the beast. It merely wanted to change ground. Our pace increased. The trackers stopped to listen. Then hurried forward. I felt ill, desperately ill, and found my rifle heavy. Dasrat said nothing, but I think that he must have noticed the way in which I finished the contents of my water-bottle by too-frequent pulls. I had to sit down and rest although it was only ten o'clock; but I would not give up. Who would after waiting so long and having travelled so far? The beast turned again towards the road, which it crossed, then vanished into the dense thicket of undergrowth near the river. Dasrat shook his head. Our quarry had gone in there for its siesta. If we followed we would come on it lying down. It would hear us coming and give no opportunity for a shot in that tangled growth. As we were near camp I returned for breakfast, but with no appetite. My temperature was 102, so I took aspirin and quinine while resting on my bed.

Slightly better—but I would not trust a thermometer—I started out again with the two men. We circled the patch of thick scrub and had almost

completed the circuit when Dasrat spotted the tracks leading out. It had only just left. We followed as quickly as we could. I felt more and more ill as we went on. As was the case in the morning, the beast took a straight line across the road till it reached its grazing ground. Then once more it wandered as it fed, not staying so long in one place, however, as it had in the morning. It may have been suspicious. Could I last out? I wondered, feeling like nothing on earth. The men pointed to the sinking sun. We must hurry or the light would go and our day's labour be lost. I knew that next day there would be no buffalo hunting for me. We pressed on.

Dasrat stopped and pointed up an open glen of green grasses shaded by the *sal* trees on either side. There was sun on the tree-tops, but none was shining on that huge beast that stood broadside on about fifty yards away, listening suspiciously. My chance had come, but could I take a sufficiently steady aim? I staggered to a tree, rested the rifle against its trunk, drew a bead on to the massive shoulder, and fired. The beast swung round to the shot at once and I gave him the other barrel, which turned him. Dasrat and his assistant watched from the safety of the branches of a tree. Turned by my second shot the buffalo vanished in long grass. We followed, looking carefully to the right and to the left, remembering the nasty habit buffaloes have of charging unexpectedly from a flank. I had forgotten to be ill in the excitement. We found a splash of blood. Then

more. Dasrat signed to me to be careful. I knew that these beasts are dangerous and have a habit of turning a circle round behind their pursuers and attacking suddenly from the flank or rear. The two men were obviously nervous.

After the first excitement of the chase there was the inevitable reaction and I felt more ill than before. Indeed I wondered if I could possibly go on, but did so, not wishing the men to think that I was afraid. I might have been afraid in normal health, but I was far too ill to have any other feelings than of sickness and a great desire to sit down. I was trembling with ague and my rifle felt as if it weighed a ton.

Suddenly there was a crash from my left and the beast tore past me a few yards away in pursuit of Dasrat, who just managed to reach a tree in time. The buffalo ignored me, taking a shot in the flank as he passed which I could not have missed, so close was the beast. Then he disappeared again in the grass. Dasrat came down looking rather foolish. Grinning, he signed to me to follow while he took up the blood trail. We went a hundred yards, and found more open country with short grass and a few bushes. Crossing this with anxious eyes on the nearest trees, like children playing " touch wood," but wood seemed a long way off, we came to a place where there were two solitary trees. Whenever we found a tree that could be climbed Dasrat or his assistant took the opportunity to scramble up and have a look around ; they went up, I noticed, much

more quickly than they came down ; obviously they liked the view. We hastened towards the two trees and had almost reached them when Dasrat pushed me at one, he and his assistant jumped at the other.

The two men jumped for the lowest branch ; it was rotten and broke. They fell. Leaning weakly against my tree which I was far too feeble to climb, even if I had wanted to, I laughed.

I could see no buffalo. By now the two men were safely up the tree, pointing. Following their direction I saw in the grass two enormous horns, and a dark body behind them. The horns were facing me. Ready to dodge round the tree, I fired.

There was no movement.

The big buffalo was dead. He had died facing us as a bull buffalo should.

We were not far from camp. As soon as they had heard my first two shots, then after a time another, the camp followers knew that I had got up to the buffalo and had probably killed him. The camp clerk sent out my camera ; a large party of villagers turned up as though by magic as soon almost as the beast was dead meat. It was just light enough to take a bad photograph. Marking on the skin of the animal's neck the place where I wanted it skinned, I left the place feeling very ill. Where the beast fell was a crowd of men, women and children that skinned and hacked and loaded the precious meat into baskets, improvised from bamboos and creepers. Far into the night

they worked, returning in the early morning with their loads of meat on their heads ready to be cut into strips and strung on to lines to dry as biltong in the sun. It was almost worth their ruined crops.

The head of the beast was carefully skinned the next morning, the skin preserved and the skull boiled to get rid of the meat. The only receptacle large enough to boil it was my bath tub and even that took but half at the time. From tip to tip across the forehead the horns measured ten feet four inches, and the spread was within four inches of six feet.

Moving camp quickly so as to be nearer home if I became really ill, I went down with fever. It was obstinate to treatment and the symptoms were alarming. I told the camp clerk to arrange to send me into headquarters if I became worse. That night I was delirious and did not become a reasonable person again until I was met at the railway seventy miles away by the assistant surgeon. But thanks to the camp clerk I had been carried in a rough stretcher those seventy miles in a little over twenty-four hours. He had sent word ahead and at each village on the way another party of fresh men took on the load. He also sent word of my condition to the civil surgeon. How they managed to get me across the Mahanadi I don't know, nor do I know anything more of the journey except that during the last few miles when I was becoming sensible again, I became very annoyed at the colour and pattern of the cloth which shel-

tered my head from the sun. In the station I received the kindness which is the outstanding feature of Indian life. As for my camp clerk, it would be impossible to praise him enough.

Was it worth it? you may ask. I think it was. The big buffalo looks at me every evening from the top of the stairs as I go to bed. Mr. Rowland Ward has made him look a mild and friendly beast, and I prefer him so.

CHAPTER III

MORE OF CHANDA

SOON after the first buffalo hunt I joined "K," the D.F.O., again in two marches; and they were long marches too. I remember finishing one in the moonlight, and meeting a couple of *bhui richs* on the track we were following, they are only badgers of course, but jungle men have fearful stories of them, how they will hamstring a man, and then getting him on the ground dispose of him at their leisure. On this occasion there was a wild scramble for the trees. When the *bhui richs* saw that they were blundering into me they showed no ill will, but dived into the fastness of the jungle on the side of the track.

"K" told me that there was a buffalo calf killed by a panther in the river-bed, that he really did not care much about sitting up all night, but that if I liked to do so I might, and that his old *shikari* Alla Din would sit up with me. I am quite certain that if I had not been there he would have sat up for that panther and enjoyed it. I was very lucky in my first chief.

People who read about India expect something of the mystic and occult—and often get it. Those

of us who have lived some time in the country and know what a glorious part humbug plays in its daily life, both European and native, are a bit sceptical of some things that we read and hear; whether it be of European gentlemen in search of mystic copy being greeted by strange but virtuous Indian ladies, or the same literary gentry being taken into the family bosom as a total stranger of the most exclusive caste in the world. I *have* been accosted by strange ladies, but they were not virtuous, and would probably be very annoyed if their chastity were assumed. I have also dined at the house of a Brahmin, but not at the same table, although he was a personal friend of mine.

The plot of this story has been told once before with my permission by my friend, Mr. Hogarth Todd. He wrote it as fiction with the necessary additions, I give the detailed facts.

I was mad keen to get that panther. I had never seen one outside a zoo and was not going to miss a chance of having a shot at one. Old grizzled Alla Din, the *shikari*, and I started out at about three o'clock in the afternoon to make a night of it, if necessary. I had plenty of warm clothing and he took his blankets. Accompanying us were a number of coolies carrying axes, ladders, ropes and poles. A mile away from the camp we came on the dead calf, which had been left in the middle of the dry sandy river-bed covered up with branches to keep away the vultures. The panther had apparently killed the calf

in the early hours of the morning, and had only had sufficient time to slay and to disembowel it neatly, the entrails being put on one side. He is a tidy butcher, the panther. Nothing had been eaten, the beast having either been disturbed before it could start a meal or possibly having another kill elsewhere which it was too economical to leave ; the latest slain would, of course, keep the longest. In any case there was the strong probability that the panther would return within the next twelve hours to have another look at his kill and take a snack off it. There were the pug-marks of the animal on the sandy bed of the river to show that it was not a tiger. Apart from this evidence, the fact of the rather thin piece of rope that had been used for tethering the calf not having been broken and the tell-tale cleaning out of the entrails, showed pretty well that this was the work of a panther and not of a tiger.

Panthers are usually much more obliging about returning to their kills than the suspicious tiger. They are cautious, too, but make the mistake of trying to be clever. A panther will sit for long periods at a safe distance watching his kill, then satisfied that no treacherous man is waiting for him to approach, come up from the opposite direction. He does so in broad daylight far more frequently than a tiger. I have noticed another great difference between the ways of the two beasts. While the tiger will often walk towards his kill without the least attempt to go quietly, often crashing through the bushes as clumsily as an elephant,

I have never known a panther come to his meal except in the most uncanny silence.

A grey-barked *jamun* tree was selected for our hiding-place. About twenty feet above the ground there were some forked branches where the main trunk of the tree ended. Across this fork the coolies tied the poles, then across the poles a native bedstead or *charpoy*, finally, all round this nest they strung little leafy branches on strings to serve as a screen.

We climbed up the ladder, made sure that we had a clear view of the dead calf, arranged ourselves in a way that we hoped, rather optimistically, would be comfortable, and sent the coolies away. I hung the water-bottle from a handy branch, put my biscuits within reach, and loaded the 500 express, a weapon big enough for any panther. Then we settled down to our all-night vigil. Alla Din and I. Not the beautiful spangled creature that we see in tights about Christmas-time, but a grey-bearded rather shrivelled old man with a smell of his own which I was now called upon to share.

Our tree overhung the bed of the river. The dead calf was in the middle of the sand up-stream of us and about forty yards away. On our right was a small island of scrub, beyond that the farther bank of the river, heavily clothed in high forest; on our left we were shaded by the trees of the jungle of our own bank. Between the island and the jungle there was an open vista over a narrow strip of shaded sand leading to a view of the

doubled-up body of the dead calf, which showed at first very conspicuously against the sunlit sand of the main river-bed beyond the small island. It was possible to see through our screen for a distance of about four hundred yards up the river beyond the kill.

Soon after the coolies left us the shadows of the trees along the river crept over the bank to the other side. The tree-tops of the farther side were still lighted by the sun, though the ground was now in deep shadow. The jungle was beginning to wake from the day's siesta. Parrakeets, hitherto reasonably quiet, were flying in twisting noisy flocks diving between the tops of the highest trees to their feeding-place. A family of peacocks slowly paraded across the sand of the farther river, but, puzzled by the dead calf, scuttled back to covert, preferring the safety of the undergrowth. A school of monkeys crossed the river in easy bounds, drank at a small pool in the middle, then returned to the side whence they came. Nothing farther happened for half an hour, by which time all direct sunlight had gone, though there was still light in the cloudless sky which showed the rose and gold of sunset in perfection beyond the green of the trees. Suddenly there was a clamour of squeaks and hoarse coughs from the direction of the monkeys. They had seen something, probably the panther.

Alla Din pulled my sleeve. I did not need the warning and already had pushed the muzzle of my rifle through the screen of leaves ready for the shot. A rifle is an awkward thing to move about

among a lot of branches when absolute quiet is necessary, it is difficult to push the muzzle through the screen quietly. But nothing happened, no panther showed itself. Clearly the beast that we were waiting for was suspicious. Still, he might turn up at any moment, but not at a time when the monkeys were shouting his presence for all the jungle to hear.

With the deepening of the shadows came a great silence save for the subdued thrill of the crickets' chorus. I kept my eyes fixed on the black shape of the kill, fearing that I might lose its position in the gathering darkness. There was little chance of this however, because the full moon was already beginning to throw vague light across the river-bed, and in an hour's time the sand was showing in silvered contrast to the dark shadows of the jungle beyond. At sunset I had slipped a piece of white cardboard over the foresight of my rifle and secured it with thin elastic, and I now found with relief that the moon shone directly on it, showing it up clearly for a shot. The edge of the *charpoy* cut me behind the knees and I felt cramped elsewhere, so I shifted position. Alla Din did the same. Then I ate a biscuit or two, the paper in which they were wrapped seeming to make a fearful noise in the still night, and with eyes fixed on the kill which showed up clearly against the sand in the flood of moonlight, I settled myself down for the night. I knew enough Hindustani to understand Alla Din when he whispered me that he would watch if I slept. To make sure that

I understood, he signed to me to sleep by placing his hand against his cheek while he bent his head towards it. I preferred watching for a while; then at length I felt sleepy, my head kept going down on my chest, I gave up the struggle, and after a final glance at the kill, slept.

I do not know how long I remained so, but in my sleep I felt someone plucking my arm and shaking it. At first I took no notice, but the shaking went on, and I woke, remembering where I was, and the purpose for which I was there. I felt stiff from the hard *charpoy*, which had discovered most of the bones in my body. I looked at my companion. He was fast asleep, his head between his upright knees. Then I looked at the kill and saw the long lithe form of the panther walking silently towards it, grey and ghostly in that light, yet it was no ghost—ghosts do not throw shadows. Very gently I pulled Alla Din's arm and shook it. He would not wake. I dared not risk disturbing the panther, so left Alla Din alone. Quitely raising the rifle and pushing it between the leaves, I took a sight on the beast, now standing broadside on, and pressed the trigger. There was a terrific roar and a flash of fire which blinded me for a moment so that I could not see whether I had hit my mark.

By the time that I could see, the animal had bounded over the sand and I could hear it crashing about in the jungle. Alla Din, now awake, listened. Soon there was silence.

" What did you fire at ? " he asked, rather peeved,

it seemed. Then the man really had been asleep! He had not woken me and then gone to sleep again.

"The panther," I replied. "There it is dead."

What is the explanation? Was my guardian angel vigilant? Or did I dream that Alla Din was waking me? Was my sixth sense at work? Perhaps it was a combination of all three possible factors. I generally know when there is a cat in the room, and with that one exception I have never been caught napping when a tiger or panther has approached. Even when following up a wounded tiger I have sometimes had an uncanny warning when the beast was dangerously near.

* * * * *

A forest officer's life is not all shooting, although many people imagine it to be so.

Soon after I killed the panther I was sent off on my own to do stock mapping. Our forests had all been surveyed some years previously and mapped on the scale of four inches to the mile, with the contours shown more or less accurately. But this was a ground survey with no attempt at the demarcation of the more valuable forests which were mixed up indiscriminately with growths of no value. Teak was the only timber worth working and the cost of transport was great over long distances to the railway, but the forests were by no means all teak, and where this valuable species of tree was found it was generally mixed with other inferior jungle. It is rare to find good teak growing as

a pure crop. It needs nurses. Sometimes there would be hundreds of acres of teak-bearing forest on a hillside favourable to its growth; in other places it would run in narrow strips in the rich alluvial soil along the banks of *nalas*. Wherever it was it was most important that its position should be mapped for future working and the encouragement of the struggling younger trees that were often choked by weeds and climbers.

So I was sent off independently to find the teak forests and report on their condition. It was not so difficult as it might sound, although I had huge areas to survey, not so difficult as making a survey of, say, the beech forests of an English county, because in the month of February by standing on a piece of high ground one can, owing to the peculiar foliage of the teak at that season, see any considerable patches from a distance and then demarcate them in detail on the spot. Teak leaves are large, huge in fact, and have a different colouring to the rest of the forest.

I found the work interesting, although the accurate demarcation of the different areas of teak was at times laborious in such difficult country. I always carried a rifle with me and had my eyes open for game as well as for the forests. For purposes of fire protection, the more valuable forests were cut up into blocks by long cleared fire-lines from forty to a hundred feet in width. They were a great help in finding our way about, since they were cut in straight lines through the forest for long distances. Often we would see game grazing

on the short green succulent grass that grew where the rubbish on the lines had been recently burnt. Sometimes we saw deer moving slowly from the shelter of the forest on one side to that of the other. We always had a good look along those cleared lines whenever we crossed them. It was about the only time when field-glasses were of any real use in that country of dense forests.

Crossing the line near a fire watcher's outpost at Lotara Naka one day we glanced along it and saw about a mile away a black animal moving slowly across from one side to the other.

"*Gaur*—bison," said my orderly, Chinnoo, shortly. He was a man of few words; I was still weak in my Hindustani and had learnt in any case that the jungle is the place for short sentences and monosyllables. We followed down the line.

The bison's tracks were clear-cut on the hard soil of the burnt fire line, but small, extraordinarily small, compared with those huge soup-plate marks of the buffaloes. Yet the bison is the bigger animal, as I was soon to see, though the buffaloes seemed large enough in all conscience. The *gaur*, or what is popularly known as the bison in India (though scientists say we are all wrong), has not the tremendous length of black horn that the buffalo boasts, nor does he need the wide spread of hoof that helps the buffalo to walk through the mud of the rivers and swamps that are his natural home. The bison's home is in the steep hillsides where the bamboos bend to the wind, among the rocks that fringe the higher ridges and in places where

a grip like that of a goat on a wall is needed. Hence the sharp-pointed slot, the fine cannon bone of the thoroughbred, the high withers and massive shoulder that give the safe holding on terrible ground. I once scrambled above a herd on the side of a hill so steep that I had to use hands and knees to get there ; from such a place, I felt, they would have either to pass along a contour below me or climb upwards towards my position. Getting my wind, they tore down that slope of rocks and fallen logs over the most treacherous blind ground without a mistake, neither peck nor falter. Truly are they thoroughbreds, and gentle beasts too compared with the fierce buffaloes. It is said that they are the largest representatives of the ox family in the world, standing seventeen hands at the withers—and although I have never checked the measurements with a tape—I can well believe it. Man they avoid and seldom visit his cultivation, which to a great extent has been their salvation, few of them falling a prey to the poisoned arrow that has been the destruction of the buffaloes in places where they were common in days gone by.

We knew that we were close behind this solitary bull, having seen him only a few minutes before. So we pushed on, not troubling to follow the tracks, but listening for the sounds of his movements ; and we had not long to wait. There was the sound of a branch breaking, the creak and swish of a bamboo as it was being bent down and broken. Very cautiously we pushed forward towards the sound, downhill through bamboos over stony ground,

pausing often to listen. I had my 500 express with solid bullets of hardened lead, not really a heavy enough weapon for so large and thick-skinned a beast, but it was the best I had, and what was more important, I had confidence in the weapon ; I knew that I could shoot with it. In my short time of two months in India I had already killed tiger, *sambur* stag, bear and panther with this rifle. Confidence is half the battle. I felt that I should not make a mess of that bison as I had of the buffalo with the young cannon.

Across the mottled sunlight that pierced the shade of the forest, I saw a dark tail flick against the yellow foliage of a half-dead bamboo. Many a time has a bison given himself away with that restless tail of his that seems to be always moving whether there are flies about or not. The huge beast moved a step or two forward, betraying his outline as he reached up for some tender green shoots. Picking out his shoulder, I fired and reloaded quickly. Chinnoo had my 256 mannlicher ready behind me—a puny weapon for so great a beast, but a comfort within reach. The bison went down, disappearing in the lower foliage, staggered up again and then tore down the hill before I could fire again. We followed, expecting to find him dead. But he was very much alive. I must say that I never anticipated a charge, still less uphill, but it came ; there was no furious roar or noise, beyond the sound of the beast's hoofs on the hard ground and the brushing of his horns and flanks on the undergrowth ; there was

nothing alarming about it. He crashed through the thickets and over the stones towards us, heaving his great weight up the hill, his bulk appearing and disappearing behind rocks and foliage. He seemed to be vague in his direction; poor beast, he was wounded; but there was no possible doubt that he was after us. I gave him both barrels from a distance at which I could not possibly miss—he was as big as the proverbial haystack—then turned to Chinnoo for the ·256. Chinnoo had his own ideas of the use of that weapon. Perhaps he mistrusted my shooting after the buffalo incident; he may have lost his head. I never asked him because I did not know enough of the language to do so, and if I had I doubt if I should have received any answer except the one most likely to give me satisfaction. Whatever his reasons, Chinnoo, instead of handing me the weapon, opened fire himself, working the magazine and getting rid of five cartridges in the most astonishing time while I reloaded. The beast still came on, but slowly and with staggering gait; and I killed him almost at my feet.

The stalk was exciting and the charge was thrilling, but the reaction was nothing but humiliating. I had a sneaking feeling of shame at being responsible for the killing of that enormous mound of dead beef, the murder of a harmless but gallant animal whose very smell as it lay crumpled at my feet reminded me of a peaceful meadow of grazing cattle in England.

So ended my first bison hunt, and the only

occasion when I received a serious charge from one. Later, I shot others. Some were a nuisance and had to be got rid of because they were solitary bulls grown savage towards man through loneliness. I loved tracking them, and I enjoyed watching them, but shooting them seemed too much like butchery.

CHAPTER IV

THE HILL FORESTS

IN March, 1905, I received orders to go to Warora on the railway where was the timber depot at which I had to learn something about the mysteries of forms and schedules dear to the soul of the Babu. I left behind me the saw-mills of Alla Pilli with regrets. There is a special charm in the place. The high-pitched sing of circular saws and the aromatic scent of teak sawdust bring back to me the memories of that remote settlement. Now each year when I work as a steward at the annual show of the Bath and West Society, and a shower of rain falls on the teak-wood furniture that is usually exhibited near my sleeping-hut in the showyard, the scent of teak again tantalizes my senses and I think of those wonderful first days in the jungle at Alla Pilli.

Warora was horrible in comparison. There was no nice green jungle and no game beyond a few black buck that frequented the bare fields. The glare of the place was awful and its dust was worse. It was March ; India was beginning to stoke up ; beyond a few mango trees there was no green to be seen in the country, only bare fields grazed to the brown earth by the starving cattle of the vil-

lages. The very acacias were dropping their leaves, while beneath their thin feeble shade goats foraged for the pods of fruit that the goatherds knocked down with long poles on to which sharp hooks had been bound. Every morning I went down to the timber depot for the receipt of custom. Timber had to be checked and missing scantlings traced. Once on the forms, a piece of timber, no matter how small or valueless, had to be accounted for. Otherwise the conservator's office sent objection statements to the accounts which could not be passed till explained in a satisfactory manner. But conservators are human, they are fellow foresters, with a greater love for the jungles and appreciation of the jungle man's difficulties than the Babus that serve him and glory in the issue of objection statements. Our worst bogy was the comptroller ; his job was pure devilry and his Babus revelled in it. If he could, he cut our pay and there was no arguing with him—the very governor of the Province, so they say, trembled at the sight of his objection statements—his office was babuism from top to bottom. In those days it was impossible for an officer to purchase a brass padlock of European make for his office use costing as little as one rupee, without the august sanction of the Secretary of State for India who lived in Whitehall. To get that padlock one had to draft a careful official letter on the usual lines beginning with the cliché that one had the honour to solicit sanction, and ending with the standard humbug that one had the honour to be his obedient servant. A mere

forest officer would not, of course, dare to use such noble sentiments to the Secretary of State. He had to put them to his Conservator, who passed them on through Chief Commissioners by way of the provincial secretariat to the Secretary in the heights of Simla, who, after the careful consideration which so important a subject merited, sent a letter of flowing words to Whitehall. Then the sanction, if granted, would come back through the same channels, and if one was lucky the padlock was purchased twelve months after one discovered that it was really necessary. The Decentralization Commission did not leave a great mark on India, but it did allow me to buy a padlock. There have, of course, been other improvements in the administration, but so long as Babus need their daily bread, babuism will survive. They are the only people I have ever met who honestly preferred the fug of an office to an open-air job. May they long continue, bless them !

The comptroller's office was the paradise of Babus. The conservator's office kept a watchful eye on anything that might be lost, the comptroller did the same and more ; he jumped on us if we found anything ! When we sold a piece of timber we had to show on our forms whatever sum of money had been spent in preparing it for sale, such as cutting down the tree and hauling the timber. Woe betide us if we sold anything without being able to show that it had cost something to the government !

Such mysteries are a pitfall for the ignorant, so

in spite of the wearisomeness of the job I was grateful for my experience in that dreadful place.

While at Warora a police officer came in who had a few days previously killed a man-eating tiger in a way that few have experienced. This tiger kept watch on a certain road. At first it was content with robbing the bullock carts of their cattle. Later it took the drivers and became a curse and terror to the country-side. So our policeman disguised himself as a native driver, daily patrolling the road tickling the haunches of his bullocks with his toes in the approved native fashion. He had not many days of this novel form of *shikar* before the tiger played up. It upset the cart, but the policeman managed to get his shot in before the tiger got home.

A brave man, that.

I had not more than a month of Warora. Government was kind and transferred me to the Balaghat District, where there are cool evergreen *sal* forests on the higher plateaux. So far in my service I had done little but combine amusement with instruction. Indeed, I was doing so little that was of any use that I felt that I was not earning my pay. This feeling lasted some time. An officer is really very little use until he has learnt the language of the country and the ways of the people in it.

I had seen practically nothing of station life in Chanda, nor did I experience anything of it until the rainy season in Balaghat. I discovered later that I had a reputation among Indians for honesty

at cards ; which in those days I did not play. I hope the reputation is still there. The reason for this distinction was that the Deputy Commissioner's head clerk was greatly puzzled at my being addressed as " the Honourable," a title reserved for members of council, either provincial or at Simla. I, of course, was far too junior to occupy so lofty a position, so the bewildered Babu asked the Deputy Commissioner the reason for the distinction in my case, and was told that I had been given the title of " the Honourable " because I did not cheat at cards. The Babu was satisfied, and my reputation made.

After a few days in headquarters, where I received that wonderful kindness and hospitality towards the new-comer that is such a feature of Anglo-Indian life, a start was made for the upper plateau from which the district takes its name. So far my wanderings had been over comparatively level country, where the passage of rivers seemed to be the normal feature of every march. If on foot, one was carried over the fords on the arms of a couple of natives ; the crossing of deeper waters being by the equally precarious dug-out. But getting a horse across those rivers was far more interesting. I soon learnt that the Indian *sais* is the biggest fool on earth when it comes to getting his charge over a river. When he leads the horse towards it, he starts to make what he considers to be soothing noises by way of assuring the horse that everything is all right and that there is nothing to be afraid of. The horse, which

hitherto has been perfectly docile, hears the sucking noises that the *sais* makes, and jumps to the very natural conclusion that there is something up. When the river is reached the *sais* stops, makes much of the horse and redoubles the noises ; in fact, he tells the horse that it has every reason to be frightened of the river ; and frightened the horse is, generally flatly refusing to have anything to do with it. One soon learnt that the only way to tackle a river was to keep the *sais* away, to ride straight into it as though it were the natural thing to do, and generally the horse made no fuss.

Those rivers were full of quicksands which were sometimes unpleasant. One never tried fording them without sending a man on ahead, of course, but most of them would bear a man but not a horse. The first sign of trouble would be a stumble, the next would be a desperate flounder, then the only thing to do was to throw oneself off into the water. The reduced weight generally saved the situation ; the horse would flounder about until it found a piece of firm footing, when one would remount in a very wet saddle. I have sent camels and bullocks on in front, and although the sands would bear them, they could not support my horse. The worst creature for getting into bogs or quicksand is the elephant, who knows it and is more than usually cautious, testing the ground very carefully with the tip of its sensitive trunk before trusting its full weight. My elephant was badly bogged at Amarkantak once. I had a friend with me. The first thing was to get off the ele-

phant's back without giving the panic-stricken beast a chance of seizing us in its trunk and putting us under its feet for a foothold. An intelligent beast, the elephant. This one was firmly stuck in front; she could manage to get one leg out, but as soon as she succeeded in doing so there was a double weight on the other which went in the deeper. We had no intention of saving the elephant by sacrificing our bodies to the source of the sacred Narbudda, so we slid off at the back, keeping well clear of that waving trunk. Then we ran to the nearest trees and tore off the branches which with great caution we offered to the struggling beast. Piece by piece she put them under one foot, got a purchase, then repeated the performance for the other till she reached terra firma. It took some time; she was badly shaken, and no wonder.

At the ferries it was necessary to swim a horse across a river. Again the main difficulty was to get it to enter the water, but once started there was not so likely to be trouble as in the case of a comparatively shallow ford; the quicksand problem being confined to the shallows near the banks. After taking off the saddle, the horse would be led into the water near the waiting dug-out; seated at the end of that very wobbly craft, one held the reins while the plunging beast was driven into the water and the vessel launched. Once started there was little trouble; a horse is a good swimmer and only needs to be gently guided with its head alongside the boat on the down-stream

side. I don't know how many times I had to cross rivers like that in my first twelve months in India, but it became almost an everyday experience. Some of them are very wide, the Godaveri or the Mahanadi being big problems for transport, owing not so much to the water as to the heavy going of the deep sand at the fords. One had to allow a whole day for the crossing of the Mahanadi.

In the hilly district of Balaghat the rivers were not serious during the dry season at any rate. My route to the *sal* forests followed the made road with causeways or bridges over the various *nalas*. In April those *nalas* were bone dry and the size of the bridges that spanned them seemed to be absurd.

Laughur was the first halting-place on the plateau, and even in that season of hot dry air when most of the trees were mere skeletons, naked in their leaflessness, it was lovely. Hill forests have an attraction of their own which appeals with a special charm; there is more mystery about them than there is in the dead level of the forests of the plains. There is a greater variety in the vegetation; little glades at the bottom of the valleys; here a mass of bamboos reaching down from the upper slopes, farther on a patch of high forest; round the corner of huge black rocks one would suddenly come on a blazing mass of *Butea* in full bloom rivalling the sun in brilliance, each flower held in a black velvety calyx that showed the scarlet corolla to perfection. There were masses of purple *indigofera* shrubs; acres of

strobilanthes, scented and blue like a haze of bluebells in spring. And always in the background there would be the slopes of forest-clad hills; beautiful in a nakedness which was here and there veiled by the coral-red leaves of the freshly budding *kusum*, confident of spring and the rains to come. Wandering with rifle ready, one might see much of the wild beasts of the forest, from the furtive barking deer that haunted the fringe of the scrub and fled with panic screams and barks through the bamboo brakes, to the larger beasts and nobler game.

With the great stillness of night-time there is a peaceful charm that only the wilderness can bring, a freshness of air, and a quiet of soul that is the special gift of solitude.

Beyond Baihar, which is three days' march from Balaghat, the *sal* forests begin. The change of scenery is striking. The leafless forest is replaced by the gentle green of the freshly budded *sal*. But there is little monotony about those forests, though the trees are mainly of the one species. There are hillsides of bamboos and great open valleys where the frosts kill the yearly growth each winter. In spring those stunted shrubs send out a fresh crop of shoots, bright green in their foliage that bravely venture on another contest with the stunting action of the frost. The result is vast areas of valleys clothed in low green shrubs a few feet in height. Here and there one of them by some special effort, or by the chance of luck, has succeeded in putting on sufficient growth in a season to get above

the layer of frost that clings to the bottoms. Once started, the upward growth is fast, and although the side shoots would still be cut back, leaving a pencil-shaped tree like an Italian poplar, the fortunate tree stands proudly over its fellows sheltering its neighbours from the common danger and helping them in their turn to win in the struggle with the frost.

The general effect is beautiful beyond words, the long valleys, flanked by green slopes, lead the eye over the sea of thickly packed stunted shrubs, the sun shining on the young leaves. Poplar-like *sal* trees stand as sentinels over it all, some forming little promontories into the valley where slightly higher ground runs from the sides of the hills half-way across the lower ground. The picture of these verdant valleys is framed by dark walls of the high forest along the edge of the hills.

Here is the home of the *bara singha* or swamp deer. Black buck stray in little herds among the green shoots. Along the *nalas* where there is often a fringe of tree growth that somehow has escaped the frost, and shade and water in plenty, tigers lie. In the evenings the *sambur* venture from the sanctuary of the tree forest to feed on the green shoots and grasses of the open spaces.

At Supkhar I found my new D.F.O. with a party of ladies. I am afraid I bored them, as within a week I was sent down to the plains again to supervise the passing of railway sleepers by an officer of the railway company that was buying them.

The journey back should have taken five days,

but it lasted longer. I was held up at Muki with my first experience of the forest officer's enemy, malaria. This delayed me for three days. I had the usual high temperature, shivering fits, perspiration, and the drop to the subnormal. Then I resumed my marches.

The sleeper-passing job took me up to the break of the rains and it was about as dull a job as one could wish for. The railway officer would inspect each sleeper ; when he found one not good enough he rejected it. Some had dry rot, others had big cracks, a few had knots in the timber where such things are inconvenient. We had gentle argument over each sleeper with which he found fault. Sometimes, but not often, I persuaded him to change his mind. I suppose that I did some good. Someone had to be there in any case. It was monotonous work, and I began to feel that I was earning my pay. I tied up kills for tiger and panther and succeeded in killing two of the latter. My companion took no interest in *shikar*, indeed we had little in common. He was one of those rather abnormal people who think that because they are deeply religious themselves all the rest of the world is wicked. His Hindustani was beyond me. I knew by then enough of the vernacular to make a coolie do what I wanted, and do it quickly. My talk may have been coarse and lacking in grammar, but it was the language of the camp and the coolie ; it was understandable. His was refined, or so I thought, full of high-sounding phrases that would pass well in the courts of upper

India but had no meaning to our simple southern coolies. Frequently I had to interpret for him.

I am not wholly heathen; but his religion irritated me. He inferred so often that I was as much doomed as Dives, while his own hopes were as assured as those of Lazarus, that I tackled him about it one day.

"Why do you always make out," I asked him, "that you are bound to be saved while I am necessarily certain of damnation?"

He thought for a moment before answering.

"It is said in the Bible," he replied, "that all those who suffer persecution shall be saved."

"Well," I asked, "what about it? Nobody has persecuted you."

"Indeed, they have," he told me. "Before I was seconded to the railway, I was in a military mess for three years."

He was a sapper.

After he left, I remained on at the railway depot with orders to stay there, seeing to the fire protection of the surrounding forests until the rains made them safe. That year the monsoon was very late and the heat was terrific. I was fortunate in having the rest-house at Lanita for a dwelling.

There was the building of a tank to be supervised. I knew nothing about building dams or the strains to which they are subject. As I have said before, I learnt little about engineering at Coopers Hill, but found in India that such knowledge was expected of me. That dam burst within a week of the arrival of the monsoon!

Fire protection was another matter. I had learnt in Chanda the system of complete protection which in that district had been reduced to a fine art. The forests were divided into large sections by means of broad cleared fire lines. At convenient distances along these lines there were fire watchers' *nakas*—platforms erected high above the ground, roofed in against the weather, from which the lonely fire watcher could look out across the forests for the smoke of approaching fires. In Chanda they were not content with a mere look-out. Every day a *chit* would be sent in the circuit of the lines, each man passing it on to the next. It would leave in the morning and if all was well return in its cleft stick to the ranger or forester in charge at sunset, having travelled as much as fifty miles in the day. Each watcher was responsible for the cleaning of the line that he traversed, and woe betide that man if any inflammable material was found on the line by which a fire might cross. If there was a man-eating tiger about those men carried their lives in their hands. At night they had the security of their lofty perches. By day they ran risks. There is a story told of Sir Peter Clutterbuck when he was in charge of the Chanda forest division. I do not know if it is true, but I believe it to be. He was camping, they say, near Sironcha when word reached him by the line of fire watchers that one of them had been taken by a man-eating tiger some fifty miles away. He started off at once, travelling all night, riding some of the way and walking the rest. He

reached the place where the man had been killed within twenty-four hours of his death, sat up over the corpse and killed the tiger.

In Balaghat they had a system known as partial protection. The lines were cleared, but there was no system of watcher's patrols. The result was complete failure. The forests were of no great value, it is true, and the larger trees were not burnt; but all the younger trees that should, in the natural course of time, grow into large timber were destroyed. This happened year after year.

Every day there was some fire or other near my camp and I had to go out with the idea of extinguishing it. It was a hopeless task, with two or three fires raging at the same time we had not enough men to fight them, all we could do was to counter-fire up-wind from one of the fire lines or a river. We could see columns of smoke in almost every direction by day and at night the surrounding hills were marked with long thin lines of flames that flickered and waned in their progress up the hills. From long distances one could hear the explosion of hollow bamboos, and the sudden roar of flames as they reached the denser thickets.

A year or two later the system of so-called partial protection was rightly abandoned. The forests were either properly protected or burnt early in the season when, not being so dry, the damage was less.

I learnt a lot from those fires. It was hard work putting them out, or trying to, and monotonous writing reports on them. In each case I

had to report on the cause of the fire. Never could one be certain enough to give a satisfactory reason, but in most cases it was probably pure carelessness on the part of a villager.

Officially the rains are due on the fifteenth of June. That year they never broke until the first of July, and the heat was awful. I had not felt a spot of rain since my arrival in India the previous November. Every day one would see dust-storms in the distance ; leaden clouds with dark pencil lines leading to the earth looking like cascades of rain ; nothing but shadows. With the gathering of clouds, the heat became yet more oppressive ; it was bottled up ; the air was stagnant. A P.W.D. officer joined me for the last few days of my stay. We slept in the open, of course. The sheets were hot and the pillows so soaked in our perspiration that we had to turn them two or three times in the night. Even in the morning the ground was hot to the bare feet. On the last day of June the Deputy Commissioner joined us, and that night we were as cheery as it is possible to be in such awful climatic conditions. The clouds grew bigger and darker in hue as we watched them anxiously, hoping for the long-delayed rain.

I remember on the first of July walking from the railway station back to the rest-house, and passing over the causeway that spanned the small *nala*. How absurdly large it looked in that sun-scorched land of withered grasses and leaves ! It was a mockery to suppose that water ever flowed along that course, or ever would.

At midday the sun went out and the heat became almost worse. But there was a change. There was something new in the midday wind. It was still a scorching blast, it still made the window-panes of the rest-house unbearably hot, but there was a damp feeling of softness in the air, a perspiring greasy feeling. We heard thunder, but that was nothing new. Thunder had mocked us loudly for the last week. The Deputy Commissioner opened the door, letting in the blast of a furnace. We protested loudly.

" Here it comes," he said, leaving the door wide open. Hitherto we had only opened it at night to let in the less hot air to be bottled up in the morning for the day's use. Now he left it wide open. More, he opened the window. Going out into the verandah, we heard a dull rumbling roar. The higher hills were covered with cloud and a strong wind blew from them towards us. It was heavily charged with moisture and there was the rank smell of rain on parched earth. One or two large drops flicked the dust in front of the rest-house. There was the roar of close thunder, and suddenly the rain came down in bucket-loads. Never before had I seen such a downpour. It continued till nearly sundown, and in the great stillness of the evening, when the fury of the storm had passed away, we went towards the railway station. We only got half-way, the causeway had disappeared under a raging torrent of dark muddy water.

In the space of a few hours the country had

changed from a land scorched and arid with a shade temperature of over 120° Fahr. to one of flowing rivers and floods and a temperature of about 70° Fahr.

That night we dined in the verandah listening to an orchestra of frogs that croaked and squeaked their joy in the marsh below us. Heaven knows that we wanted the rain, but our prayers could have been nothing to those of the frogs now proclaiming their thanks to heaven.

Next day the waters had subsided enough for us to reach the railway station and take train for Balaghat.

A month later the meteorological department in Simla published the monsoon forecast!

In Balaghat I learnt more of the mysteries of office work, which seemed to me to consist mainly in signing letters written by the Babus, checking figures on forms and trying to find suitable answers to objection statements. None of it was thrilling. The station was dull; there was no club where the four or five Europeans could meet in the evening, and very little tennis. There was not even hockey or golf. The station was not healthy and our main diversion was to drill. That was amusing. A mounted infantry corps had been formed for the province and a staff sergeant came to the station to put us through the riding school. There were only three of us; I rode my mare, the policeman rode a gelding, while the stallion that the P.W.D. man brought out gave us all the thrills that we needed.

With the opening of the camping season in November I went to the higher plateau to mark *sal* trees for felling. And it was in this work that I had my first real acquaintance of the Baigas. Later, in the Bilaspur District, I was to see a lot of these delightful people. In 1905 the world was still in what future generations will call the horse age, and Baiga posterity will know as the pre-match age. I consider myself lucky to have seen as much of these people as I did before they, too, are spoilt by our civilizing education and turned from truthful and natural savages into imitation Europeans.

In England if one sees anything that has been thrown aside along the country roads and lanes, and heaven knows there is plenty, the odds are that it is an empty cardboard box that once held cheap cigarettes, probably somewhere near it one will find the portrait of a film star or a coupon, the collection of a sufficient number of which will enable the smoker to buy more cigarettes ; those cardboard boxes and coupon cards seem to me to be a normal feature of our English country-side. It is a feature that irritates.

In 1905 the main feature of the roads in the Baiga country of Balaghat was the large number of short lengths of split bamboo that were left alongside the roads. There was often a short peg left in the cleft of the bamboo to keep the split open, and always across the middle of the bamboo over the cleft there would be the marks of friction. There were also numerous pieces of dry

wood left about in which small hollows had been rubbed. These were not so conspicuous as the cleft bamboos, but the discerning eye could see just as many ; they became more frequent as one went higher into the hills and deeper into the *sal* forests which are the home of the Baigas.

Those sticks and bamboos were the matches of the aborigines. Ask a Gond to make fire, and watch him. He will select a dry bamboo and cut it with his axe into a length of about a foot, leaving a knot at one end to prevent it splitting right down. Then he will push the blade of his axe into one end and split the bamboo, driving in a wooden peg to keep it open. Into the cleft he will push a small piece of dry tree-cotton. Then he will take another bamboo, also dry and of about the same length, and split it in half. He will take one of these half edges, and while holding the first piece firmly to the ground with his toes, he will vigorously rub the sharp edge of the second bamboo across the cleft of the first above the place where he put the tinder of dry tree-cotton. There is soon smoke, and on seeing it he will rub the harder till there is more. Then he drops his half bamboo and blows on the tinder, and opening the cleft will shake it out smouldering. It is very simple and takes not more than three minutes in the hands of an expert. Anyone can do it with two pieces of dry wood and cotton-wool. That was the method generally favoured by the Gonds.

The Baiga did it differently. He cut a small

hollow about the size of a shilling in the middle of a dry piece of wood, into this he would place a few pieces of grit, then he would take a thin, dry, sharpened bamboo, insert the pointed end into the hollow of the wood and revolve it quickly by brisk rubbing between the palms of his hands. The wood-dust formed by the friction of the point in the hollow soon smouldered into fire. The Baiga method took longer, and I found was very rough on the palms of the hands of anyone not used to manual labour.

Bamboos are a great factor in Indian village life. They are used for house building, matting for floors, fencing, wattle work of all kinds, axe handles, ropes and many other things, including buckets and water pipes. It is hard to conceive an Indian village without bamboos, from the sale of which the forest department made a considerable amount of revenue.

The jungle man is never without his axe. Not the heavy weapon of Europe, but a light axe made by the iron-workers of the country of soft steel that will not chip on the hard bamboos and wood of the country. His axe is as necessary to the forest man as a knife is to a gardener, only more so. It is the means of his livelihood as well as his weapon of defence against the wild beasts of the country. A great author, who I am told never visited the C.P., describes the Gond as a man who kills his quarry by throwing his axe at it. A pardonable error on the part of one with perhaps the greatest gift of writing in our times.

But it does not excuse others who have had the opportunity of studying the Gonds. The very last thing that the Gond will part with is his axe. I have lived the best years of my life among the jungle men of the C.P. and I have never yet seen one of them throw his axe at a bird or animal. He has more sense, keeping it for close engagement when he can be most certain of its use. Their skill in the use of their axe is very great. Two or three of them will have a giant tree down in no time. Whether it be the cutting down of trees or bamboos, the severing of thick climbers, the whittling of a stick, the splitting of staves, the carving of meat, the killing of a wounded beast, or any other job, the axe is brought into use.

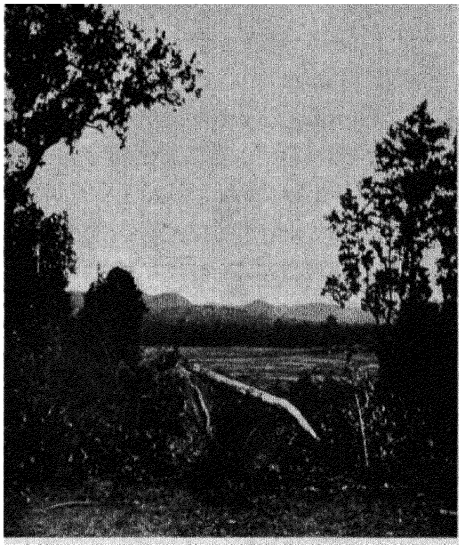
But anything to do with digging is beneath the Baiga's contempt, and it is so indeed with most of the jungle men. When we made out our programmes for a possible famine and its relief, we found road work for the men of the plains and cultivators accustomed to the hoe; but for the jungle man the axe. Tree cutting, climber cutting or bamboo clearing—there was plenty of it to be done. It was only a question of money which in a famine was always available in abundance from a paternal government.

I spent two months selecting, marking and registering trees amongst the Baigas in the *sal* forests. I had with me the usual contingent of native servants. Cook, cook's mate, bearer, sweeper, *dhobie* for laundry work, *sais* and half a dozen cartmen in charge of the transport. They loathed those

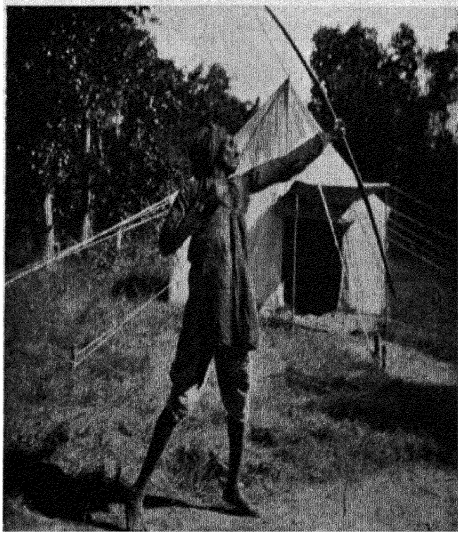
solitary jungles as much as I loved them. Within a week of my arrival there the trouble began. My cook said that we had run out of flour and potatoes. So I sent back for more. Then the paraffin oil gave out. I sent thirty miles for another tin from the Baihar bazaar. That was upset almost as soon as it came. Then I read the riot act. I told my followers that I had a job to do and that no matter what happened, I had no intention of leaving those forests until the work was finished. The less trouble they gave me, the sooner I should finish. I did all I could to make them comfortable, and once they realized that I meant business they gave up the struggle.

After Christmas I was sent along the foot of the hills to inspect the fellings in the coppice *coupes*. By March I was at Sulsuli seeing to the building of a new rest-house ; then I went on to Dhiri Mangli on the extreme south-east of the division to make the alignment of a road that was to enable the bamboos of that area to be extracted into the neighbouring native state of Khairagarh. Here I was working with a party of Gonds and took the opportunity to learn a few words of their language, which amused them immensely.

Dhiri Mangli, where the road was to start, is a very small village in a hollow on the top of a hill overlooking Khairagarh State. Around it is a huge area of bamboo forest, almost waterless in the hot weather, and devoid of game. The reason of the scarcity of game was obvious when after a long tramp through the forest I inspected the only



A FOREST CLEARING AT ACHANAKMAR



A BOWMAN OF THE BAIGA COUNTRY

water-hole in the place. Over it I found two lofty *machans*, the home by night of the local poachers who waited there for the unfortunate animals that came to drink. That was by no means an isolated case in that district or any other. Its frequency is one of the principal causes of the disappearance of game in many parts of India, yet what can one do? Sack the forest guard in charge of the beat? I tried it more than once. The man appealed and was reinstated. Transfer him to a more unpleasant place? Unfortunately, the crime was usually committed in the most out-of-the-way places, from which the forest subordinate responsible would be only too delighted to be transferred. So long as low-paid forest officials can double their income from poachers' bribes the practice will continue, unless a suitable punishment can be devised and local officials are backed up by those in high places.

The first thing in my road work was to spy out the land. There was already a very rough track down the hill, but not good enough for my pony. There were no maps to help me, a fact which necessitated a personal reconnaissance. So, starting in the very early morning, I walked the distance of fifteen miles down to the plains. I shall never forget that march there and back The men with me lagged behind, finally I left them and went on alone. It was very hot and I ran out of water, my tongue went dry and I realized what real thirst was. Having reached my objective I drank at a well, rested in the shade of a leafy

tree, and then started back. My followers, who were supposed to show me the way, had simply sat down and waited for me to return. I don't blame them, it was the most comfortable way of working in the heat. I reached camp again at Dhiri Mangli late at night, had the most glorious drink of my life, and then went down with fever.

Having obtained a rough knowledge of the lie of the land, the real work of the road alignment began. Bearing in mind the maximum gradient that I was ordered not to exceed and armed with dumpy-level and prismatic compass we cleared the jungle along the line, marking it on the map as we progressed. A dumpy-level is not an easy implement to use in jungle country, it is clumsy, and the jungle growth has to be cleared away before one can get a sight on the measuring staff through the telescope. The hillside was steep and it was difficult for a person with no experience of the work to keep below the maximum gradient between the contours without going away from the direction that one wanted to attain. The corners of the zigzags were an awful problem ; it was comparatively easy to keep within the limits of gradient when taking a straight line, but one had to make the road for carts to go along it and be able to turn the corners. A difficulty that I was not taught to overcome at Coopers Hill. One can do a lot, of course, if one can tunnel and cut through obstacles, but that is expensive and therefore out of the question.

Then there was the religious question, which

always seems to crop up in a God-fearing country like India, although roads and religion would seem to have little concern with one another.

One takes the alignment along quite merrily, the men clear the jungle ahead and it is only a question of having a sufficient range of vision to take a sight along the instrument: a large tree with grey bark obstructs the view.

"Cut that tree down," you yell at the axe men.

Everyone seems to find something else more important to do. I have noticed the same sort of thing when playing tennis and the balls are nearly all collected near the net, someone has to go forward to bring them to the server, yet everyone seems to think it necessary to look for imaginary balls behind the back line.

"Cut the tree."

The coolies are busy cutting beyond and out of sight. They are called back, but nothing will induce them to cut that particular tree. As well ask the Archbishop of Canterbury to blow up his cathedral, or to try to take a road through the middle of St. Paul's, it simply is not done. No Christian would do that! nor will the jungle man cut down a sacred *pipal* tree. So we go back and start again, edging down the slope a little more or a little less until religious obstacles are past.

I finished the job in time, pegged out the line of the road and sent in a beautiful map to the D.F.O. I don't believe that the road was ever made, but the experience taught me a lot that was very useful later on in my service.

We found in our wanderings a place where bears came in the evening to eat the sweet petals of the *mohua* flowers fallen from a large tree; thither I betook myself at the end of the day's work to see if I could kill a bear. One of the Gonds carried my cartridge-bag for me; with my 500 express ready we waited while the sun set. We had not long to wait. As we sat on the steep side of a dry *nala* with a low hill at our back, we heard something shuffling towards us in the dry leaves. The bear? No; three of them coming down the opposite slope, and only a few yards off! I fired at the leading one and knocked him over; the rest came on while the leader stood up and looked round to see who had hit him. I knocked him over again with my second barrel, then turned to the Gond for more cartridges. Most stories of big game have records of the devotion of native gun bearers. This one was not true to story-book type. He was doing record time up a tree while all three bears came straight at me. There was only one thing to do, and I did it as fast as I knew how. I ran up the hill, my Gond friend shouting words of encouragement to me as I went. I scrambled as far and as fast as my breath would let me, then stopped (not because I was brave, but because I could go no farther), while I clubbed my rifle (to which I am as devoted as the Gond is to his axe) and turned to fight. The bears, luckily for me, fled down the hill again, cheered on by the Gond in the tree. The latter came down when he was quite sure it was safe to do

so, appearing to be gratified at the entertainment, not the least ashamed of his desertion of me and full of praises at my performance. He seemed to think it funny. My dignity was hurt. But I had learnt my lesson; never to leave my reserve of cartridges with a follower, and always to reload if possible after firing the first barrel. An empty rifle in the jungle can be as dangerous as the gun which the home sportsman thinks is unloaded.

Bears are the most dangerous beasts in the jungle. We had far more people mauled by them and killed, too, than by any other animals. He is a stupid beast, the bear. Half blind and with little sense of direction, he becomes panic-stricken when suddenly meeting men, and instead of clearing out like a sensible creature he goes straight in, generally scalping his victim and making a horrible mess of his face. No wonder jungle men fear the bear more than any other animal.

On another occasion I was getting my instruments ready for the day's work, setting up the dumpy-level where we had left off the day before, when one of the Gonds found a sounder of pig rootling about in the middle of an open glade. The very thought of pork fills the jungle man's soul with joy. Here it was ready to be killed by a kind Sahib.

"You keep back," I said, "and leave this to me." Abandoning my precious instruments, I took my time over the stalk, waiting until the unsuspecting pigs were near enough for me to make certain of two, one with each barrel, then

I fired. Meanwhile, the sounder had been surrounded by the Gonds. At the sound of my shot men closed on the herd of swine from the cover of the surrounding forest, those who had their axes used them on the young porkers to good purpose, those whose job it was to carry my precious implements had either left their axes at home for the day or thought that a dumpy-level or a survey staff was a better weapon. Whatever the reason, I saw with horror that they were using the precious implements as weapons of offence. Imagine a man trying to knock over a pig with a dumpy-level ! Fortunately, perhaps, the pig got his blow in first. The man went over with a slight cut, the boar went on his victorious way rejoicing, and I was thankful to find that the level was not damaged.

The survey work was finished in time for me to go in to Nagpur for my departmental exams. I got through the lower standards for Urdu and Hindi, as well as procedure and accounts. Then I returned to the jungles in the Sonawani Range, where I had more road work to do, as well as routine inspection of fire lines and forests generally.

Here there was a man-eating panther about. A brute that went into the villages at night, in some cases even getting through the thatch of the houses to kill his victim. I had the idea in those days that a man-eating tiger or panther would not attack a European. This was not a matter of pride of race so much as the general impression that such beasts would not attack a smelly

meat-eater. Later I learnt that my impression was wrong. So the rumour of this panther did not worry me, and I slept in the open air a few yards away from my tent in order to get the full benefit of the cool night breezes. Camp was fixed about a hundred yards away from the village.

It was one of those wonderful quiet nights of the jungle in the hot weather, when there is not a breath of wind and sound travels for great distances over the tree-tops. At first it was hot, the bed was uncomfortably warm until the soothing coolness of night prevailed over the stagnant heat of the evening, after which the soft subdued scent of forest flowers in which the bees had hummed was, at the whim of unsuspected air currents, oppressed by the acid smell of wood smoke and cow-dung from the near-by village. There was some little talk in the village while the jungle people composed themselves for slumber. But soon the last murmurings died away and at the same time a slight chill came over the land which was now in that deep silence that comes with night over an Indian forest. Far away I could hear the mournful cry of the lonely owl ; the nightjars had gone to bed. I turned my pillow, pulled up a sheet, then slept that deep sleep which the jungle brings.

I woke with a start. Someone had screamed. The scream continued. It sounded awful. A few seconds after I had been awakened by the noise of the first cry of terror, the whole village was yelling its panic. The sudden uproar of some five

hundred people screaming in terror of their lives in the black night gave a prickly feeling in the back hairs and an inclination almost to join in the din which my camp followers were now doing. Jumping out of bed and hastily loading my rifle I ran to the village. Inside the huts every man, woman and child raised such a din that I had difficulty in making myself heard.

"What is it?" I shouted.

They howled all the more.

Then as suddenly as the uproar rose, there was silence again. I found the headman's house.

"What is the trouble?" I asked.

"Panther!" said a frightened voice from within the wattled walls.

"Where?" I inquired, holding the rifle ready for whatever might come.

No one knew. No one had seen it.

Someone had dreamed; and the rest were frightened.

Such panic is a dreadful thing to hear, and taught me the unholy terror that a man-eating beast brings into the lives of those simple defenceless people. I heard similar uproars from the same cause later on in my service, but it was the raiding of a camp or *sarai*. That was bad enough, but a whole village screaming in terror is a thing not easily forgotten.

After aligning another road in the Sonawani Range I was transferred to the Conservator's office in Nagpur. The second road was naturally a better piece of work than the first because I had

learnt something that I ought to have learnt at Coopers Hill. I believe that the second road was made, but there is no record of the first; the place is probably still roadless jungle as wild and charming as I left it.

They say that the modern forest officer does most of his work from the seat of a motor-car. One thing is certain, no car could go along the first road aligned by me.

CHAPTER V

A DIVISIONAL FOREST OFFICER'S WORK

THERE is nothing beautiful about Nagpur, and it is hard to believe that there ever could have been. In 1906 when officers lived on the Ridge or at Takli in thatched roofed houses the place was not quite so bleak as it is now since the Civil Station has been moved to the modern bungalows built on the P.W.D. mode of architecture of brick and tiles.

Wide roads run between bungalows with bleak compounds surrounded by wire fencing making great pretence at protecting the brown dead roots of grasses that have survived the raids of thieving cattle. Sometimes there is a pathetic effort at a garden, but the gardener seems to have known from the beginning that it was too hopeless to get anything beautiful to grow in such an abomination of desolation, and to have concentrated his best efforts on producing beautiful patterns in white stones and coloured tiles. The gardener's job is to produce flowers. They are always there for the table and the wise employer does not ask where they are grown.

Huge secretariat buildings, standing in bare

brown plains full of dust and glare, show the same P.W.D. style of architecture as the bungalows. Bricks, tiles and pillars, from which the glare jumps back and hits the beholder in the eye. It makes one feel hot and tired to think of the place. There are a few trees of poor growth scattered about, but they stand little chance of development even if the soil and climate permitted it ; leaves are precious to the goatherd and the half-starved Nagpuri goats.

A few sun-scorched hills circle the station. An optimistic forest officer tried to make trees grow upon them at great expense and with poor results. It is doubtful if even now, after thirty years, any of those prospective forest giants are more than fifteen feet high ; and the bare spaces between them are great.

There is green herbage for three or four months of the year after which the emaciated cattle seem to keep alive on the roots of grass, waste paper and what they can steal from gardens. They are the best jumpers of wire fences that I have seen.

Hot, brown, bare, dusty and glaring. That is Nagpur. It is said that an unfortunate Burman was once convicted of murder in the Nagpur courts. In spite of the wretched man's pleadings for a quick and sudden end, he was condemned to a long term of imprisonment in the Nagpur gaol. The miserable fellow pleaded in vain that he would far rather be hanged than endure such an awful sentence. The judge was a hard-hearted man.

Apparently the sole reason for Nagpur being retained as the capital of the province is its historical

associations. It always was the capital and, India being a conservative country, it always will be. Another reason given is that the new secretariat buildings have been built there. Anyone seeing them might think that an excellent excuse for deserting the place.

The old fort of Sitabaldi is associated with one of the most glorious battles in the history of our army in which the Marhattas were defeated by a British force infinitesimally small compared with their opposing hosts. The fort is still occupied by an unfortunate officer and a company of men sent over from the neighbouring cantonment of Kampti. Beyond the fort there is little romance about Nagpur.

Socially, the place is desperately official. At the most private dinner party there is absurd punctiliousness about the official order in which one goes to table and who sits on the right hand and who on the left.

Once the bachelors of Nagpur gave a dance in return for the hospitality which they had received from the married ladies. To arrange the dance certain ladies were asked to help, which they did willingly and successfully. Unfortunately one of the bachelors thought that he and the other hosts would like their guests to know who had helped them to their better enjoyment. So he drew up a list of the ladies who had kindly helped. Poor fool, he did not know the trouble that was to come. In drawing up his list he forgot the rules of official precedence ; the names went down in such order

as they occurred to him. One proud matron found her name below that of another whose husband was junior to her own, and official complaint was made. The Province heard of it, so did *Truth*, and the world was the merrier for it.

The trouble about Nagpur is that practically all the British residents are officials ; every man knows his place, being proud or humble accordingly.

I am afraid that my description of the Capital of the C.P. is unkind to its features and its people. It was rather unique ; other big Indian stations had a healthy mixture of civil, military and commercial folk, but in Nagpur it was all civil. Even the parson was an official ; also the Bishop, with an exalted place allotted him in the precedence list.

Calling had to be done on all people of importance. It took a pretty big hand of cards to get round the station, since all ladies had to be called on by the new-comer and also all officials of importance. Their importance could be gauged from the precedence list with which every office was supplied. Some folk, indeed most of them, had boxes put up in front of their bungalows to say that they were not at home ; then all that one had to do was to drop in the requisite number of cards, thank a kind Providence and go on to the next. All this had to be performed in " store " clothes in the middle of a hot glaring day. Calling was considered so important that a junior officer could always get away from office in the middle of the day in order to carry out this supremely important duty. Some folk like dining out in

black tail-coats, stiff collars, and boiled shirts in a disgustlingly hot climate with people who only ask them from a sense of duty. Others are affronted when, having toiled round with cards in the heat of the day, no notice is taken of them. I liked dining with my friends, particularly if there were not so many that one had to shout to be heard talking, also if I was senior enough to stand a chance of sitting next to a lady, and lastly if I could go home at a reasonable hour. That was not so easy as one might think. None could go until the "senior lady" had taken her departure; after which there was a scramble to escape unless there was a particularly dangerous second senior lady whom one had to wait for. Eleven o'clock is quite late enough for a man who works for his living to go home; there is nothing more maddening than having to wait long past that hour till some wretched woman realizes that the health, efficiency and happiness of the rest of the people in the room depends on her immediate departure.

All of which sound very ungrateful for hospitality received. But the formalities went too far. In those days (and for all one knows it still continues) government officers working in one another's offices, seeing one another and their wives every evening in the club, and playing tennis together most days in the week, must needs make formal calls upon one another again when they went to and from the hill station at Pachmarhi.

Beneath this veneer of absurdities there was to be found the most wonderful kindness and hospitality

of any country in the world. Real hospitality, and the greatest of all kindness. I have had to go to most stations in the Province at some time or the other, but it was very rarely indeed that I was allowed to stay the night except in the house of some newly found friend or an old one.

To see Anglo-India at its real value one should look behind the scenes when a fellow countryman is ill. Those gentlewomen give up everything if a sick man needs help, no matter who he is. They will nurse a man whom they dislike for weeks, dragging him from the very gates of death. The kindness and hospitality of the East is traditional, but one has to experience it to know what the real thing is. If the women make themselves look foolish in the struggle up the ladder of precedence, what does it matter? We who know them place their merits far above those prescribed by an official publication.

Those were the days before the arrival of motor-cars when the smart man kept a smart horse. The alternative was driving to the club in the evening behind a pair of trotting bullocks. The gay young man kept a *tum-tum* and drove with a rattle and a swing. The really dashing thing was to drive a tandem, and quite a few did, since young officers all had ponies and played polo. Some went pig-sticking. But all had horses of sorts and had to pass an examination in riding before being sent to India. Things were very different after the war had marked the end of the horse age. And although Nagpur itself moved its official residential

quarters to where a new town arose, its bleakness and glare remain.

Water sanitary conveniences were unknown, and I am told that the community is still dependent on the services of " sweepers."

I cannot imagine anything more dull than an existence in such a place with no prospect beyond the sentence of living the rest of one's working life going regularly to office at ten o'clock and returning again at four. Even with modern amenities such as fans, an office in the tropics is indescribably fuggy. There are unfortunates in the Accountant General's office and in the Secretariat with no prospect of anything better. No wonder their outlook is soured, and that their pleasure is to send unpleasant letters and objection statements to those more fortunately placed in the outer districts.

For the short time of two months that I was in the Conservator's office, I found the work interesting and learnt more about office work than I ever learnt in a divisional office. It is a great education to be able to see all the letters that come from the districts to the head office and the replies to them. One can learn so many people's points of view. /

In every office wherever it is situated, the last half-hour of one's time before going home is devoted to signing endless papers, copied by the faithful Babus. After that it is home and tea, then tennis or golf, and in those old days, polo.

So far, responsibility had not been thrust upon me. But in October, I was put in charge of the Nagpur-Wardha forest division. It is hardly forest,

merely thorny scrub of the sort that one hears of as surviving on the edges of large deserts. The exception was the Pench Valley which was real forest and full of tigers. I do not think that I have anywhere seen so many tigers' pug-marks as I did in the bed of the Pench River one early morning.

No doubt my activities as Divisional Forest Officer, temporarily in charge, were carefully watched. On relief, soon after Christmas, I was sent back to Balaghat on the old business of stock mapping which I did for about a month till I received a wire saying that Hobday, the D.F.O. in Bhandara, had been murdered and that I was to take over charge. I had passed all my departmental examinations and had a good deal of experience on how to look after myself in camp, but Bhandara was a severe test for my abilities.

Hobday, who had been murdered, was camping with his wife and son some way from headquarters. He had spent the morning in the forest and was picnicking in the middle of the day with his family. He had with him a large party of forest subordinates. One of them had got hold of Hobday's gun and walking up behind him as he ate his lunch had shot him. The rest of the forest subordinates had fled, deserting Mrs. Hobday. The murderer cleared off and, after shooting some fowls in the village, gave himself up. It was one of those crimes that one hears of so often in the East, due to excitement perhaps or to some petty grievance. The really bad part of the business was the way that all those

forest guards who were with Mrs. Hobday ran away. I had quiet instructions to make life uncomfortable for them. Also I was invited to see the murderer hanged, but declined, that not being a forest officer's job. We have no trade union, but I was quite certain that I did not go to India to see a poor devil hanged. But, I dealt with the forest guards and tightened up the discipline of the division.

It seems hardly necessary to mention these petty details of an early career except that readers can judge for themselves the effect on the character of a boy almost straight out from home being told to play the bully. It was necessary, of course, but it was the job of an older man. I had to play the part of the martinet, and the experience affected my character and my dealings with the natives for the rest of my service. The slightest breaches of discipline had to be punished heavily. The bribery and corruption that went on was a revelation to my young mind, and I was the sport of the anonymous petition writer as well as the recipient of complaints from every man who had an enemy. It is a great thing to be young and full of zeal.

By the end of the camping season in June the discipline of the division was pretty good. One lesson that the young man going to India in those days, and still more at the present time, had thoroughly drummed into him was never to hit a native. I only broke that rule once and most people would think it justified. I was touring, towards the end of the hot weather, in a jungle

where I knew that there had been a great deal of timber thieving, probably with the connivance of the forest guard whose business it was to stop it. Not a single case had been reported from his beat, although everywhere there were signs of the felling of timber to which that particular jungle was closed. The forest guard had no explanation to offer of the dreadful condition in which I found the forests of his beat. As I rode along a track of the forest I heard the sound of a man cutting timber and told the forest ranger to bring me the man who was felling. The guard went with him. A few minutes later they brought back with them a feeble old man who had been cutting dead firewood. Not a serious offence, if an offence at all. The Ranger came towards me, leaving the forest guard behind who was holding that decrepit old man under close arrest. As the two men approached the old man held out his two hands towards me in the attitude of prayer, after the manner of the East, begging for mercy. I had no intention of punishing him, but the forest guard, to show a belated zeal in the interests of the forests in his beat, hit the wretched man a most cruel blow from behind that sent him sprawling at my feet howling in terror. I helped him up, gave my horse in charge of the *sais*, cut a stout stick from a bush, and to the intense surprise of the forest guard gave him the beating that he deserved and that I should never have given him. He complained, of course, but I was lucky in having as my conservator a man of an understanding nature. No official notice was taken, and I had

learnt a valuable lesson. For all that, I should do the same thing again in like circumstances.

That first camping in full charge of a division was great fun. It makes a vast difference when one knows that the charge is more or less permanent and that there will be time to make a success of the job or prove a failure. There was plenty of work to do. I had a road to align, but there was the difference that I was responsible for the actual making of the road. Then Government insisted on tanks being made ; the idea being to provide water for grazing cattle, particularly in the years of scarcity or actual famine. These big ponds were really the work of an irrigation engineer. Their dams were earthen with a puddle of clay down their middles to keep them water-tight. We knew roughly what the rainfall was as well as the catchment area of land feeding the tank, from which it was possible in theory to work out the waste weir required to allow for the overflow. Naturally if water flows over an earth dam it is soon washed away. We did our best, but many of our dams went down-stream the first time there was a real cloud burst. That first tank that I made held water, which was a piece of luck. My new road led into the jungle past it, and before I left the division I had the satisfaction of seeing the pug-marks of tigers leading from the jungle down the hill to the tank where the beasts slaked their thirst. When I saw that in a place where tigers had not been seen before I felt that I had not lived in vain.

There was another tank that I made which gave even greater satisfaction. It was constructed right in the middle of the Gaikuri Range in a place where it is doubtful if any cattle would ever go. Government insisted on a tank being made, so I made it. It was a pretty big affair and held water. In the Gaikuri Range there was a herd of bison that ran the gauntlet every night in the hot weather when they went outside the forest limits for the only water available ; there poachers lay in wait for them hidden in cunning holes screened in the mud. When my new tank had been made and held water throughout the year, the bison drank in safety and the herd increased.

Then there was a working plan to be made in addition to routine duties. That involved a preliminary stock mapping of about eight hundred square miles of forest. The work was hard but interesting and real forestry. The best forest, likely to grow trees of value and big timber, was relegated to the " high forest " working circle, where for the next thirty years the treatment was to be " improvement fellings " in which only the rubbish was to be cut out, the object of management being to foster the more valuable growth. The rest went into the " coppice-with-standards " working circle which comprised most of the forests of the division.

We had to allow the public access to material for house building and firewood, and arrangements were made that the villagers always had some fellings available for their supplies within reasonable distance of their homes. So something like thirty

felling series were formed, each being divided up into thirty *coupes* of roughly the same area or yield, so that every year the same amount of timber and firewood would be on the market in each area served. The constant yield has a wonderful effect in stimulating a market. Timber merchants know where they are and can make their plans for years ahead. The advantages are obvious. A period of thirty years was fixed for the rotation because, although we did not know the rate of annual growth in those days, we felt that we were safe in concluding that thirty years after making a clean felling, except for about forty standards per acre of the best trees being left, there would be at least as much material on the ground again as there was at the first felling. Investigations that I made later in my service as Sylvicultural Research Officer showed that a shorter period would answer the same purpose and, of course, by giving quicker returns increase the yield. The main principle of forestry is to fell only as much as grows in a year so as not to encroach on capital. Thus, if a fully stocked wood is renewed in thirty years, then it is safe to cut one-thirtieth of the timber each year.

The division of my eight hundred square miles into thirty felling series of thirty *coupes* each was a big job. It meant dividing the forest up into nine hundred different *coupes* each yielding approximately the same amount of timber and firewood. Natural boundaries had to be made use of so far as possible. I received about seventy rupees a month extra pay for doing this job as well as

running the routine work of the division. I felt that I was earning my pay.

Normal routine work meant much marching and touring throughout the open season from November to June. During that time I very rarely saw another white man. One would start out with cook, butler, cook's mate, *saises*, sweeper, laundryman, orderlies, tent-pitcher and his assistant, and a number of cartmen or camelmen. The *mahout* and his assistant lived with the elephant. Five days in the week on the average one moved camp for ten or twelve miles, one tent going on ahead overnight with the cook. The Indian servant is a marvel, he goes out into camp for months at a stretch leaving his family behind, he is ready to sleep on the ground anywhere so long as he is given blankets, he has a meal ready for his master —and a good one too, at any time of the day within a few minutes of demand, and he is generally clean in his person and his clothing. The cook will travel all night and have breakfast ready the next morning. The men are ready to work at any time except the middle of the day, which is the time for sleep. It is a marvel that under these conditions the cook could make bread, but he always did, and good bread too.

The most invaluable of all the retinue was the camp clerk ; he was responsible for informing the range officer in advance where we expected to go so that arrangements could be made for our comfort ; he controlled the postal runners and the arrangements for sending the post to and from

headquarters in our own special bags; he read out the vernacular correspondence, copied urgent letters in camp, and did many little things to make everyone's life more comfortable. Then again the range staff took immense trouble to make our stay inside their particular charges as pleasant as possible. We seldom went without milk, in spite of difficulties in obtaining it, frequently fish was brought in from miles away. We lived practically on the country; eggs, chicken, milk, vegetables and most of the requirements for one's table coming from the villages on fair payment. All of which was arranged by the range officer and his staff working in conjunction with the camp clerk. A good camp clerk was everything. He generally was good, and we owe him a large debt of thanks.

There were occasions when the servants were a nuisance. One was very dependent on them for comfort, so that if there was trouble amongst them it meant trouble for oneself. Usually the presence of a liquor shop in a neighbouring village meant rows; but a good camp clerk could often wangle it that the liquor shop should be closed when the Sahib visited a village. The trouble about Indian servants when they manage to get hold of liquor is that they drink with the sole idea of becoming drunk, otherwise, of course, they do not consider that they are getting value for their money. When they are drunk they become quarrelsome and noisy, and a quarrel once started is not easily forgotten. The Indian is a proud man; whatever his caste there is always someone below him in social position,

and it is a terrible thing to look foolish before him. *Izzat*—reputation, position, means a lot with these people, who like to hold their heads high. Yet they can be supremely childish. Many a time has some servant bigger and more muscular than another come to me in floods of tears asking for my help because the smaller man has threatened to hit him. You never quite know where you are with them. A man may be on bad terms with his neighbour and deliberately smash the greater part of one's crockery in order to throw suspicion on his enemy. Although extraordinarily reliable in the matter of the service of meals, the charge of money, and one's general comfort, yet if a man has a grievance, imaginary or otherwise, against his master or anyone else in the camp he will break his contract and leave one in the lurch, no matter how far one is away from civilization; and it is only in the towns that the servants can be recruited. It is impossible to do all one's work, to march from one camp to another, and at the same time to cook one's own meals as well. There are at the most only one or two men in the camp who can or will cook a meal for a Sahib, and they are the cook and his assistant. The rest, no matter how low their caste, will have nothing to do with the Sahib's cooking pots. If the cook fails the Sahib must do it himself or go hungry.

I can remember so well an occasion when I was camped in a particularly wild part of the country near a forest village. The forest was a regular zoo for tigers, and I had in one day shot three of them

which my cook made the excuse for celebration with my precious whisky. It did not take him long to pick a quarrel with someone. I was making the most of that best half-hour of the day when one sits pleasantly tired in a camp chair between the tent and a fire just after sunset when the stars begin to show and a pipe tastes good and a whisky and soda better. It is the time for gentle reflection on the day's doings. Voices were suddenly raised, there was a crash of cooking pots thrown down, and my cook was before me speaking so fast that it was difficult to follow his words. At last he spoke clearly enough for me to follow him.

"No. He would not stand it any longer. He had had enough of it. He gave his resignation. He would go home."

His home was fifty miles away and there were probably some fifty tigers between our camp and where he meant to go. No, he would not consider a withdrawal. He had been insulted and had to consider his reputation. Not another night would he stay near the man who had insulted him. That was final. A tactful orderly took him away. The camp clerk told me with concern that the man really meant to go.

So I sent for the headman of my forest village. I knew well that no townsman cook would venture through that tiger-haunted jungle alone, particularly at night. The headman came.

"No one," I said, "is to leave the village to-night or to-morrow morning without my permission."

That settled it; no matter how drunk he was the

cook was not going to face tigers alone. By morning he was sober, and my invaluable camp clerk had given another example of his marvellous tact.

So far as the forest subordinates were concerned, discipline had to be strict. I took care to see that those who worked well received the promotion that they deserved while jumping heavily on the slackers. Naturally I made enemies. I had rather a savage dog in those days which a friend had passed on to me on retirement. Her name was Babby and she was a cross between a Rampur and a Banjara bitch. The dogs of the Banjara gypsies are notoriously savage. Babby accepted my friendship at once and that of the other dogs after a few skirmishes. But Babby would stand no nonsense. Her business was to bite strangers and to guard my cash-box. After dark I was a stranger from her point of view. No doubt she had the idea that no honest man wants to go to his cash-box at night ; once she was chained on to it there was no possibility of getting her off again until daylight, unless one wanted a severe bite. So there she remained. The other dogs who, of course, had to be tied up within the tent for fear of panthers were secured in the bathroom.

Babby was a huge bitch, a regular hound of the Baskervilles. It was very amusing to watch the pariah dogs when I rode through the villages on my marches. At first they would rush out at sight of a stranger, then swoop down with joy at my terrier dogs. Babby, who had a sense of humour, generally lagged behind, and it was great fun to

watch the pariah dogs as they suddenly came on this huge creature at the tail of the pack.

They grew suddenly quiet, stopped for a moment, then with an apologetic air retired quietly to their homes. One might almost hear them say :

" So sorry, madam. We did not know it was you. Hope we have not disturbed you with the noise of these others."

One morning my post brought me a letter addressed to " The Honourable Beast "—obviously me. I opened the letter which said that I would be shot in the same way that " Halfday Sahib " had been shot. A cheerful little note. It did not end with a " yours sincerely " or with anyone's signature. I took no notice of it, treating it with the contempt that one does all anonymous communications. That night Babby was poisoned. She died in harness chained to my office-box. Then I took the anonymous letter to the police, where the matter ended.

That was in the rainy season when regular touring in tents was out of the question. A month later I visited a rest-house on the railway where there was a community of manganese miners. I had no dogs with me ; they were rather a nuisance when travelling by train. The rest-house was of the usual Public Works type of the third class and I was glad to have the shelter. Rough thatch overhead was screened by a ceiling cloth over which the rats ran their steeplechases in the cool of the evening. Outside was a wide verandah with comfortable chairs and long leg-rests ; bugs lived in the chairs

waiting to feast on the weary traveller; hornets and large bees disputed the best place for rearing their young in the rafters and on the pillars of the verandah. An occasional lizard in search of the many insects that enjoyed the shade provided amusement. Inside and out the bungalow was furnished with bamboo matting which, serving as a carpet, covered a year's accumulation of dirt.

The night was hot, so I slept in the verandah. For once it was not raining. I always had a lamp burning somewhere near in case I had to get up in the night. No one likes groping about in the dark in that country of scorpions and deadly snakes. My bed was across the door of the room and about two feet out in the verandah, inside the room was my office box and the lamp. There was no other furniture.

Nine o'clock was my latest bedtime on tour and soon after getting under the mosquito net I was fast asleep.

I sleep pretty sound as a rule. It takes a very loud noise to wake me once I am "off," although I am sensitive to people or cats coming near my bed.

In the middle of the night I woke, hearing a scratching on the bamboo matting within the room. A rat, of course. Even a rat can be interesting, so I thought I would watch it for a while by the light of the lamp that shone in the room. Very gently so as not to disturb the creature I lifted the mosquito net. There was no rat; what I saw was a man stark naked, his body shining with oil, trying to prise open my office-box with a large knife.

Bulldog Drummond would no doubt have known what to do and have done it with great efficiency. But I am no Bulldog Drummond. I was not armed, there was no possible weapon within reach ; not that I thought of a weapon. I suppose I was only half awake.

"What are you doing there?" I asked my visitor. With a quick scrape and a click he withdrew the knife blade from under the lid of the box, then after a hasty glance round he came straight at me. I was lying on my right side and did the wrong thing. I tried to hit him with my right fist ; if I had heaved myself up with my right arm and hit with the left I might have reached him. As it was he dived under my fist and escaped past the foot of the bed into the darkness outside, where I was only too glad to see him go. That knife was a nasty-looking weapon. If, like some men in the East, I had slept with a revolver under my pillow I might have shot him, but I was far more likely to have shot myself by accident on some other occasion.

Thinking it over afterwards, I realized that the man had no other way of escape than past my bed and his body must have been oiled to prevent possible capture. Before he visited me he had succeeded in robbing an unfortunate manganese miner of his loose cash.

It took me three years to finish my working plan. In that time I had three different conservators, each with his own ideas of how it should be written. No sooner had I finished it to the satisfaction of

one than another came who wanted it changed. It was heartbreaking work. The last was a very human man. When he congratulated me on my work at the time of my transfer, he warned me that the period of playing the martinet would affect my character, and that, although my reputation for strictness would be of the greatest help to me elsewhere, I must guard against being too hard on my men. They were wise words. Yet I felt that those experiences did affect my character and outlook on my staff for the rest of my life.

CHAPTER VI

BILASPUR

FROM Bhandara to Bilaspur was a great change. The type of forest altered from mixed scrub with a little teak to the practically evergreen *sal*. The people wore different dress and spoke a new language. I never found the Mahrattas very forthcoming ; probably it was my own fault. The Chattisgarhis of Bilaspur were very different. They are a fine race, sturdy peasants of the plains, their women strong and upstanding. In the Mahratta districts the tendency is for people to avoid the Sahib and for the women of the villages to turn the other way on his approach. Not so the women of Chattisgarh ; they are ready to give information about the way, to chaff, and be chaffed in turn. For some reason the Englishman seems to be looked upon with less suspicion in the more eastern parts of the Provinces.

But the great difference between the two districts lay in their natural features. There were hills in Bhandara ; in Bilaspur there were mountains. Great quiet heights clad with their mantle of green forest with a pie-crust of cliff along the line of their crest, at dawn and sunset golden-red sprayed with the emerald green of overhanging creepers. Here

was no land of great lakes and still pools to fertilize a thirsty earth, no reservoir of quiet water saved from the torrents quickened by the anger of turbulent clouds. In a parched land it is natural that people should hold their rivers sacred, and the places where they spring, in the bosom of the mountains, veiled by the mists. Pious Hindus make pilgrimages to Amarkantah, whence waters flow to two great oceans. One must see the beauty of the place to realize their piety. Not for its great height is it nearer heaven, but for its peaceful solitudes whence mighty rivers spring, and hermits live shaded by fruitful mulberry trees, within the sounds of waterfalls.

In Bhandara we had to rely on the richly cultivated plains for our forest labour. Here in Bilaspur we had our own forest villages.

When the forests were originally reserved as government forest under the Forest Act there were within their borders a number of villages mostly of a temporary nature. The Gond is a good cultivator, and is prepared to settle down permanently on the land so long as he is given land worth cultivating. At Deosara, for instance, there was a big Gond village within the government forest boundaries, whose people, in addition to growing crops for their own food, did very well with their tobacco, which was famous. They cultivated their land at a very low rent, and were given by the forest department liberal advances for the purchase of seed for their crops, to keep them out of the hands of the money-lenders. In return these men

had to work for the forest department when required, which frequently happened, as we were entirely dependent for our labour in tree feeling and other forest work on these and other villages. It must be admitted that most of these settlements were there before the forests were notified as reserved. At any rate, most of the Gond villages situated on good rich land—the soil of Deosara is some of the richest that I have seen anywhere—were of old standing; but the forest department rule is mild and the people were quite content with their lot, indeed, one of our difficulties was to prevent too many people coming into such favoured spots. There were other settlements that owed their origin to the forest department; places where there had once been villages in ancient times and only required water facilities and ploughing to yield a rich crop. There are any number of these old clearings in the forest; in places there are even the lost cities of fiction, whose buildings are hidden away beneath a mass of creepers and twining roots of figs. Where we re-established these settlements we were the sole arbiters of the fate of those who lived in them, our rule was unquestioned; it was generally recognized in all cases, whatever the origin of the villages, that no individual had any right to be there except with the permission of the forest authorities. Formal permission had to be asked before a new-comer could settle on the land, and any man who misbehaved himself or refused to work when required for the forest department could be, and was, turned out. The legal right of

the department was never questioned, possibly because the forest man has no use for the law or lawyers, but more probably because forest officers generally took paternal care of the villagers entrusted to their charge.

The Gond is a cultivator of the soil, and when he finds good soil he stays on it. The Bhumea or Baiga is a different man altogether. He is the man for the axe, with the greatest contempt for the tillers of the soil ; he is the backwoodsman and the hillman and a roving creature within the limits of his forests, which are wide. Much of his food he gets from his skill as a trapper ; he is a cunning tracker and a fair shot with a poisoned arrow, but so clever and quiet as a stalker that he generally has for a mark something almost as big as the proverbial haystack. Since no man can live on meat alone, he has to rely on some sort of a crop to supplement his diet—but no digging or ploughing for him ! During the dry season he selects a few acres on the upper slope of the hills and cuts down all the trees, after reserving enough material to fence the clearing against wild animals, then he sets fire to the whole lot, generally burning the surrounding forest with it. There remains a heap of ashes and soil scorched to a fine tilth. On this the Baiga scatters his seed and the following rains complete a natural process. He has, of course, to watch over his crops to protect them against the deer and wild pigs, but that is a job after the Baiga's own heart. Not digging, the work of common cultivators, but occupation for a gentleman of leisure.

There are other little luxuries that the Baiga knows of in the jungle, which he can grub out with his axe, and uses to supplement his diet. There are wild fruits in plenty, some very nourishing roots, honey for the taking by brave men, and fungi that are delicious : which sometimes he brings in as gifts to his friends. One of the best meals I have ever enjoyed consisted of fish, venison with wild yams, as many truffles as I cared to eat, mango fool from the wild fruit, and honey for dessert.

It can be well understood that there are few, if any, permanent settlements of the Baigas. The land of their crude cultivation is exhausted in a year or two and they must move on to fresh destruction. As the result of their system of firing their *bewas* in the driest season of the year, the annual burning of the Bilaspur forests was the normal thing, with the consequent retarding of the young growth that should replace the older trees. True, the forests were supposed to be fire protected, though seldom saved. Once the fires started they were on so huge a scale that they could not be checked. Strictly speaking, the practice of shifting cultivation by burning was illegal. Actually it was winked at. The *bewas* were situated in the wildest parts of the more remote hills, which the wily Baiga knew well that the forest staff could only reach with difficulty. The members of the Indian forest staff generally prefer the road ; they have not that love of the wild and the hunting of wild creatures that so many Europeans possess. I felt sorry for my unfortunate

ranger who had to come with me up those fearsome hills.

If the awful destruction of the forests by fire was to be checked then the *bewas* had to be stopped. How was one to do it and yet convert the Baigas to fire protection? The first thing was to get to know them, to make friends with them and make them realize that one was out to give them fair play, which was not so difficult as I had expected. My predecessor had been an Indian who was not as interested in these wild people as I was. Consequently he had not their confidence, although his reputation as a just man was well founded. Moreover he was not mad keen about shooting as I was. Shooting was my sole recreation in that lonely life, and here I had something in common with the Baigas which formed the foundation of my friendship with them. Convinced that I would be far more likely to get to know them if we were not embarrassed by the presence of outsiders, I took no forest subordinate with me in my wanderings through the forest. The Baigas were my sole companions and I learnt to know them and to love them dearly. I knew very well that hidden in the thatch of most of their houses were their bows and arrows, secreted because of the order of one of my predecessors who was not in favour of the Baigas using their bows. The order was an absurd one in my view. Who on earth was going to stop those little men using the bows of their ancestors in places where no one else ever went? Of course they used them, and they have a very strong moral

right to do so since they were there with their bows and arrows long before we were. It is ridiculous for the white man to visit a place with his rifle in search of game, to rely (as he must) on the local men to show him sport and to expect them to learn all about the ways of the beasts, where they feed and how to track them over iron-hard ground, unless they have a personal interest in the matter.

English officers on a shooting trip are apt to take things for granted, and while accepting the use of the marvellous skill and knowledge of the wild creatures that the Baiga possesses, they unconsciously assume that all this very expert knowledge has been acquired solely for the benefit of themselves. A very conceited attitude, of course. Those same officers, after a pleasant trip in company with the Baigas, sometimes condemn their practice of shooting the wild creatures with the bow ! They are shocked at the evidence of what they describe as poaching. Visitors may rest assured that unless the Baigas did a little private *shikar* on their own account they would never be able to give the help that they do to others.

It seemed to me that it was no use prohibiting a practice that we knew we could not stop and, indeed, that was in the interests of sportsmen so long as it was not overdone. So I gave the order that no one seen carrying his bow would be run in or otherwise punished. I went farther and held an archery competition. The large number of entries of grinning Baigas showed how much respect had been shown for my predecessor's rule. None

of the bows were new. The concession meant a lot to them, and they were grateful. We had many a merry day together exploring the forest and hunting the deer. They knew to a yard where a tiger would come out in a beat, and entered into the spirit of tiger hunting with great zest. We killed a good many of these beasts; but I enjoyed the scrambles through the forest more than the formal beats.

One day we had sat down to rest after a long tramp. The little men had found me honey to help with my sandwiches and we were enjoying it together.

"Sahib," said one of them, "why is there no order that we should be paid for making the road to Lamni?"

"If you worked on the road you will be paid for it."

"But, Sahib," he said, "we have not been paid and the work was done by us three months ago."

So I made inquiries. A certain forester was in charge of the work and should have made the payments. The vouchers were called for from the office and they seemed to be in order, with the thumb impressions of each man to show that he had received the money due to him. I called my friends who had made the complaints.

"Did you not tell me last week that you had not been paid for your work on the Lamni road?"

"Sahib," they repeated, "we received no payment."

" But here are your finger-prints to show that you were paid."

" Those are not ours," they said decisively.

I verified this by taking their finger-prints with my camp set. Then I took the forester's finger-prints, which agreed with those on the muster roll.

So the forester spent six months as His Majesty's guest, reflecting on his misdeeds.

Then they complained to me that they were compelled to pay the licence vendor, at the checking post on the edge of the forest, two annas for each cartload of bamboos that they took to the markets. Twopence is a lot of money to those men. One day I found a party of cartmen passing through my camp on the way to the checking post twenty miles away. I immediately sent one of my ponies on ahead to a half-way *sarai*, while I called in the cartmen to give their evidence on a matter in no way connected with the case under investigation. After taking their statements I gave each man a two-anna piece, that I had marked, which was their diet money as witnesses. They went on their way rejoicing to the checking *naka*, which I knew that they would probably be passing in the early morning. Twenty miles is not a very long ride with two ponies.

The checking licence vendor was most indignant at my suggestion that he had been robbing the cartmen.

" If I had taken money from all the carts that passed my *naka*," he said, " I would have more money than this."

Whereupon he produced a number of my marked two-anna pieces. He too, had opportunity and leisure for reflection.

It was clear to the jungle men that I was not going to allow them to be robbed by the forest staff, and it became easier to make friends with them. My gramophone, too, was a great help. Every evening they came, men, women and children, to hear and laugh with Harry Lauder, who was a great favourite. Laughter is the common languages of all people. They would sit round in a silent circle each holding himself in for fear of doing the wrong thing, but after a time they could not control themselves and would go into fits of laughter.

The time came for a big talk with these people if one was to get their help in fire protection, so I shifted camp to the side of the great hill at Boehra village where I could be in touch with the most out-of-the-way villages where the fires originated. They knew what I had come to see them about. There were men from all the Lurmi villages, and delegates from the neighbouring district of Mandla, men from the Baiga Chak renowned as medicine men and as persuasive orators. No doubt they had heard of the new Sahib, they wanted to know more about him, to hear his gramophone and to put him to the test; and it was a severe one. They came in driblets down the Chakmi Pass, little black men with masses of tangled hair uncovered by head-gear, some with no clothes at all beyond a very narrow loin-cloth, others dressed in

strange garments, the presents of pious missionaries now donned in honour of a great occasion. Their women likewise had uncovered heads, and rough cloth round their bosoms, their babies tied within it across their backs ; naked youngsters, and old men with grey hair and shrivelled skin. Each man carried his axe, either the narrow felling axe, or the curved broad-bladed axe for defence. Some carried their bows. They came in straggling bodies issuing from the foliage of the forest, greeting their friends solemnly, and then squatting to await the great event of the evening. They sat in little groups while their women brought them water, and the men rolled small pipes for themselves out of leaves, each man sucking, then passing the pipe round the circle. There was the occasional tap of a drum, while musicians made ready for the festivities of the evening.

It must be remembered that I was young, and like most young men, rather full of my own importance, and ready to accept anything that would emphasize it. I was, of course, the big noise of the place, with very wide powers affecting the lives of the people.

You can see me, then, seated in my chair in front of the tent, a chair for my forest ranger by my side, some of the elders of the tribe either standing respectfully at my back, or seated in ignorance of my importance on the ground in front, near the camp fire. I started the entertainment with a selection from Harry Lauder on the gramophone. This was the usual success, affording great

amusement, some of the people new to this mystery came close up to the gramophone, looking into its interior to see if anyone had been cunningly concealed within. An old man did this while many eyes watched him. He was clearly a person of importance. He listened carefully and fearlessly as one with serious responsibilities to his tribe. He may have been the local archbishop with full powers to denounce the unexplainable as heresy. He was worried. I saw him shake his head slowly, the black coils of his hair encumbering his eyes. Was it good for the children to hear this? I am sure he was weighing the matter. But Harry Lauder's infectious laugh won the day. It is no use telling people to avoid heresies that make them laugh. And God knows these people have little enough to laugh at in their normal lives. So the old man sat down and enjoyed the fun as much as the youngsters.

When my dinner-time came the audience retired. The next item on the agenda after dinner was to be the dance of the massed Baiga tribesmen. There were representatives from almost every village in the Lurmi Ranges as well as a good number of tribesmen from Mandla. The noise was terrific, they danced, they sang, and they beat their drums. I have described the sort of scene elsewhere. There came a pause in the festivities when the forest ranger suggested to me that the time was fitting for a few words. Here was my great opportunity of persuading the Baigas to help me in fire protection.

I told them that I would do all that I could to help and protect them, but that their practice of shifting cultivation had got to stop. They could, I said, finish up the areas where they had already cut the jungle, but for the future no new areas were to be cleared for *bewas* except in special places where we wanted the jungle cleared, and on condition that the Baigas sowed teak or *sal* seeds among their millets in the cleared areas. If anyone wanted to take to the plough, there was land available and generous advances for the purchase of bullocks. Indeed, I was ready to buy their bullocks for them. There was plenty of work being arranged for them to earn their living. But there could be no work if the forests were all burnt each season.

It was my first public speech and it was, of course, in the vernacular. I was young and proud of myself.

The audience took my oratory calmly. I noticed with some concern a party coming from the forest, those present turned to look at them, then there was much low-toned talk ; after which there was complete silence while a gentle breeze shook the leaves of the forest whispering of secrets. There was mystery in the air. What was up ? I wondered.

Two of the elders approached ; they craved audience. " Speak," I said, " and fear not."

" Protector," they said, " there is much scandal. While the rest of us have been enjoying ourselves with your honour in innocent amusement, a young man and a maid of the village have misbehaved themselves. We have caught the guilty party."

" Then," I replied, " deal with them after the custom of your tribe."

Which was rather a rash thing to have said. Heaven knows what they might have done if they had taken me at my word. But I was young and, as I have already said, conceited, and full of my importance.

" Protector," they answered, " let your honour deal with this question."

" Very well," I told them, " produce the guilty couple before me."

They were dragged up, the maiden hiding her face in shame at her dishonour, while there was a great silence on the audience. I knew that I was on trial with these people and that they would judge me as I judged. It was a test case to see how the new Sahib would behave. Would his decision be that of Solomon?

" Come here," I said to the guilty couple. Embarrassed, they approached. I had no intention of making a detailed inquiry, I was far too shy for that. To warn seemed the only suitable course.

" Are you guilty? "

Both nodded. Clearly they felt their shame so much that they could not raise their voices before their fellows.

I then read them a little lecture on morals in general, and on the necessity for observing tribal laws in particular.

With my heart full of generous importance I warned them not to do it again. Then to my

great embarrassment the woman threw herself at me.

" Stand up," I said sternly.

She stood, and to my horror took off her upper garment, thus shaming herself and me before the whole of the tribesmen. Tactfully I turned my head away. The situation was very embarrassing, and while I looked in vain for my ranger to help me there was a great shout of laughter. Great big-hearted laughter, deep-throated roars, from the men who outdid Harry Lauder, shrill pipes from the women and children. Yes. Even the children laughed at my shame ! The little brutes. I turned again to the unrobed woman. " She " showed a great grin on her now plainly visible, and very ugly face. And her chest was hairy and muscular ; there were no soft moulded breasts to shock my young eyes.

It was all a joke, of course. This was no trial of an errant maid, but the test of the humour of the new Sahib. Luckily I saw the joke and laughed, after which we outdid a hundred Harry Lauders.

But the great thing was that they promised to save my forests from fires, and they did too. More, I controlled their shifting cultivation and eventually stopped it, and we ended up the best of friends.

Four years later I had finished my second working plan, and was due for leave, and a transfer on my return from home. It had been ordained by those in high places that the late Edwin Montagu should be my guest for a few days with a view to tiger shooting.

At that time the Baigas knew that I was soon going away from them on leave and were anxious about my successor. During my time there I had made very strict rules regulating the *begar* or system of forced labour which is the time-honoured custom throughout India. Generally speaking, tenants in Indian forests receive their land at a lower rent on consideration for their performing certain services for officers of the government when on tour. These services are trivial, unless the village is situated on a much-frequented road. It is a matter of pitching tents, bringing firewood, clearing camping grounds, and finding provision of the ordinary country foods for camp followers. All of this on payment, of course, at a rate fixed from time to time by the district magistrate. The obligations of our forest villages went farther. They were there with an object—to carry out forest work to which they had been born and bred, and which they liked. In their case the forest officer fixed their wages at a fair rate. If the rate was not a fair one the villagers went away, if they refused to work at the fixed rate within reason, they could be, and were, sent away.

We very seldom had villagers migrating outside our reserves. If they did quick inquiry was made into the cause and justice dealt out where needed. Our forest villagers enjoyed greater privileges because more was asked of them in the way of work. They had their firewood and building material free, also bamboos for their own use, there was free grazing for their cattle, free grass, advances for the purchase of grain, and many other little concessions. As long

as the fire season lasted they had a good deal of work to do in that connection, and during most of the open season they had as much work as they wanted, which made a great difference to their standard of living. Sometimes they would trade in forest produce on their own account, by taking out licences. There was grass for rope-making, there was the distillation of geranium oil for attar of roses, the collection of honey, fruit, and the horns of deer, while bamboos had to be cut and sold to the men in the plains. Any forest villager of enterprise could always make a bit of money if he wanted to. In the rainy season he grew his crops. But because the forest department had first claim on all labour within the forests, the system of compulsory labour was subject to serious abuse. It was bad enough outside the forest villages. So bad that I have travelled mile after mile along a made road with no village beside it because, I was told, the *begar* had become too oppressive. Each policeman, *tehsildar*, revenue inspector, and anyone else with power to twist the wretched villagers' tail, made his demands on the village. He demanded guides and transport to the next camping ground for himself and his servant, the collection of firewood, the cutting of grass, the carrying of water, the supply of *ghi*—clarified butter which, even when paid for, was procured at rates intended for moderate consumption at the camp and not for hoarding in home use. The greater part, however, is not paid for, or was not in my time, and I am certain that however well intentioned the orders of government of the

time may be, they are not carried out now. The very men whose business it is to check these abuses themselves benefit from them, and are the last to stop them. European officers, as a rule, are particularly strict in paying for all services and for supplies from the villages, although one has come across a few cases where an officer has not been too scrupulous. I can remember a Deputy Commissioner of a district to whom I mentioned the difficulty I had in insisting on my servants paying for all their food supplies in some villages.

"But," he answered, "my servants get all their supplies free from the villagers when on tour. I have no trouble."

That was a man drawing some £1,500 a year and paid to look after the villagers! Cases of the sort amongst officers of the civil service are extremely rare. I quote it to show what an unscrupulous person can do if he chooses. And if it is possible for those in high places to do this, what about those in more humble positions? From what I have seen of India I say most emphatically that the system is grossly abused. I do not know what the pay of a police constable is now, but in my early days it was as low as eight rupees a month. I doubt if it is much more now. Yet these men are expected to remain honest, and to make long journeys from village to village in the prevention and search of crime. In the earlier days they received no travelling allowance, and even when the travelling allowance was at last granted them, they simply looked upon it as extra pay and con-

tinued to rob the villagers. The lower the rank of the government servant, the more oppressive he is. In out-of-the-way places where officials seldom went it did not matter so much, but in places where officers and subordinates frequently camped, the infliction on the villages was very hard. Let the reader imagine himself with a precious garden as his sole property and means of livelihood. You start the day meaning to do some digging to get in your early potatoes. A uniformed policeman turns up and compels you to carry his bedding to another village ten miles away. Next day you start on your work again. This time you have to stop so as to bring firewood for the *tehsildar*. Another day it is a matter of carrying water, or hewing wood, or doing odd jobs for somebody's servant. And so it goes on, until the sensible man leaves the village for a place where these tormenting officials do not come. People say " Why do the villagers do it ? " They are compelled to by the tradition of ages, and they know that it is far worse to refuse than to obey.

Forest subordinates have an even greater power over the forest villagers, and I found that there were undoubted cases of villagers moving to other sites because they had been pushed too far. I decided inside my own charge to take steps to stop the abuses.

The headman of each village was given a book, in which was written an account of all dues from the village, the amount of land held by each man and the rent that he paid, the number of his cattle grazed free or on licence, and any privileges that

he was given. Moreover, the order was that all payments to the villagers had to be noted in the book. All this information gave a clear idea of what was happening in the village and I was able to keep a check on my staff. But the great charter of these men was that *no one* was allowed to take any labour from a village except through the headman, anyone wanting service had to write it in the book, after which the headman was bound to supply their wants. In addition, I made it an order that when labour or anything else was required in this way, the amount paid for it had to be shown in the book as well.

Those books were the greatest treasures that the villagers possessed.

They soon realized their advantages. I shall never forget the joy with which a Baiga told me that when a policeman made certain demands from his village, he was asked to write them in the book, but refused to commit himself on paper.

His demands were refused, and the policeman complained to his officer, who complained to me. My reply was that if the policeman's intentions were honest, he only had to write what he wanted in the book, and all would be well.

It is quite true that there was not a single headman in my villages who could read what people had written, but that did not matter; the moral effect of committing themselves to paper was enough to check dishonest people. I even came up against a *tehsildar* over this question.

A *tehsildar* is a collector of revenue and a minor

magistrate. He is not a man whose authority is questioned ; he can twist tails. He turned up in one of the forest villages and demanded a cart, whereupon he was presented with the book by the headman. Never had man been so insulted. Damn it ! he was *tehsildar* before whom all should tremble. He tore up the book, and took a cart by force, for which he refused to pay. The headman reported it to me. There was no question of identity ; *tehsildars* are too important to hide their identity. I wrote to the Deputy Commissioner with whose support I had started my book scheme. Even *tehsildars* tremble before Deputy Commissioners ; this one apologized to me.

Just before Edwin Montagu came to me the Baigas asked whether it was true that I was leaving the division. I said it was.

" Is another Sahib coming to take your place or is a black man ? "—he used the word " black " in the most reprehensible and unrefined way. It would have been as much as my job was worth to refer to a native of India as being black. One could not even call them Natives. During my time in India " Natives " became Indians, Eurasians became Anglo-Indians, the old-time Anglo-Indians became Europeans, and I suppose that the old-time English should become Anglo-Anglians. No doubt they will, as the Government of India becomes even more sympathetic to the sensitive races.

" Why do you ask me ? " I inquired.

" We don't want a black man again," they said decisively.

" Well," I replied, " I have written to the government about this, and I hope that your wishes will be fulfilled. But why not ask the very big Sahib who comes next week ? "

The first evening of Montagu's stay in the Lurmi forests, we were sitting outside the rest-house having our evening drinks and smokes. My friend the Baiga turned up. I must say he did it remarkably well. He threw himself full length at Montagu's feet and clasped his ankles. I felt that I had to play up.

" Go away, Jhurri," I said roughly.

Montagu did not know the language, but he understood well enough what I was saying.

" No, Best," he said, " what does he want ? I should like to know what his complaint is."

" Don't you be bothered with the man," I said. Then, turning to Jhurri, I said again but more roughly : " Go away ! "

For reply, Jhurri wriggled yet nearer to the embarrassed knees of his protector.

" Let's hear it," said Montagu.

So I sent for the camp clerk.

" Babu," I said, " will you please interpret literally for the Sahib, exactly what this man is saying."

The Babu looked at Jhurri in contempt. Fancy a savage giving so much trouble to a big Sahib.

" This man says," interpreted the Babu, " when our Best Sahib goes, we want another white man to rule us, not a black man." He might have added " like this Babu here," but the Babu missed that part out.

Montagu laughed.

"I think that is one of the best stage-managed things that I have ever witnessed."

Jhurri did the stage management, not I.

I enjoyed Montagu's visit and his friendship. I have never met a better naturalist or more interesting person. Though I was a man with different political views from Montagu the only regret left to me by his visit is that Jhurri's stage management did not have more permanent results or influence on Montagu's views. The unfortunate peasant and jungle man gets a poor Press, if any, till he rises up against his oppressors. Further, the jungle man has no vote. So the politicians can afford to ignore him, in favour of those who can influence the Press.

CHAPTER VII

FOGGED

WE all know what jungle is, or at any rate what the word implies; dense forest of a tropical nature, an almost impenetrable mass of confused growth, steamy heat, semi-darkness, wonderfully brilliant butterflies, tormenting insects, loathsome spiders, orchids, creeping lizards and venomous snakes, mighty zoo beasts that creep or crash their way through a dark profusion of palms, bamboos, canes, ferns, and hanging ropes of creepers. Such is the picture impressed on our minds by writers and artists, some of whom, one must suspect, have never seen the real article. A picture that conveys the impression of a place dark and forbidding, yet mysterious in its unknown depths and therefore attractive to the adventurous.

The word "jungle" is merely the Hindustani for forest.

So we naturally look to India for tropical growth in its densest form. In some parts of the country we find it, more particularly in those places where there is a high rainfall, of which Eastern India holds the world's record. Elsewhere there is great variation in the nature of the enormous areas of

forest that cover a large proportion of the continent of India, from desert lands scantily shaded by a feeble clothing of sparse withered shrubs, to the true forest of giant trees, waving bamboos, and twining creepers.

Nowhere have I seen the jungle of my boyhood's imagination. It has never been necessary for me in a long career in the Indian forests, to carve a way through a mass of vegetation like a miner cutting through the bowels of the earth, nor can I say, that in any case was the forest so thick that my transport could not make more progress than a mile or two in the day. I suppose that if one had to make a journey in an exact beeline by compass without any deviations from the straight path, then a certain amount of cutting would be necessary, and in many cases a great deal. But so would it be for the traveller in England, if he wished and were allowed, to pursue so obstinate a course.

No one blunders into a mass of dense thorns if he can avoid it. The sane man walks round, as do the beasts in their journeys through the forest. Where a heavy animal like an elephant or bison has gone, it is absurd to suppose that a man cannot follow. Game paths twist and turn in every direction to avoid nature's obstacles, and creatures have rights of way in the forests older than any claimed by man.

Transport has, of course, to go by road, bridle track, or path, according to the means employed, whether wheeled, pack animals or coolie head-

loads. Nor does it take much longer to make a road through a tropical forest than it does in any other place. So I, for one, feel inclined to reach for the salt when I read, or hear, of travellers in tropical countries hacking their way through the primeval forest all day, for the purpose of progressing a mile or so. If they are not fools, too proud to walk round an obstacle, then I sometimes suspect that the narrators are telling travellers' tales.

Which reminds me that I must get on with my own. Perhaps the main characteristic of the jungle proper, as compared with the outside world, is the limit of vision imposed by the growth of vegetation. This feature, combined with the necessity for the traveller to make constant deviations from the straight course by reason of the obstacles, renders it none too easy for him to find his way about, or, what is more important, his way back to camp after a long day of wandering in the forest.

A compass, or a check by the sun, is good enough for a rough guide, but little use for short cuts on a return journey home, involving a twelve-mile point to a camp in a small clearing that is invisible a quarter of a mile away. The local guide is worth anything, and very reliable. He knows his way about as well as the Cockney does in the streets of London—probably better. Only once did he fail me, and that was in circumstances, uncomfortable it is true, but so unusual as to be excusable.

I was camping in the forests between Achanak-

mar and Amarkantah in the Bilaspur District of the Central Provinces. The only human settlement in the neighbourhood of any sort, was a collection of three or four huts on the bank of the Bankal River, and that was a temporary settlement of nomad Baigas—wild little forest men, dark skinned and almost naked. A wide-spreading, low-branched fig tree gave good shelter for my tent on the river bank near the village. Behind me was an area of a few thousand square miles of forest, before me was the half-dry bed of the river only partially covered with water ; the rest being bright shining mica sand, a few dark-blue rocks that showed in contrast against the gleaming sand, and the bent stems of purple flowering tamarisk. Overhanging the banks of the river were large trees, leaning bamboos and giant climbers whose foliage hung gracefully, throwing deep shadows over the side of the river and forming a pleasing frame for the picture of sunlit water and gleaming golden sand. Beyond the river were a few more hundred square miles of forest. South of the camp the country was well known, north of it few beyond the aboriginal Baigas had penetrated. My business was to make a rough map of the forests with the view to their possibilities of exploitation.

Of wild animals there were plenty ; within a few yards of my tent heavy pug-marks showed where tigers had wandered along the river-bed at night, the glittering sand had been marked and scarred by the passage of many deer, and farther

up-stream were round wide marks where wild elephants had come to drink. We found the traces of bears and leopards in our daily wanderings. Most of these signs are normal in a forest officer's life, except perhaps those of the elephants, that being the only part of the Central Provinces where they were to be found wild.

One of them, a huge tusker, was reported to be dangerous, ill tempered, and unpleasant to meet.

Elephants in India are specially protected, and even if I had the right to shoot one I should not exercise it except in extreme emergency—circumstances requiring a quick and accurate shot—for I have had much to do with them in captivity and rather love the huge beasts. But this tusker had been a nuisance. Sometimes he would wander from the obscurity of the Bankal forests for long distances to other jungles nearer civilization, where he found things that interested him. Boundary pillars for instance, which he loved to pull out of their neat cairns of stones, thus risking the penalties of the Commination Service ; when, however, he took to pushing down my forest rest-houses his antics were no longer humorous, at least so thought I, who had to sleep in them. Sometimes he knocked down a Baiga's house if he smelt within it a store of grain, a fact that may have accounted for his reputation as a man-killer, although there was no evidence to support the accusation. He was not popular.

Besides the elephant, there was a man-eating

tiger in the north, that sometimes came as far south as Bankal for food. Altogether the neighbourhood was one where it was as well to have a rifle in one's hand, and loaded. Ordinarily a tiger in the jungle is not an animal to be taken very seriously, he is far more frightened of man than man is of him, but man-eaters are different.

Beginning close to my camp, I gradually extended my mapping activities outwards, until after a week it took me some time to reach camp again at the conclusion of my day's work. I had surveyed the valuable first-class *sal* forests that grew on the deep moist soil near the river, promising a yield of valuable railway sleepers; I had outlined roughly the mixed forests of other species where little timber of value was to be found; then I sought the limits of the dense bamboo areas that clothed the upper slopes of the hills, and hugged the sides of watercourses, till the shallow soils of the highest lands were reached, and grey cactus-like euphorbias stood in ghostly array amidst the barren rocks of the highest peaks.

My work was practically finished. I had mapped out all the forest which was likely to have a commercial value within the next thirty years—the limit of time to prescribe in my work. Later, I should take my camp round by a thirty-mile detour to have a look at the most northern end of my charge. Meanwhile, I proposed to make an excursion of twelve or fifteen miles into what was practically unknown country. A delightful prospect.

Two Baigas came with me. I do not flatter myself that they came for my company, although we were great friends; they wanted meat—lots of it—and there were good prospects of my killing a bison. Amoli and Jhurri had guided me in most of my work in that country, and their bump of locality was marvellous, almost uncanny. After a day of hill-climbing, crawling up *nalas*, pushing our way through dense bamboo forest, stumbling over creepers, twisting and turning all over the place, Amoli and Jhurri would lead me home without fail by some short cut that they alone knew. It was not as if we went back the same way that we had come out, I could have found that, their way was the straight one of the bee returning to its hive in the evening.

We left camp by the light of the waning moon in early hours of the morning, at a time when the jungle has a special charm of its own; the drip of dew from the leaves, the chill and stillness of night, the liquid call of night birds, followed by the shrill crow of the jungle cock, challenging the earliest streak of dawn.

In the last hour of the jungle night the deer finish their feeding, and after a drink and wallow in the pool, push their way silently through the undergrowth with antlers thrown back, dark muzzle forward and ears twitching for sounds of danger. They must find shelter for rumination in the daylight hours. The tiger's last prowl on the way to his lair, the clumsy bear's final snatch in the fruit tree, and later, in the glow of the golden sunlight,

We know they are there, we have seen where they have fed, watered, and rested, and we use their paths. Such signs merely whet our appetites for a more intimate knowledge, like the books of travel of our youth. If only we had something in common with the beasts, some mutual sympathy, so that we could study one another without suspicion, what a lot we could learn. And here was I hoping for a chance of murdering a bull bison ! Thus I mused while I rested on the top of the ridge while one of my companions left the party for a moment.

He soon hurried back, having found the fresh tracks of a bull bison. After a final pull at my water-bottle I followed the two guides. Amoli pointed with the bundle of his bow and arrows to where some brittle leaves had been powdered by a heavy hoof. It was the dry season and the ground baked hard. But tracking was easy for those keen-eyed hunters. We found more places where powdered leaves and freshly disturbed earth showed where the heavy beast had gone. Twisting between huge black rocks, across glades of short succulent grass that was yet green despite the drought, we followed the bull for two steady hours. At midday we rested.

At three o'clock we resumed our hunt. By now we were a long way from camp, and in our erratic twistings and turnings in the tracks of our quarry, I had lost all sense of direction. I knew, of course, that camp lay to our south and that with the sun's help I could find my way home, but I should have been sorry to have been compelled to lay a

compass course over some of the obstacles that intervened between us and the camp. That was where the guides came in. I had complete faith in their ability to lead me back to camp by the shortest and easiest route. We had climbed up a steep incline and were close on the heels of the bison; indeed we found his dung yet steaming and I had my rifle ready for a quick shot, when the unexpected happened.

A curious chill suddenly came into the air and the light changed with startling rapidity from brilliant tropical sunshine to the gloom of fog. Amoli and Jhurri looked at one another, then at me with uneasy glances, then upwards into the heavy mist that had enveloped us. A few minutes later it had gone, forming a cloud over the high hill to our front, leaving us in sunshine again. There was the persistent drip, drip, drip of moisture from the leaves over-head, a sound uncanny as it was unusual under the full blaze of the sun. The dead leaves beneath our feet were no longer hard, brittle, and noisy, but damp and soft from the moisture. In the far distance we could hear approaching us the roar of rain falling on thousands and millions of forest leaves, and at the same time a breeze shook a shower of heavy drops on us from the trees over our heads; the sun vanished again; at first a few drops of rain fell, a warning of the deluge that we could hear growing louder in its approach; soon we were the centre of a roaring, crashing cataract of water that soaked us to the skin and reduced my pith helmet to

pulp. There was no escaping that deluge. Thank goodness there was no hail—tropical hailstones are dangerous.

The storm passed away as quickly as it had come, leaving another dense fog behind it. Tracking the bison was out of the question, all signs of his tracks having been washed out by the rain. We must make for camp.

The rain and fog had been brought up from the south by a wind that billowed the mist around us amongst the rocks and trees, which appeared and vanished in the most ghostly fashion. There was a creepy feeling in the air, and it was clear that my two companions were shivering not only from the cold. A good twelve miles from home and the nearest human habitation, with a wild bit of jungle between obscured by a dense confusing fog; not a pleasant position with night coming on.

As darkness for no real reason, except its obscurity and possibilities of hidden dangers, sometimes frightens a child, so the sudden blanket of mist affected the nerves of my guides. It was unusual for that time of the year, and the unusual is dangerous in a jungle where men know that hidden dangers lurk even in the brightest hours of daylight. Night is normal but not that gloom. And there are *bhuts*—ghosts—demons that their fathers had warned them against as the enemies of simple men, they themselves had heard of victims of the demons in their own time. Nervously they fingered charms kept ready for such emergencies. A branch

of green leaves abruptly revealed by a momentary gap in the mist as it waved and tossed in the breeze made them turn suddenly with an expression of fear on their lips, gripping their axes rather than their bows, as the better weapon to meet the sudden onslaught of a jungle foe rushing from the grey gloom, be he demon or solid flesh.

"Which way lies the camp?" I asked the dark smudge in the mist where stood Amoli.

He came near and pointed down-wind.

I was certain that he was wrong. Camp was up-wind of us. Jhurri admitted quite frankly that he had no idea of its direction.

Faultless in sunshine or even at night, the guides were lost in the fog, their nerve had gone and they had completely lost their sense of direction. I thought of men overtaken by fog on their way back from hunting in the old days when men hacked home, people who knew every gate and bridge in their country—lost and going round in circles in one field, and that not a large one.

Not only were the guides baffled; it would seem from the sounds around us that the wild beasts themselves, if not lost, were uneasily suspicious and alarmed by the suddenness of the unseasonable conditions. The chatter of monkeys clearly showed panic, a momentary thinning of the mist revealed them sitting in the upper branches bewildered, and not daring to leap below to a branch that next moment would be blotted out in the fog. Close to us—or so it seemed—the deep roar of a tiger told the now sodden jungle world that

he whom all feared was uneasy ; the bully was calling, if not exactly in alarm, then in vague bewilderment. We could hear the squeaky cries of fawns looking for their mothers, the querulous wail of jackals, the scream of a hyæna ; all the beasts of the forest seemed to be in evidence from their cries except the one that we really dreaded to meet—the bull elephant of uncertain temper—he might do anything in the panic of that fog. He could wind us long before we could have any idea of his presence.

All living creatures seemed to have been affected with nerves, and in their fear of the unseen and unknown they seem to have forgotten their fears of one another, they seemed even to have put aside their dread of man, for we could see their vague shapes quite close to us at times. All life sought home ; the cave for the bear, the thicket for the deer, the highest tree for the monkey, and the tent for man.

Suddenly all other sound was again drowned in a further deluge, it passed on, almost at once, fading away with a noise like distant surf on a shingle beach.

We were lost. Which way were we to turn for camp? Normally a night in the forest had few terrors, many a time had we three slept in the friendly leaves ; Amoli, Jhurri and I. This was different, we were as wet as it is possible for anyone to be, and the risk of malaria had to be avoided. My matches were sodden, and with every stick in the forest waterlogged, the normal method of pre-

paring fire by the Baigas rubbing dry sticks together was out of the question. There were no dry sticks. We must try to make camp. But which way were we to go? Thinking over our course during the day, it occurred to me that we had not crossed the main ridge of the hills, therefore, it seemed to me that all the watercourses, which were now in spate, must eventually lead to the river that flowed past my camp. Once we could reach that, the finding of the direction to the camp should be comparatively easy.

"Do all the *nalas* here run into the Bankal River?" I asked Amoli.

"Yes, Protector," he answered, shivering.

"Then," I said, "we must follow the first *nala* that we find until we reach the river. It will mean a long journey, but it will take us to camp eventually."

Bruising ourselves on the rocks and cruelly spiked as we stumbled among the prickly euphorbias in our passage, we eventually met a watercourse; this we followed down as rapidly as possible while it was still light, for the sun had not yet set. Every few minutes a tropical shower would roar over us, then fade away into the distance, to be followed by silence except for the calls of the animals. While sheltering behind a rock from one of these deluges, we suddenly saw two black bodies approaching us through the mist; the fog was so dense that, though straining our eyes for danger, we saw nothing till a few yards away a dark patch materialized, grew larger and darker, then formed

itself into two black bears that almost touched us, as whining querulously to one another they shuffled on their way to shelter, the coarse hairs of their coats grey with the moisture that had settled on them. Before I could put up my rifle they had passed ; the two men shrank behind me. Bears are dangerous beasts at any time ; we had enough trouble on our hands for the moment without looking for more from those gentry.

With darkness of night added to the gloom of fog we reached the bottom of the bluff, leaving the worst of the ground behind us. We were more or less on the level and there were few rocks to hinder us, but the undergrowth was thick as it overhung the watercourse that we followed ; it was so dark that we were afraid of losing one another ; company is rather precious in those circumstances ; we stopped frequently to make sure that we were all together, and even held hands as we made our way one behind the other. Torn by thorns, prodded by bamboo stakes, tripped by climbers, we staggered down the watercourse till it joined another and widened over a sandy bottom now covered with shallow water. Here the going was easier, the rain had stopped, but it was as dark as ever.

Somewhere about midnight we rested ; my rifle which was a great encumbrance among the branches and climbers, had grown heavy on my shoulder, which constant shifting from side to side did not ease. So we rested while I ate the last of my sodden biscuits, and in the monotony of the drip, drip,

drip from the leaves around us we heard a mighty crash close by, but up-wind.

"*Hathi*—elephant," said my two companions together, and we hastened down the watercourse, stumbling and splashing on our way. It was probably no elephant, but the falling branch of a tree; but we were taking no chances.

I do not think that I have ever been so utterly weary, yet we had to push on, and often it was a case of real pushing, shoving against low branches that seemed reluctant to yield us progress. We could not see, but we could feel the bed of the stream beneath our feet and hear the running water ahead. Suddenly the fog seemed to thin and the night to become less dark. We appeared to be in an open space and we paused; there was a faint show of light to our right, high in the sky, which we watched anxiously; there was a puff of wind and for just a few seconds the friendly moon showed a sickly light through the mist, then vanished, leaving us in darkness.

It was enough. At our feet lay the Bankal River, no longer a stretch of sand and rocks, but a real river of running water. With a cry of joy my two companions led me left to a path well known to them along the bank, even without the moon they knew every step of the way. They knew where there were thorns and climbers to be avoided, frequently stopping to hold them out of my way. I had to ask them to slow up their pace, so keen were they to get on.

It was bright moonlight without a trace of fog

when we saw the lights of my camp, the white tent showing up well against the dark of the jungle. Amoli shouted, there was an answer from the camp, and we walked in a few minutes after four o'clock in the morning. We had been out for just twenty-four hours.

CHAPTER VIII

TIGERS

WHEN we were young the mention of the word India brought to our minds visions of cobras, other horrible snakes, and tigers. Rajahs were mentioned, also sepoys, the latter mainly in connection with the mutiny—which was unfair. Oh! I forgot the sahibs; they were important. Englishmen, completely changed from mild students into ferocious hard-swearing Anglo-Indians, merely by donning solar topees. I heard at school of the Indian Civil Service as being something very hard to get into, but no more, and I should be very surprised to know that one Englishman in a thousand, even in these enlightened times, knows what a Commissioner is and what he does. Yet the I.C.S., and Commissioners, are frightfully important people—and I am not trying to be sarcastic. In spite of so many people gaining experience of India during the War, their ignorance, past and present, of that vast continent is still great. My first shock in this respect was when I was at a private school. Geography was the lesson and India the subject. I was asked what animals were found in the country. "Tigers," I replied. "Any others?" inquired my

form master. " Bears," I answered, remembering the bear-skins in my father's house.

" There are no bears in India," said the pedagogue, " India is a hot country."

I argued, and was sent to the bottom of the class. Like so many who tell of big game in India I was " misunderstood " ; I have been prejudiced against schoolmasters ever since. You can't argue with the creatures. They are armed with canes.

There were, of course, tigers in practically every forest that I visited, and I seemed to have a happy knack of meeting them. Once, I was sent off to the forest research institute at Dehra Dun to learn something from the wise men who live there, and we visited a place in the forest to see experimental plots ; a place where tigers had not been heard of for years. We met one. I met another in a part of the Nagpur district where they are as rare as the hoopoo in England. Throughout my service I killed a great many and I was mad keen on their hunting, studying the phases of the moon in anticipation of hunting them at night, and I looked forward to each camping site as a possible place of going in their pursuit. All of which sounds bloodthirsty—which it was. My excuse being that tiger *shikar* was at certain seasons of the year my sole recreation in a very lonely existence. The work was fascinating, of course, but something more was needed in a life where one spent months on end without seeing another European. Forest officers were rightly encouraged to shoot. They were responsible for the adminis-

tration of the game laws, and, like the bow-and-arrow men of the forests, could not be expected to take an interest in the animals unless they themselves were allowed close contact with them, although too close contact with a tiger can be unpleasant, as I will show.

There was a young forest officer sent to me when he first came to India. He did not care for shooting, he said, he was more interested in botany. Botany is a useful subject to take up, we all had to know something of it, but as a principal hobby it bores me. If a forest officer is keen on *shikar* it means that he spends his leisure hours in the pursuit of game in the forests in the company of forest villagers under his charge. He thus gets to know his forests and his villagers, which is all to the good. After many attempts to get this recruit to the service interested, I put my young friend in a *machan*, gave him a loaded rifle, and told him where the tiger would come in the beat almost beneath his feet. He shot it; and spent the next two days studying gunmakers' catalogues. The last I heard of him was that he had been bitten in the back of the neck by a man-eater, and now spends all his leisure in trying to kill as many tigers as possible.

One could shoot tigers, of course, at all times of the year, but the hot weather was the easiest. Also at that time there was no small game shooting, the deer-stalking season was drawing out and life could be very monotonous. One had to rely on the poultry from the villages for one's diet,

which made the monotony worse. Chicken soup, chicken roast, caramel pudding and chicken's liver on toast. There were only very slight variations in the menu, the principal of which was the shape in which the chicken (so called) arrived on the table. Sometimes the cook put it between two stones and squashed it flat before he cooked it; it had a different name in that form.

The hope of defeating a tiger in the hot weather helped to save one's reason. It was the only recreation.

It was early May and desperately hot. I was moving from one large block of forest to another in anticipation of a nice cool *sal* forest. Between the two blocks of forest I had to camp for two nights in the plains, and it was unpleasant, though the villagers did everything to make my stay comfortable. I had a nice clean camping ground beneath sweet-scented mango trees, where the shade was welcome. The villagers—and it was a big village—asked me to stay for an extra day in their village, which was very flattering of them, but I had no idea of staying in that heat longer than I could help. There was a tiny block of dull flat forest to inspect, which I meant to do in the evening and get the job over as soon as possible.

The headman of the village was a very respectable landowner. I could not understand why they were so keen on my staying there, till the headman told me that he hoped that I would kill the tiger that lived on the villagers' cattle.

That, of course, was quite another story. And

finding out that what the old man had said was true, I decided to have a try for the cattle raider, and gave orders for an extra night to be spent there. This was a popular order with my camp followers because there was a big bazaar in the village, and in addition, I strongly suspect that the old headman brought my servants little luxuries to which they were unaccustomed in their normal jungle camping. Which was, of course, very irregular.

There were great stories of that tiger. But then there are always special stories of every tiger that the villagers know. It is either the largest that has ever been known or has some other abnormal peculiarity. I had grown used to taking a grain of salt when I heard tiger stories, though I hope I was never so rude as the schoolmaster of my youth. This was a very unusual place in which to find one; the jungle—which at that season was leafless and without shade, consisting of a few dwarf palms, and scrubby thorns—was very near the village and its big bazaar. A much-used road ran along the side of the forest, and near the road there was the only water available for cattle and the wild beasts, a perfectly filthy pond with water the colour of chocolate and with sides bare of vegetation from the trampling of cattle, while the few stunted bushes near the pond were grey with the dust of the road, along which there was a continuous stream of traffic. Behind the pond was the so-called forest, of dwarf palms and low thorns. Nowhere was there the sign of any covert to shelter

so large an animal as a tiger. There was no grass ; it had all been grazed bare months before by the hungry village cattle. The ground was hard, and so cracked by the heat that the chasms in the dark soil made careful stepping a necessity. There was a low ridge of rock a few feet above the rest of the ground leading northwards away from the direction of the pond through the middle of the jungle for the distance of about half a mile. This ridge was about a hundred yards wide.

On the evening of my arrival at the village I staggered out into the blaze of heat to look at this dreadful place. I heard that the pond was the only spot where there was water, and on the way to it I had a look at the forest. Water, especially in the hot weather, is the main thing that must be present in a successful tiger beat, and I noted the line of the ridge as the only possible direction for a beat in such unpromising jungle. To move by day a tiger must have covert. This jungle gave practically none ; hardly enough to hide a hare, still less a tiger. The rocky ridge was the best apology for covert and was the only probable line for the tiger to take—if a tiger really lived in such a ghastly place. I could not believe that any sensible tiger would stay in so bare and shadeless a forest that even the cicadas had deserted. " There is the water," said the villager who was showing me round and carried my rifle for me. There seemed not the slightest chance of shooting anything ; from force of habit one had the rifle out, but did not carry it. In that heat the con-

stant touch on the barrels would have blistered the palm of one's hand.

Carelessly we approached the pool that stank, even from a distance, of mud and cattle grime. Hard bare banks, hot and shadeless, stretched from the edge of the low scrub to the dirty mud that formed the home of despairing frogs in the middle of the hard pan. One tree threw a little shade at that time of the evening over the mud. Walking along the road now thick with dust from the bullock carts that bumped and jingled noisily from the bazaar, I looked with something like envy at the one shaded spot of that patch of muddy water. How nice to be a frog, even in water that was smelly, muddy, and hot; but then a frog would not mind that or be unhappy about it as I should be.

There was a curious lump in the mud, so curious that I looked at it the harder. What on earth was it? It moved, then before I could realize what it was, a great shape rose out of the water, a great muddy shape from which the filth dripped as it took the form of an animal.

At first I thought that I had roused the father and mother of all the pigs. Naturally, one associates pigs with such filth. But no pig ever had a tail like that. It did not at first occur to me that this was a very dirty tiger. When one thinks of a tiger one naturally thinks of stripes—not mud —and there were no stripes. But this was a tiger, and a very dirty one too. He was simply covered and plastered with mud. There he had been lying

in that one patch of shade over the mud within a few yards of the carts that rattled past along the road. If I had had my rifle in my hand and had kept my head I could have shot him as he went up the muddy bank towards the scrub. But I did nothing of the sort—I was too dumbfounded for anything.

Hastily we went back to the near-by village and got hold of a couple of buffalo calves which we tied for the night, one on the edge of the muddy pool and the other on the road. Leaving them with food we returned to camp at dusk, full of hope for the morrow. If the tiger took one of those calves he would be certain to lie up as near the water as he dared, and it would be possible to beat him out of the thin piece of jungle. He was bound to stay near the water after feeding; it was almost as certain that he would be somewhere near even if he did not take a kill; since he was known to have taken up his quarters near the village and to have fed on its cattle for some time past. In any case he would hardly be likely in that stifling weather to make a long journey overnight to the next water.

Very carefully the next morning I stalked the pool of so-called water—there was no tiger; there was only one calf left, the other had been taken away towards the low ridge that I had reconnoitred the previous evening. Hastily word was sent back to the village, and from thence to surrounding villages, so that before noon I had some two hundred volunteer beaters. I did not want

so many, of course, fifty men, or even a dozen trained men would have been sufficient to have driven that tiger out of so thin a piece of forest. However, it never does to discourage keen beaters, and there was no doubt that that tiger was an extremely unpopular animal.

The heat was perfectly awful. I had to wear blue-tinted glasses against the glare and to wrap my handkerchief round the barrel of my rifle where I held it. The tree that I sat in was leafless, its bark was white and glary, the heat rose from the ground below, and the sun smote mercilessly from a brazen sky directly above my head. There was little wind and that was dry and scorching, sweat trickled down from my forehead but dried before it reached my eyes, where the eye flies were making the most industrious efforts to crawl beneath the dark glasses. An eye fly is a persistent creature that cannot take a hint, preferring a greasy death to losing an opportunity of being a nuisance. It is only beaten by a minute bee that revels in human sweat, particularly round the eyes. Thank goodness, such bees do not sting ; nothing to signify at any rate.

There was an hour of this sort of torture while I waited for the beat to begin, my position being at the end of the long low ridge and overlooking a piece of flat ground about a hundred yards wide towards the next low ridge. I had calculated that when the tiger was disturbed by the yelling of those two hundred revengeful men out for his blood, he would make away along the

ridge which gave him the sole covert for a daylight retreat. Some way to the north, and behind me, there was a large forest which, if he reached it, would give him safety.

Those villagers knew how to yell all right. I never heard such a fiendish noise as they made in the beat. No doubt the tiger was equally surprised. He came on quickly enough, but took the precaution of giving his wife precedence, and possibly because she was a nervous lady, she took what was given her. I rolled her over dead in one shot.

Scarcely had I reloaded when the tiger came along. He was alarmed, consequently angry, and told the world so in noisy roars. A tiger's angry roar is a terrific noise, compelling attention. It always seems to be followed by an intense silence which must be gratifying to the beast's pride, and in that silence he generally bellows again just to show, now that the world is listening, what sort of tiger he is. The stops in the security of high trees on either side tapped their sticks and hurled abuse at the beast. He passed me at full stretch belching rage at each bound as he crossed the open patch towards the next ridge. There was just time for one shot which took him in the groin. He rolled over like a rabbit, then went straight on in his original course, not seriously damaged, apparently. I felt that I had sadly bungled the business.

The beaters came up and crowded round the dead tigress. Then they looked round for the

tiger. Where was it? Not dead? Nonsense! The Sahib had shot one. He had fired at the other. So of course he had shot it. "Come on, brothers! Let's find the other, it must be bigger than that whore's daughter lying there."

"Stop!" I shouted, though my throat was as dry as parchment. They looked round in surprise.

"The tiger is not dead. Only wounded, and therefore very dangerous."

Each man wanted to have the credit of being the first to see the dead tiger and all pressed on.

"Stop," I shouted again. "Let every man climb a tree. That is the order."

In the East an order is an order. It may be mad or very unreasonable. But it is an order, and if given in the right tone of voice must be obeyed. So they climbed such trees as there were. They were poor things, however, leafless and no higher than the average garden laburnum. They found them uncomfortable and insecurely low. In any case, they thought, the tiger was dead, there was no danger. Even if the tiger was not dead the Sahib, without doubt, would shoot it as soon as he saw it. So they came down.

I happened to know a great deal more about wounded tigers and their probable behaviour than all of that crowd put together. Again I warned them to get up such trees as there were while I looked for the wounded tiger. I had with me my own personal *shikari* and one or two men who knew the game. My *shikari* carried my spare rifle, while I had my ·400 double-barrelled high-velocity

rifle ready. A hard-hitting weapon but an ejector, or so reputed, which nearly led to my undoing. I had no illusions about the possibility of stopping a charging tiger. I had met that kind before and I knew well that except for a shot in the brain or the spine that would paralyse a beast, there was no stopping a tiger that really meant to come in. There are tigers, indeed many of them, that when wounded will make a great noise and pretence of charging, but with no intention of coming in close to a man that will stand up to them. There are others that mean to get in with their charge at any price. The wise man treats all wounded tigers as coming into the second category. I had the feeling that the tiger in front of me meant business of a serious nature, and stood ready for whatever trouble was coming. Usually on such occasions one sends men up the higher trees to have a good look around before one makes the next advance. Here the forest was so poor that there were no higher trees. One could, however, see a long way ahead and be reasonably prepared for trouble.

The only covert for a beast was the low *sindi* palm trees not much higher than cabbages, and even these did not form a dense covert, just a few bushes a couple of feet high scattered about, but not making a continuous screen. However, I knew well how easily a tiger can hide behind practically nothing, so kept a good look out. It is on such occasions that the man who has spent years in the forest scores. One from the open plains or

the mountains has his eyes accustomed to a long vision, and does not naturally use the close focus required for the limited view in the forest. If year after year a forest officer spends his time in close jungle it is natural that he should normally take the close view, and not the long view of the mountaineer or the plainsman.

I remember being very much struck with this difference the first time I stalked in Scotland when home on leave. When it was a case of picking up the deer on the distant mountain-side, whether with the aid of the telescope or with the naked eye, the Highlander had me beat every time. Which annoyed me, as I rather pride myself on my keen eyesight. Later, we followed the deer into a wood ; here I was in my element. I could see the deer long before the Highlander. It was a case of looking out for the twitching of an ear, or a darker shadow in the nearness of the growth. Even after I saw the deer it was a long time before I could get my companion to see them.

Now, I had a fairly good range of vision. I had given up trying to get the villagers to remain in their trees. Some followed in a mob. A few tried to go ahead. That I stopped. Keeping a careful look out I suddenly saw the tiger about a hundred yards away, sitting up behind a *sindi* palm. He was watching us, sitting up like a dog. He meant trouble, that was quite obvious.

" Get up trees at once ! " I yelled. " He's coming ! "

They scrambled up such trees as there were,

making them look like overburdened pear trees. Then I fired at the tiger full into his exposed shirt front and he staggered to the blow. As he was some way off when I first fired, I decided that there would be time to reload before he got within striking distance, so I gave him the second barrel as he got up. Quickly I pressed the lever to open the breach for reloading. The thing had jammed ! It was an ejector rifle. Too complicated an affair for jungle shooting in such intense heat. It happened that the blistering heat of midday had affected the cordite. One of the cartridge-cases had split in the breach and there it jammed. I could not reload, and the tiger was getting unpleasantly close. There was no time now for the second rifle. My *shikari*, and small blame to him, was out of reach. He had dropped the spare rifle and fled, leaving his turban behind him caught up in a thorn. There was no time to pick up the spare rifle, my only chance was to get behind a bush, which I did quickly, still grasping my rifle.

The tiger did not charge in great springs. Nor did he roar in the way that one is accustomed to hear in beats or when they are suddenly disturbed. He came on at a steady trot, head and tail down, his powerful neck and shoulder-blades showing as much as any other part of him, and he growled steadily in muffled rage, as though each time that he put foot to ground it hurt and urged another growl. It was like the rise and fall of distant rumbling thunder. Seeing my *shikari's* turban, he tore it to pieces, then he found my spare rifle,

and as though recognizing that this was a mischief-maker he bit the barrel, denting it. Meanwhile I found a stone, and tapping the lever of my rifle, managed to open the breach. The tiger had seen a party of men hanging, terrified, on to the highest branches of a tree which bent under their weight. They were shouting in their terror, thus asking for trouble. The tiger tried to reach them. He did not spring as he might well have done if unwounded. I have seen a healthy tiger spring as high as the top of that tree. He stood on his hind legs and reached out as far as he could, clawing the bark of the branches in his efforts to reach the men. It was a matter of inches. And if the occasion were not quite so exciting might have been funny. It was funny, I suppose, to see those men tucking in their toes and wishing that they could become snails or tortoises.

Reloaded, I had a magnificent target with the tiger standing on his hind legs close to me. I gave him both barrels. He went down, but rising again took two more, and then the count. Every shot that I had fired had hit him, and with the possible exception of the first that hit him in the groin, all would have eventually been fatal. He died game.

That was a tiger.

And now I will tell of another of the same year and the same hot weather. I had been told that Sir Guy Fleetwood Wilson was very anxious to shoot a tiger on foot, and I had been asked if I would arrange it for him. I said that I would

do my best, only of course, I was not to be held to blame if there should be an accident. Stalking tigers on foot is supposed to be dangerous work, possibly it is to the inexperienced, but the real danger of tiger shooting lies in finishing the beasts off.

There is only one season for this form of *shikar*, and that is the very hottest of the hot weather. It is not a form of sport that can be undertaken everywhere because, to have any chance of success, special conditions are necessary, one of which is a scarcity of water with a tiger about and only one pool for him to drink from. What one does is to tie a calf up as bait in a place such as a road or dry watercourse, along which a tiger is likely to pass at night. Somewhere, within a mile of where the bait is tied, there should be a solitary pool of water that can be approached from covert. What one aims at is to obtain a kill, and for the tiger, replete with veal, to go off in the early morning to the pool for a drink. After that he lies up in some shady spot in the neighbourhood with the view to another feed in the evening. Actually, he finds the heat making him very thirsty, and as the day warms up he goes for another drink. Finding the water temptingly cool he lies in it and sleeps. The sportsman, by carefully stalking the water can often get a certain shot. Sometimes it entails the preparation of a footpath beforehand so as to facilitate a quiet stalk.

There are two rules for safety. The first is to wait to fire until the tiger is turned away from

the sportsman—the chances being that if not killed in one shot he will rush on in whatever direction he happens to be facing at the moment of being hit. If the sportsman stands in his way he may expect trouble. The other rule is not to fire except at a fatal spot that will be certain to put the tiger out of mischief.

It is thrilling sport, as one can often get a very close shot from a distance of a few yards ; and the heat calls for considerable endurance. Knowing what this form of sport meant, I was a little horrified on meeting Sir Guy to discover that he was what most people would call an old man (this was twenty years ago, and Sir Guy is still going strong !), but whatever his years, I soon found that he had the heart of a lion and the spirit of a colt. I took him to a place called Khondra which was within reasonable distance of the railway, and had the necessary requirements for this form of sport. And it was most damnably hot, although there were cool nights, for which we were grateful.

The water was none too good even when disguised in tea, and was the colour of chocolate, since it came out of a small hole dug in the bed of a *nala*. Moreover it was scarce, and in the end we had to send to a distance for more. There was another pool fairly near, but that had to be left for the tiger. We did not wish to risk disturbing him till the proper time. Farther away, some four miles off, there was a river-bed with frequent pools where I had once succeeded in

dealing with a tiger that had lain up in the water in the middle of the day. I had hopes that Sir Guy would get his tiger there.

But in spite of two kills we had no luck. At last, on a scorching hot day when it was painful to handle a rifle, we had a bait taken near the water, within reasonable distance of camp. In that heat it was pretty certain that the tiger would lie up in the water in the hottest part of the day, where he could be stalked. Rope-soled boots were a necessity for quiet going, as the approach was over rocks. The water was at one end of a gorge. It was only a small pool, but that was all the better for our purpose, since it would be easier to spot the tiger lying in so small an area of water.

Very slowly and carefully we approached, so as not to alarm the tiger with clumsy footfalls. The forest around us was leafless at that time of the year, and the rocks reflected the heat into our faces. The pool was marked by a few grasses and reeds that tried to look green. We drew it blank. But the tiger had only just left it, perhaps he had heard us approaching. Our *shikari*, Nandki, said that he had seen it going away. I doubted his statement at the time, since I was looking out and saw no tiger. We found the hot rocks where he had left the pool still wet from the drops from his flank, which was proof that he had only just gone on ahead of us. We followed into one of the hottest places that I had ever struck, down a *nala* with huge boulders, between which grew a few low bushes, and enclosed by two walls of rocky

cliff that bottled the midday heat up most effectively. The cliffs were almost perpendicular, with loose rocks on their sides held together in places by a few bamboos and sparse vegetation. There was a horrid glare and the sweat from our faces dimmed our darkened spectacles.

Not a nice place to meet a fighting tiger. Yet that brave old man was as keen as a boy after his first rabbit.

Nandki pointed to a cave in the side of the cliff some fifteen or twenty feet above our heads.

"That is where the tiger is," he said.

I did not believe him. I don't know why. Anyway, there was no harm in throwing in a stone or two, but we thought that we would rest and take a pull at the water-flask. The water was hot, of course, but still wet, thank God. The rocks on which we sat were hot enough to raise a blister; comfort demanding frequent movement or we should require to eat our next meal off the mantelpiece. While we rested, I heard a noise like that made by the wing pinions of a vulture as she stoops to her feed. There was nothing unusual about it, since it was the sort of sound one would expect to hear with a dead kill about. Then we threw stones into the mouth of the cave. Nothing happened, and we rested again. Suddenly Nandki said:

"There's the tiger!"

And there it certainly was. A tigress. She had been frightened away from the main entrance of the cave by our stone-throwing, and tried coming

out by the back door, a small entrance that seemed just large enough for her head.

I told Sir Guy not to fire, since she was above us and facing us ; if wounded she would certainly come down on top of us. So we let her come out. Once clear of the cave she scrambled up a ledge on the side of the cliff. It is immaterial who fired first, or who hit her ; not until she reached the top of the cliff did she take a shot in the shoulder that broke her forearm. With this handicap she could not manage to pull herself over the edge of the cliff, and came sliding over the rocks and rubble, first endways then sideways, sprawling her legs to get a foothold, until she crashed into a bamboo clump about half-way down. Dead, I thought.

" You cover her," I said to Sir Guy, " while I go up and push her down."

So saying I handed my rifle over to Nandki, and with some difficulty climbed up over the loose stones till I got level with her. I had more sense than to climb up to her directly from below. When I approached, she told me very plainly that she was alive and angry. So I slithered down again to the bed of the *nala*, from where we fired into her through the screening bamboo. That livened her up, and down she came with a lot of stones and dust, while we took pot shots at her in her passage. She ended up with a bump at our feet, opened her mouth, and took the bullet from my left barrel in her mouth. That was the end.

It was one of the most interesting pieces of *shikar* in my experience. What sticks in my memory more than anything else was the way that old man stood up to the tigress. It was not as if he were a man who had spent the best part of his life with a rifle in his hand, much as he would have liked to. His lot was cast in offices; but he showed that he was as capable with firearms as he is with finance.

And that was another tiger.

CHAPTER IX

VISITORS AND TIGERS

I HAVE, I think, already shown that the forest officer's lot in the old days before cars were the fashion, and railways developed as they are now, was a lonely one. Made roads were scarce, some districts boasting only one or two such luxuries. Long journeys in the districts meant long rides, or uncomfortable mileage cramped within the limited space of native bullock carts. Those quick dashes out meant organization—*bandobast*—ponies had to be sent on ahead so that one could move quickly, with changes of mounts every ten or twelve miles ; and there is nothing so restful in a long ride as a change of mount ; or, if one travelled by bullock cart, the trotting bullocks had to be replaced by fresh animals at shorter intervals.

There was a fixed tariff prescribed for the hire of the bullocks according to the mileage, and with each stage there was a new driver, who took his animals home again on relief. Riding was, of course, quicker, but even the bullocks could do their six miles an hour or even more in the case of a well-bred pair. Some were obstinate, specially at the *nalas*. There would be a quick run down the steep bank to the ford, then strained toiling through

the heavy sand, but a willing pull to the welcome water where there would be a great splash and a sudden stop while the bullocks drank deeply. Then away again with the cool water splashing their flanks, followed by the hiss of sand as the wheels came on to the dry again cutting deep into the soft bed of the *nala*. The driver, knowing the way of his beasts, would tickle them under the tails with his toes, and if that were not enough encouragement twist their already knotted tails, leaning well forward as they heaved and strained up the steep bank where the ruts cut deep into the hard dry mud.

Sometimes they were obstinate ; they would lie down in the road simulating death as though utterly weary of this world's toils. Then they would be prodded with goads and submitted to all manner of cruelties, including the ordeal of fire, till the humane man cried halt to the brutalities. Once started again, however, the bullocks knowing that their driver was indeed the master, would go on willingly enough. The driver had called their bluff.

But the horse for me. The bullock may be sacred to the Hindus, although it is hard to believe it considering the cruelties to which he has to submit at times ; but if any animal can be called sacred to an Englishman surely it is the horse. Indeed, when London, after our civilization is gone in a few thousand years, is excavated by the antiquarians, and learned men are trying to reconstruct our national life, it seems probable that they will decide that the noble animal, the horse, was the

principal object of worship in our times. No other creature receives such flattering attention in statuary or the arts.

Every forest officer in those days had to pass a test in riding before he could come to India. He was expected to keep at least one horse and found difficulty in having his travelling allowances passed unless he did.

It seems a pity that the noble animal should be replaced by the car. I can remember the time when on news coming in of a sounder of pig near the station every officer turned out for the hunt, and the cultivators would join in a riotously joyful day followed by a feast of pork. Alas ! I was to see the day too, when I was the only Englishman in a moderately-sized station to turn out with his horse. I have noticed that the man well mounted always excites respect. In an Indian bazaar he gets his salaam and the bold glance from the ladies ; in rural England the touch of the hat and the welcome upward twist of the head that means " we be of one blood, you and I."

And talking of horses, there is a story told of a well-known forest officer in charge of a division who scored over an unpopular conservator whose duty it was to pass his travelling allowance bills. The rule was, that if an officer came into head-quarters, he could charge to government the cost during the period of his stay of the maintenance of his camping equipment, such as the hire of carts or camels. This officer kept two ponies and when opportunity offered—which was not often—he used

them for playing polo. He needed his ponies for his work, however, and felt justified in charging for their keep during a short stay in headquarters during the camping season. So he put down their feed and keep during the time. This was disallowed by a hard-hearted conservator, because the ponies, so he said, were kept for the officer's own pleasure—a ruling which the officer noted.

A month or two later he was in camp some twenty-five miles away from the nearest railway station, a dull spot consisting of a few sheds set down alongside the line in a vast treeless and dusty plain. The conservator wanted to see the officer urgently and quickly. A wire was sent to him in camp, which he received, telling him to come to "——" railway station at once to meet the conservator who was waiting there for him. The officer started ; it was a long walk and took two days. He met a very angry conservator.

" Why the devil could you not come more quickly ? " he was asked by the enraged man.

" Twenty-five miles is a long way to walk, sir," was the answer.

" But you have two ponies, why not ride ? "

" You have told me, sir, that I keep my ponies only for my pleasure. This is not pleasure," he answered as he glanced round the bare arid plain.

Communications in those days were not easy. We were expected to spend the best part of the year in camp, and we did. A stay in headquarters during the camping season gave occasion for an explanation. A forest officer's place was in his

forests and among the people entrusted to his care. If he met people of his own race when on tour he was lucky ; sometimes a missionary, more often a soldier on a shooting trip ; perhaps a district official on his tours. But any such meetings were rare. Once or twice in my career I managed to meet the forest officer of the neighbouring division to settle small affairs of our mutual frontiers, but as a service we saw little of one another, and we were so keen on our jobs that we resented being called into headquarters to discuss affairs with our chiefs. Often such summonses were sent purely out of kindness to break the spell of the lonely jungle. It was thought that too much of our own company was not good for us. Our chiefs had been through it and knew its influences, and when I was in the lofty position of being conservator myself I was guilty of the same offence. It is not good for a man to go wholly "*jungly*," although that was my nickname with some—of which I am proud. One got into a rut and formed the habit of making plans of tours long ahead, resenting any interference with them. The annual volunteer camp in those days was not very serious soldiering, it was more of a yearly reunion and ten days under canvas for those whose lot lay in offices. Few forest officers attended it. They were held by the shade of their own forests and the claims of the people that lived in them.

But visitors were nearly always welcome. They were of all sorts, and, except for the visiting tour of an inspecting conservator or that rare bird the

Inspector-General of Forests, came with one object —to shoot.

The most welcome were those from England—home—as we call it in the East. I always found it a great joy showing off my jungles to these people—they appreciated it. They knew nothing, and were keen to learn. More, they knew that they knew nothing, and did not try to interfere in the arrangements made for their amusement or to criticize after events. I know nothing so irritating after a hard day, when, as the result of careful plans a tiger beat has been held, to have a man who has taken no part in those plans and knows nothing of the terrain, to start criticizing ; trying to show how, in fact, if he had been running the show he would have done it much better. Then there is another sort of interference, when having successfully laid plans to get a tiger into a certain place for a beat, and even had the *machans* placed a week beforehand so as to take the beat in a certain direction, one is desired to alter arrangements at the last moment, and by one with no real first-hand experience of *shikar* but who wishes to pose as an expert.

The Anglo-Indian brass hat often comes into this category. He has probably killed a few tigers in his time, but they are what are popularly known as " Viceroy's tigers " ; beasts that have been driven over time-honoured ground to a place where they are certain to come out for the brass hat to massacre. The wretched man is cursed with a knowledge of the language and so by questioning the *shikaris* is in the position to find out what the

plans are; having done so he tries to show his superior knowledge by criticizing.

I remember one in particular. He had shot a good many tigers in his time, yet I doubt if he had ever run a beat in his life. We were in new country where beats had not been held before. For that reason it was all the more interesting to me. I put him where the tiger was expected to go and the beast walked straight beneath the tree where he sat. He had a very easy shot at a few yards' range and killed his tiger in one shot. Another added to his total! That man never saw the kill, he did nothing about helping to plan the beat (I did not want him to, of course), he did not help place the stops or do a single thing to help in the general arrangements. Yet after the beat was over he had the gall to tell me that the *machan* was badly placed. I don't quite know what he wanted. A tower perhaps such as the Rajahs produce, with a lift and iced champagne ready to hand.

The next beat was a very scratch affair over a natural kill; a piece of luck that one receives with thanks as a gift from the gods; the tiger again went under the man's tree and he missed it. Once more he pointed out how he could have run the beat so much better. That was a hurried beat that we had to do before the limited hours of daylight gave out. He was lucky, with such hasty plans, to see the tiger at all. The trouble is that that sort of brass hat is usually very highly placed and cannot be put in his proper jungle position, which is a low one in my view. I did

answer one of them back on one occasion, scoring heavily.

I was asked to run some small-game beats at a difficult place before I had time to cut rides or to bait the ground to collect the game. Moreover, it was the wrong time of year; the jungle was too thick. I said so. The person's reply was that he did not expect more than a day in the country, which is about all that he had. Our bag was three jungle fowl and two peafowl to four guns.

A year later I met the same brass hat in headquarters after I had left that division and another was in charge. There were a number of people present at the club bar and the brass hat amused himself at my expense. He asked my successor whether he could arrange some shooting for him in those forests at Christmas. "You know," he said to his listeners, "a year ago I asked Best to arrange a shoot for me in that same place. Best thinks that he knows a lot about *shikar*, he has written a book about it. He arranged beats for me; we worked all day and what do you think we got?"

The crowd waited for him to answer his own question in respectful silence.

"Three peafowl and two jungle fowl!"

There was laughter in court.

"No, sir," I said, "you are mistaken. One more must be added to the bag."

"Oh," he said, "what?"

"One beater," I replied joyfully.

"Who shot him?" he asked.

"You did," I said.

And it was true. The man had been only slightly peppered, of course, but it was enough for my retort. I am not usually quick on the uptake, my best answers coming after I have gone to bed.

It is right to add that the brass hat to whom I refer was a man for whom I had, in other respects, considerable regard and sympathy. He had the gift of humour and bore no grudge.

Perhaps one loses one's own sense of humour to a certain extent in the jungle. The monotony of the life plays on a man's nerves and the loneliness, although one does not realize it at the time, makes him irritable over small things that most men laugh at. India herself is a sad country where it is rare to see a smile on a native's face, and from close association with the people the white man is apt to react to the mood. It is natural that one's greatest sympathy should be for the young, and I must confess that I took far more pleasure in helping the keen young subaltern to get his shooting, than I did in the case of more senior officers.

In nearly all instances the type of sportsman who goes to the jungle plays the game. He knows that the shooting rules are made mainly in the interests of sport, and it was very rare indeed to have an infringement of the rules reported. There was such a thing as the black list, but it was rarely that a name was reported for entry. Once on it, and the name circulated to the divisional officers, no permit could be issued to the offender.

AN UNDEFEATED SUBALTERN

A block permit was once issued to a certain lady —I did not at the time know she was a lady, but it would have made no difference. I discovered her sex when she complained to me that my forest ranger had been rude to her. The good lady had wounded a tiger and wanted it finished off. Finishing off wounded tigers is dangerous work and most sportsmen do this job themselves. Not this one though.

She wrote complaining to me that the ranger refused to order the little jungle men to finish off her wounded tiger with their bows, arrows, and axes. Would I punish the ranger? My answer can be imagined. It was then placed on record that I was a very rude man—no gentleman, in fact. She received no more permits to shoot in the districts where I served.

Very different was a young subaltern from a battalion stationed in Bengal. He was given a block that bordered a native state where tigers were preserved more carefully than any home-bred pheasant. And there were man-eaters waiting for the rajah to shoot. Our young soldier tied up his kills within his own block in British territory, and being keen, he did the job himself. Over the boundary line and close at hand was the rajah's magnificent camp.

A tiger took the subaltern's kill. Beaters were out of the question, the rajah's party had seen to that. So our subaltern decided to sit up over the kill and wait for the tiger's return. He received a visit from the prime minister saying that His High-

ness wished to shoot the tiger. Naturally the request was declined. The soldier tied his own *machan* and sat all night, which was made hideous by the noise of drums, firearms, and other alarms. It would seem that no normal tiger would venture near such noise ; but this one was the exception ; it returned and was shot. Next day a polite note was sent to His Highness asking him to come over and see the trophy !

One of my most welcome guests was an officer in the Indian army. He knew a lot about *shikar* and was as keen as mustard. Whatever the result of the beat he wanted to go over it afterwards and try to learn something from it. He was very different to the brass hat type : you don't find *them* trying to learn anything, they know it all and give one to understand that that is so. All they come out for is to add yet one more tiger to their record of which they can boast in the clubs. Any fool can sit in a tree and murder a tiger as it walks under his feet.

There was a freshness about visitors from home ; a breath of England that did one good. Perhaps the most amusing of all were a couple of naval officers ashore for the Christmas holidays. Here, indeed, was a change for them and for me. A difference in our respective outlooks that can be summed up in an excuse one of them made for not shooting as well as he might have.

" It is all right for you," he said, " shooting beasts hidden in this tangled jungle. Your job is to pry about into its depths. Ours is to shoot at

targets on the sea with no trees and branches to obstruct the view."

We were not, of course, always in the jungles. During the monsoon period from July to September the roads were no longer serviceable. They were mud, and all wheeled transport ceased. Some touring was possible in the hilly forests by means of coolie transport and living in rest-houses, but it was wet and unhealthy, although more interesting than at other times, because one could study the trees during their short season of astonishingly rapid growth. There were plants and flowers to be seen during the rainy season that were not there, or were inconspicuous, during the dry months.

In the stations we lived the normal life of the Anglo-Indian. Office work in the day, following a ride in the morning with tennis or golf in the afternoons. We played much bridge and snooker. The usual small station consisted of the Deputy Commissioner, Police Officer, Doctor, Forest Officer and possibly one or two assistants. All of these would be Europeans and we generally got on wonderfully well together. Club life was the centre of social affairs, and the clubs were kept almost exclusively for Europeans. Europeans started and built them. We played cricket and hockey as the weather permitted and often took on the next station, which was usually some hundred or more miles away, sometimes considerably more. Our teams were mixed and were as good an example as could be found anywhere of the friendly co-operation of European and Asiatic.

Then at Christmas we would meet again in camp —those of us who wished to enjoy more of one another's company. In the ten days' holiday I would be responsible for the amusements. We always tried to fix camp in some place that was near good small-game shooting, whether water fowl or true game birds, such as peafowl or jungle fowl. That would keep guests amused by day and sufficiently tired in the evening not to wish to play bridge, which in my view is almost sacrilege in those marvellous forest nights when one should be listening to the many voices of the wild. If we did not bag a tiger or two we were disappointed. Sometimes we killed a deer.

After the Christmas camp we were unlikely to see one another again until the rains broke in June. In that period the forest officer would be fighting fires, the policeman might be hunting dacoits, the doctor waging his chronic war against insanitary conditions, cholera, malaria, plague perhaps, and the thousands of other ills that afflict unguarded man ; and over all would be the watchful eye of the Deputy Commissioner supervising and tactfully oiling the machinery of each department in his district, lest there be a squeak in an important bearing indicating trouble that might affect the efficiency of all. He was the Mussolini of the district ; farming, engineering, mining, forestry, police administration, medicine, irrigation, what ever was being done came under his eye. He was the chief magistrate of the district as well. Nowhere in the world can there be such wonder-

ful personal rule as there is in India under the I.C.S.

In running tiger shoots it is my experience, and sometimes that of others, that if the organizer takes a *machan* in a tiger beat the tiger is sure to come his way. It is naturally one's wish that the tiger should be shot by a guest. I have heard it said that if the beat is left entirely to the *shikaris* and to native subordinates, they do their best to drive the tiger to the *machan* of the most important person out. I do not think that this is the case, as I know how difficult that would be. It is true that the stops on either flank might, by making excessive noise at a certain time, drive the tiger to one particular flank where the important person is. But those who run beats are not stops in the flank, they are with the beaters, and in any case if the stops do make an excessive noise and an unnecessary tumult on a flank then the guns cannot fail to hear it even in a noisy beat. Whatever the reason, I found that if I took a *machan* the tiger generally came my way. So after some experience, when I had guests I went with the beaters. It had the advantage of giving them confidence, and was far more interesting than sitting in a *machan* for the tiger to be driven up. One avoided the long wait while wondering why the men delayed so long and whether the beat would be bungled.

Sometimes in the case of a tiger that was well known as a sticky customer I went with the beaters unarmed, as they were, save for their axes, which in an encounter with a tiger would be of little use.

Then one had to pretend to be really brave tackling thickets that others carefully avoided. There were thrills in plenty and the work was intensely interesting. First, placing the guns in their *machans* and clearing the ground round them so that they could have as good a view as possible, then putting the stops up on either flank, one would work back as quietly and quickly as possible to where the beaters would be waiting.

Every sort and type of man would be there. Cultivators, cartmen, camp followers and squat little black men from the jungles, each with his axe slung over his shoulder as he sat on his heels waiting for the word to line up. With them would be uniformed forest subordinates, men of authority to keep them together and ensure the essential silence. Generally they would be waiting on a road defined by two deep cart ruts and the grey dust on the leaves at its side. Now it would be deserted of traffic. Everyone knows when there is a tiger beat on, and the road is deserted except for those who come on tiger affairs, and they are many ; the Indian countryman is one of the best sportsmen in the world.

A few brief words to the beaters. " Don't bunch together. Let no one get ahead of his brethren, for there danger lies for all. When the word is given shout your loudest and continue shouting till you hear a shot, then be silent. If you hear me blow my hunting horn climb trees till told to come down again. Then, when word is given that all is safe, drive on again."

So we line out in silence. I take the middle, the elephant one flank. And as we spread along the road facing the jungle where we hope the tiger lies up after a full meal, we see a cloud of vultures spiralling to a point in the air and we are heartened. He has driven them off his kill.

Two shots start the beat, there is a mighty shout and we move forward, plunging into the undergrowth. The jungle is pretty thick here, as it should be if a tiger is to be enticed to lie within its shelter ; on either side of the strip of heavier growth, which marks the sides of a watercourse, there is open country, park-like with a few trees standing over high grass. From where the kill was taken we find a well-marked trail along which, in his efforts to drag the carcass away from the vicinity of the man-haunted road, the tiger has broken down shrubbery and lower bushes as he pulled his clumsy burden behind him ; the ground is scarred as though in places someone has dragged a heavy log ; earth, leaves, sticks and stones are scraped away and piled up in little banks and heaps. There are patches of ground with no trace of dragging, where the tiger has lifted his prey over a stretch of particularly awkward ground, then the tell-tale marks are found again. We press on, looking anxiously ahead ; it cannot be far off now ; a crow calls in a tree to our left ; the trail leads to the steep bank of a *nala* shaded by creepers, the lip of the *nala* is scarred and stones have recently been displaced on its side, and there, screened by leaves the beast has left his kill.

A half-eaten calf, the buttocks gone, the entrails torn away by vultures, the whole carcass grey and fouled by bald-headed creatures unworthy the name of bird. Round about, the grass has been trampled by them and the branches of trees soiled where they waited for a safe moment to descend to the feast. They knew well enough whose meat they were stealing, and one caught napping by the returning tiger lies broken, dead, an untidy mess of dirty, dishevelled feathers hiding a carrion bald head.

But we push on. Here we find the tiger's track, fresh, where he hastened over the sandy bed of a dry stream. There he drank in a shallow pool. Freshly disturbed earth shows where he climbed the bank of the *nala*, rolling rocks behind him. He has hurried. We pass on, keeping our place in the line so far as the thickets and the tall waving grasses allow. The cries of the men have merged into a monotonous chorus. We find where the tiger has left the *nala*, seeking better covert for his escape through the tangled undergrowth. We lose the trail to find it again where he crosses the *nala* for the other side. There is a sudden crescendo from the beaters. Why? One wonders. A panic-stricken deer rushes back through the line, then a sounder of pig, and a man is knocked over but is none the worse, though regretting the loss of pork by an error in aiming his axe. Good sportsmen these fellows. They amuse themselves by throwing things at terror-stricken monkeys that dash here and there, lost in their panic and not knowing whither to flee.

We reach a thicket of thorns impenetrable to man and elephant. We line up in close formation behind it, then shout together with sudden fury, hoping to shift the tiger. A man shouts that he has seen him go ahead. He is probably a liar. Again we move on. We are more than half-way through the beat, and the shouting diminishes a little. Will there never be the sound of a shot?

Then in a pause of the shouting, while men as it were took breath for the final effort—it was tiring work—we had our message from in front. The full deep-throated roar of the tiger bellowing in baffled rage.

It began with a sudden nerve-shattering cough so loud that it seemed to shake the leaves of the forest, and it could be heard by all in spite of the confusion of human voices. At the sound men stopped in their tracks or took a pace or two back; many made for the nearest tree. Then there was a bellow repeated three or four times in quick succession, ending in a shattering roar followed by muffled grumbles like the echoes of receding thunder. The beaters are quiet. Most of them are half-way up trees, for the tiger is close—somewhere on the right flank where he has tried to break through the stops. He has clearly been turned, but must not be allowed to come back. So we shout our loudest, hoping that he is being driven on to the line of guns. There is a tendency for the beaters to group, a natural hesitation about going on. Stout-hearted men patrol

the line and the main body is led on again, but more slowly and with cautious glances at trees.

Nothing happens, and one fears that the tiger has got away between the stops. The beaters regain confidence, growing less careful. They forget those terrifying bellows in the comfort of their own company and nothing happening. I become anxious. Why has there been no shot? Has all this trouble and scheming been in vain? One thinks of and hopes for nothing but the sound of a possible shot.

There are no animals left in the beat now. No monkeys tearing out through the beaters in their panic. The deer have been gone a long time and so have the pigs. One grey monkey, half grown, has been left behind by its terror-stricken mamma ; it sits at the top of a bare tree, its little body clasping the grey trunk against which it tries to hide, while the howling horde of men passes beneath and beyond. A large red squirrel flies before the line, leaping from tree to tree till it reaches the last in a row and there is a gap before another can be reached. Will it jump? Scuttling up the highest branches in a corkscrew course it stops, looking fearfully below. The beat passes on.

At last! A shot. The dull roar of a heavy rifle, muffled in its echo by the leaves and branches. It is followed by another shot. Again there is a halt of the beaters while men listen. Two shots may be a bad sign in a small-game beat, but in a tiger drive it is a cheerful message. It probably

means that the tiger has been bowled over with the first, and that a careful gun gives him a second to make sure that he will keep dead. There is little need for a warning, again most of the beaters are in the sanctuary of the trees ; and they chatter. It is essential to know what has happened. Has the tiger gone on ? Perhaps it is dead ? But it may have been headed, and wounded is now approaching the line. No risks may be run.

I blow my horn and the few men remaining on the ground race up the trees there to watch, wondering perhaps what the Sahib will do if the tiger comes.

There is a stop on my right. He shouts to the next man and so word is passed to the guns asking what has happened. Why can't the beaters stop their chatter in the trees ? It is difficult to hear what the stops say. Contradictory messages come back. At last we get reliable news. The tiger was knocked over, took a second shot and then went back towards the beat.

There is uproar of conversation among the beaters now crowding the branches of the higher trees. They hope to see something. Rather a vain hope, because a tiger that does not want to be seen is almost invisible. Each man gives his view of what has happened, and since the noise is great he must shout louder than his fellows to be heard. But none listen. One knows that shouting at the men is hopeless. So the horn is blown again. That is something new, different to the other noises. The shouting stops for a moment,

and before they have time to reopen their babel they are ordered to stay where they are.

Then, with the two trackers, we carefully feel our way along the line of stops towards the guns. Overhead we hear a branch shake. It holds the Babu. A sportsman, but a very fearful man, keen to be able to say that he has seen a tiger shot and to help in the shoot.

"Hallo, Babu. Have you seen the tiger?"

"Sir, it is there." We get behind a tree ready for a charge.

"Is it dead?"

"No, sir, it is not deaded yet."

We avoid the place and collect the other guns. The Babu stays where he is. He is not likely to move voluntarily. The guns come down from their *machans*. Now we get direct news of what happened.

"That is where I first saw him. There I took the shot and there he fell over the creeper. As he went off into those bushes I fired again and I am sure I hit him a second time."

Now is the danger time, when even the most-experienced men do things that they know are foolish. There is a reaction after all the excitement, and an impatience to get the business over. There is, too, I often think, the risk of a nervous man not quite sure of himself taking chances that wiser men avoid. A natural course for most people. I always had nerves while I waited that half-hour before following up a wounded tiger. There is an urge to get along with the job and have done with it; many have fallen to it, and

alas, many have paid for it. Practically every death from tiger wounds has come from that "follow up." Men who have killed their scores of tigers have in so many cases made this mistake and paid the price.

The beaters grow impatient. Some come down from their trees and are driven up again.

We start to follow up, all of us fully armed. The trackers in the middle, the guns covering them on either side. Behind us we put men up trees to search the ground ahead. We are too intent on our business to have nerves now. The trackers smile. This is their job. Another smile as one of them points to a red scar in the bark of a sapling, showing where the "sure hit" went—not into the tiger. But the first shot is another story. There is a big splash of blood on the ground over which ants scramble, quickly sensing a meal, an overturned stone, freshly moved earth. A splash of blood on green leaves and a horrid smell of wounded tiger. More blood. We throw stones ahead into the bushes, more men are put up the higher trees as we move on.

"There he is!" shouts a man.

We close ranks, waiting.

"Is he dead?"

"I can't see," is the answer.

Another man goes up beside him. There is much low talk as the first man tries to point him out to his fellow and then to us. We cannot possibly see from our position, but, with luck we may get in another shot before the charge comes.

The man says he can see the tiger plainly. In that case one of us can shoot it from the same place.

The rest get into positions of safety and I climb up with my rifle. There is one brief anxious moment as I part with my gun to climb the easier and a great feeling of comfort as I handle it again. The man, almost too excited to speak, points with his axe to a dark tangled mass of creepers. There, after much searching, I see a yellow patch darkened in the shade. With my left arm round a limb of a tree to keep my position, I fire, then try to recover my hold after the recoil for a second shot when the tiger comes out. There is a slight movement in the shadows and I fire again, this time without definite aim. A low moan and the tiger is dead. But not so dead that we approach without first throwing stones to make sure.

And that was the end of the beat. A typical beat and actually one from my own knowledge. Can anyone ask for more interesting experience of the ways of a wary beast, the panic terror of the lesser creatures of the forest, and the reactions of men to changing emotions, in pursuit of a beast whose name has been used throughout the world to denote the extremes of ferocity, cunning, and strength?

Tiger shooting need not consist of merely sitting in a tree and shooting the beast as he passes beneath. The real fun lies in outwitting him. First a place has to be found where tigers dwell (and they are not too common), then there has to be

found a place with water, covert, and a sure line of retreat for the beast, and finally the tiger must be induced to take a kill in such a place that he will lie up within the ground selected for a beat. That is all the preliminary work. A beat I have described.

One of the last beats that I ran was shortly after I had recovered from two attacks of enteric and was not over-strong. I had two boys out from Home with me. Neither had been in India before and they came straight from Bombay to me. The most delightful form of guest imaginable. And they were as keen as boys can be. For nearly ten days the tigers refused to play up, and we passed our time with stalking and shooting small game, or rather they did; I had my work to do. Then at last, while I was away from camp, news came in that a tiger had killed. Time is precious on such occasions and they started out, one with his copy of *Shikar Notes*, the other with *Forbes' Hindustani*. And they proceeded to work the thing out. I reached them in time to arrange the *machans* to cover the line of the tiger's retreat. I was not fit enough to go into the beat on this occasion and took the right-hand *machan*. J was in the middle and W on the left.

A tiger came out in front of J. He fired.

"Have you killed him?" I asked.

"Yes. It is dying in the jungle behind."

"All right. There may be another."

This was optimistic on my part, but there is always the chance of a second tiger in a beat.

For which reason the order that guns should fire at tiger and tiger only in a beat, holds good even after the first tiger has been shot. I hoped that if there was a second then it would have been sufficiently frightened by the first shot to go across to W, who was on the left flank. There was little chance of one coming my way, the ground was not suitable.

There were two more shots from J. I felt annoyed. The wretched boy was shooting at deer or pig.

"What are you firing at now?" I asked, rather peeved.

"I have killed two more tigers," was the reply.

It seemed absurd to expect a fourth tiger, but, in case there should be one, I fired at and killed a peacock that was scuttling towards my position. I hoped that the noise of my rifle-shot after those of J might turn towards W any other that might by great good fortune be about. And it did so, W killing the fourth in the beat. We had little trouble in collecting them.

That was a great day and gave enormous pleasure to our visitors. And although the bag was never so large, there were other days with friends that were as amusing. And not only in tiger beats. Imagine a Chief Commissioner (Provincial Governor) with a reputation for fierce temper but a heart of gold, standing in a small-game beat armed with nothing larger than number six shot, face to face with a tiger that said things in a loud voice that no human would have dared to men-

tion to so august a personage. A fat commissioner in a peafowl beat in a like case; but it was a harmless hyæna which he mistook for a tiger, both being similarly striped. He climbed the nearest tree, which was a thin sapling, too thin for his weight, for it bent like a fishing-rod dangling a tempting bait, while rude people laughed.

CHAPTER X

CHIKALDA

THERE was something about Chikalda that differed from any other station to which I was appointed. I think it was its general atmosphere of domesticity, and that it was possible to live there with one's family all through the year. Other stations were impossible for women and children in the hot weather, and one saw so little of one's bungalow that it was really not worth while to try cultivating a garden.

Most of my life in India so far had been spent as a bachelor, which was good enough in its way ; dinner in pyjamas, very rare and consequently painful occasions for shaving, and a general free-and-easy existence. After I was married we had the sound rule that obtains in most parts of India that we should dress for dinner in camp as well as in the station. A wretched bachelor cannot be doing his work and give the careful thought to his menus that they merit, consequently most people put on weight when they marry, a rule to which I fear I am no exception.

Chikalda was essentially domestic ; it was the only place in India where we spoke of our house as home ; it was not the only hill station in the

Province, of course. Pachmarhi was the official sanatorium, but Chikalda was a little bit higher, a matter of a few hundred feet, but we who loved Chikalda were proud of every one of them. They gave us a feeling of superiority. Let Pachmarhi keep her gilded governor, her smug secretaries, her noisy soldiers who overshadowed the quiet sanctity of the pilgrim's way to holy Mahadeo; we were content in the village life of Chikalda, and could look down on her rather loud sister with the tolerance of those who know a better way of life. Pachmarhi can speak for herself. Now hear something of domestic Chikalda.

The great Duke found her and fought two battles, they say, for her possession—three, if you reckon the capture of Chikalda's fort itself. First at Assaye, then Argaon, and at last the assault of the hill. The steeply walled fort that caps the Gaurlgarh hill measures her girth in miles rather than yards. There lay her weakness, since the garrison was not sufficient to man the circumference of the walls. After a great fight at the main gate, where we now enter the fort for our picnics and bathing parties, Chikalda was ours. Cannon still lie in the grass overlooking the plains two thousand feet below, and where they built ponds to hold water against a siege we bathe and fish at leisure. Between the fort and the European village there is an open plain cut by wooded combes, the home of pigs and deer and the very tiger himself. These combes are hidden in the folds of the rolling downs, and on the higher ground there is

a cemetery for Christians, and no ordinary one either. Here it was that the battery stood to pound in the gates of the fort, while another party climbed up the precipitous hill from Ellichpur. There was a sting left in the Marhatta army, they fought bravely, they replied to the guns and killed the British officer directing his battery. As he fell, there they buried him. His was no common grave. Others have since been buried in this place consecrated by the gunner officer ; they lie in ordered rows around him, turned east and west, but he lies as he fell, facing the direction of his guns and their target.

There is a wall around this sacred spot ; and outside the wall and within, there grow a profusion of lovely flowers. Cosmos daisies, glorious zinnias, and balsam, escaped from the gardens of the village, join in wild freedom with the flowers of the forest to make a garland worthy of a hero. I like to think that this officer also came from the down country of our sleepy southern England, and that he has found a fitting rest in the soft bosom of the downs of another land.

Beneath the shadow of the fort and near three thousand feet below it lies Ellichpur, once a cantonment, now a derelict station. Here is another grave of an officer killed in the capture of the fort. Remarkable, since it is in the charge of pious Moslems, who though of a different faith, honour a brave man's memory, and tend his tomb as if it were that of a man of great renown who died in their own belief.



GAURLGARH FORT
From a drawing by MRS. R. A. WILSON

One can picture the noise and smoke of battle, the desperate fight around the gate, the final assault, the Mahratta power broken; since then peace. If any wish to know what conditions were in Berar before that British peace came, let them look out of the train and behold the tall forts that still stand on the high ground over the villages, their crumbling mud walls testifying to the ryots' need of defences in the past and also bearing solemn witness of the frailty of empires.

Now Chikalda is all peace. It can, thank goodness, never be a big station or the home of great men. It is a picnic ground; but, despite its name, which means the muddy spring, it is devoid of permanent wells.

The dweller in the plains of Berar sleeps in his derelict garden by breathing the relative coolness of the night air. No scent of roses greets him when he wakes, but dust, glare and the heavy smell of cowdung. At night his doors and windows are flung wide open to welcome the night air, which at first dawn is hastily bottled within doors to last throughout the day. Each day, with the advance of summer, the hours of light are more scorching, and each night the air becomes more stagnant. The trees are leafless, the grass is dead. In the far distance is a line of blue hills crowned by a fort; that is Chikalda, who smiles an invitation. Let us imagine our visitor going to Chikalda for the first time from Amraoti. There was a time when he would have to travel by rail all day to get to Ellichpur, the half-way

town. I have done that journey—once ! It was interesting.

The train from Murtizapur was held up beyond its allotted time. At last the guard blew his nose on the green flag before waving it ; we were off with much important noise. We were only an hour late and had thirty-odd miles in which to make up time. Which was not to be, since we had a mishap ; that part of the engine which the small boy loves to imitate with his forearm fell off on to the line. The train stopped. I leant out in the darkness to ask what was the trouble. They told me, and I got out to see. A man went back along the line with a lantern, others followed him ; soon there was a shout in the dark distance, the thing had been found and was borne along in triumph to be pushed on again. I forget whether they took the trouble to tie it up with a bootlace.

We were only two and a half hours behind our time in reaching Ellichpur.

But the better way is by car direct from Amraoti to Chikalda. The first part of the journey is along a straight road flanked by leafless trees ; if by chance a tree or two has burst into young foliage, the leaves droop and wither with the scorch of the midday blast. On either side are cotton fields now bare, brown and dusty. Cattle group themselves beneath the trees in the pitiful hope of shade, or stand beside mud walls until the sun reaches that angle at which no wall can give shelter. The earth is cracked and there is not a

sign of green anywhere. Even the borrow-pits alongside the raised road, from which the bank was made and where a few green weeds survived the earlier drought, are now brown and arid. Some of the richest soil in India, but at this season a wilderness, the main occupation of whose inhabitants is to draw water from the fast-diminishing wells.

And Ellichpur, the half-way town at the foot of the hills? A derelict of empty bungalows and bare compounds. Here there were trees planted in the old days of the cantonments. Some are evergreens with welcome shade, but most of them spread bare branches in the scorching wind.

Beyond Ellichpur there is a change, the ground is more broken by *nalas*. Here and there rocks and round boulders show black against the brown earth. There is a perceptible rising of the ground, and soon the road bends to ease a steep pitch. There are a few shrubs where goats have fed and will feed again as soon as green shows. We pass a village of huts. The houses are different from those in the plains; they are thatched and the walls show more woodwork and less dried mud in their structure, from which there is a complete absence of bricks and tiles. The architecture is of a cruder age. This is no settlement of prosperous Berari plainsmen, but a vagrant village of aboriginal Korkus hugging the foot of the hills that are their home. The road twists, and as it rises the low bushes and shrubs are replaced by higher growth

and then by trees, and in between the rocks and stones there are occasional small blue flowers braving the heat of the day. A red indigo plant shows along the roadside in full conspicuous bloom, while arched over it one sees the shameless scarlet of the "flame of the forest." The car mounts steadily from a few hundred feet above the sea-level to five hundred, then a thousand and two thousand. The engine grows hot and is glad of the water of Ghatang, the half-way rest-house that is perched on a prominence in the Melghat forests. Straight on leads to Sembadoh and the valley of the Sipna, which means the valley of the teak trees; it is well named. But we turn left, skirting the foot of a higher hill, passing along little valleys of brown grass, then again into the forest where there are mango trees, dark in their evergreen. A turn to the left and a further sharp rise with a deep drop to our right and we suddenly find ourselves on the downs, the walls of Gaurlgarh fort behind us. Across the downs to our front we see, deep green against the brown grass of the downs, tall spiky pine and cypress trees, with here and there grevillias. There is something in the view that catches the heart like no other place that I know in India. Why, I cannot tell, but that first view of Chikalda makes one think of home. It may be the cypress trees showing up beyond the rounded bosom of the down; it may be that breath of coolness at noon. Cool air, not a hot blast from a furnace, blowing gently over the plateau and scented with the wild flowers

of the jungle. A drive through the village and we pass between green coffee plants and smell the resin of the pine trees that mark the centre of the little station. There are gardens, real gardens with flowers, not the withered mockeries of the plains. Some have lawns with green grass upon them. There is a riot of bougainvillea, the smell of roses and jasmine in bloom, and the air is filled with the soft sound of forest breezes, sweeping through the branches. There is a sense of great peace about the place, which is nearly four thousand feet closer to heaven than the plains below.

That is Chikalda where dwells the Divisional Forest Officer of the Melghat, a country of some thousand square miles of jungle-clad mountains. The forest officer looks after the forests and those that dwell in them, and he is expected to be fairy godmother to the small hot-weather settlement of Europeans as well. No wonder he is called the King of the Melghat. When I was there I was expected to run the little club, make soda-water for the residents, look after the public gardens, grow watercress, provide fresh fish from the nearest river some twenty miles away, allot shooting opportunities fairly to those that wanted them, and run the beats for small-game shoots in which most of the residents joined. If there was anything else that wanted doing, from the supply of coffee, the destruction of a plague of ticks or fleas in the temporary home of the Governor, the measurement of a prospective occupant of a coffin, the inspec-

tion of dead goat offered to the public as mutton by the butcher, the getting of another butcher up from Ellichpur as a last resort, then the forest officer was called upon to do it. It was sometimes a bother, but it was interesting, more particularly the calculation of the length of coffin needed for the prospective corpse—but in this I was fortunately never able to check the accuracy of my estimate. It was all well worth while in order to be allowed to live in such a heavenly spot with my wife and two children. Chikalda is essentially a domestic place, and we lived there as a happy family of Europeans for the two last months of the hot weather. By then the springs in that volcanic soil were dry, and since the water in the tanks was too dirty to be considered fit for drinking purposes, we had our daily ration of rain-water from the previous rains out of the common stock collected from the roofs of the Government offices. We played golf and tennis together ; we picnicked, fished, and bathed in the old fort ; in the evenings we played bridge and gossiped in the shade of a thatched roof in the public gardens that passed as a club. There, too, on Sundays some good padre would sometimes give us a service—it was, of course, the forest officer's job to arrange this—and in the quiet of the scented coffee groves, sheltered by strange exotic trees, cinnamon, india-rubber, oaks from the Himalaya, grevillia and fig, we sometimes held our Communion, while the winds hissed through the pines and the cypresses.

When the rains came our visitors deserted us, and we were left to ourselves and a few missionaries. Then the fogs descended on the place, the dahlias came into flower, the local blackbirds sang to us of England, and we lived on mushrooms.

The first rains that I was there my wife had to leave me for a while when our daughter was born. I made it then a rule, no matter how much it rained or how dense the fog, to ride with the dogs in the morning and to go out again in the evening with my fishing-rod, and when I got home I was glad to sit in front of a fire—and this was in July in tropical India. I never got bored, either with my own company or the place. The fishing was great fun. A friend had given me as a wedding present a spinning-rod and an outfit of large spoons. I had used the rod before for ordinary fishing of a rather poaching nature, but I had never used the spoons—it seemed altogether too ridiculous to expect a fish to take such an absurd bait. But I used one of an evening to practise casting in the pond, which in the hot weather seemed too low and dirty looking to harbour a fish. To my great astonishment I caught fish, and big ones, too. Naturally, when I had landed the first after a thrilling fight, I thought that I had caught the only one in the pond and that a born fool. But I soon caught more and was looked upon as a public benefactor by my Indian neighbours.

Then I went in for breeding rabbits. A friend

offered me a buck and two does. These I tended carefully in a nice little hutch that I had made for them and housed in a small lean-to against the verandah of our bungalow. The lean-to had a brick floor, and in any case the rabbits were caged and had no chance of getting away into the jungle, where no doubt they would have been at once devoured by some fearsome beast. Naturally, I remembered the awful tales that one is told of the number that a couple of rabbits would increase to if allowed in a year. An absence from home of six years had given me a longing for rabbit pie, so those rabbits were tended as something rather precious. They had all the titbits out of our garden, and from the attention that they received should have increased at an unprecedented rate. But nothing happened; there appeared to be a catch in the statistics and rabbit pie seemed a long way off.

Between whiles of tending the rabbits and catching fish in seemingly impossible places, I did a bit of gardening; and it was worth it. Never have I had such a garden. The dahlias and cannas were our speciality, though the roses did very well, too; but the cannas were a real marvel of colour. But they had to be guarded. Porcupines like cannas, and wire netting had to be put up to keep them out. But the porcupines beat me.

Every morning there was more damage to show in the precious canna border, and each day a new hole in the wire netting had to be mended. When

a few mangled remains of canna tuber were left over in the morning, the disorderly remnants of overnight excesses, they were offered to the rabbits. Would those proud rodents look at them? Not they. They were pampered beasts, my rabbits. Perhaps I had spoiled them with over-indulgence. By the time that my wife came back from Kasauli with our new daughter I had despaired of both rabbits and cannas. The former refused to breed and the latter merely fed the beasts of the forest. Finding a new hole in the wire netting, I set a trap in the run, then slept with a hog-spear handy.

In the night my wife woke me. Frantic screams came from the garden fence. Seizing the hog-spear and a lantern I ran out to do battle with the porcupine held fast in the trap. I found one of my rabbits!

Those rabbits had been deceiving me. They had a secret hole through the bottom of the cage and another under the brick floor of the go-down. No wonder they turned up their noses at the remains of their night's debaucheries. Think of their cunning; they actually made a hole in the wire to make us think that it was an enemy outside that raided us. If any beast lived a double life it was that rabbit. We had our rabbit pie; after which the cannas flourished.

We tried keeping pigeons, too, but with no more success. I forget where we got them, but I well remember toiling to make a dovecote in a high tree away from marauding jackals and foxes, and

protected with wire netting. Within twenty-four hours some fearsome beast bit through the wire netting and killed every pigeon.

The Indian egg is not a big affair. Usually they are so small that they rattle in the standard-sized egg-cup. We wanted something better, remembering the comparatively huge size of the home-bred egg. So we introduced to the wilds of Chikalda some real European fowls. We had a good poultry run, too. Here again the wild beasts of the forest defeated us. In spite of the stoutest wire netting our fowls vanished. The netting was cut ; the fowls, poor beasts, sensed their danger, making wild noises in the night. I cornered an unidentified enemy under the fowl-house with the help of the dogs one wild night of pouring rain ; it could not be reached with a hog-spear in spite of much prodding, and pyjamas in a tropical downpour are not an encouraging kit in spite of the enthusiasm of a pack of bloodthirsty dogs. The dogs said that there was something under that hen-house with a real good smell, the fowls squawked a frightened protest at the smell being there, and in the morning another had gone. But there was a dead fowl left in the house. So the survivors were moved to safer dwelling, much to their relief no doubt, and I put a trap by the side of the dead one in the then empty fowl-house. I did better, I put in two traps round the dead fowl.

Next morning I went early to see if anything had happened. One trap had gone completely,

not eaten, of course (there are limits to the ferocity of these beasts), but dragged away. The other trap was there and a most awful creature in it. A dark long-tailed brute about three feet in length, with a face almost as unpleasant as that of an angry tiger. The dogs pounced on it, the beast fought well, and most of the nest boxes in the house were ruined before the affair was settled.

Outside, the dogs picked up the line of the other one that had got away with the trap and after a longish hunt came up with it. There ensued a tremendous fight, which was only finished by my finding a place in which to shove in my spear and put an end to a gallant but cruel and most destructive foe. The dogs suffered badly in both encounters, but obviously enjoyed the experience. I believe I did, too. Anyway, that was my first experience of the *bijju* or civit cat ; they were fairly common round Chikalda, and whenever I met one I shot it.

Apart from the surroundings at Chikalda, which breathed an atmosphere of rustic domesticity, urging one to keep some sort of domestic animals, necessity drove us to keeping our own flock of sheep. This was my first attempt at farming, and the experience gave me an insight of the ways of the middleman that, curiously enough, still makes them a subject of suspicion to me. Remember, this is a story of a very obscure corner of India, not of civilized England.

We were not satisfied with the meat we were

getting. Why should we buy dead goat at prime mutton prices? we asked. And at the end of the season, when our visitors left us to ourselves, the butcher also went away, announcing airily that he would be pleased to return for the short second season in October. I made up my mind that when he did come back he would get a surprise. The forest ranger was consulted and then commissioned to purchase me a flock of thirty sheep. They had to be bought in the open bazaar at a distance, since it would never have done for me to have had commercial dealings with people with whom I came into official contact. I was King of the Melghat. The sheep arrived and were let loose in my compound by day but carefully housed in a shed at night for fear of the panthers which abounded in the forest and came up to the wire netting of my canna garden. The good Father Thevenet of the Roman Catholic Mission did quite well for his converts by having a permanent panther-trap, rather on the lines of a mouse-trap, set in the forest. Fifteen rupees the government paid him for each panther caught. We meant to take no risks of our precious sheep suffering at the hands of the beasts of the forest as had our poultry. We engaged a shepherdess, a wild aboriginal Korku who might almost have been taken out of a trap herself; a simple child of ten with the charming face of the jungle children and the most innocent eyes. She took our flock out to graze and, jungle bred, knew the best way to avoid undesirable wild beasts.

The sheep were nothing grand to look at, in fact, unless you were previously warned, you would hardly realize that they were sheep. Extraordinary beasts with long necks and scraggy legs. There were black sheep, white sheep, piebald specimens, and one that was of uniform khaki brown. Once we had grown accustomed to them we grew fond of the creatures, specially the brown one. And we fed them on peas to fatten them for our table. When our friends returned in the autumn we would show them what a good leg of mutton was like, we said to ourselves. In due course they returned to the plateau, and in our rounds of golf we pointed out our flock with pride as they grazed on the fresh green grass. And we thought with joy of the jealousy of that butcher.

When we ordered the first sheep to be killed we invited a select party of friends to the feast. But the mutton was no better than the butcher's, in fact it was worse. He seemed to have taken warning from our experiment and to have produced first-class mutton. His was delicious and ours more like dead goat than ever. Other sheep were ordered to be killed but with no better result, although I took the precaution to handle the beasts and to select the fattest. I did not do the killing myself, of course. Finally, I decided, without telling my wife about it, that I would have the brown sheep killed. We had made rather a special pet of it, though recently, knowing the horrid fate that awaited it, we had avoided

seeing it. I called the shepherdess, the picture of primeval innocence.

"Bring me the brown sheep," I said, meaning to make quite sure that it was fat.

"Brown sheep?" said the child. "There is no brown sheep."

"Nonsense," was my answer, "I know there is a brown sheep. Bring it at once."

But no brown sheep was forthcoming. Very upset, I went for my morning ride over the downs. I passed the butcher's flock. There was our brown sheep grazing with those of the butcher!

I sometimes wonder what our Madonna-faced shepherdess got from him.

The immediate vicinity of Chikalda was legal sanctuary for all creatures except those of prey. Barking deer crept from the jungle in the evening to sample the taste of rose-petals in our garden, *sambur* stags found our golf greens convenient rings in which to battle for their harems. Tigers and panthers followed them, lurking in the covert of the lantana undergrowth, but sometimes venturing on to the open downs in daylight, when a frightened cowherd would run to our house and with harassed face and excited manner tell of another steer slain in the open sunlight, then dragged or lifted bodily over the edge of the plateau to the tangled wilderness below, where none dared follow.

Jungle pigs, headed by fierce tusked boars with backs bristling in defiance, followed ravines into the heart of the plateau by tunnelled paths and

densely wooded combes. With squeaks and grunts of joy they fell by cohorts on the fields, eating the ripe corn and destroying where they trampled. Not till the warning light of dawn appeared did they return to their fastnesses, a dark compact mass, rippling, dipping, and rising in the irregularities of the ground like the dark waves of an ocean tide on a leaden night.

Sometimes we cut them off—there is no protection for pig in unrideable country ; at other times, lulled by the security of their numbers, their stomachs replete with stolen food, they would lie up in a sheltered combe. Then we took heavy toll of them.

A breathless man would bring news to my house, while his fellows watched like waiting vultures from the tree-tops, marking the pigs' progress if they moved. On such a morning I waited for them on their only line of retreat, while revengeful cultivators craving for pork drove them towards me with fearsome shouts. They came on, boars, sows, and porkers, in a compact mass that rippled in movement. I let them come till the white of their wild eyes showed, then fired into the mass. Two shots from my ·450 laid out three, then the Winchester automatic came into use—five shots in quick succession. It was impossible to miss at such a range. With broken ranks they fled into the forest, squealing and grunting in alarm. Villagers, hastening up, slung the ugly beasts on their shoulders, returning home with porky smiles on their faces.

Round our bungalow at dawn and sunset the jungle cock would challenge his domestic brother, crowing the joy of jungle freedom over those who dwelt pampered and fed within the cage of domesticity. The jungle cocks were safe from the sportsman's shot and the cook's long knife, but his fears of the *bijju* were great.

Once a peafowl presumed too much, sat on the roof of the kitchen and clucked derisively. He asked for it. But this is not a book of criminal confessions.

Panthers have a great liking for dog meat and were a great nuisance to us.

There was one of them too cunning for the good Father of the Catholic Mission ; it lived on the flocks and herds that grazed on the grass of the plateau. I was anxious for my sheep. This panther killed a cow on the road within a hundred yards of our bungalow, and although very lame from a thorn that had penetrated the sole of my boot into my foot, I had to try to kill it. I failed to locate it when the cow was killed and eaten, but a few days later it killed a pony near the veterinary surgeon's house on the edge of the bazaar.

The Nihals, a very low type of aboriginal who seemed to live on carrion, no matter how matured, were warned off the remains, and since the carcass was so near human habitations it was possible to keep a watch on it during the day and ensure the obedience of orders. Normally these folk would have waited for the cover of night and under dark-

ness taken what the vultures had left. We took care on this occasion to see that the vultures kept at a distance, and so far as disturbance from human vultures by night was concerned, there was a man-eating tiger about (of which I have written in *Tiger Days*), and while the Nihals might disregard my orders they had a very great regard for the man-eating tiger. So had I, particularly in my crippled condition, since I could hardly walk. But I could drive my car, and with my wife's help managed to park it at the door of the veterinary surgeon's house. We then went indoors with my rifle and the acetylene lamp from the car. The good vet. made us very comfortable, leaving my wife, my orderly, and myself in occupation of one of the rooms of his house, that gave us a view from a small window of the body of the pony that was about sixty yards away, and showing signs of that maturity which is the delight of the Nihal.

The room was bare except for a couple of chairs, the walls were whitewashed, the floor was plastered with dry cowdung, and near the wall there was a little native lamp burning in uneasy flickers. It was not a bright light, the lamp itself consisting of a small black saucer of oil over the edge of which a thin piece of cotton hung and burnt. A crude affair, the light of which gave us not only comfort but much amusement, since beyond the wick and between it and the wall a rough outline of a cobra had been modelled to protrude from the edge of the saucer. The result was

amusing and rather weird. As the light flickered, the shadow of a cobra showed on the wall moving, distorted, and strange. This play of dim light diverted us, for although when we went into the house it was still light outside, yet it was dark enough within for the lamp to show its ingenuity.

Every now and again I would have a look out of the window to see if the panther approached. When the outline of the pony became merged in the gathering darkness I lit the acetylene lamp, but blanketed the light for fear of disturbing our quarry, then returned to watch the fascinating shadow of the cobra on the wall. Soon it was quite dark, and with darkness the silence of the Indian forest became noticeable in spite of the village at our back. Perhaps the villagers were waiting to hear what would happen before the sound of our running engine told them that we were going home. Who would not be waiting and listening anxiously, knowing that a fierce beast of the forest was expected at his door, and that beyond in the dark a man-eating tiger might be lurking for an unwary strayer?

"Time to go home," I whispered to my wife, "but I will have a look round first."

So I pointed the rays of the lamp at the kill. The beam of the headlight cut the air sharply, and the dead pony showed like a large mole-heap in a fallow field. No panther showed itself. Playfully I swung the beam of light along the fringe of the forest some hundred yards away, my orderly watching at my elbow. I saw nothing, then swung

the beam back again—it was rather fascinating throwing that searchlight against that black wall of forest, but fruitless ; who could hope to penetrate it even in daylight ? Yet after I had brought the light to our feet again I had the idea that two stars that I had seen dimly were strangely low and close together. I looked again ; they were brighter now.

" The panther," whispered the orderly.

Again I looked, they seemed yet brighter, the two stars were certainly the light reflected by two eyes. I had seen those sort of eyes before. But suppose they were the eyes of some man who had dared the night forest and the man-eater for sanitary reasons ? Should I take the risk ?

Men's eyes do not shine like those of cats in the dark ; sheep's eyes, yes, and dogs' eyes, but not man's. More, no man would dare be there whatever the necessity. So I took the risk, and after careful aim, fired. The noise of the heavy rifle in that still expectant night air was terrific.

The village woke. Men and women chattered, we could hear them comforting startled children ; a dog barked and a child cried ; after the flash and bang of the heavy rifle in the still night any sort of noise came clearly through the air, and there were many of them.

No one but a suicidal lunatic would follow a wounded panther down a jungle-clad precipice on an inky-dark night. I was dead lame, with no inclination to be that sort of lunatic ; so we packed up our belongings and, staggering to the

car, I started her up and drove the party home, with thoughts of the man-eater on the way. Home in India usually meant England; in Chikalda it meant the house of one's dwelling, a distinction unique to the place perhaps, because I was a family man with my wife and children; in any case, I was thankful to get there and to find a comfortable dinner ready.

In the early morning I went back to the vet's house, prepared to do in daylight and in a reasonable way what a lunatic might have done at night.

I found the panther dead.

I had killed it at over a hundred yards with a shot clean through the chest; it must have been sitting up like a dog waiting for a biscuit to be thrown it.

Next day the Nihals finished the pony, and after the panther was skinned they took its meat away with them to mature to a suitable state of putrefaction. He is a hardy man, the Nihal. I have lost a good breakfast by standing to the leeward of a newly slain tiger; a dead panther smells much the same. There is nothing to which it can be compared, save everything that is beastly, and horrible, and vile; its effect on the stomach is compelling. But the Nihal eats such fare and flourishes on it.

That was the best shot I have ever brought off, I think. Exactly the right spot at well over a hundred yards on a pitch-dark night. Not long afterwards I met a fellow sportsman, and confident in the support of two witnesses, I told him the

story without the usual fear of being considered a liar.

" That panther *was* unlucky ! " was all that he said. He might have meant anything. But he was right.

CHAPTER XI

INDIA DURING THE WAR

UNTIL a few years ago it was difficult to get leave out of India before one had finished eight years' service in the country.

It was possible to accumulate what was known as privilege leave of one month in twelve up to three months, the idea being that one should spend it in the country. Otherwise none but sick leave or leave on urgent private affairs was possible until the eight years were up. Then one had two years' furlough due. These rules were based on the days when officers had to travel by sailing-ship round the Cape to reach India or to go home again.

Most officers managed to plead urgent private affairs, and those in authority were generally wise enough not to inquire what the private affairs were. The stock answer was to look for a wife, or at any rate to hint as much. One applicant for leave is reported to have replied that if it were not urgent he would not have asked for the leave and as it was private he was not at liberty to disclose the reason. I was fortunate in getting home once on three months' privilege leave, and again

on urgent private affairs for six months. In 1913 I took furlough due to me and was home when war broke out in 1914.

Like everyone else at home at the time I applied for an extension of my leave and for permission to join up, thinking cheerfully that the war would be over in the six months, which was the period for which I asked for an extension of leave. We were all told to hold ourselves in readiness to return at a moment's notice.

On arrival in Bombay, I found myself posted to the Hoshangabad District, for which I was thankful, since I was now a married man and welcomed the good climate, Pachmarhi being a hill station inside this district.

Naturally the war made a lot of stir in the country. There were all sorts of rumours connected with it. Some sporting Gonds had the idea that it was a sort of boxing match between Jarge Punchim (King George the Fifth) and Kaiser Bill. Another story that reached us was that the Germans had invaded England, that the King and Queen had succeeded in making their escape to Holy India, where they were wandering about the country disguised as religious mendicants. Naturally the rumour was rife that all Indians were to be seized as cannon fodder, with the consequence that when we started into camp with the Conservator, the villagers assumed that we were a recruiting party with full powers to seize all able-bodied men to serve in the war. There was some difficulty in finding sufficient men to

pitch our tents until it was realized that we had no intention of laying hands suddenly on anyone.

Those early days of the war were abnormal in so many ways. The regular army had mostly moved elsewhere. We met some of them on our way out between Aden and Bombay, a huge fleet of transports in somewhat confused order passing us into the fast-setting sun, the great vessels showing up in a very impressive way in that light. I think it was the absolute silence in which they passed us on a sea of glass that made for so much grandeur.

The Territorials were arriving in India. They were very much strangers in a strange land ; whole battalions of them without a single person in their midst who had any experience of the country. They were most refreshing people to meet. The parched Anglo-Indian can sometimes be narrow ; moreover, these fresh men saw India from an entirely new angle ; they could see a side of life that we, through constant use, did not observe or properly appreciate. They had a great welcome from the civilian element of India. They were men who had volunteered, given up lucrative positions and practices in offices or as lawyers, estate agents, schoolmasters, engineers, etc. Many came from the Stock Exchange. The student became the officer and the professor took his place in the ranks. These men brought with them a sense of humour and a new outlook most refreshing to most of us. They were in glorious ignorance of anyone's importance except that of their own officers, and

they left their mark on the country. Where we could we dined them and helped them with amusements and shooting. Government House took much notice of them, and since civilians are not usually guided by the rules of military discipline, they were asked out to dinner and tennis, irrespective of rank.

That was where the trouble began in one station. At a college it is possible for a lady to ask a student to her house to meet her friends or the professors of the college. The professors themselves can ask students to their houses to meet other folk without anyone losing caste or there being scandal attached to it. But once you are a soldier things are done differently. The student who is an officer apparently cannot go to the same house for entertainment as his former professor who is now serving in the ranks. They must not go together ; so word went round that officers and men could not go to the same house even if care was taken to ask them at separate hours.

Everyone, whether soldier or civilian, was very anxious to do something definite to help on with the war.

Solid male bamboos were needed as the shafts of lances. Could we get them of a specified standard ? We tried. We tried very hard. Not every clump of bamboos holds a solid male one. And few of those found were of the specified standard. The range assistants found them. Then the rangers went through them and threw out about half as not being good enough. What passed the rangers

were further sorted out by my assistant, then I threw out a lot more in my final passing. The result should have been absolutely perfect specimens—and they were. After carefully searching about a thousand square miles of forest and sending the very best two hundred bamboos that we could find, we were told that not one was good enough. And a little bird whispered that if we had offered a commission in the right quarters all our bamboos would have been passed. There was talk of sergeants growing wealthy, whatever foundation there was for it.

Then we were asked if we could supply teak poles for the army, of a certain specification. We broke all the rules in a working plan and cut from a young plantation alongside the railway so as to have the poles of the very best that could be selected and in plenty of time. The rate at which we quoted was very cheap, the cost price of cutting and railing only. Every one of those poles was rejected. Instead, poles were bought of an inferior quality (but from our jungles of course) at a much higher rate in a neighbouring market through a contractor. I wrote a very bitter letter about this to the Government.

Very soon we were to have all the work that we needed, and more, too, in supplying grass for Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Salonika ; but there we dealt direct with officers, who gave very little trouble, and none regarding whom there could be the very slightest suspicion of dishonesty. But more of that later.

It is really astonishing how calmly rural India took the war. Those peasants went on with their work, ploughed, cultivated and harvested their crops with no regard for the war whatever. Why should they do otherwise? Compared with the ages in which they had been firmly planted in the soil, the war was a small temporary affair a long way off. The Sahibs knew their job and no doubt would win. It is doubtful if the Central Provinces sent more than a hundred recruits to the war. But agitators were at work.

One of the great charms of India is the marvellous courtesy and hospitality of its people. We are, I think, a little apt to take it as a matter of course. Yet if it were not for that same kindliness our life in the country and especially in camp would be very different.

There can be no country in the world where life in tents is more comfortable. To begin with the tents themselves were large and well furnished with carpets, chairs and tables. Each tent had a bathroom attached to it. They would open out so as to give additional room in a shady verandah in the cool weather, and in the hot season punkahs were arranged to swing within, and on the breezy side wet mattresses of scented *kas kas* grass kept the air of the tent cool. There was generally a shady tree to camp under, and altogether conditions were delightfully comfortable. The villagers arranged and swept the camping ground, brought firewood and grass, and under the guidance of the forest rangers saw that one was comfortable. So

long as touring officers did not go too often to a place or stay too long and saw that the servants did not oppress the villagers, they were always welcome. A large camp in the village added excitement to the monotony of their existence. There were horses, camels, and sometimes an elephant for the entertainment of the children. The Sahib would shoot a pig or a deer perhaps, then there would be great feasting for the poor. So it was that only once in my experience of camping in India, which usually occupied nine months in each year, I found very definite signs that I was not welcome. Politics were behind it. I had an interesting experience and since there is a moral to the story I am going to tell it.

Agitators had been round with stories of the wane of the Sahibs' power. There was to be a new heaven on earth in which pious Hindus would play the greater part. There would be no more taxes of any sort and no officials.

We were camped at a large village, more like a small town with many shops, perhaps two hundred houses and a couple of thousand inhabitants. The houses had all been built with grass thatch and the village was very inflammable in every sense of the word. North of the place there were rich cultivated plains, while to the south lay the forests. This was no humble forest village of aboriginals, but one of well-to-do folk of all creeds and castes. Mohammedans, Brahmins, Jains, Telis, cultivators, and the humbler folk who must do the menial work for the better born.

It had been the scene of raids in the bad days of Tantia, the famous Bhil dacoit, otherwise its history was uneventful. Tantia is reported to have tortured its wealthy money-lenders for the profit of the poor, which was the village's sole claim to fame, and it slept peacefully on the verge of the plains under the shelter of the forest-clad hills.

I rode in to where the camp was supposed to be pitched, feeling tired and rather hungry after a long ride from the railway station. There was the usual clump of mango trees, their branches heavy and widespread with green shade-giving leaves. Beneath them and close to the well my camels rested unloaded. A deputation of camelmen and private servants came to meet me, and I knew that there was some sort of trouble. A little distance away, watching events, was a group of well-to-do villagers.

"Well," I asked the deputation, "what is the trouble; why are there no tents pitched?"

"None come to help," was the reply. "They say that there is to be a new raj."

"Nonsense," I said. "Call the headman."

No headman came. Usually, as is the custom, the headman meets the visitor on the village boundary to escort him to the camping ground.

It was no use taking notice of this form of discourtesy, so we made shift as best we could, unloaded the camels and pitched the tent. We found enough sticks and brought sufficient water for our immediate needs, and after a rather irritating delay settled down to food and rest. I should have to

report it, of course. It was a little hard on my servants who had marched all night and naturally expected the customary help on arrival in camp.

After breakfast I had my forty winks of siesta, then settled down to office work. It was very quiet and there was little noise except for a few monkeys that occasionally stirred in the branches over the tent, dropping trifles that fell on the canvas above my head with quiet thuds. The servants slept, as did my dogs, who were tired. The camels had gone off to forage for themselves, and I do not suppose that the camelmen were too careful where they browsed, since there was no one to tell them where they could go without doing harm. The village was some two hundred yards away and was as quiet as the camp. Later a strong wind rose, hot and dry ; it stirred the overhead leaves into a restful whispering.

Suddenly there was a great cry from the village. A riot, I thought, but no business of mine, unless they were coming to the camp. The noise continued, supplemented by a dull roar, at first indistinguishable from the noise of the growing breeze. Something serious was on. I put down my pen and called an orderly, who ran to bring my forest ranger. Looking outside the tent I saw villagers running towards the camp. With them was the forest ranger.

" What is it ? " I asked.

" Fire ! " they said ; " the village burns. Save our houses, Sahib."

Snatching up a pith helmet, I ran with Mohamed,

my Indian officer assistant, to the village. The main street was crowded with frightened humanity. Overhead, menacing them, was a dense cloud of black smoke that dropped smuts and sparks of fire on us. People were beginning to pull their treasures out into the narrow street.

To reach the fire we had to run the length of the street and then turn a corner. There it was. Two thatched houses a mass of flame showing yellow and red against the pall of smoke that streaked down-wind. Another house caught fire with the suddenness of an explosion and scarcely less noise.

" Sacrifice two lines of houses to leeward and save the rest," I shouted, " or the whole village goes."

The headman arrived, his face sweating with heat and haggard with fear.

" Pull down that house ! " I ordered. The houses were doomed in any case. Quickly the thatch was stripped. Others followed. Those huts nearest the fire were left to their fate, which was quick. But the sparks crossed the open space ; some fell on the dismantled houses and burnt the thatch as it lay heaped on the ground. Others threatened the standing houses beyond. In the main street men waited to see the doom of their homes.

" Bring buckets and cooking pots," I shouted.

Some brought them. Others looked on. A Mahwari's house was in danger, a spark caught it and the thatch burned. I saw a group of idlers.

" Bring buckets and cooking pots," I yelled, " and make a chain from the well."

The men looked at me sullenly.

"Why should we save a Mahwari's house?" they asked.

"Because I damn well order you to!" I answered in English, which of course they did not understand. But they got my meaning pretty quick. It was no time for courteous argument. I hit, I cursed in many languages, and I kicked. Caste was then forgotten, the cooking pots normally defiled by the touch of the lowly born were brought out for all to handle in the common use, and a chain was made from the well to the threatened houses whose thatch we soaked.

The Mahwari's house was doomed.

"Is there anyone inside?" I asked the harassed owner.

"My women are upstairs," he replied.

"May I go in and get them out?" I questioned, careful even in such an emergency to observe the etiquette of caste and *purdah*.

"Save them, Sahib," he prayed.

So I dived for the narrow stairway. It was only a few steps up and I feared for what I might see at the top. Turning left I was directly beneath the burning thatch. There were already a few holes in it through which hot sparks fell to the floor. There was a haze of suffocating smoke in the room. Through it I could see three women and a weeping child. They were not unconscious as I had feared to find them. With Oriental calm they were still cooking food!

"Quickly outside," I shouted, "or you die."

They looked at me in wonder. Then remembering the decencies they drew their veils over their faces. Taking the nearest by the arm I led her to the stairs. She lifted her veil and smiled at me. The rest followed. A few moments later the roof fell in. Luckily the wind fell and we saved the village. Which is no vain boast. Any other European would and could easily have done the same. They wanted a leader and they looked to the white man to be it, and so long as the white man is there they always will.

Making sure that the village was safe, I returned to my tent. I had left it a reasonably clean man clad in the white clothes of the tropics. I returned as black as a sweep. And I was thirsty.

While I was still enjoying my second drink and contemplating a third, a deputation arrived, this time from the village. I had not expected gratitude, one does not look for an open expression of it in a country with no word for " Thank you " in common usage, but never did men show their thanks more fully. I had saved the village. They owed their lives to us. I was their father and their mother, the protector of the poor, etc. Did my honour require anything for my comfort? Men were even now bringing firewood for my servants and grass for my horses. Here were eggs, chicken, milk and clarified butter. Anything else needed would be brought at my wish. Would the presence consider himself as the guest of the village for as long as his stay, which all hoped would be a long one, for indeed he was a protector?

Not a word was said about the lack of welcome in the morning. Why harp on such unpleasantness? They are simple folk, easily led by fools or Sahibs. They were anxious to make amends. I looked at my dirty clothes.

"Have these washed for me," I asked.

The clothes came back next day cleaner than I had ever seen them before. But ruined in spite of the pathetic effort of some good soul to repair the many holes burnt in them.

I sometimes wonder if the fingers that worked the needle belonged to the Mahwari lady that smiled. I should have liked to know; but the most respectable of married men must be discreet in the East.

It was always a pleasure to visit that village, and the following year my wife came with me.

That was one of the very rare examples of discourtesy that I met in India, but amends were made in full measure.

Those of us who were compelled to stay on in India during the war were desperately anxious to do something definite to help, something beyond our normal peace-time duties. Some were permitted to join the Indian Army Reserve of Officers, but with rare exceptions only those junior in years and service. I knew of one of these exceptions, a man drawing very high pay in the civil service. He was allowed to go, but he continued to draw his high pay as a civil servant (so it was said) and did the work of a subaltern.

Even before the war we were most of us amateur

soldiers. I had been one since I first joined as a cadet at Wellington. Now the order went forth that all except heads of departments and police and a few more were to be enrolled compulsorily. The old mounted infantry were disbanded and we were enrolled in the new Indian Defence Force with orders to do a great number of drills in the year. It was necessary, of course, to ensure that all knew how to give a good account of themselves if required, and there was always such a chance. In the first year we had to put in something near a hundred hours of drill, and discipline was strict. I managed to get in most of my parades in Pachmarhi. It was hard work when one considers the tremendous stress of civil work at the time. Yet the duties were undertaken with the maximum of good humour and exemplary zeal. A man is not best prepared for a heavy day of secretarial work by two hours of early morning parade. The staff sergeants were sometimes a little trying because they tried to be funny, and often lacked a proper sense of humour. One can remember so well, on instruction in saluting officers, regarding which we were most punctilious, the sergeant telling us that when we met our officers in civilian clothes at the club we were to be sure to take our hats off to them. I am afraid that once we had doffed our uniforms we treated our officers as common clay. I lived in the same chummery as my C.O., as did another of us, and I cannot say that we treated him with any great respect. Right through the year whenever we had the opportunity we

drilled. We had to, to put in the minimum number of drills prescribed. At Hoshangabad, after I had gone through the period of musketry instruction at the Central School of Musketry, I was responsible for drilling our small detachment. My Conservator came to inspect my office. In the morning I met him with great deference at the railway station ; in the middle of the day he inspected my work and passed his criticisms, in the evening he fell in and was drilled by Sergeant Best.

Many stories are told of those strenuous days. One of the best came from Simla. A general officer inspected the local I.D.F. detachment. Passing along the ranks he saw one man of considerable age with many ribbons on his chest.

" Ah ! " he said, " that is what I like to see. A stiffening of veterans in the ranks."

Looking closely to identify the ribbons, he remarked ; " What are these medals ? I don't seem to know them ! "

" K.C.I.E., K.C.M.G., C.S.I., sir," replied the man.

I can remember so well when we were in Amraoti for an inspection. I was in command at the time, being the only officer in the place of military rank. We thought ourselves a pretty smart lot and mustered some thirty or forty of all ranks. I met the inspecting officers at the station in my uniform and we went straight to the parade ground. All went well. The usual complimentary things were said. The parade was dismissed and we repaired home where we gave our inspectors breakfast. By now

we were comfortably clad in civilian clothes. The inspection was the topic of conversation at breakfast. Soldiering was not shop to us. One of those present gave his views on some particular incident in the parade.

"I did not see you there," said the inspecting officer. "I thought we had no spectators."

To the officer's intense surprise, the critic admitted to have been in the ranks, as had all the others present except myself.

Our conscription passed off with a great sense of humour. With some it irked, the hours of drill were long for those with a full day's work to follow; it is true that one did hear murmurs that it was inflicted on the country unnecessarily because the soldiers were jealous of the civilians, but I am sure there was no foundation for the complaint. It was absolutely essential for all of European descent in the country to be able to give good account of themselves if needed, and the need might have arisen at any time, and nearly did. My musketry course was not a waste of time, but my subsequent intelligence course, though interesting, did not seem to answer any useful purpose. It was suggested that I should go to Quetta for a further course of intelligence. Perhaps it was necessary from the military point of view, but Government, who employed me as an expert in forestry and to look after the forest tribes, thought differently.

Soldiering, however amusing, was a very small part of my job. Hay was needed at many fronts for the horses, particularly in Palestine. The grass

farms department could not cope with it, and the forest department had to help. It was a ghastly job. Every man, woman and child available was put on to cutting the grass in the forest. We transported it to the railway after hand baling, and on the rail it was put into the steam presses of the cotton mills. At first there was some difficulty in getting the use of the cotton presses. At that time government had not taken powers to use them against the wish of the owners, although later we had the powers, but for the present we had to make use of other weapons than compulsion. The cotton mills were busy, but by dint of flattery and a hint of honours the owners allowed us to use their presses for one or two days in the week. The owners did not like it in all cases, and it was a matter for tact.

The arrangement was that we cut the grass in the forests and passed it for quality on the spot, and again on arrival at the railway. Our standard was high. Before the grass was finally sent for shipment, it was passed by a military officer who was usually a cavalryman. Most of them were understanding men, and very good fellows to deal with. One of them, though charming personally, did not understand the situation. He was one of the first to come on the job.

He came with me to a place where there was a press for cotton, and we had with the greatest difficulty persuaded the owner to allow us to use it two days in the week. To add to our troubles there was an outbreak of plague at the mill. But

our grass came in all the same. I arrived at the place with my soldier, and we were met with the news that the manager had died of plague. The assistant manager, too, was ill and was likely to follow his chief. None of this the soldier knew. As we went into the mill my soldier saw some cotton lying about the place.

"What's this?" he asked.

"Cotton," I said.

"What is it doing here?" he inquired of the Babu who acted as manager.

"Sir," he said, "this is cotton mill."

"Take it away," said the soldier, with military directness.

The Babu said nothing.

"How many days in the week do you press grass?"

"Two," he replied.

"Unless I find a great improvement when I return, I shall close the mill."

The wretched man would have been only too pleased to close it to our grass; he wanted to bale his cotton. Plague closed it for us. But I had to take the soldier aside and explain to him what the circumstances were. I also had to tell him with the greatest of tact that his job was to pass or reject the grass, and that he had nothing whatever to do with the arrangements for pressing.

As the grass was baled and passed, it was stacked ready for transport to Bombay. As soon as a ship was ready we had our orders to send it off. There was a small station where I had at one

time some ten truckloads of grass ready for sending. I had orders by telegram to send it along at once to the docks in Bombay. There was a long siding full of empty trucks which I naturally concluded would be available for my purpose. It was the first consignment from that station.

The station-master was full of apologies ; there was not a single truck available.

" But, Babu," I said, " there are any number of trucks waiting empty in the siding."

He was adamant, but courteous.

So I took the bold course and wired to Simla that although there were empty trucks in the siding sufficient for our purpose, the station-master refused to let me have even one.

I knew I was going to have fun the next morning and was not disappointed. The station-master himself came to my tent very early. I could have all the trucks I wanted. Would my honour say a few words in his favour in high quarters ? After that I had no more trouble.

It is, of course, well known in India that trucks are seldom available until sacrifice in suitable measure has been offered to, and accepted by, the station-master. Indeed I have heard that one of the ways in which a station-master can be punished is by sending him to another station where the demand for trucks is not so great. The shortage in trucks in those days was chronic, and one wonders if it still continues. It was a gold mine to some of the station-masters.

At this same place I experienced the only attempt

at personal bribery during my service. The owner of a cotton mill was very anxious to be free from the baling of grass. This was natural, since the cotton trade was booming and he wanted to devote his mill entirely to the purposes for which it had been established ; and although by then we had the power to use the mills, whether the owners were willing or not, we naturally arranged to give the least inconvenience possible.

I was sitting in my tent when I was told that the mill owner wished to see me. He was ushered in and then said that he wished to see me privately. My camp clerk withdrew. The mill owner then produced two notes for a thousand rupees each.

" Your honour," he said rather furtively, " I wish to make a donation to any charitable object that your honour may have in mind. I leave it entirely to your honour." So saying, he put the two notes on my office table. He then started off with his request to have his mill left entirely free to go on with the cotton work.

" Wait a minute," I replied. Then I called the camp clerk. " Here, Babu," I said, " are two notes for a thousand rupees each that Mr. Blank is anxious to give to charity. Take their numbers and send them to the Deputy Commissioner, who will acknowledge Mr. Blank's generosity better than I can."

Poor Mr. Blank's face was a picture.

When one comes to think it over, it is extraordinary how very rarely a European is offered a bribe. I had no doubt that the case quoted was

an attempt with me, and I am thankful to say the only one in my experience. Most Indians know that it is an insult even to attempt it, though one must admit that it is the sort of insult that some of the lower-paid subordinates receive with joy.

By the end of the war some thirty thousand tons of grass had passed through my hands. It was some satisfaction to feel that although one could not take an active part in the campaign, that grass must have played its part in helping Allenby's cavalry in Palestine, which was the beginning of the end. But how one got to hate the sight and smell of hay! The work was monotonous and a strain considering that one had the normal work of a forest officer in addition.

Playing at soldiering in what spare time was left, though taken very seriously, was recreation and healthy exercise. It would have been rather amusing to carry out the correct procedure in quelling a riot. The Deputy Commissioner would, as District Magistrate, call in the help of the military. After which he would fall in with the rest of us. Then he would have to fall out again to give the requisite permission to fire, when he would take his place in the ranks again.

The last year of the war, in the last few months, there was the added anxiety of the influenza plague with its terrible death-roll. In some of the forest villages half the population died. It came at an unfortunate time, when the cultivators were sitting up all night in the chill of autumn to keep wild

animals off their crops. If a man developed fever at that time, he put it down to ordinary malaria and continued his normal way of life. The result was that many of them developed pneumonia and died. The aged seemed to escape more than the men in the prime of their lives, and the children, probably thanks to the care of their mothers, were not so seriously affected as their fathers, though one saw some tragic sights among them too. Whole villages were deserted in fear of the terror, the people flying to the forests leaving their dead to rot in their homes. One did what one could for them, and some of the sights are difficult to forget. There is a herb in use in Indian medicine called *chiretta* —a species of gentian, I believe, that has a great reputation as a tonic and a stimulant. This we boiled up and served out with great success. Whisky, brandy, gin and any form of alcohol was useful, and being concentrated could be carried in small quantities. I found my saddle bags and holsters of the greatest help to me as I rode round from village to village, giving what help I could. *Chiretta* juice was too bulky for this form of transport.

The Quaker missionaries were splendid in their work of relief. They organized their converts who, led by their teachers, gave the finest example of real Christian work that I have come across. I am sorry to record that some of my own forest subordinates hesitated about going into the houses of the sick. Actually there was no more risk of infection in the houses than there was outside.

The plague was in the air. But those mission boys went wherever required without the slightest hesitation in the help of the sick. It is fashionable sometimes to abuse missionary work in India : I have not always felt pro-missionary myself and at times have found them a nuisance, but there could not be a single scoffer who, seeing the work of those boys, would not take off his hat to them and those who taught them.

After a long tour through part of the stricken country, I arrived with empty bottles in my saddle bags at Taku railway station. The station-master greeted me with the news of the Armistice.

The influenza plague is still remembered in parts of the country as the *garbar*—the confusion—which left its mark on the country for many years.

In the winter of 1918 I went snipe shooting on the old bed of the Narbadda with Sir Benjamin Robertson. It was difficult to walk the snipe up without stepping on the thousands of rotted corpses which lay about everywhere on the river-bed. Some still had rags of clothing on them, others lay broken up by the crocodiles and the Narbudda turtles.

CHAPTER XII

THE NINTH COMMANDMENT

IT happened over twenty years ago. It might occur again to-day, twenty years hence, or a thousand for that. And I think that those with knowledge of Indian courts will say that my experience was only what was to be expected of one having first-hand acquaintance of the facts. Perhaps that is rather a sweeping statement to make, but subsequent knowledge of India and her ways adds conviction to my views, however strong they may be. In any case, readers will appreciate the necessity for my changing the names of people and places for the purpose of telling this story, which in other respects is true.

My diary merely records daily marches with a few notes connected with my work. I find, however, the following entry on a certain date—"Trouble at a duck pond at ——" then farther down—"—— of the —— caste resident of ——." The only other entry in my diary bearing on the story is a record that I marched at a later date from a certain place to give evidence.

It will naturally be asked how I can remember events that happened so long ago sufficiently well to place them on record as facts. The reason is

that the happenings were so unusual and astonishing that they were very firmly impressed on my memory, and that having been compelled to give sworn evidence on them, which necessitates very careful thought and statement, the details have been indelibly fixed in my mind.

It was a short rainy season that year, and it was possible to start touring early. Station life becomes dull and irksome after three months of office routine by day, followed by the usual bridge or snooker-pool and dinner-parties at night. The time comes when social amusements lose their attraction and one longs for the freshness of camp life, changes of scenery and the company of the men of the fields and the jungles. Men who don't chatter, but talk only when there is something interesting to say. I know nothing so restful after a long day in the open glare of the sun, as to sit before a camp fire when the world is quiet and to look into the hazy infinity of the stars, which nowhere shows to such advantage as it does in that clear Indian atmosphere. Of course, it is possible to look at the stars even in the station, but the environment is not conducive to a proper appreciation of their company. The camp fire for that.

There was a small isolated patch of forest, about ten square miles in extent, near the eastern boundary of the district. This needed inspection, and though dull it was comparatively healthy. It is the dense forests that breed the worst forms of malaria, a fact that the doctors have not yet explained. There are no more mosquitoes in such

places than there are elsewhere, and often there are no human inhabitants to breed the germs.

Anyway, I reached the village where I was to camp on the edge of this forest after three days' march over the cultivated plains. The jungle was typical of that found in such localities, low scrub bearing the marks of over-grazing—dense thorns which alone could withstand the attacks of half-starved cattle, and ground beaten hard by their tramping. What forest officer in India does not know the conditions? Of game there was none except the ubiquitous pig and a few *nilgai*—not an interesting place. Consequently it had suffered from lack of inspection, more particularly as it was not an important forest from the revenue point of view. I doubt if a forest officer had been near the place for years, which may in some degree explain my experience there.

After spending four weary days tearing my clothes and bare knees on the vicious hooked thorns in my endeavours to bring home to the local forest staff the sin of allowing cattle to graze in closed areas and permitting timber thieves to take what they would, I came to the conclusion that I had earned a holiday. Hunting dishonest subordinates is poor sport, more particularly in dull flat country with little variation in the vegetation and scenery. So I asked if there was any duck shooting to be had in the neighbourhood. The justly chastened forester said, Yes, there was a tank or artificial lake, about seven miles away on the other side of the forest. Good; then I would make a final round ending up

at the duck pond by way of diversion. There was a track leading through the scrub past a village in the middle of the forest. There I was to meet my horse after tramping the wilderness, and ride on to the duck pond. Feeling the after effects of a recent bout of malaria, I was tired when I reached the village and was glad to accept the hospitality of the headman, a dear whiskered patriarch of the old-fashioned type. I doubt if a European had been in his village for years, and my new friend rose to the occasion. With true Oriental hospitality, he offered me everything that he possessed. All that I asked for was a drink of milk.

"Of course," he said.

"But," I interrupted hastily, knowing the dangers of unsterilized milk in the tropics, "let the milk be boiled and brought hot into my presence, it being the custom of my caste to drink it thus."

My host was only too delighted to oblige, being clearly impressed with my strict observance of caste rules. The milk came steaming in a lordly dish. My host was politeness itself, removing a piece of dirt from its surface with his finger and blowing on it to cool the beverage, after which I was invited to drink and was much refreshed. Thanking my attentive friend, I rode the three miles on to the duck pond.

The uninteresting scrub jungle ended abruptly at the line of boundary pillars which marked the limits of my Government forest reserve, and the change in scenery to the beautiful grass-fringed sheet of water in front of me was as delightful as it was sudden.

The gently sloping ground that led to the lake was treeless, but it was difficult to see where the water actually began because the grasses and reeds extended some distance from the dry land, screening its surface. Farther out the grasses were replaced by flat-leaved water-lilies, and beyond them the blue surface of water was visible up to the dam at the farther end. A number of dark specks in the middle showed that there were good prospects of a successful duck shoot. A flight of teal wheeled overhead and with sudden rush of wings descended sharply on to the surface of the water amongst the reeds with a splash and a hiss. Everywhere were the cries of coots and waterfowl. A snipe rose from the marshy fringe as I approached.

Beyond the expanse of green reeds and grasses which almost surrounded the patch of blue water, the dam of the tank blotted out the farther view. The mango and acacia trees that shaded it stood out conspicuously against the glare of the cloudless sky. Beneath their shade one could see women from the neighbouring village bathing and washing their laundry, while the sounds of wet cloth being hit against stone in the process of washing came very sharply across the still water. A thatch-roofed village spread almost up to one end of the dam, ending in a white temple that stood out conspicuously against a tall *pipal* tree.

To reach the duck it was necessary to wade out as far as possible through the reeds and grasses, and I hoped that there were no leeches, of which I have an unreasonable horror. Leaving my horse with

the *sais* on the edge of the forest, I managed to wade out to the limit of the reeds where the water-lilies grew in the deeper part. A few yards beyond them was the open water where the duck were slowly paddling away from the suspicious stranger. I could hear people talking on the dam. Duck were now rising uneasily, not to a great height, but just skimming over the water for a short distance to greater safety. I noticed a couple of ugly crocodiles basking in the sun at the end of the dam farthest from the village where it was quiet.

I will not describe my shoot in detail. Opening the ball on a white-eyed pochard, I had an easy shot which gave me a change from the everlasting camp diet of skinny half-starved village fowl. At the report of my gun a cloud of protesting duck and teal circled round and the two crocodiles splashed into the water, submerged until suspicious noises should cease. For the next few minutes I had a merry time taking toll of the duck. The local fisherman came across the water towards me in the only boat on the lake, a dug-out canoe rudely fashioned from a log, that just held his slim body. He was a useful ally in collecting the bag and keeping the game on the move.

During a pause in the fusillade I heard a man shouting at me from the bank :

" Stop shooting ducks," he yelled.

I saw no reason why I should not go on with my sport, and continued. I had never been interfered with before and saw no reason why I should be then. The man went on with his shouting and was

soon joined by a good-sized mob from the village. " Stop shooting ducks ! " they yelled all together. The first man to shout was waving a thick *lathi* or quarterstaff over his head, a formidable weapon of solid bamboo bound with brass rings. I had enough duck for the pot and to spare for the camp followers and my fisherman ally, so telling the latter to bring what he could collect ashore, I waded slowly towards the shouting mob. They looked nasty. The man who first started the shouting, a weedy-looking youth in the pimply stage of growth, had worked himself into a frenzy of rage, yelling that he would bash my head in. The mob backed him up. I found a small low island near the shore where the ground was reasonably dry. Thinking it wiser (I had that much sense) not to have a gun in my hand while trouble was about, I grounded arms on the island. The mob grew quieter and I approached the party on the mainland.

" What is the trouble ? "I asked.

That stirred them up.

" Stop shooting ducks," they howled, while the pimply youth stepped towards me threateningly.

Seeing an elderly man on the fringe of the crowd, I approached him and asked him to explain the cause of their agitation. They all crowded round me shouting, and it was difficult to understand what they said. The situation was unpleasant. I edged back a bit towards the water where the fisherman had now arrived. With the command of the sea at my back I felt in a position to parley.

Again I asked the old man what the trouble was.

" Your honour," he said, after he had obtained moderate silence from the crowd, " dead ducks are falling in the temple where the Brahmins worship."

That explained a lot. I said that I had, of course, been unaware of the fact and that the last thing that I wished to do was to hurt people's religious feelings. Naturally the Brahmins were upset, their religion not being associated with blood and slaughter. I told my hearers that if, as appeared to be the case, one of my ducks had carried on and fallen into the temple, then no one regretted it more than I did.

They seemed satisfied with my expression of regret, and now that they were reasonably quiet I approached the young man with the big stick and told him that he had no business to threaten people in the way he had done. By way of impressing him with his wrong-doing, I asked him for his name, his father's name and his caste which I entered in my pocket-book, meaning to do nothing farther about the matter. After all, what could I do ? I had no wish to take any action and, so far as I was concerned, the incident was closed.

Taking the few ducks that I wanted for my own use and my camp followers, I hurried back to camp for a hot bath, with thoughts of the return of malaria that I deserved after my wetting.

That should finish the story. Unfortunately, it does not.

Striking camp next day, I moved westwards across the open country and after three days

chanced upon the camp of the Deputy Commissioner who was touring in those parts. One doesn't often meet other district officers on tour, and we naturally spent a bit of time together. While we were at breakfast he asked me :

" Had any shooting lately ? "

" A couple of leopards, some pigeons to keep the pot going, and a few days ago I had quite a nice little duck shoot, only it was interrupted."

" How interrupted ? " he asked.

So I told him what had happened.

" Do you mean to say that this youth actually threatened you ? " he asked.

" Yes," I replied ; " but I don't suppose he really meant what he said. I gathered that they were holding some sort of religious service in the Hindu temple when one of my ducks fell by accident among the congregation. Quite apart from their natural horror of blood and slaughter generally, they were reasonably upset."

" You say you took the youth's name ? " he asked.

" Yes ; but more by way of asserting my importance than for any other reason," I answered.

" That will save us some trouble," he said.

" What on earth do you mean ? " I asked.

" A report must be wired to the Viceroy at once," he told me. " It can go by special messenger to —— railway station."

" What possible interest can the Viceroy have in my duck shoot ? " I asked, bewildered at being associated with so lofty a person.

" Surely you know," he replied, " that in all

cases of trouble between Europeans and Natives a report has to be sent at once to the Viceroy?"

"I know nothing about it."

"That is the case," he said; "we have to thank Curzon for it. Now we must wire," he continued, as he reached back to his camp desk for a telegraph form. "What's the fellow's name?"

I pulled out my note-book. "Narain," I answered.

I gave further details of his caste and his father's name and the village where the incident occurred. It seemed to me to be rather an absurd fuss about a trivial event that I had hoped would be forgotten.

So the wire was sent. I thought that some junior secretary or other would look at the telegram, fill in a place in a many columned form, write "*file*" on the message and hand it to a Babu who would put it away on a shelf, where after maturing for five years it would be duly burnt on the altar of useless documents—an annual event in most offices of more interest than ordinary routine, that sometimes finds a fitting celebration on the fifth of November.

I left the Deputy Commissioner the next morning on my way to inspect more forests. That was early in December, and I did not see him again, or any other European, until I was called into headquarters in March to give evidence against the unfortunate Narain.

Government ordered his prosecution. It was absurd, of course, and a great nuisance to me because I was going home on leave and wanted to

remain in camp tidying things up before handing over charge to my successor. The court was very civil and wrote asking me when it would be convenient to attend and give my evidence. No time was convenient. But I had to go, and fixed a date. Even now I find it difficult to understand such a fuss being made over so trivial an incident. I suppose some superb under-secretary in a tail-coat, ambitious to show his zeal and learning, had put up the Deputy Commissioner's telegram to the head of a department with a beautifully worded memo splashed with Latin and Greek quotations in the best Oxford style. The head of department probably capped his subordinate's quotations and showed their joint effort to His Excellency who, not understanding a word of them, promptly ordered a prosecution. That, of course, is pure guess on my part—merely my idea of how our Empire builders in Simla work. I remember being told that when a memo of that sort was once put up to a robust Commander-in-Chief he added his own little Latin tag "*nullum sanguinum bonum*"!

The magistrate who took the case was an Indian gentleman of considerable dignity. He had held some sort of preliminary inquiry before my arrival and seemed to think that there had been a mistake in identity. Was I certain that the youth's name was Narain? I was, and said so. Then the trial had to proceed.

After being given a seat, I was presented with a Bible and asked to take the oath, usual for a Chris-

tian but not apparently for those unlearned in the teaching of the ninth commandment. All that the other witnesses had to do was to raise their hands and make solemn affirmation that they would speak the truth.

In giving my evidence I produced my note-book and showed to the magistrate the entry with Narain's name, father's name and caste.

"That is very extraordinary," commented the magistrate, "because Narain can prove a satisfactory alibi."

He then asked me if I thought I could identify Narain if he were produced before me with a number of other persons. I replied that I thought I could. So a party of men was called into the court and ranged up at the back for my inspection where I was asked to look them over. I soon spotted my pimply youth trying to look inconspicuous in the rear rank.

"That's the man," I said.

"Do you identify that man as Narain son of ——?"

"Yes," I said, "that is the name that he gave me as his."

The magistrate was astonished. "Why," he said, "that is his name."

Well. I knew that already.

"Is that the man who threatened you?"

"Threatened is rather a strong word," I said, feeling rather sorry for the fellow and not wishing to get him into serious trouble. "He waved his stick at me, but I don't suppose he really meant to

do me any harm. He could easily have done so, but did not."

The case had to proceed and the witnesses from whom I had picked out Narain were then sent out of the Court, so that there could be no question of their merely repeating in evidence what they had heard former witnesses testify.

" Call Gopal Pershad," said the magistrate to the court orderly.

The man left the court for the yard outside whence I could hear him yelling at the top of his voice,

" *Gopal Pershad, wald Ram Pershad, hai ?* "

After repeating this call three or four times there was silence, and the man returned into court with the witness Gopal Pershad.

" My name," he said in giving his evidence " is Gopal Pershad, son of Ram Pershad and I live in Pipalgaon."

" Where is Pipalgaon ? " asked the pleader for the defence.

" In the Bazarpur *tehsil.*"

" How far is Pipalgaon in the Bazarpur *tehsil* from Rampura in the Sakli *tehsil* ? "

" Ten leagues," was the ready reply.

Rampura was the name of the village where I had shot at the ducks and had my argument with Narain.

" I would ask your honour to note the distance between these two villages, as testified by this respectable witness, which can be verified by the map."

The magistrate made a note. Poor wretch, he

had to take down everything that was said so as to give the accused every opportunity of appealing in the event of his not being let off.

" Continue," said the magistrate, looking up.

" On the fourteenth day of the month of December I attended the bazaar at Pipalgaon. I was selling garden produce. Before noon, when the bazaar was still crowded, Narain came to my stall and bought two seers of red chillies."

" How was he dressed ? " asked the pleader.

" In his ordinary clothes," replied the witness.

" Can you remember anything particular about him that day as regards his appearance or his manner ? "

The witness was obviously racking his brains.

" Yes," he said, looking up suddenly, " he held an umbrella in his hand."

" Why do you remember that ? " asked the magistrate, " there is nothing unusual about carrying an umbrella, is there ? "

" Your honour," replied the witness, " it was fine weather and there was no need for him to carry an umbrella."

On being further questioned, the witness was certain that the man to whom he had sold the chillies was Narain, and he was convinced that he had the date right.

Another witness was then called. He told much the same story so far as the time and place were concerned, and he too remembered seeing the man carrying the umbrella. He had not sold Narain chillies but he had chaffed him about carrying an

did not wish to delay my leave for an adjourned case, and if the fisherman was called what evidence would he give? Would he bear testimony against his fellow villagers? I thought not—and I had booked my passage in the next P. & O. The magistrate was sorely puzzled as to what he should do. The pleader for the defence looked pleased with himself. He had reason to be pleased.

I was an interested spectator. Although rather shocked at the perjury, I did not wish to see the headstrong Narain punished, and I admired the staff work behind the defence.

After I had been mildly cross-examined by the pleader for the defence, I thought that the case would end with the magistrate's judgment. But more was to come.

I had noticed a rather striking-looking man at the back of the court who had taken interest in the proceedings from the very beginning. He was obviously of the priestly tribe with a caste mark painted across his forehead. He wore spotlessly clean white clothes and looked the picture of respectability.

The magistrate was so puzzled as to what he should do that it seemed clear to me that he was going to defer judgment. The priest seemed to think so too, and he had no intention of leaving the issue in doubt.

"I wish to give evidence," he announced.

Putting down his pen, the magistrate glanced up at the speaker in surprise. The pleader for the defence looked distinctly put out. This was not on the programme.

A man standing next to the priest was obviously trying to dissuade him from speaking, but the man persisted.

" I wish to give evidence," he repeated firmly.

" Very well," said the magistrate, " but you must first make a solemn affirmation that you will speak the truth."

" I will speak the truth," said the witness—a pretty good effort, in view of what he was going to say.

He raised his hand in the approved style while making this solemn affirmation.

" What have you to say ? " asked the magistrate.

" The Sahib speaks truth," said the witness.

This was indeed a bomshell. The very last thing that anyone expected in that court was the truth. The pleader for the defence could not conceal his chagrin. Here was his case falling to the ground just at the moment that everything had worked out so nicely. His carefully tutored evidence shattered by a last-moment witness whom nobody asked to speak ! As things were, the magistrate would not have convicted. The Viceroy, if he really took an interest in the case (he probably knew nothing of it), would have been satisfied, and I wanted nothing more than to be allowed to go home on leave : the boat was waiting in Bombay harbour. Now this well-meaning interferer must come along introducing complications !

After the first hush of surprise there was a stir and a craning of necks to look at this astonishing witness more closely.

" On the fourteenth of December," he began, speaking carefully, " I was reading the scriptures in the temple near the pond at my village of Rampura. Some of the younger folk with a desire for knowledge of the written word were listening to my reading. We heard noises of guns shooting near the water and I was told a Sahib had come to shoot ducks. Without warning, a duck flew through the door of the temple and fell dead almost at my feet. There were blood and feathers on the holy floor ! " The man shuddered at the memory, and continued :

" Your honour, I was horrified at the sacrilege. Putting aside the holy books, I ran out towards the bund of the pond and standing at that part of it nearest to the Sahib who stood far out in the water, I shouted to him to stop shooting ducks. In my rage I seized a stick from a villager and waved it in the air shouting to the Sahib that I would kill him with the stick. I did wrong. When the Sahib reasoned with me and asked my name, I was afraid and gave a false name, that of Narain. For which reason the Sahib thinks that Narain threatened him. Narain did not threaten him, but I did. And I have done wrong and must be punished. How could Narain have threatened the Sahib if he was at another place ? "

There was dead silence in the court. No one stirred. We were completely surprised by the old priest's gallantry.

For gallantry it undoubtedly was. He thought that the blame was his for sending the headstrong

youth out to ask me to stop shooting ducks, so like a good sportsman he made himself responsible for the results and wished to take the punishment.

It was so still in the court that I could hear a kite screaming outside in search of food. At last the magistrate broke the silence.

"Is that all you wish to say?" he asked him.

"That is all," he answered.

It was natural that no one should wish to cross-examine him. The case for the defence had been strengthened. I had nothing to say. I wanted to go home on leave; and, in any case, what good or harm could it do to anyone?

The decision of the court was that both the priest and Narain should be bound over to keep the peace for six months. In view of the recorded evidence and the fact that I should be out of the way, Solomon could not have given a better judgment. I did not ask the magistrate whose evidence he believed most or least. Nor did I hear what the Viceroy thought of the business—if he gave it any thought at all. I expect he had more important work on hand.

It was to me a most interesting experience from which I profited in my later service. I think that generally speaking I have a prejudice against priests. I had no opportunity of speaking to this one, and even if I had I doubt if my own practical knowledge of Hindi would have been equal to an adequate expression of my feelings towards him. The ninth commandment says that we are not to bear false witness *against our neighbours*. He had

borne false witness against no one. Perhaps, like me, he thought that a silly fuss was being made of an affair that had already been settled in a friendly way as between gentlemen. If he would have allowed it, I should have liked to have been honoured with the friendship of that priest.

CHAPTER XIII

INDIA

FOR many reasons it is probable that the last forty years will in future ages be looked upon as the most interesting in the history of our civilization. Never before has the world witnessed such changes as we have been privileged to see during some part of our lives. And because we who read and write pay attention to those happenings that affect us in particular, we are perhaps inclined to ignore changes that have affected the lives of the greater proportion of the dwellers on earth. Agriculture has been the hardest hit of all industries. And the reason? That the animal has been replaced as a means of locomotion by mechanically driven vehicles.

The change has been very sudden, more so than any other change in man's habits that has been recorded. Fifty years ago the motor-car was not known, certainly not as a normal means of transport. The horse, though rivalled by the railway engine, and displaced by it so far as long-distance heavy traffic was concerned, still reigned supreme. Instead of cars there were horse-drawn vehicles, the horse population of England and of the world was huge compared with that of present

times, and when one considers that one man was required to look after every two or three horses it is possible to realize how much employment those same animals gave. More, I venture to say, than the cars at the present time whether in the factory or their maintenance. And agriculture was prosperous. Instead of millions of money going every year out of the country to increase the wealth of foreigners in the purchase of petrol, those millions were spent in the purchase of hay, oats, and straw for the use of horses.

Statesmen can hold their world economic conferences, but they are wasting their time in talk. I can tell them how to solve unemployment and most of the other ills from which men suffer (including nerves and liver troubles)—prohibit the use of motor-cars. I gather from the statistics of accidents in England that this measure would save the lives of many people in the country every day.

We have no world dictator to carry out such a reform. Meanwhile we can realize the tremendous change in world conditions. In an industrial country like England it has been great enough. In India the change is going to be even more drastic. There, they are two hundred years behind us, and the huge bulk of the population is essentially agricultural. Since wealth is measured by a man's holding, land is still the main investment for his savings as it was in the Middle Ages in England. In India a person's wealth is spoken of in terms of villages. "So and so; a money-lender; a rich man; the owner of twenty villages." Is this going

to last even in conservative India? What is going to happen when motor transport has taken the place of the millions of bullocks that even now pull the country carts? When that comes to pass, as it will, the problem is not only going to be one for agriculture, it will bite deep into the social life and religious soul of the most conservative country in the world.

Cattle raising is one of the essentials of Hindu life, the products of the cow are far more necessary in Hindu ceremony than the bread and wine of Christianity. Hitherto a use has been found for the male half of the cattle population as beasts of draft until they are worn out, after which they are a useless burden on the land. It is against the precepts of Hindu teaching to kill cattle; they are sacred, and live on in half-starved misery. Part of the forest officer's job is to find grazing for the village herds, and the damage done to the young growth by browsing and trampling is enough to break any forester's heart. Yet two-thirds of these cattle are unproductive and useless except as food for raiding tigers. They are either barren cows, or bullocks, emaciated, and past their prime, that in any other country would have long ago found their way into the abbatoir or the knacker's yard. The problem of the future India will be great when the time comes for the bullocks to be replaced by tractors and cars. What will they do with the young bulls?

The change began even in my time, which made my stay in the country the more interesting. There

were very few motor-cars in the country in 1904 when I first went there. In those days we used horses. The young man wishing to make a dash before the ladies would ride, he would invite them to drive with him in his smart tum-tum and he would show his skill in handling his tandem. In the evening he would play polo, and in camp he would ride. So essential was the capacity to ride considered, that officers were not accepted in any of the Indian services (with the possible exception of the Indian Marine) unless they could produce a certificate that they could ride. In the Central Provinces, and in other Provinces also, there was a mounted corps, you could call it either cavalry or mounted infantry, who might not have made a sufficiently brilliant display in the field to have satisfied a military martinet, but whose members lived their outdoor lives in the saddle and spent their leisure in shooting with the rifle. And it would have been hard to find a more useful body of men if trouble arose.

If a long journey into the country had to be made, it was not a question of rushing along the road in a car at a great pace, but a long ride all day with relays of horses. Men saw the country and could talk with the people. Now it is all hurry in cars. No wonder they say that we are losing touch with the people of the land. King horse has gone ; will queen cow follow ?

Enough has been said to show the great change that has come over India. One shudders to think of others to come, or that may come, whether

mechanical or political. Politicians seem to think that it is wrong to leave the people of a country in placid content, but rather that they should be stirred up to follow the noble examples of our politicians of Europe in the bribing of the electors to return them to power, with promises of privileges and money at the expense of other people. Let us admit that in India there is as much bribery and corruption as anywhere else, yet it cannot be denied that the bribery there is done with the briber's own property and not with the wealth of others.

Those who have served India, some rising to very high positions, retire to comparative obscurity when they settle down again at home. They have given of their best to the country they have served, and prefer peace in their retirement. For this reason Anglo-Indians, though men of ability and administrative experience, seldom make their voices heard in their native land. So they are ignored in the more weighty matters of state policy. They are often considered too narrow in their outlook even when the policy of India is under consideration. Men who have spent their lives in the villages and cities of India are told that their experiences are too narrow to be of use in framing a policy suitable for the whole country. They are told that the people best able to frame such a policy for India are those who have visited every province and heard the views of their politicians.

It is true, these constitution-mongers are prepared to admit, that they have never made India

their home and that their experiences are based on one or at the most two cold-weather tours of the country staying at the Government House in the capital of each province that they visit. Nor of course can they converse with the people of the country in any tongue except English, a language confined almost entirely to the politician class, forming the noisy minority of the population. I have been told myself that great as my experience may be of the jungle tribes and the ryots with whom I was in constant contact, yet I cannot possibly have the broad outlook of the politician who makes the cold-weather tour of government houses. Our critics seem to think that it is possible for only the British politician to visit the different parts of India, that the dweller in India never sees another province nor can he converse with those from another part either within or outside their native provinces. It takes a party politician apparently to frame India's future ; he knows best, although he cannot converse with any of the people of the country except in his own language.

I have no political bias either for or against the White Paper ; nothing is yet settled. But judging the situation, it is only right that the public at home should realize one or two things. We hear it said by some of the politicians that officials now serving in India are unanimously in favour of the provisions in the White Paper. No one is named, of course. I heard more than one man at the time of the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms speak privately most emphatically in condemnation of

them. Yet I have known those same men to be officials quoted as enthusiastically in their favour.

It must be remembered that Anglo-Indian officials are people who have made their way by their brains and their ability. I refer to the Revenue Department known as the I.C.S. in particular. Members of that great service are naturally and rightly ambitious. They and their wives are anxious to secure the best future for their children, and the time when they are expecting the coveted " K " is generally the time when they are asked for their opinions. Perhaps in some few cases their views are not unbiassed.

Here in England at the present moment we are pestered with papers and propaganda by those in favour of the White Paper and those against it. Each side is careful to quote its supporters, neither cares to give the reasoned views of those opposed to it. The result is that we get extreme points of view from both sides.

There have been great changes in almost every direction in India during the last thirty years, and there will be more. Our whole attitude towards the " Natives " has changed. In my father's time an Indian who came into the presence of a European officer with his shoes on, or who passed him with an umbrella up would receive a thrashing for his insolence. Those were the last of the days of what one might call the " conquistadores."

I can remember so well my father telling me that I should stand no insolence from them, unless of course they were men of dignity and honour as

much entitled to respect as men of family in the old days of this country. He pointed out to me that many of the ruling Rajputs and others had pedigrees and records of honourable service to their countrymen that would make many of our own European Royal Families look insignificant. When I, as a boy, referred to them as " niggers " I was severely sat upon—and quite rightly so too.

In the early days of my service the last remnants of the old traditions were going. The Englishman had still kept the right to be judged by his peers —a jury of his own countrymen—and he had the right to carry arms without a licence. Now these privileges have gone. I do not grumble, I merely state facts.

I think that in the old days in my father's time, Europeans could discriminate between one Indian and another as we discriminate in our own native country. In those days of class distinction at home, a gentleman knew when he met another in the East. It was a matter of breeding and education. I do not agree, however, with the view that one hears sometimes expressed regarding the present personnel of the I.C.S. and other services, namely, that they are now recruited through examinations from all classes and that they include many of those known as " board-school boys." Many of the most able, and the most courteous, and the most successful in dealing with the Indians are men of humble birth who have often educated themselves by their capacity to pass examinations for scholarships. It is absurd for people to say that

the Indian spots these people and holds them in contempt. If they can identify them at all, which is doubtful, they certainly respect them as much as they do any other members of the services.

It must be frankly admitted that there is still a great social gulf fixed between Europeans and Indians. If blame must be allotted for this, it should rest on both sides. But why allot blame? Except for the records of the Greeks under Alexander the Great and of a very few travellers, India, until the discovery that it was possible to sail round Africa, was almost a mythical country. As was China, although the ancient Romans used Chinese silk to a very great extent. It would be absurd to expect to find, in a civilization so cut off from our own, anything similar to our own manners and customs, or even morals. In some circles of Indian society it is considered the best of manners for a guest who has fed well to break wind noisily at the end of the meal, thus showing his host that he is replete. That to us would be the very worst of manners. So, to the Indian the habit that some Europeans have of blowing their noses in the presence of their friends is most repulsive. The European does not discuss with his friends in the club the intimate details of the indispositions of his womankind. Yet I have heard an Indian give an excuse for his wife's absence that made me squirm. There can be no possible doubt that we blunder just as badly in Indian society.

The caste system and the Mohammedan custom of keeping respectable women *purdah* is, of course,

the greatest stumbling-block to real social intercourse on an equal footing between the two civilizations. Whatever they may say to the contrary, it is going to take many generations to break down the caste system. Christianity may in the end. But it is going to take a lot to do away with a system that gives every man in the country a social, religious, and a family status. Whatever a man's caste, there is or he believes there to be someone below him. Each man knows his place and will not yield it lightly. Caste is at the back of all public and private life. It is the basis of the Hindu civilization, and the consequences of breaking down such a sanction for the existing moral and social life of the country would be very serious ; if the caste system is ever broken down, which is doubtful.

I have said enough to illustrate the great social gulf that is fixed between the two societies. That gulf is fixed by caste and is so peculiar to India that more should be said of it since it produces relations, and has indeed forced them, between the conquerors and the conquered, peculiar to India herself and not found in any other country in the world, except possibly China.

Marriage or its possibilities between members is, after all, the principal factor by which the eligibility of an aspiring party to any particular social community is judged. This is not snobbery, it is the fact. Family life and friends formed through new relationships are the basis of all society. It is the case in England, and throughout the world, not

excluding India. When one nation has conquered another the victors and the surviving vanquished have usually intermarried, or at any rate interbred, and in time they are absorbed in one another. A new nation is formed. The Romans, who were the greatest colonists of old time, were not above intermarrying with the people that they conquered. In the case of our own country, there can be little doubt that the Roman legionaries and officials (who were, of course, not necessarily Italian) took, in many cases, British wives.

After Sicily, our own island is probably the most remarkable example of this absorption of one race into another. We have been colonized by Romans, Saxons, a few Danes, and Normans. Probably there is Phœnecian blood here and there : in parts of the country the old Celtic blood predominates, yet who can say that he is pure British, pure Roman or even pure Saxon or Norman ? None, I venture to say. All the races are mixed up. We are English.

And the same is the case in other countries of the world ; yet it must be admitted that at the present time there is a distinct colour bar between some nations, although it is doubtful if the same colour bar existed in old times. The Arab, the main colonizer of Africa, enforced no colour bar, and going farther back, it is doubtful if the Phœnecians did either. Yet in India we have an entirely different social scheme. There has been no intermarriage between the better classes of the conqueror and the vanquished. There has always been the

colour bar. The Indian as we know him, is a brown fellow, and because of this we forget very often that he comes of the same stock as ourselves. Occasionally one meets an Indian who is very light in colour and could easily pass as a native of Southern Europe. But on the whole they have tanned dark from generations of residence under India's hot sun, so dark that ignorant people refer to them as " niggers," a matter on which the Indian is naturally very sensitive.

When these light-coloured Aryan Hindus first conquered the country and drove the native Dravidian races into the hills and the jungles, the newcomers were determined that they would keep their own race pure. There must be no intermarriage with the survivors of the vanquished. Hence the caste system, which has been remarkably successful in its object, since India can show a condition of society that is unique. Of course, there have been irregular unions from which the innumerable subcastes have originated ; but it is very remarkable that the conquering nation of Aryans has successfully kept itself absolutely pure behind the most exclusive social system in the world. Their pedigrees can go back for thousands of years and there is no possible question of the purity of descent of a high-caste man. They have been able to maintain these exclusive ideals by giving them the sanction of religion ; and so strong are the bonds of caste that although another Aryan race has now conquered the first comers, the Hindu caste system would not under any circumstances sanction the

marriage of a high-caste Brahmin woman with a European, no matter what his pedigree ; such a woman would be outcast from her own people.

The issue of the union of members of different castes form new castes of their own, and these sub-castes are innumerable.

There is an amazing story told of a certain Colonel Ouseley who somewhere about a hundred or more years ago was Deputy Commissioner of Hoshangabad. He apparently was held in great affection by the people of the country, among whom his name is still a tradition as " Wasley Sahib," and the stories of his doings and wisdom are many. In those days there was not the quick and easy communication between India and England that obtains at the present time ; leave was only given after long periods in the country. It is said that this Colonel Ouseley felt the need of a wife ; he was, of course, the most important man in the district ; there was no lady of his own race available or willing to become his consort. So he married a Brahmin lady.

At once she was outcast by her own people. " Wasley Sahib " was very upset over this ; he was determined that his wife should have a proper social position among her own people. He gave a party to which all her relations were invited. He was head of the District, the chief magistrate, a man of hot temper, just, but an autocrat. The relations had, of course, to go to the party. They came, they were offered refreshment which they were assured had been prepared by a Brahmin,

moreover there was something about the manner of Wasley Sahib which compelled politeness and not too careful checking of what he said. After they had duly feasted, Wasley Sahib told them that the food had been prepared by his wife who was a Brahmin, that those assembled had eaten of this food, and that therefore they were castefellows with his wife. Since the Pandits had said that Mrs. Wasley could no longer be received as a Brahmin it was necessary to start a new caste and all those in the room would be known as "Wasley Brahmins," and so it was: they say that at this time there are still a number of Wasley Brahmins in the Hoshangabad District.

That is one example of the formation of a subcaste. They are innumerable, but the original castes remain in the proud purity of their breed. Caste has kept the races apart through the thousands of years, whether India has been conquered and overrun by Greek, Scythian, Persian, or Mongolian stock, the original pure breed of the first Aryan conquerors has remained. The Moslems if they married Hindu woman converted them to their own religion, such women were hopelessly outcast by their own people, they were accepted as Moslem converts; and the Prophet includes all true believers in his family.

So far as the British were concerned, we did not proudly proclaim our caste superiority. We were excluded by the caste system of the Hindus from their society, our own exclusive social system of the Georgian and Victorian periods also acted as a

deterrent against any mixed unions with respectable Indians ; family counted for something in those days in English society. Moreover, it seems that people of the Nordic races have a very pronounced colour sense. Call it brown or black, whatever you like, however wrong the idea, we have the feeling of race superiority over them, as indeed the high-caste Hindus have over us. Most Englishmen would be ashamed to have a coloured wife, and an American of European descent would feel it more strongly. These are facts which have to be recognized and faced. They have been the factors that have imposed a new caste on India. The White Caste. The reason for it is the same as the reason that formed the original Hindu castes —to keep the race pure. As the Hindus had no intention of being absorbed by the Dravidian races of India, so our social system demanded a similar exclusiveness on our part. This was rendered more easy by the fact that our people do not colonize the country ; they administer it and trade in it, but those that go to India *do not make the country their permanent home.* Englishmen, and Scotsmen in particular, go to India in the prime of their lives, and return to their native country when they have made sufficient money to do so. They may breed children from women of their own race in India, but the children are sent home and brought up in the more bracing climate. The administrators of India and the European traders of the country have been brought up and mostly born in Europe ; they are not country-bred.

There lies the strength of the position of our race in the East. It does not deteriorate in stamina by rearing future administrators in that enervating climate. It is doubtful whether an Empire has ever before held its possessions under such conditions. There are, of course, Eurasians, half-castes, often the product of unions of Europeans and the lowest class of native women. They form their own separate community, they are neither one thing nor the other, and are despised by both races of their origin. Closely akin to them and in the same society with the best of the Eurasians are what are known as the domiciled community—European in origin but born and educated in the country—the Eurasians and the country-breds are now officially known as Anglo-Indians, their own peculiar way of talking is known as *chi-chi.*

It is all very well for people to say that these people have the vices of both races of their ancestors and none of their virtues. Chastity was certainly not the virtue of their fathers, yet the British are primarily responsible for their being, and it seems priggish and unjust to hold them in contempt. They are almost completely outside the circles of European society. Yet these men and women showed in the mutiny and on other occasions that they can rise to as great heights of self-sacrifice and valour as any pure-bred European. The story of the Martiniére boys during the siege of Lucknow is a story of heroes for those who care to read it.

I had a good deal to do with these men when I was commanding the company of the Auxiliary

force in a certain cantonment and I have the greatest respect for them. There was to be a garrison boxing tournament. Rather contemptuously, I imagine, I was sent a copy of the announcement of the fixture to read out on parade to my company. I read it out, of course, but I never thought that any of those lads would be prepared to stand up to the British soldier. Yet they did, and they acquitted themselves well, one of them being second in the heavy-weight competition. As it is with the missionaries, so it is with these people. It is fashionable to run them down. There are bad Eurasians as there are bad missionaries, bad Europeans, bad kings ; there have even been bad Popes ; but it is wrong to assume that because there is one black sheep in a flock the rest are not bred true. Some day these Anglo-Indians, as they are now called, will have the opportunity of showing that they too can take their place as leaders of men. One can understand their position. They have no possible hope of social standing among the most cultured people in their own country of either race, although many of them are well educated. I remember a boy once asking me what he could do ; he was not satisfied with the narrow social conditions imposed on him in India. His only hope was to go to the colonies where caste distinctions do not exist.

The club is the centre of all European social life in India, and the question of membership has been the subject of much searching of hearts. In the larger places, such as Bombay and Calcutta, the

difficulty is not so acute, since there is more than one club, so that if a person is excluded from one he may find another where he will be welcomed. Yet even there one or perhaps two clubs hold special positions to which many people aspire. There are still clubs in India which are for Europeans only and from which even the highest Rajput princes in the land are excluded. It is easy to criticize the attitude of the European clubs on this matter, but not so easy for the outside critics to appreciate the view of the position.

The life of a European in India is often lonely in that many seldom see their own countrymen, although they see plenty of the Indians and are dealing with them all day. Not all of them are married with a home to go to in the evening, and owing to the climate, wives are often away for long periods. The club is then a man's sole distraction, a place where he is free to speak to his own folk without restraint. Is it quite fair to ask him to accept Indians in his club—people who may be as refined as he is but exercise a restraint on what he may wish to say? There are still clubs in London from which women are excluded, for which Allah be praised; although women have an equal vote with men, they have no grievance because they are not allowed to mix in the clubs with the men. They have their own clubs. The Indian has his own club, and it seems unreasonable that he should make a political fuss about not being accepted as a matter of course in the European clubs. Yet in my time official pressure was brought

to bear on the members of the clubs in the small stations to allow Indians in as members.

The reason was feeble—namely, that certain Indians who held official positions usually allotted to Europeans should, because of their official positions, be allowed into the clubs. It was a matter on which some Indians were very sensitive.

After all, a club is a private house, the property of members, and it was a little hard that members should be dictated to by the Government, in no matter how gentle a manner, as to who they should accept as fellow-members and who not. Some Europeans are still of opinion that if an Indian is too proud to show his wife's face to the European, then it is not fair to give him the opportunity of acquaintance with the European ladies who frequent the club. I do not say that that is my view, but it is one that one hears frequently expressed. The fact remains, as I have already shown, that some Indians, without in any way desiring it, since they are courteous people, are apt to be a source of embarrassment to Europeans, especially in mixed company.

I remember so well how in a certain small station where I was posted, there was an Indian who was very anxious to belong to our small club, where we were privileged to see two or three European ladies. We had nothing against this particular Indian except that he was not accustomed to European ways, and we saw no reason why our ladies should be embarrassed in teaching him. As Deputy Commissioner of the District and

its chief officer we had a Parsi, a particularly nice fellow with a charming wife and daughter who were, of course, accepted as club members on their own merits. Well, some misguided person put the Indian up as a proposed member; he was blackballed.

Somehow or other he heard of it and came round to me and argued the point.

"I will do everything Europeans do. I will eat the leg of mutton," he said, holding out his two hands in front of his face as if that was the way he intended to do it. I had to explain to him that we did not eat legs of mutton in the club, and that if we did we should not hold it with our hands, and that anyone doing so would cause great embarrassment to those present.

He got no change out of me, so went to our unfortunate Parsi Deputy Commissioner to put his case to him. Finally he complained to our Divisional Commissioner, and then the Deputy Commissioner approached me. He had heard demi-officially from the Commissioner about it, urging him to get the man into the club. The Commissioner was not a club member and it seemed to me that it was no business of his. Now that Commissioner was a married man with two daughters.

"When the Commissioner invites Mr. —— to stay in his own house in headquarters to associate with his own daughters, then," I said, "I will raise no objection to Mr. —— joining the club, if the other members wish him to belong."

I was a young man, and I suppose it was a great piece of cheek on my part. But we heard no more about it.

There seemed to be the idea that the club was a place to which all officials of a certain standing were entitled to belong. Many an Indian is a fish hopelessly out of water in such surroundings, and it is difficult to understand why they wish to belong to it except to raise their social status, which is a bad reason for belonging to any club.

Club membership in India is the standard by which a man's social position is gauged. So and so—is he a club member? is asked. If he is, then he comes out to dinner, otherwise no. The Indians have their own clubs and use them a lot. Occasionally I have been the guest in an Indian club, and very pleasant it was.

People at home do not realize what a club means to the Englishman stationed in a small district in India. The membership may not consist of more than six or so, yet it is the club where the lonely bachelor can go in the evening, get an iced drink, meet his friends, play tennis, bridge, and billiards, and work off a lot of social energy. When one went into camp, as one did at the end of October, and did not return until the middle of June, seldom in that period of loneliness sitting down to a meal with a fellow-countryman or indeed with anyone, one naturally looked forward to the club society during the three months that one was in headquarters in the monsoon period. Is it right or

wise for the Government to force on such institutions members who are not wanted?

Every small station in the old days had its club. Now I hear that the clubs are disappearing from them. Have they been killed by the dearth of Europeans or by the policy of the Government in forcing unwanted membership on them? It is easy enough for those in high places with their own exclusive clubs to force the hands of the lonely outstation members, but no club in Bombay, Calcutta, Delhi, or even in lofty Simla is as necessary to its members as is the club in the small district.

The problem of club membership is even greater with the members of the domiciled community, since they are always striving for recognition by the countrymen of their fathers who begot them. Here there is a good deal of snobbery. Or so it would seem, but it is not so really. It is a question of caste and colour bar—one of the essential elements of Indian social life, a system sanctioned by the ages. The same colour bar that has been and still is applied by the high-caste Hindus, although, since they themselves are now slightly tanned, it is not called a colour bar but caste.

It seems hopeless to expect to have free and equal social intercourse between two nations whose social rules absolutely exclude any possible thought of honourable marriage between their members.

Then, it may be asked, how are we and the Indians ever going to know one another so as to be able to reach a common footing of good fellowship? There are cases where the Indian is as

good a fellow in the club as any Englishman, or better; there are cases where an Indian will bring his wife to the club and prove to be a fellow with whom one can discuss anything without fear of giving offence. Such exceptions adopt the European style of living, and although one of my greatest friends was one of these, I say that the type is rare. There are other ways of the races getting to know and respect one another that have been open and freely used. In the matter of sport we meet on common ground. The Indian is good at games, he has an eye like a hawk and the legs of a greyhound. Race sensitive, he can accept hard knocks and hard words on the playing field as well as any other. He will take a reproof in good heart that anywhere else than on the playing field would give deep offence.

I can remember in a certain station playing in a hockey match with a mixed side of Indians and Europeans. The captain of my side was a bit of a martinet on the field, though one of the very best at all times (he is now the Governor of a Province); I did something wrong for which he damned me good, hearty, and very loudly. That was his job, of course, and I took note of the fact that I must play differently another time if I was to do the best for my side. The next person to catch it was an Indian pleader well known for being rather touchy about his dignity. He got it as strongly and as coarsely as I had, and took it with a smile. At the end of the game we were able to chaff one another and the captain of our

side about it. We were on common ground. The common ground of the two races.

And what better place is there? It is on the playing fields that we are going to do what political schemers have been trying to do for so long. All will be well if the Government does not start interfering. In the good clean air of sport the nations can learn to respect one another.

One cannot emphasize too much the importance of caste. It is a permanent factor in Indian life that cannot be obliterated. The youngster out from home or the tourist in India is too apt to classify all Indians as black men and to judge them by their domestic servants drawn from the lowest classes in the land. The days of rude arrogance to the courteous Indians have gone. There was never any justification for it. But the days of caste are by no means over. When the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms were introduced, I said to an Indian officer, who was my assistant, that I thought it was a good thing that Indians should learn to govern their own country. He did not agree with me, and he said what is only too true:

"India has always been ruled by a foreigner, from the days of Alexander the Great, and before, to the present time. India always will be ruled by a foreigner. If the British leave the country to-day, the Afghans, the Nepalese, or the Japanese will be in the country to-morrow." That is true, and the Indians know it.

There is a story told of a famous old Rajput Chief, a man of well-known character. He was asked

what would happen if the British withdrew from Bengal.

" Give me three weeks," he is reported to have said, " and there will not be left a rupee or a virgin in Bengal."

Whoever rules the country forms a new caste. If there is to be another ruling nation in India, then there will be a new caste.

CHAPTER XIV

INDIA (*continued*)

PEOPLE talk of India as if it were a homogeneous country where all are of the same blended race and speak the same language. It is no more so than the British Isles were after the Norman conquest before the intermarriage of the races, when a man was a Saxon, a Dane, a Cornishman or a Norman, each with his own language. In fact the peoples of India are farther apart than were our forefathers in those days. Except for the lepers there were no untouchables in England and there was a common religion. In India at the present time, in addition to there being a great number of languages spoken, people are divided by many religions violently antagonistic to one another in their teachings ; they are divided by what they may eat and with whom they may eat ; they are widely separated by rules as to whom they may even touch without fear of contamination.

Our royal family shake hands with the humblest of the King's subjects, but many a Brahmin would shrink in horror at the thought of the lowest in the land touching him—an outcast—a pariah—a social leper by birth. It is probably the most undemocratic country in the world. The British are

attempting to graft democracy on this very ancient stock.

There has been much talk of freedom as between Europeans and Indians. There is now absolutely no distinction in the privileges that the two races hold by law. Are the high-caste Hindus prepared to give this same equality to their pariah-born fellow-countrymen? I do not mean in religion. It seems to me no more reasonable to ask the high-caste men, who have been to the expense of building a temple, to admit the low-caste man to its uses than it would be to ask the Church of Rome to allow another Church not in communion with her to use her buildings. It is more a matter of political and even social equality that must make India a real nation. At the present moment their sole claim to unity is their membership in the Indian Empire. Take away the sovereign power and what is left? A bloody pandemonium of discord until another policing power takes charge. It will be said that India was one country under the Moghuls. True. But the Moghuls were foreigners.

I have been told that because I lived my life in India amongst the aboriginal tribes and the peasants, I cannot claim to speak on the higher politics of the country as a whole. But the peasants *are India*. It is essentially an agricultural country. The huge bulk of the population lives in the villages and is distinctly concerned in the cultivation of the soil. The one per cent minority who constitute the "intelligentsia" certainly succeeds in making the biggest noise and in making their views understood

by politicians, but that one per cent hardly represents rural India. A large proportion of them are of such high caste that they will have nothing to do with something like seventy million people of the country.

In the old days there was a rule for Government offices that one caste should not be allowed to predominate in any one of them. An excellent rule, but an impossible one to follow. It is probably still in existence, yet I would be pretty safe in guessing that three-quarters of the clerks in the Government offices at the present time are high-caste Hindus, almost all of them Brahmins. These men of the priestly caste are clever and able men, masters of intrigue, able to get where they want and to put their relations in the next best place. It must not be forgotten that they are extremely loyal to their own families. The poor live on the rich—within their own caste. I remember telling a Brahmin forest ranger that he could look forward to promotion. He was dismayed at the idea. I could not understand it and asked him the reason. He was frank.

"Your honour," he said, "I now draw seventy-five rupees pay and twenty-five rupees travelling allowance. If I get a rise up to a hundred rupees a month my relations will consider me a rich man and live on me. It will cost me more than the extra twenty-five rupees that I will draw."

With such prospects before them is it surprising that these men once in office will exert all their efforts to get their relations jobs? The intrigue

that goes on in many of the offices is serious. The superintendent or head clerk is a man to keep in with. Even if the officer who has the final say in the promotions settles them entirely on the merits of the candidates, the head clerk will often take good care to let it be known that he is the man that really counts. Orders for the promotion of the outdoor staff, or even office promotions, are sometimes delayed. I have known a case of a whole batch of promotions being held up for five weeks, subsequently coming out with effect from the original date of the order. I may have a suspicious mind, but I can imagine the wretched forest guard in his lonely jungle *naka* hearing from the head clerk that promotion might come his way if the head clerk is approached in the right way by sending the necessary douceur along to expedite matters.

In the forest service the temptation to trade in transfers from a bad climate and lonely post is very strong. The wise officer with a proper care for his men sends each individual affected a post-card as soon as he has made a decision on a transfer or promotion. I do not suggest for a moment that the intrigue is confined to one class or caste. But the British officer, if he does his job properly, is the guarantor of fair play.

The ordinary Englishman when he goes to India is often shocked by a standard of behaviour below that set at the public school which he has just left. Loyalty is the feature of all our English institutions. The sneak at the public school and the trade-union

blackleg are equally contemptible to their fellows. It is rare to find this spirit in India, and I remember my horror at the way that one servant deliberately gave information against another. I was new to the country. Later I was to experience one servant smashing my property in the hopes that a fellow-servant would get into trouble for it. There was even a case told me in the Hoshangabad District where a son murdered his father in order that suspicion might fall on his brother, of whom he was jealous! It is useless to expect the same standard of public life as we have at home among such people, although on the other hand, there must be many things that the European does which shock the standards of old-fashioned Indians. For instance, many of them cannot understand our manners towards the ladies of our race, a matter on which we rather pride ourselves. The old-fashioned Indian gentleman does not walk across the street to shake hands with a lady of his acquaintance. I have heard such a thing described in not a very complimentary way as partaking more of the habit of a dog interested in the female of his species than that of a man of culture.

The ways of the two continents are absolutely different; yet in spite of the many examples before us of the failure of democracy in Europe, statesmen are brave enough to try it on India. It appears that the franchise will not be quite the same as ours, which acknowledges all men to be equal politically—something better will be done. The illiterate jungle men and the unlettered men of the

fields are, it seems, to be kept in their places by those with a better education. Under the control of British officers there was, it must be admitted, plenty of graft. The townsman can look after himself, but one must hope that the humble toilers of the fields and jungles will get a square deal under whatever new constitution Parliament is pleased to give to the country.

Put a forest guard on to check forest produce coming out from the jungles. He will check all right, but he is unlikely to let anything past his post until he has collected a small private fee.

A man is put in charge of a level crossing over the railway with sole power to open and to close the gates. He would not dream of allowing anyone across until a fee had been extorted. I have watched this little play going on with great amusement. It never occurred to anyone to complain. I mentioned it in the proper quarters, and the reply was, " How can you stop it? "

An Indian hospital assistant is put in charge of a Government dispensary for the benefit of the poor and for the treatment of Government servants. He takes his fee from every one of them. I once asked one of my subordinates why he was such a fool as to pay in such cases. His reply was that if he did not, then without doubt the doctor Sahib would give him very nasty medicine to make him worse. I think there was sense in that. There are, of course, many splendid Indian doctors. There are others who are not, and it is useless to blind oneself to the fact that some Indians put into a

position of power over their more humble brethren make as much as they can and dare out of them.

The cultivators of India (and the men of the jungles, who are far more remotely related from the Hindu than we are) wish for nothing more than to be left in peace with an officer over them to see that they are not oppressed by subordinates. They are still old-fashioned enough to prefer personal rule by someone whom they know and can trust to give fair play without fear or favour.

There is a story of a town where the Municipality put in a water supply at the expense of the ratepayers. There was a certain tap which the high-caste men considered to be their own exclusive property, why, it is not said. The low-caste men thought otherwise, and one of them who dared to draw water from the tap was promptly prosecuted by one of the high-caste community for polluting the water. He was haled before a Brahmin magistrate and fined ten rupees for drinking the water which he as a ratepayer had helped to supply. He appealed against this sentence and won his case. The appeal came before an Englishman. Possibly a high-caste Hindu would quote this case, which I believe is well known, as another instance of British injustice. It might be argued that even a Brahmin must drink, that he is a ratepayer, too, and that he cannot drink where the lowly born have drawn water. He could make out a good case. It only shows the different point of view.

A friend of mine was called upon to give judg-

ment in a somewhat similar case, and did it in a way that would have given credit to Solomon.

A new well had been dug at the expense of the Government. A dispute arose between the high and the low castes as to whether the latter were to be entitled to the use of the well. My friend reasoned as follows :

" You say that if the Low draw water, the High cannot drink it ? "

" That is so," they replied.

" But that if a high-caste man draws water he would not pollute it, and that if he gave to the low-caste man to drink the latter could do so without damage to his soul."

" True," they answered to this clear reasoning.

" Then," said Solomon, " let the High draw for the Low."

From all of the foregoing one might gather that Indians are totally unfit for any Government posts in the country. Which would be a wrong impression. Enough has been said to show that there is a tremendous variation in the human elements in the continent. There are men whose ancestors have been rulers for very many generations back, Rajputs and others.

Occasionally one hears of misrule in a native state, but more often one hears of a rajah being extolled as a perfect marvel of so-called progress (towards what ?) and wise administration. Some of those Rajput princes are the admiration of the world in the field of sport, loyalty and straightforward fair dealing, and are loved by their sub-

jects. There are other native princes, often of low caste, who have attained their position through the palace intrigues of their forefathers. I knew of one who was a tailor by caste ; there are others lower still in the social scale. These men must not be confused with the Rajputs. The stories of drinking, sexual vice and disease fostered by the intrigues of the *zenana* generally apply to others than the Rajputs and the Moslems. The point about the Rajahs is that they are born to the purple and know their responsibilities. They are men of great families with the honour of their house at stake. Moreover, they have no less vanity than those of meaner birth, and have the laudable ambition of being known as good and just rulers to whom their subjects are devoted.

Can the same be said of the university-trained Babu ? Family pride and the devotion of a people to a house that their fathers knew counts for something. Something that the educated Indian of no ruling tradition cannot expect to attain. *Izzat*—prestige, is a tremendous factor in the East. Can a man whose sole qualification is his capacity for passing examinations hold the respect of the people ? It will be said that the Englishman who went to the various services in India was judged by his capacity to pass examinations. That is true, but among the countrymen of India he already has a reputation and prestige by birth. However much governments may bring British institutions into contempt there can be no doubt whatever that the prestige in India of the Englishman as an individual stands as

high as ever. I am quite sure that if I had been a Babu I could never have done what I did to help save from fire that village of which I have given an account. A Rajput in his own country or a Mohammedan in a place where he was known and respected could have done the same: but a "Sahib" is a "Sahib."

When does the ordinary Indian countryman see the Sahib? When he is on tour in the villages, whether on duty doing his best to be fair to all men, or on pleasure bent, either pig-sticking or shooting. That is the type of man who appeals to the Indian countryman; not the type that cannot ride, has no use for shooting or other sports, and as often as not has a horror of the jungle. I make these statements because they are facts, unpleasant perhaps, but facts that cannot be ignored without storing up trouble. The brains of the Englishman make no appeal to the Indian peasant. He is not particularly gifted with them like the Babu. It is the Englishman's character that is his asset in the East.

There was trouble in a station that I knew where there was an Indian Deputy Commissioner. A successful man at passing examinations, but not a man of outstanding character. Trouble rose between the Hindus and the Moslems. There were riots. I was told that while men killed one another the Deputy Commissioner spent his time in his office studying codes, manuals, and standing orders as to what was the correct procedure for one in his position during a dangerous riot. Having

found out that it was necessary to fire on the mob to stop more slaughter he deferred action, fearing that if he gave the order to fire, his own co-religionists would blame him if he fired on them, and that he would be accused of bias if he ordered the police to fire on the opposite side. After the casualties had mounted, the English policeman received sanction from elsewhere to keep order. He promptly shot two men and showed that if the riots did not stop at once he had plenty of ammunition and men to kill more. That settled it.

If there had been a European Deputy Commissioner the chances are that the riots would not have taken place, and that if they had the Deputy Commissioner would have ordered the police to fire at once, thus saving many lives and much property —and would perhaps have been broken by the politicians at home ! The Indian with the capacity to pass examinations does not always possess those qualities of character enabling him to make quick decisions and to take responsibility when they are urgently needed. The British Empire has been built up on those qualities, and it would be absurd to expect other nations to possess them. The Indian has many qualities that we do not necessarily possess. He can pass difficult examinations. In spite of all the stories that one hears that the Indian judge takes bribes from both parties and then dispenses justice between them, it must be admitted by those with the experience to speak of the matter, that he makes an excellent judge, fair in his decisions, and patient in hearing the parties

in a case. More patient than some European judges. Some of their judgments are masterpieces of reasoned prose. When it comes to criminal cases the Indian sometimes shows the defects of his race in too gentle feelings or perhaps a lack of moral courage. He does not like condemning a man to death : who does ? and he is apt to allow his feelings to override his judgment. One hears so often the phrase, " Justice tempered with mercy," used by Indians. But justice is justice without the necessity to add the qualification of " with mercy " to it.

There are some jobs to which the educated Indian is specially suited by temperament ; there are others into which the Englishman fits more easily. Instead of each side grumbling that they cannot get the jobs of the other, why not agree that India is specially fortunate in having people ready to serve her of differing temperaments to suit her service.

So far as the tub-thumper is concerned, he is probably much the same all over the world. If he sees a chance of enriching himself and his friends and relations by changing the constitution he will work pretty hard to bring that change about. The Indian tub-thumper is no different from the others, except that he has a more credulous and pliable material to play with.

The forest service is not one of the jobs for which the educated Indian is specially suited. The conditions are rather peculiar. It is no job for the weakling nor for the man without natural history

hobbies, or one who is not interested in sport. The forest officer's job is for those who care more for the things of nature than for a social life, and although the pay may attract the educated Indian who has failed to get anything better, it is quite certain that the life is totally unsuited to the Babu type. In the forest service it is essential to get the men who will go for the life and not for the pay, and in the past India has been fortunate in recruiting the type of officer who has a love for the waste places and the solitudes of the earth and for the sport that they provide. The ordinary English officer who sees a hill in the distance and asks about it may be told that no one has as yet scaled it to see what is on its top. On hearing this he is determined to go there, no matter what the difficulties, and he gets there. The average Babu would no more dream of going to such a place than he would of trying to go to the moon. He associates inaccessible places with tigers, ghosts, and other dangerous things. The good English forest officer prefers the jungle to the dusty road, many of the Indian leave the beaten track with reluctance.

I hear that no more English forest officers are being recruited for India, except one or two for Burmah. When one sees the work that the forest service has done for India and one knows the temptation of the politicians to make more money than they should out of the forests, one trembles for their future. A good forester does not cut more timber than grows within his area in a year. Thus, if it takes a hundred years to grow a good

tree, then a forester is not justified in cutting more than a hundredth part of the growing stock annually. If he cuts more, then he is cutting capital. There is a tremendous temptation for a government with forests under its control to cut capital timber in times of financial need, thus destroying the forests of the future. By careful conservation the Indian forests have under British administration been brought into good order, they have produced wealth for the country and benefit to the people, which has been brought about by careful tending and conservation. There was always the temptation for some forest officers wishing to be in favour with the Government to overfell their forests, thus making more revenue at the expense of the future. The most awful crime that a forest officer could be accused of was that of being a " revenue hunter." Luckily there were checks on them. They were not allowed to fell outside the provisions of a working plan without the sanction of higher authorities, which was seldom given. It is very doubtful if future governments will be so careful. The forests are far too ripe a plum for a democratic chancellor of the exchequer. It is so easy to cut down trees, and so hard to replace them. The main hope for the future is that if a great increase of felling takes place in one year, the supply will exceed a demand that is often entirely local. One can only hope in such a case that there would be so great a fall in prices that the Government would soon realize the folly of the policy.

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