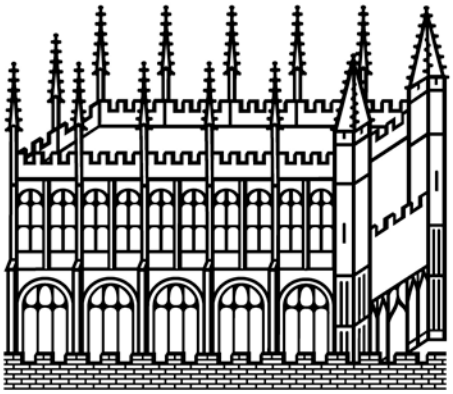

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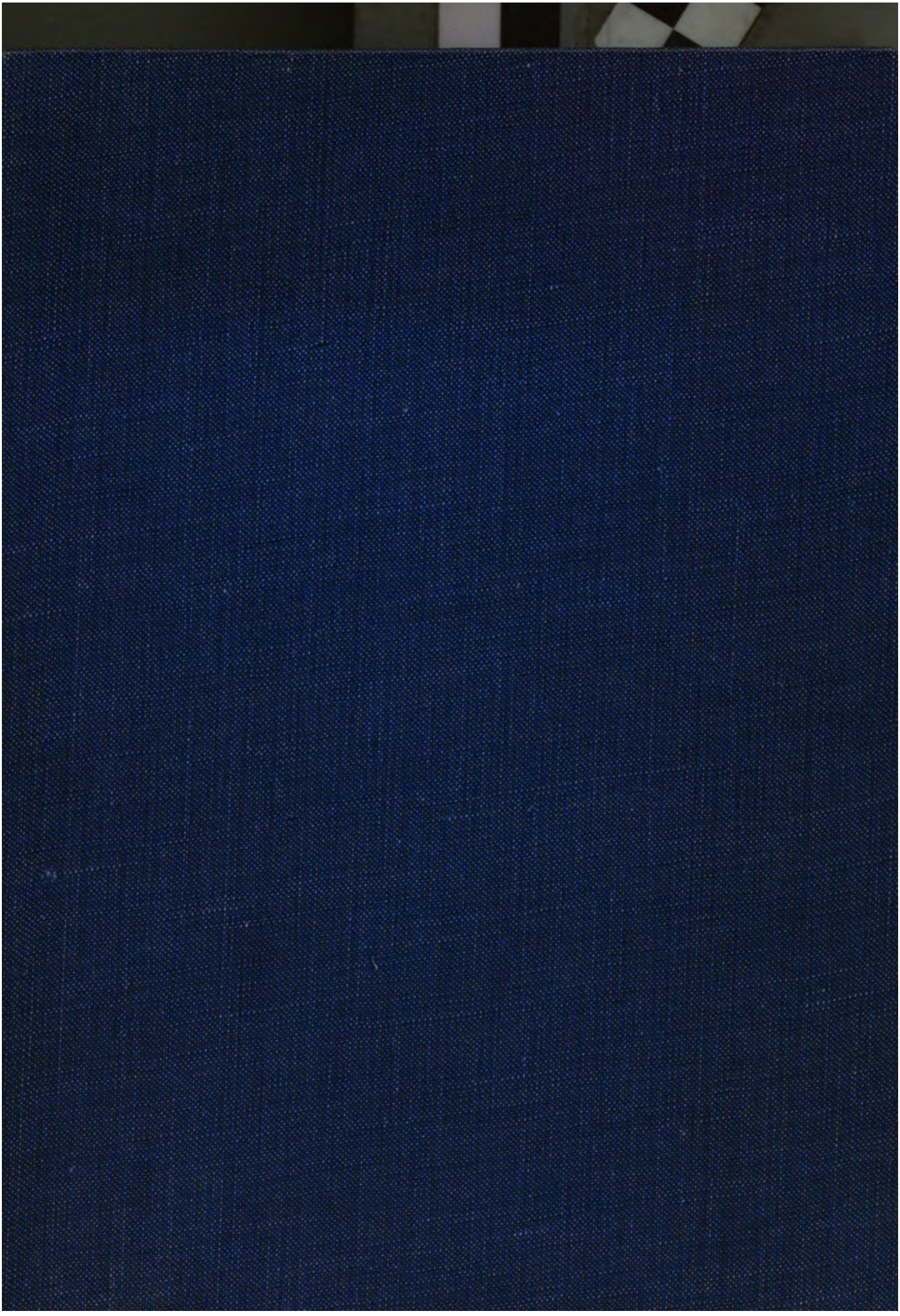

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THE GARDEN OF FIDELITY

MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED
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[*Swaine.*

FLORA ANNIE STEEL.

THE GARDEN OF FIDELITY

BEING

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF FLORA ANNIE STEEL

1847–1929

MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED
ST. MARTIN'S STREET, LONDON
1929

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PREFACE

A FOURSQUARE garden set with flowers and trees. A garden on a hill, overlooking snow-clad mountains—a garden where one human soul had laid to rest his loves, his hopes, his fears.

Such was the Garden of Fidelity planted by the Emperor Baber, poet, painter, musician, soldier.

Such shall be mine.

No record of people I have met, no transcript of other folks' lives, no gossip of this world's doings. Simply a straightforward account of things I have seen and done in eighty-two years.

It shall be foursquare also. Spring till I married at twenty. Summer till I began to write at forty. Autumn when I published my experiences. Winter when I turned my eyes chiefly to the snow-clad mountains.

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SPRING

CHAPTER I

Of course I was born; everyone is, and even in 1847 there was a sufficiency of ceremonial about the mystery of birth to employ many Sairey Gamps and duly diplomaed doctors. So I was born at Sudbury Priory, Harrow.

There had been financial difficulties in the family due to an autocratic mother-in-law, an equally autocratic husband, and an heiress wife who ought to have had control over her own money. But in those days no woman had any legal status whatever, apart from the man whom she had honoured by her love. So there had been ructions. Hence there was nearly three years between my birth and that of my elder brother. An unusual thing in a family of eleven, seven boys and four girls. I have often wondered if this voluntary cessation of marital relations on my father's part had anything to do with my inborn dislike to the sensual side of life. Heredity is a strange, masterful thing.

There were eleven of us; all healthy, strong Scottish children, half Lowland, half Highland; a real good mixture, for both father and mother had more than the usual store of brains.

Of my father a word must be said. He had the most

extraordinarily violent temper of any man I ever met; but he was a universal favourite with the outside world. No one could be more charming, or more absolutely unreasonable. Passionately attached to wife and children, he could make life extremely pleasant and unpleasant to both, and he knew it. I was a great favourite of his; memory yields but few recollections of him that are not kindness itself.

My mother, though she never realised it, was a very gifted woman. An only child, a great heiress, she married at eighteen a man nearly eighteen years older than herself. Children and troubles came fast; but neither ever clouded her vitality. She was everything to the household; a perfect mistress and mother, even to the writing of plays and stories for her children, and the direction of their literary tastes. All but two of her family also wrote or tried to write; and even my father, as a young man, had been looked upon by his friends as the recognised producer of lovelorn lyrics with which to court their inamoratas as was the fashion in those days; so the *cacoethes scribendi* may be said to have been in the family. And it was a very happy, a very united family on the whole. I see now, though I did not realise it then, that it was my mother's singular charm that kept things going. She was a real charmer—as I have heard her described by a Headmaster of Harrow !

Autobiographists are always expected to report their first recollections. Mine comes from when I was eighteen months of age, and it was verified by my mother's surprised corroboration when I quoted it long years afterwards as my first memory. It was of being in someone's arms at an open window. Of seeing therefrom a much muffled up little boy being led round a "winding for a

shay"[1] by a nurse. Of my escaping downstairs, of a mad chase over the lawn, of my being caught, and of my subsequent fightings and scratchings and yowlings.

And apparently it was so. I had caught sight of my next brother who was convalescing from scarlet fever. We were devoted to each other.

My next recollection is, at the age of four, being plumped down on a high chair in the schoolroom with a book out of which I had to learn the first verse of "Ha! little Lark, I see you there". I could read it perfectly, though I could not at the time tell A from B—this ignorance of alphabets coming from one of my mother's many educational theories. Whether this one were right or wrong, I do not presume to say. I only know that most of us could read perfectly before we were six years old, and that I was, so to speak, free of books at four. I learnt, as did most of the others, from the "Thomas à Kempis" which my mother read every morning before getting up. We young ones used to invade her bed, and learn the book of words. Also we learnt by laboriously reading over to ourselves stories which we really knew by heart. To this day I can repeat some of Mrs. Gatty's *Parables from Nature* with fair accuracy.

Another of my mother's theories which used to shock her neighbours was that which made her teach her children all games at which, in after life, they might be tempted to risk money.

"My children may be rooks," she used to say cheerfully, "but they shall never be pigeons."

So another of my early recollections is the playing of whist, piquet, écarté, and so forth, on a high square

[1] *Anglice*, "carriage sweep".

carved stool. The cross-stitch woolwork dog, seated on a red cushion set round with arabesques with which it was covered, still stares at me with its hard eyes from the identical old stool, and I can almost hear my father's voice telling us that there were thirty-five thousand impecunious and impoverished people wandering about the Continent because, having five trumps and two honours, they would not lead them! A curious piece of parental advice to remember; yet, strange to say, it is the only one in my memory; for my father never interfered with his children's education; on the other hand, my mother saw us through everything.

I have reams of her letters to pastors and masters and teachers, with their approving replies. One of her theories was that it is unfair to ask children to obey rules which the household generally are not bound to observe. Hers was a law, as of the Medes and Persians, but since it was administered with strict justice and impartiality we youngsters never objected. An instance of this comes to my mind. I had curly, long, rather tangly hair. The combing and curling of it gave trouble; nurse had, as it were, to capture me. I became restive, and one day refused to come when called; as a result I came down to dinner with hair unbrushed.

I see, now, that in all these little skirmishes my mother must have chosen her battle-ground and prepared it. So she was ready with surprise. "Dear child, you haven't had your hair done. Didn't nurse ask you to come?" Naturally, I had to confess that she had. Not a word of blame. Only pity. Everyone's hair was brushed before dinner. "Run up and ask nurse to be kind enough to do it now."

Of course it was all arranged. I had a dim intuition

that it was so when I came back from an empty nursery and was advised to seek nurse in the kitchen at *her* dinner (with her hair brushed, of course). I felt it was fruitless. I knew the indignant protest. "Did I ever get up from my dinner to comb your hair? Very likely, Miss Flora." So back to the dining-room, where the others were gobbling potato pie, to be advised to run upstairs and see if I couldn't do it myself.

With my abnormally long hair I might as well have tried to fly to the moon. So the little comedy of error concluded with my going without my dinner.

And I had no egg for my tea, though my supper bowl of bread and milk was, mayhap, a little larger; but the comedy did not run two nights.

My mother had other inflexible rules. One was that she would not see a naughty child; so that if any of us became intractable she invariably went out of the room. It had a most extraordinarily quieting effect, and I thoroughly recommend it to all mothers who have fairly reasonable children. In like manner if she asked one of us to do something for her—shut the door or pick up something and we did not do it at once, she did it herself, with the remark, "That was very unkind of you".

The foundation, briefly, of her method was this: "If you *have* to fight, choose your ground and be sure of victory before you open battle". One typical instance recurs to me. My father, enraged, hotly pursuing my brother of five down the corridor, found himself confronted with a locked nursery door, from which safe retreat a rebellious voice shouted, "Give me an axe to kill Papa. Give me a gun to shoot Papa." In such an *impasse* what was to be done save summon Mamma to

"*her*" naughty child. Through the long lapse of years her sweet, calm voice comes back to me, "My dear! How did you come to put yourself in such a ridiculous position?"

I think that I personally must have been rather a horrid little child; at least a governess whom I met in after years told me that I was too sensible, that I was terribly afflicted with a sense of duty, and that I always did what I was set to do with quite appalling energy.

I certainly have very few recollections of punishment. Out of these very early days, beyond an all-pervading sense of happiness, only two incidents stand out very sharply. The first, as it were, was, I think, my soul's awakening, when on seeing my little dead sister in her white coffin—for it was thought right in those days that death, even in all its terrors, should be brought to children's eyes—I thought she looked beautiful—flowers on her goldy curls, her little embroidered frock so fresh and dainty. She died suddenly a few hours after her first party, and they had dressed her as she had gone thither—her tiny blue shoes so unsoiled. Here was nothing to fear, nothing but a great rush of remorse that I had not given her my doll the day before when she asked for it. That episode has remained with me to the present day. I fancy it has had much to do with my future actions.

My second memory is less pious. I may in fact regard it as the awakening of doubt in my infant soul. I was six years old, and I believed everything that I was told. As my governess said, I was appallingly dutiful, and the chapter of the New Testament which we had read that morning had said, "Blessed are the peacemakers". From the top of the stair, I saw my eldest sister and a brother having a real good tussle on the

door-mat. Fulfilled with my text I ran down. Five minutes afterwards I was seated weeping on the door-step, feeling that the Sermon on the Mount was somehow mistaken.

When I was three years old the financial crisis which had been hanging over the family for years came. I dimly remember big wardrobes attempting to come up narrow stairs—emblem of the general constriction of life! But with four boys reaching up to school education, Harrow was not to be forsaken, and the move from the Priory was made to a tiny villa overlooking the cricket field, where we tucked ourselves away as best we might till we moved to Scotland when I was nine, in consequence of my father's appointment to a Government office, which he kept till his death.

It was in this tiny villa that my next brother and I used to steal out of our beds in the back nursery when nurse had gone to supper, and watch the sixth form game of cricket. It was here that my mother found us in our nightgowns playing the game solidly with my father's top hat for wicket, the coal shovel for bat, and a soft ball. Doubtless the instruments were unconventional, but the "Leg before wicket! out" with which, as my mother entered, my brother closed my innings was absolutely correct. Whereat I, being but three, cried.

Happy old days! A house crammed up with boys, girls, children, babies, with one calm, cheerful mistress of all, seeing the big ones through their "trials" at Harrow, urging them on to compete for English verse prizes, refusing beer for dinner until a deficiency in size and weight per age could be proved by any other house boarder; guiding the girls' studies, apportioning the babies' bottles, seeing a somewhat disgruntled husband

to his work in London every day, solving domestic problems, even financial and legal ones connected with the failure of the Australasian Bank and my father's bankruptcy; and through it all bringing new mouths to intensify the difficulty of feeding those that already clamoured for beer and skittles!

Truly women are amazing, and if all the work they have done since the beginning of time could be weighed up and balanced with that of the men—be they statesmen or scholars or scientists—it would not be found wanting.

During all the happy, and to us children irresponsible, time, I only personally remember two punishments.

Once was when as a consequence of having been taken to the circus we improvised one in the nursery—the old coal-bunker with my next brother on all fours on top of it as the horse, I as the acrobat on top of him, balancing the long-clothes baby. Fortunately the return of nurse prevented infanticide, but there were other dire consequences not alleviated by the covert smiles of the executioner. The other was when, water for the cow and the pony being short, my father had a pond dug in the small field at the back of the house which was rented for these two animals, one of which was necessary—according to my mother—for the economical sustenance of childhood, the other to convey my father to and from his business. Now Harrow is on clay, yellow, shiny clay, and the spoil from digging being piled on the sides, a perfectly irresistible sitting slide was formed. The result on our inner and outer garments can be imagined; also nurse's anger, which in this case overbore our mother's smiles.

It was during these ten years of my life at Harrow that I first met my husband. It was at a child's party. I, aged three, was much admired in a white frock and blue sash, because my fair curls touched the hem. So much admired that, even now, I distinctly remember being made to stand on the thimble-centre of an old-fashioned ottoman so that I could duly be seen by the company. Possibly it was the conceit thus engendered which prevented my remembering my husband clearly, though he was at the party, a nice-looking little boy in his first Eton jacket.

Such, then, was my life at Harrow-on-the-Hill between 1847 and 1856. In the earlier part of those days we bought our drinking water by the pail; and concerning the introduction of a supply scheme there was an amusing story which is worth recording. A committee of all notables, including the Headmaster, was assembled to discuss the acceptance of an engineering firm's tender. It was very learned indeed; it talked about values and suctions, two-throws, three-throws, and such like to its own satisfaction until the Headmaster, who happened to be sitting next my father, whispered to him, "Can you tell me what a three-throw pump is?" "Not I," was the reply; and there was a general laugh when it was found out that not one of those present had the slightest idea what they were talking about!

So it is often: even on committees!

During those first nine years of life I saw, as a child sees, many men and women of note, for my father and mother had had, in addition to Sudbury Priory, a house in Palace Yard, Westminster, where, from his position as Scottish Parliamentary agent, they had known almost

everybody worth knowing. Thackeray, Cruickshank, and Fox Maule were constant friends, and, indeed, most of the old set held fast to my father, to whom the judge had said in his final adjudication on the Bank's affairs, "If your advice had been followed, sir, this catastrophe would never have happened". That was but cold comfort for the loss of all my mother's money; the marriage settlement, which in those days was supposed to protect women sufficiently, proving not worth the paper on which it was written.

Still we children sometimes saw strange things in the little cupboard of a store-room under the stairs, things which testified of the fine Jamaican estate that was wasting away for want of labour after the emancipation of the slaves; a philanthropic action for which I feel I have some right to claim credit, since only £3000 was paid to the estate out of a debit of more than £30,000. But it was a joy to eat tamarinds, and see the pots of guava jelly, the jars of strange pickles on the shelves, and the barrel of brown sugar by the door. And once we saw a real live turtle sprawling on the limited floor. That memory is as green as the fat that floated on the soup which was duly made from the poor creature.

There is one thing which ought not to be omitted from these early years; and that is our very occasional jaunts, chiefly by relays in the pony carriage, to Chenies on the Chess, where my father, who was an ardent fisherman, was admitted as a non-paying partner in a small syndicate of very old friends. We used to invade the little inn, nurse and all; go to church in the quaint old church where a 'cello and a violin made irresponsible accompaniment to quavering chants, and wander round

the water meadows where, in the early spring, the willows and the watercress vied with each other in green growth. It was here, I think, in one of our longer rambles that I first saw a cornstack. I remember coming back to my mother and reporting that I had seen the most extraordinary haystack—round and yellow; for from the very earliest days my instinct for form and colour was very marked. Indeed, I have some early drawings and paintings of mine which, to my old-fashioned eyes, seem much closer to the originals than are many of the productions of modern artists.

My mother had no artistic talents herself. She neither painted, played, nor sang; but she encouraged imagination in all ways; notably by denying us, as far as possible, all bought toys. We had to invent them ourselves. And she was lenient to excesses of invention, as, for instance, when, called up to the nursery one Sunday afternoon by a perfect tornado of trumpets, shawms, and drums—all of which were forbidden on that day—she found us engaged in blowing down the walls of Jericho.

Neither did we incur guilt even when we hung our bad behaviour tickets with which the governess had decorated us, on the door handle of the drawing-room before going in.

"I am glad. They had evidently seen that such behaviour would not possibly do before me," was the withering comment.

And there was one never-to-be-forgotten incident in church. We sate, the whole pew full of us, in the south transept, just opposite the pulpit. Against the wall of the transept, just at the end of our pew, was an Elizabethan monument; two life-size coloured figures, man

and woman, ruffs and all complete, kneeling on opposite sides of a *prie-dieu* lectern; their marble immovability for years filled me with awful admiration, and after the incident which I am to relate I was, as usual, filled with regret that I had not been able to emulate their impassive faces. It was a very simple little incident. The vicarage pew was in front of ours, and in it, besides the vicar's daughter, sate a strange gentleman who was afterwards identified as James Fitz-James Stephen. Apparently his future father-in-law's sermon—for he afterwards married Miss Cunningham—bored him; for he began balancing his umbrella. It was not, however, until he had managed fairly to balance it on his nose that the explosion of children's laughter behind him recalled him to a sense of propriety. I suppose we ought to have been smacked, but my mother's conventionality, while it made for strict discipline, was not strong enough to overcome humour. She passed our conduct over with the remark that to laugh loudly at other folk might be unavoidable, but was always rude.

There were so many jokes. The joke of my cousin who invariably was seized with bad bleeding at the nose when he saw his aunt, aged seventy, climbing over the cricket ground railings in a blue-flowered muslin, the jokes on the very tombstones as we marched to church. There was the slate slab, to "poor Port" who on the train "resumed his wonted sport" until "ere evening came to close the fatal day, A mutilated corpse the sufferer lay". Then there was, unnoticed, I believe, by many, the simple irony of one tombstone recording the death of a first wife with the resigned text: "The Lord gave and the Lord taketh away", followed by

the record of the second wife's death with these dubious words: "This poor man cried and the Lord heard and delivered him out of all his trouble".

But for conventional admiration and very unconventional amusement, what could equal the long pæan of praise confronting us in church which began:

> Without a superior in the Senate
> Without a rival at the bar
> Without an equal in chaste and classic eloquence.

I think this accounted, in after life, for my hatred of Burke's style!

Altogether life appeared to me one good laugh—those first few years of my life were the happiest I remember. I am sure they were so for my mother. My father's misfortunes had softened him. He needed encouragement, her children were growing up as she wished them to grow up. She still had babies to fuss over; above all she had the hardest problem before her that woman can have: how to manage her household on very limited means, yet to keep up the *old traditions of life*. And she succeeded. To the last she was a "great lady", and my father was "*grand seigneur*".

CHAPTER II

OUR move to Scotland was a complete change. At Harrow we children had companions; at Burnside we had none. The boys had gone to masters' houses, and even with less restricted finances there was not much money left for girls' education. And I missed the boys; for from the beginning we were great chums. The three elder ones were almost past schooling, and one had gone to Haileybury. I often think that their manner of coming down the stairs for "bill" at Harrow school in the morning was a real clue to their future lives. First, in excellent time, would come Mac, his voice, high-pitched from the top of the stairs to the bottom, with one continuous "Boots, boots, boots!" Next George, the third, courteous but captious, "Oh, Mary! Please, my boots, my boots, please". Finally John, really late, waiting till he reached the bottom to say tentatively, conversationally, "Could you give me my boots, Mary?"

But this was all over. We were now a comparatively small party, though my youngest brother, born in Edinburgh in the spring of '58, kept up the tradition of babies. The year 1857 had been fateful to many. The waves of horror that had spread through Great Britain as one after another of the Great Mutiny tragedies came through reached even the nurseries and schoolrooms. Nana Sahib was hung, drawn, and

quartered by children hundreds of times, and nothing is more remarkable, nothing more sad, than to look through the newspapers of that time and note the bloodthirsty tone of the letters to the editor, especially those of many Christian clergymen. The revengeful spirit was more marked than it was during those first years of the Great War when the German Emperor was burnt in effigy from John o' Groat's house to Land's End. Now he is living at Doorn in full possession of his riches, and we are thinking of self-government and independent status for the descendants of the mutineers. Truly it is not only the female sex that deserves the Latin proverb. Humanity in general changes with startling celerity. And this raises the point of forgiveness—we look on it as a Christian virtue; but in reality it is but poor stuff. It is so purely personal, yet the actual, personal offence which is forgiven does not touch the uncounted miseries, the unnumbered wrongs which may have sprung from the original error. That is forgiven; but what can even Ultimate Wisdom do to the consequences? Forgive and forget, we say, and think we mean it. But are we sure that forgetfulness of wrong is meritorious except in a strictly personal sense? One cannot forgive for others.

Be that as it may, if I am glad of anything in my life, I am glad that I have been enabled to write a book which shows conclusively how very partial the Indian Mutiny was; a book which made one perfect stranger write to me thus: "I lost my wife in the Mutiny; but after forty years you have enabled me to forgive India". It is something to have done.

Nevertheless, I burnt and hanged and tortured the Nana Sahib in effigy many times. In truth he really

was a scoundrel; and as my eldest brother was going out to the Civil Service in 1858, it was only natural that the personal element prevailed over soft-heartedness. For none of us, as a family, were cruel; we didn't kill flies or torture or even tease animals.

Our exodus from England to Scotland was effected by rail, still in its infancy. Fine ladies and gentlemen still refused to travel in the common coaches, had their private carriages put on open trucks, and, sitting in them, travelled in state. But we filled more than one coach, and the enormous amount of luggage we brought with us was piled up on the roofs as in old coaching days. Such a business as it was to undo the covering tarpaulins and get it all out on our arrival at three o'clock in the morning at the Forfar station! I still have a vivid memory of my father shouting directions to a *posse* of distracted guards and porters. But, as usual, the strong personality prevailed, and after a minute or two all was well. Everyone worked with a will, and my father, amid smiles, thank you's, and mutual admiration, tipped the lot handsomely. Liberal, almost Whig as he was in politics, that was his method of managing the proletariat. And in nine cases out of ten it succeeded.

A drive in the dark for some two miles on the road; for another mile on an ill-kept wild avenue—and we were in the house where I was to live till I married. It was already homelike; for my mother had been there a week, and her smiling welcome even survived the fact that Dick, the spaniel dog, who had been out rabbit-hunting all day, had his head on the pillow and his muddy paws inside the sheets of nurse's bed!

It was a large house, rough-cast, square, substantial, with two lower side wings extending backwards, and

forming, with coal-cellars, dairies, and wood-houses, a courtyard to the rear; in the centre of which stood, in form like a Brobdingnagian pigeon-house, a larder. Such a larder! A surrounding course of hooks for game, an inner room all shielded by perforated zinc and filled with innumerable shelves. After the tiny villa appurtenances, it all seemed gigantic. But Burnside altogether was what it stood for; a roomy, old Scottish house. The rooms were big and lofty, and there were two parallel passages side by side that ran through the building, the meaning of which was never grasped; unless it was that the servants should use one and the gentry the other.

It was the first time I had ever lived really in the country. There was not a house within sight; our nearest neighbours—three spinster ladies—were two miles off. A similar spaciousness was everywhere. The stables were scarcely to be seen, the garden of two acres was a quarter of a mile away across the paddock, and there were 1800 acres of hill and dale over which we could wander.

It was a paradise! The tops of the braes, where sheep pastured amid gorse that never was out of blossom, where white-tailed little rabbits scuttled away to ruddy red-loam holes, and speckled plovers' eggs could sometimes be found if one disregarded the mother's wheeling, wailing cry, given to lure us from her treasures. Then the dark fir woods that could so easily be peopled with fairies, where a wigwam could be built of branches, and all sorts of makeshifts imported as wanted. I only remember trouble once, and that was when we regaled our elders with soup, and afterwards informed them that it was made of mole!

Then the loch! A broad sheet of water more than a mile long, set thick at its upper end with tall reeds and boggy inlets of marsh. Was there anything in the world more contentful than to drift slowly, slowly in the punt through the channels in the reeds, making no splash for fear of prematurely disturbing the wild duck, the teal, the widgeon that might be lurking round the corner? And the perch that we caught and roasted on the bank! But that was only when the boys came home for their holidays. Otherwise the big single-barrel duck gun, the Knox, and the Mitchell Martin, and in later years the pin-fire breech-loader, (the very first of its kind to be imported into England), lay on the long ottoman in the big hall. Above them hung the fencing foils and the masks; for my father was a noted fencer. Old Roland of Edinburgh used to say he was the best pupil he had ever had, and my father with pride used to admit that his master was the only opponent he could not beat. Curiously enough, none of my father's sons inherited his talent; but I wonder how many hours I spent lunging at a spot on the wall because I was told I had the best wrist of the lot.

So till I was nearly twelve, life passed with few startling incidents. Then a change came. My elder sister, four years my senior, went to join her uncle and cousins in Germany; my younger sister was seven years my junior, and naturally a governess could not be entertained for one child, neither could school fees be afforded. Besides, as my mother quietly told me, she thought I could do very well for eighteen months without tuition. I was a fair pianist, I loved practising, I painted better than most, and there were plenty of books I could read without any restriction. "If they

were nice books, so much to the good; if they were nasty ones, evil slipped off a clean mind like water off a duck's back, and I should most likely find them very stupid"—I think I did. I remember yawning over *Tom Jones*!

Extending over the whole central portion of the old house was a vast attic, with a window at each end of the pent roof. From these windows naught could be seen save the chimney-pots and lower roofs of the wings, but the sun shone through the west one, and here I would sit and read and read and read the old medical and philosophical books which were piled in layers around me; for a big consignment of them had come home from some far-away doctor-cousin in Jamaica. It was an excellent education.

But I was no bookworm. I had plenty of other fish to fry. From my earliest years my hands had been useful. "I can do that too" has been my detestable cry ever since I can remember. I had only been beaten by one thing—tatting. But there was something about the semi-convulsive jerk necessary to tighten the thread which got on my nerves. So what the household called "Miss Flora's conceits" became numerous. They largely consisted of peep-shows: a bright-tinted fungus, green moss, a glint of quartz or shiny mica, overarching greenery and a ring of fairies (their wings made of gay coloured onion outsides!) dancing around; all enclosed in a glazed box. I charged a halfpenny a peep. I did not give the proceeds to any charity. I kept them to buy materials for other peep-shows. It was not much, only about threepence a show, for I didn't allow my father or mother to pay.

The former often took me with him when he drove

out in the dog-cart to his office. I could walk back. As a rule he would talk politics all the time, for he was an ardent Whig. Nowadays he would be considered a high-and-dry Tory; but then he stood on the verge of Radicalism. From him I learnt many things that have stood me in good stead during my life. For one, a hatred of direct taxation. Whether his arguments against this were cogent then, or are cogent now in the face of having to raise close on four hundred million a year for war debts and pensions alone, I know not; but one of his statements holds good; namely, that the incidence of exceptions in a tax is a proof of its soundness or unsoundness. And again and again he told me to remember that it was in his drawing-room in Palace Yard that twenty Scottish ministers awaited the result of Dr. Chalmers' fateful interview with the committee in the House of Commons concerning the Disruption, "It was growing dark", he would say, "when the Doctor appeared and stood at the door. 'Gentlemen,' he said, 'we go out, but remember we only go out on the question of patronage'."

I have repeated this story to many Free Churchmen in days past without gaining much credence.

Things are better to-day, when folk are beginning to be ashamed of having so many sects in a religion which can be summed up in the words of Christ that are to be found absolutely identical in three Gospels, "If a man will save his soul he shall lose it".

One other feature of these drives with my father I distinctly remember, and that is his intolerance of any breach of the law. A drag-stone left on the road by a careless carter would move him to hot pursuit of the offender if mayhap he could be caught further up the

hill; and the sight of a team of three horses with but one teamster would produce instant demand for name and address. Certainly he was a J.P., but his public spirit was remarkable and sometimes, as when one wanted to keep an appointment, annoying.

So life went on. The summer was always spent with my grandmother in Argyllshire; but were I once to begin on the West Highlands I should never stop. I had always been a religious child, but my personal adherence to Christianity began with a sunset seen over the Linnhe Loch. My grandmother was still a very autocratic woman. She and my father could not safely be left within each other's hearing without consequences, though she took his advice in most matters. She was a fund of information on the Highlands and on Jamaica, where she had gone at eighteen and promptly married my grandfather. One of her Jamaican stories appears to me worth recording. She had a favourite maid, Charlotte, to whom she said one day that the master had consented to her being set free. To her surprise Charlotte hummed: "Does Missie mean freedom with Hermitage to live in and John and James to wait on me? Then me thank you, Missus, but freedom so-so—no me thank you."

Possibly, many of the descendants of the slaves, nowadays idle, cheerful, irresponsible, absolutely unreliable, would say the same thing.

A Highland story which delighted me, however, was of when my ancestors from Lochaber set out to meet their cousins from Perthshire. How they met, two valiant Highland hordes, pipes and pride and all, in the Pass of Melfort; how, not recognising each other, each refused to give way; so fought till only two repre-

sentatives were left, when, sorely wounded, they shook hands cordially and died, giving the name of "The field of the fools who fought" to the spot, to remain to this day! A fine ancestry! And she had other stories to tell of Sheenan-a-Norran who had second sight and used to go into long trances, and of how the Kennedys of Lennachan got their white hair from being too clever for a witch.

I often wonder whether, if my books had been published in time for her to read them, she would have treated them as she treated the yellow-back novels my brothers used to bring from their travels. The dear old lady would get hold of one before breakfast. There was no breakfast for her. Glued to her leather arm-chair, she would read and read and read. Lunch time would long pass. Then suddenly, about four o'clock, she would rise, fling the book into the opposite corner with one word "Trash", and resume normal life. Why are not children made to write down what they hear in their youth? It is a perpetual grief to me that I do not remember one-half of the stories old and new which my grandmother told.

But in truth one did not need to go far back to happen on strange things in the glen at that time. The schoolhouse was also the post-office and the church. It was free to all denominations; and there the Anglican curate, the Romish priest, and the Calvinist minister used to hold forth alternately; but one invariable ritual attended at each and every service—a strong smell of sealing-wax during the prayers and a furtive delivery of letters during the sermon.

It was all too exhilarating. Last but not least I remember my mother's calm, cheerful face when the

boatload of her children, ranging in age from eighteen to eight, did not return from the sea till, sometimes, after midnight. She must have been anxious, but she never showed it.

So, as I say, life went on; a fervour of happiness when the boys were at home and they dressed me in their clothes and took me out shooting; mostly to carry the bag. But I struck at more than two jack hares! And here I must confess to a very terrible thing in view of modern feminism; I invariably unlaced their shooting boots when they came home.

Then would come three months of lady-like reading —no! not ladylike, for, as I have said, I tried to read *Tom Jones*!

Then at thirteen and a bit I went over to my uncle's at Brussels for six months. It was the only real schooling I ever had. My cousin and I went to a magnificent school in what had been the Turkish Ambassador's house, where there were thirty-eight pupils and thirty-nine professors. I don't know that I should have learnt as much as I undoubtedly did but for the fact that I adored the first mistress, Mlle. Mathieu. After all these years, I should like to record my admiration, my gratitude. She was a big, clumsy, Northern Frenchwoman; the lower part of her face seemed to merge into a column-like neck, and her general figure was of the extinguisher type. But I held her a genius and compared her to George Sand, some of whose novels I had already read. But for her my school record, I expect, would have conformed to the headmistress's report: "Diligente mais point gracieuse".

When I returned to Scotland, the great comet of 1861 was, as it were, lying on the top of the turnip

field, that—with a brief interspace of coarse turf and a row of hurdles—formed the outlook from the hall door. It was a marvellous sight. Low down on the horizon, lambent light concentrated on a star-like nucleus, the end of its wide tail hidden by the birch-wood of the avenue. . . .

I watched it for several evenings and I think the mystery of it penetrated me through and through.

I was now going on for fifteen. My elder sister had come out, the younger children had a nursery governess: so I was once more mistress of my own time. But there was always plenty to do. My mother's health was not so good as it had been; she suffered from headaches that often kept her in bed. I was fond of housekeeping and did most things for her. In addition there were always the animals. I think my sister and I reared by hand every animal that lives. She was devoted to them, and together, amongst other experiments, we reared under a hen a whole covey of thirteen young partridges which became so tame that my father was amused when he flushed it off the dining-room hearth-rug as he came down to breakfast. But the boys were dubious when we shut them up in the greenhouse on the day of the partridge drive. I only remember one failure to rear; and that was a field mouse. I tried several times, but had to give up.

Memories of the next three years crowd in on me. Summer in the glen, a month or two of the winter in Edinburgh for my sister's gaieties, a week or two to England and Harrow. It was at the latter place that I met my future husband, then at Cambridge. His mother was a most beautiful woman; she remained so till her death, but my chief recollection of her is in an

incident on one of my earlier visits. A comfortable dining-room, a long table covered with breakfast comestibles. My mother-in-law, queen-like, behind a steaming coffee urn, my future husband reading the *Times* calmly, back to fire. Then one remark, also queen-like, "Come to breakfast, please", followed by another as the newspaper was with equally queen-like calmness reft from the hands that held it and deposited on the sideboard. "You should come when you are called, dear."

Does it not seem incredible in these latter days when children of ten defy their parents that this young man of twenty-two should have said with a laugh: "I beg your pardon, mother", and taken it as a matter of course? And are the relations between mother and son more close, more intimate than they were between my mother-in-law and hers? I trow not.

But my chief memories are of the country; of the low spur of hills on which Burnside stood, with the blue Grampians on the other side of Strathmore. Some of them are tragic, as when I called "mark cock" as I trudged through the crisp frost-bitten ferns in the birch copse, and was rewarded by having to carry the owl which my unerring shot of a brother had brought down, and which led to wordy strife as to who was to blame, the girl or the skilled sportsman who had not seen aright; until the wretched bird decided it against me by digging its claws right through my thumb.

We acted a great deal in the evenings. My mother wrote most of the plays, and I produced them; our audience were the servants.

In the winter of 1865 my eldest brother came home ill; he had to be in bed for weeks, and I played piquet with him for hours. He did me the honour of approving my

game; but I have never been a player of cards for choice; there is too much chance about them. Chess is, I think, the only game worth playing. It is such a comfort to be able to say, "I lost that game because I was a fool".

By this time I was a come-out young lady. I was a good sewer, and I objected to most of the dresses that were within the reach of my purse. It may interest the girls of to-day to know that my dress allowance was £20, just half what my elder sister received; but she was taller, stouter, and required a good dressmaker. I did not, so I made, and at eighty-two still make, everything I wore or wear. It saves money, and, if you are gifted with a pictorial memory, most fashions in the shop windows can be copied. We spent three months in Edinburgh in '66, and we were out every night. My eldest brother, quite recovered, gave us a real good time. We had a house in Heriot Row, and all went well.

In the summer of '67 he was still a sort of fairy godfather. His pair of thoroughbred cobs drove my mother about, his vivid personality kept the ball fairly rolling. We had many visitors in the Glen, and amongst them my future husband and his brother. I made more raspberry tarts and veal pies than in all my life before, to take out for the picnics which were a recognised event each day. The real good time went on. From childhood we had had a family habit that each birthday must be greeted with an ode from each one of the company. Of late years we had inaugurated the custom of having birthdays when we chose. All that had to be done was to say at breakfast time, "To-morrow, or the next day, or the next, is my birthday", and the deed was done. The odes and generally some joking present were forthcoming.

IN 1867.

Yes! undoubtedly we were a humorous family.

Now I come to my marriage.

Why I married I cannot say: I never have been able to say. I do not think either of us was in love. I know I was not; I never have been.

That is a sad fact, but it has to be faced. It has not made life any the less entrancing, any the less full of what Swinburne calls

> Fair passions and bountiful pities
> And loves without stain.

My husband confessed guiltily that, but for the best man, his brother, he would certainly have run away that bitterly cold 31st of December, and I comforted him by saying truthfully that I would have done the same thing had I had time; but what with dressing my bridesmaids, trying to light the fire which had gone out, and attending to some of the younger members of our party, I had to go through with it as a duty.

There was but one thing, which in my turn I confessed. My chagrin that he should have written asking me to marry him, instead of speaking to me.

He said he was afraid of me. I wondered, I still wonder, if that was why, though I had already had written offers of marriage. I have no recollection of any courting whatever!

This ends my experience at home.

It was an uneventful spring: but it will show what manner of girl it was, who at twenty, accustomed to the varied life of a large family, went out to the solitudes and the distractions of India.

Knowing nothing: absolutely nothing—save what she could learn from books.

SUMMER

CHAPTER III

My first entry into India was in a *masulah* boat through the surf at Madras.

It was exhilarating. Something quite new; something that held all possibilities. A boat that had not a nail in it; dark-skinned boatmen with no clothes on, who did not look naked, a surf such as I had never seen before, thundering on yellow sands. The sights, the sounds, obliterated even the joy I felt at seeing my eldest brother again; for he met us on the steamer and took us for the twelve hours' halt to a chummery of his friends on the residential part of Madras.

And here I must pause a moment, to make sure that the record of spring has presented faithfully the personality which began the summer. I think I may say it was a very vivid personality. I cannot help recognising it. "Flora is so cheerful, so eager, so impatient", so this, that, and the other, had been the comments ever since I can remember. My next brother declared that my energy would be a upas tree overshadowing all my life. I do not think it has been so, for all these attributes, when I come to analyse the years, seem to have touched me—the ultimate Self—very slightly. For instance, many many women of my ignorantly-kept generation

have told me that their honeymoon was spent in tears and fears. Mine was not. I simply stared. I accepted everything as a strange part of the Great Mystery of humanity and the world, though no child could have been more ignorant of natural happenings than I was. Just as my vivid joy at the sight of my brother was overborne by the novelty of my surroundings, by my intense curiosity as to causes and reasons, so my distaste to realities was overborne by a desire to understand. I think that even in those early years my mind was working along definite lines, which in later years were to crystallise into intense belief.

My memories of Madras are chiefly of palm trees and mangoes. The former were so numerous, so tall, as to dwarf the houses; the latter began what in India is an absolute misfortune—a perfectly irrational inability to eat them. My brother and his gay *confrères* in the chummery had actually telegraphed for the best specimen to be got. They cut it open, they gloated over its strawberry and cream inside, they watched me take the first spoonful.

Unfortunately it was the last; for had I taken a spoonful of ipecacuanha the effect could not have been more immediate and disastrous. And this disability to keep even a spoonful of mango down remained to the last day of my life in India. Angered at an idiosyncrasy which was not me, I have tried again and again, always with the same humiliating result; for of what good can the Self that is Me possibly be if it cannot eat anything it likes? Digestion or indigestion is in the hands of the gods; but that one should be unable even to try is intolerable!

We went on that night through the Bay of Bengal

to Calcutta. There we met my third brother, by this time a Bengal civilian, and I had to buy a modified trousseau at Whiteaway-Laidlaws, because when we arrived at Marseilles we had not found our "round by the Bay of Biscay" luggage. So I had only a small cabin trunk and cold weather clothes with me. On board ship I had managed by buying at Alexandria enough cambric to make what in those days we called a garibaldi, while the washing of underclothes and handkerchiefs presented no difficulties to me. But it was different in Calcutta, where my brother naturally wanted to present his sister, the bride, in a wedding dress. So I furbished up a white muslin and white sash, in which I must indeed have looked "Steel's baby bride".

It was now May, the heat was terrible, the mosquitoes raised huge blisters all over me, and at Jamalpur on our way by train up country the thermometer stood at 117 at eleven o'clock at night in the railway station. It was here I had my first experience of tea in which had been put milk from goats who fed on castor oil leaves. It was horrible, but I drank it, as I assimilated all things in my new life—except mangoes!

We stopped, as did the railway, at Delhi. An old friend of my husband's, a policeman, put us up. I don't think he ever recovered his first sight of me, round-faced, high-coloured, with my hair still in curls, though tied up at the back with a bow of ribbon. But he was very kind, and answered the many questions I put to him about all and sundry. This inquisitive habit remains with me still, and sometimes I feel obliged to send the present of an encyclopædia to those whom I have much worried with many questions.

The heat was terrific. Rain had fallen short, a

famine was threatening, especially in the Cis-Sutlej districts of the Panjab, through which we were literally whirled in the box upon wheels, drawn by miserable starveling ponies, which at that time was the only method of travel beyond Delhi. The luggage was stowed away below the seats or on the roof, a platform was made by joining the two seats with planks, and on this your bedding was laid, pillows and coverlets all complete. Here you were supposed to sleep, and here my husband, accustomed to the method of travel, managed to pass hours in slumber; but I was kept wide awake with all the novelties that had to be observed and pigeon-holed in my memory. To begin with, the Grand Trunk Road itself: inconceivably straight, broad, and white, inconceivably monotonous, inconceivably dusty. Then every ten miles the huge square caravanserais built in the time of the Moghul Emperors, set back from the road, so that just one long wall was visible in the moonlight, pierced by one tall shadow of a wide arch. Dusky forms, queer-shaped camels, unbelievable waggons, humped cattle, all jumbled together in and outside. The smoke of smothered fires, the insistent bubbling of innumerable pipes, and there, under a stunted thorn-set tree, two skeleton ponies waiting to convey us still further. Was it any wonder that my feet were out of the window, and that I was watching, watching, watching, listening, listening, listening?

What a babel of voices, what curious *lacunae* of silences, as those engaged in the task of changing ponies incontinently sought refreshment in a neighbouring pipe.

Are they ever going to start? The two ponies which

have brought us so far at a round gallop stand with heaving flanks, steaming in the moonlight.

Are we ever going to start? Then on the peace of the night rises sudden fierce objurgation—we are off—No! the off-pony has turned right round. Its nose is at my feet, I withdraw them quickly—a false start—No! The objurgations rise louder. But even that backward movement has shaken the animal's obduracy. There is a perfect yell—a grinding jerk—an absolute earthquake which rouses my husband to a muttered "Thank Heaven!" and we are away once more at a gallop, to miles and miles more of straight, white, dusty road. And we have two rivers to cross; not two European rivers, bridged and passable, but two huge Indian rivers widespread in the sandy plains, with only a bridge of boats available during the dry, rainless, cold weather. And by May the sun has had time to melt the snows on the high Himalayas, the floods have come down. The boats have been put into safe harbourage for the rainy months. So, our ponies exchanged for bullocks, we shall have to labour over a mile or two of reed-strewn sandy tracks, over mayhap one or two short boat bridges which remain over the small channels among the sand banks; so to the big stream which we cross by boat.

It all takes time; but one of the first lessons to learn in India is that "Time is nought". At first it is exasperating; but when one comes to realise the philosophic truth which underlies the crude statement one is forced to respect it.

So we arrived duly at Lahore, the seat of the Panjab Government, where my husband had to get orders as to his station. There was no reason why these orders

should not have been given him in Bombay, thus saving him many miles of useless journeying. Had I been but a few more years, as it were, in the Commission, I would have pointed out the error to the Secretary to Government; but being young and inexperienced I did what most Government servants do—acquiesce in negligence, partly from good nature, partly from fear of a black mark. Concerning that same black mark, after eighty years of life, I give my considered opinion that there is no greater mistake an honest man can make than to hold his tongue regarding error. It stops progress; it is the great curse which underlies democracy. Truth is always monogenetic. It is born in one man's mind, and eventually it makes a majority—if it is given fresh air. Stifled, it simply cumbers the ground. So much of my future life depended upon my habit of saying what I thought, that I make no excuse for giving at this early stage the reasons which actuated me.

In Lahore we were put up by Henry (afterwards Sir Henry) Cunningham. He was a son of the old Harrow Vicar; his sister—my next brother's first love—she was at least thirty years older than he was—kept house for him; so it was like a bit of home being with them. Here I had my first experience of Panjab fever. As bride I was of course taken in to dinner by my host. Just at dessert time he surprised me by saying in an undertone—"I'm getting fever—speak to your other neighbour and take no notice; I shall get through". He did; but before the ladies left I saw tears running down his cheeks. He was shivering all over.

We had to traipse back to Ludhiana, not so very far from Delhi, whence we had started. However, this time having been posted to the district we were spared the

laborious transit over the river Sutlej, for the engineer in charge of the magnificent bridge which was being built over it trolleyed us across. Truly, I thought, the world was wonderful! The bare-footed coolies, their supple feet clipping the single rails that stretched from pier to pier, were more wonderful still, and most wonderful still, and most wonderful of all, the dark, rushing stream over which one literally hovered; coming whence—going whitherward? It was the Stream of Life, mysterious absolutely.

There were no other European women at Ludhiana, for the Deputy Commissioner's wife and children had gone to the hills. The policeman and doctor were unmarried, the engineer a widower. And I was a baby. Small wonder then that seven months after I married I was knocked over; the heat, the journeyings, the very novelty of everything, were too much for my constitution. We had to send away for a sergeant's wife from the nearest cantonment. A good woman whose tongue never ceased over battles, murders, and sudden deaths. Especially over the young mothers in the regiment who had died with their first children. And my doctor, a dear fellow, had never attended a woman before!

It was not exhilarating. I used to lie perspiring—for the weather was abnormally hot, and listen for my husband's step in the verandah on his return from office. But the district was a very busy one, and he seldom got back before five, or even six. Was I homesick? I do not know. Vaguely I felt as my father must have felt when my mother asked him how he had come to put himself in such a ridiculous position; but I stifled regrets with duty; it is quite an easy process with some natures.

And all things come to an end; so by the middle of August my husband had taken me up to the nearest hill station of Kasauli, to be the guest of an unseen, unknown Commissioner. But even those who had not been privileged in person to know Colonel Reynell Taylor knew him by repute. He was the *preux chevalier* of the Panjab. It was quite enough for him to know that the young wife of one of his subordinates was helplessly ill in the heat of the plains, for him to offer indefinite house-room. It was gladly accepted, and my husband saw me to the foot of the hills, returning the same day; but he was a super-excellent rider; he had laid out his ponies, and the ninety miles across country was nothing to him. I shall never forget the delight of that ten miles in a *dhooli* from Kalka to Kasauli. It is not a very pretty road; the hills are too much of a spur into the plains, the trees cannot compare with those further from the drying, hot winds; but the wild dahlias were in blossom. Thousands, millions of them. They covered the ravines as with a gay-coloured chintz.

I did not see my host for a good three weeks: I was too ill. But then I metaphorically fell at his feet and worshipped. Tall, good-looking, his fair curly hair lavishly sprinkled with grey, his blue eyes so candid, no one could help seeing that he was indeed *preux chevalier*. His more youthful exploits were numberless. One, concerning an affray with five mounted tribesmen in the Khyber Pass in which, being a brilliant swordsman, he had killed three, and "the rest they ran away", I have heard him recount more than once. For in the photograph album which was used to amuse the ladies at a dinner party there was a snapshot of his favourite charger Suleiman, who had been almost cut to pieces

in the fight; and this would give me, acting as hostess, the opportunity of broaching the subject by saying mischievously, "How many men in buckram,Colonel?" He would revile me afterwards, but he, the most modest of men, had to speak.

I think he was the most perfect specimen of simple manhood I was ever privileged to meet. I saw very little of him during my six weeks' stay, but the words with which he met my attempt at thanks for his kindness as we said good-bye in the verandah have remained with me all these years. They have been far more useful than any sermon I ever heard:

"Pass it on, my dear; pass it on."

Well! I have tried to do so; and if in any case I have succeeded it is due, not to any bishop or clergyman, not to any other advice, but to Colonel Reynell Taylor. I met his wife the next year. She told me she had but one regret in her life, and that was that with the exigencies of boys and girls claiming school and college life she found it necessary to prevent her husband seeing half the appeals that came to him by putting them straight into the waste-paper basket. "I trust I may be forgiven," she said. "Anyhow, it has to be done by someone." She was a very charming, capable woman.

My husband came up for a few days' holiday late in September and took me down to a new house of our own in Ludhiana. It was a very big house, just built, and we shared it with the doctor, honest man. He was a very good violinist; our German piano had just arrived, and every hour he could spare we spent in good music. To this day I cannot listen to the *andante* from Mendelssohn's violin concerto without being back in that bare, whitewashed drawing-room with its clerestory

windows and raftered roof; with its high door-windows looking out on the verandah and beyond that to the new-made garden, mostly dust, which the *mali*, after the custom of *malis*, had arranged in whorls and cart-wheels, sowing the beds between the mud path spikes with "*powder of flowers*". Not so bad in spring-time when there would be a wild tangle of poppies and larkspurs and cornflowers and mignonette and marigolds and virginia stock; but now mostly dust that crumbled like sand when you stepped on it, and that required the gardener to be constantly patting it to consistency with a flat trowel. For there had not been time for my husband to begin the gardening for which in after years he was so famous. Yes! I can see the doctor, big, broad, every inch of him from the toes of his shooting boots to the top of his red-haired Scottish head, playing Beethoven and Schubert and Schumann, with interludes of Border ballads and Scottish reels. It was fine.

And he drove a buggy in the shafts of which an old flea-bitten Arab used to go as it chose. We called it Beelzebub in consequence. It was the handsomest beastie I ever saw. The house was very sparsely furnished, as all up-country houses were in those days. Matting, a table or two, a few chairs, and a lovely red-morocco carved walnut Hewitson (the precursor of Maple) occasional chair, which an old lady of my husband's acquaintance had given him as a wedding present, and which we already called the white elephant, because it needed so much care and consideration. Then there was always the beautiful Stuttgart piano which had been chosen for me by John Farmer, the Harrow music-master. I had been a great favourite of

his. He loved accompanying my Scotch songs, and on one occasion had insisted on my singing before Joachim. I was terribly nervous, but the great man seemed quite pleased; as a matter of fact I had a good voice, a flexible *mezzo* touching C quite easily. And my painting, entirely self-taught, had drawn down from Sir Noel Paton the advice to my father that I should be trained as an artist. So I had plenty with which to occupy myself in the new, dusty bungalow.

In writing down these happenings I simply let my mind go free, and I set down what I see before me. So my next sight must be a trifle tragic.

I have mentioned that our "round the Bay" luggage did not turn up at Marseilles. In the following months the trunks containing wearing apparel arrived first. I had actually worn my real wedding dress when doing hostess for Colonel Reynell Taylor. But two cases, one containing a plate chest, another chintzes and linen, etc., had failed to put in an appearance. They were at last traced to Kurrachi, where they had been consigned to a non-existent firm. By whose mistake matters not; indeed, the error was never discovered.

Well, my sight is of our bare dining-room, my husband turning the lock of the big chest, I kneeling beside him on the floor, the sun shining vividly through a scarlet-flowered pomegranate bush, I agog with the expected delight of seeing our wedding presents once more; for we had been very self-denying and asked that everything might be for the good of the house.

Well! There were five ivory-handled dinner-knives, and a sufficiency of small stones to make up weight on the first tray. Below, more and larger stones, and the three stoppered bottles of the cruet-stand; the fourth

had gone, doubtless because, being the pepper castor, it had a silver top.

What do I see next? Two people laughing like children, and being joined by a burly Scotsman, who positively threw himself into our only rocking-chair and kicked his heels up in the air, as was the dear man's wont at any screaming jests.

And this was a screaming one. What was there to be done save laugh? Nine months had elapsed since they were put on board a P. & O. Half that time they had lain derelict on a Kurrachi wharf. One could but acquiesce in the fact that some human being was eating curry and rice out of our side-dishes, and that the silver teapot which—with the £300 a year he was worth dead or alive—used to be considered the Indian civilian's chief merit as a husband was gone for ever.

And it was; for whether from sentiment or parsimony I know not, but to the end of our service we never had even a plated teapot. We used a Rockingham. It made better tea.

We went out into camp before Christmas. Whether it be that I have so often taken part in the slow shiftings, the placid packings, the subsequent loud ladings, the inconceivably discordant complaints of the camels, and the general lack of any organisation which invariably results in perfect order and breakfast and hot bath ready next morning when you arrive at the new camp, I cannot say; but only two pictures leap to my eyes.

One is the extraordinarily vicious kick given by a camel, which landed a coolie engaged in loading it with—I admit—a somewhat large pack in the very middle of the gardener's pet cart-wheel where the "*powder of flowers*" had already sprouted six inches

high. The camel was immovable as if carved in stone, the coolie for a minute as if dead, but the *mali's* yells were awful.

The next picture is of a carpet, in a deserted Sessions House right away at the back of beyond. Whether Sessions were ever held there seems doubtful, but the house was there all right. It is impossible to give an idea of its absolute desolation. It was a large house, of course one-storied, with a flat roof and wide, arched, empty verandah. A sort of ghost of a house standing alone in the vast plain of sand, with here and there a stunted *kikar*—bush rather than tree.

When was it built? How was it built, why was it built out there in the wilderness?

And why, above all, were those two vast peerless carpets put down in the two vast rooms which, with outlying dressing and bath-rooms, formed the whole house?

They were not priceless Persian carpets brought from afar. These were simply cotton carpets which might have been woven by a local man who knew his trade. Not dull stripes after idle modern fashion, but cunning arabesques, charming curls of conventionalised leaf and flower, deft contrast of colour and tints, all still brilliant despite the dust.

I had never seen the like before, and questions of the caretaker—a wizened old man—produced no information. The house had been built. Yea! it was true. Doubtless to please the Big Gentleman. The carpets had always been there. Doubtless also to please the Big Gentleman.

So I had to leave them there, where they doubtless are to this day, in the deserted, desolate Sessions House.

Years afterwards I came, in the Lucknow jail, upon a small cotton carpet closely woven in arabesques and

conventional flowers and leaves. It was an exorbitant price, but the workmanship, they said, was difficult; few of the prisoners could touch it. I bought the carpet; but the dye-stuffs were evidently modern. It is now almost one uniform grey, but absolutely untouched otherwise by Time. Like the originals, it would I believe outlast Time itself! but the colours! Alas for science and imperial dye-stuffs! These Sessions House carpets started in me the keen interest in purely indigenous arts which has hindered me so much in dealing with the Westernised natives of India.

The next few months were chiefly spent as a sick nurse. Between our house and the native town was a shallow ravine or *nuddi*. In the rains it held little pools of water. In the dry months I believe it still had a remote connection with the drains of the city. Anyhow, whenever the wind came from this quarter the civil station, and especially those closest to the *nuddi*, used to go down with tertian ague. I would hear my husband's quick step on the verandah, listen to his cheerful voice regretting he was a little late, and bidding me begin luncheon as he would be in in a minute. Ten perhaps would pass, and going to see what was up, I would find him blue and cold, with chattering teeth, on his bed, and a wandering tongue showing he scarcely recognised me. And when, after administering hot bottles, arrowroot, and brandy, I would go down the big central passage that split the house into halves, I was as often as not met by a plaintive voice from the bedroom saying that the doctor was in like case and would be obliged by similar treatment. So it would go on like Box and Cox, or the two figures in a weather-glass. It was not dangerous; so many hours of rigor

and rheumatism in every part of the body, so many with high fever bringing some respite from all but headache, and then, like refreshing rain, such perspiration as bath towels failed to absorb. Then for forty-eight hours you were as well as ever, save that you were thinner, possibly weaker, until on the very tick of the appointed hour it all began again. It was very wearing, especially to a man who, though nearly 5 ft. 7 in. in height, never scaled over eight stone.

Malarial mosquitoes had not been invented, but by dint of plentiful quinine and going into camp we escaped much of the trouble until April.

Then the doctor and my husband put their heads together and decreed that in view of my dangerous experiences in the preceding hot weather it would be foolish of me to risk a coming life. So a little house was taken for me near the church at Kasauli, and thither I moved with the best table servant and the worst cook, leaving the men folk to double up establishments. The little house was not a restful place. It proved to have many many inhabitants. I routed some by means of Naldire's soap and quassia infusion; but I found a pair of large scissors most ineffectual against a ten-inch centipede I discovered in my bed; the only result being the multiplication of the monster, who, however, was at last overcome. Even a hundred legs cannot stand fifty snippets! My worst enemies, however, were scorpions. I confess to wild alarm when, on taking a pinch of tea from the canister held out to me when I was deep in a book, I found nothing in the tea-cup but a huge black scorpion. It was a lucky escape. I suppose it was the careless quickness with which I handled it that made it too surprised to sting.

Nevertheless all went well, and more than once my husband rode ninety miles up to see me on a Friday night and rode back again on Sunday evening, until the beginning of July. Then he took fever badly, and after a three weeks' tussle the doctor sent him up to Kasauli with sixty grains of quinine inside him.

Then the question arose, what was to be done? We were at our wits' end when we were offered—I am sure in consequence of some kind word of Colonel Taylor's—the hill station of Dalhousie, on condition that we went at once.

There was really no choice, though the coming child was expected to be a Michaelmas goose; so my husband having packed up the Ludhiana house and done what he could, the middle of August found me, after miles on miles of straight white dusty road and jibbing ponies, on my way in a *dhoolie* up the hills to Dalhousie. My husband, ever a wonderful rider, had gone on ahead to make things as comfortable as could be.

I suppose it was the cooler atmosphere which induced sleep after two wakeful nights in the heat; but when I woke about half-way, I found the *dhoolie* had been plumped down on green grass. The bearers were some way off, invisible, though the even bubblings of their pipes told that they also were resting. It was just dawn. A little stream gushed out of a rock close by; it might have been an Argyllshire burn, the rock set round with ferns. But these were maidenhair ferns—green, graceful, fresh, dewy. Was it thankfulness for returning beauty after days of dust that made me raise my eyes to high heaven?

Ye Gods! What was that?

I see it, I feel the thrill of it now as I write.

Three-quarters of the way up the sky, just flushing with the dawn light, stood Holy Himalaya.

It was my first real sight of them. My first realisation of anything more than a distant panorama that might have been cut out of paper.

We made the move fairly well, our only misfortune being the total loss of our books. All my husband's prize books at Harrow, two shelves of them, and the rather valuable little library which his uncle had specially left to my husband, as the scholar of the family, and which my father-in-law had insisted on our bringing out. Being of very literary leanings himself, he imagined they would be a solace to us of literary tastes. Well and carefully packed, they were laden on a boat to cross the river. The boatmen let the craft hit a newly erected pier. The books were brought up to Dalhousie a gelatinous mass on mule packs. We attempted to get compensation. But the ferry belonged to the Rajah of Kaparthala, so at the last we were told "that political reasons forbade our claim being pressed". Government had not nerve enough to say there was no claim!

Is there any regret a woman can feel so bitter as the regret over her child that has been born dead? Was there anything she could have done? Was there anything she had omitted? Why had she not given her life to save it? And the poor little dear had been so punctual. She had not failed! It was the dawn of St. Michael's day when she came.

But I was too far gone to know—I had been three whole days ill. Perhaps I had been fighting for dear life —I hope so.

It was some days after before I could think clearly,

but some words of the strange doctor's were burned in on my brain. "You are young—you will have others, so it was better to let the child take its chance."

So I lay looking out on the great rampart of snow-hills that could be seen through the window. Not so far away. I could watch the dawn light come and grow: I could watch the rose of sunset fade and die. And I was so glad that in this autumn time the intervening valley was filled up with soft, white mist. It veiled the earth-born foundations. Only the peaks and passes remained.

So I lay and wondered much. What was she like? for I had been too ill to see her—a fine little dear, my husband said, with level dark eyebrows like his, and I wondered where they had buried her; but I never asked. I was afraid it might be somewhere I didn't like—though the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof. It was cowardly of me, I fear: yet—am I sorry? I think not. "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof," even my Garden of Fidelity.

So, when my time comes, I also will disappear into thin air—which is the Lord's also.

But most of all I wondered if it had really been death? The nurse was untrained; the doctor had thought it better——

Yes! the memory of that time is very vivid still.

But I was soon about again. I have always had the recuperative power of an animal; and mercifully I was immediately wanted, or thought I was wanted, which is the same thing.

There had been trouble in the office before my husband took over charge; defalcations, I believe. At any rate something must have occurred to explain his transference to Dalhousie in the middle of the hot weather;

it is generally a two-season appointment. He was called upon for instant report and explanation. He was not fit for the task, unaided, save by the office clerks, who probably knew too much. Prolonged fever and my illness had left him rather helpless, so I undertook to see the matter through. It was my first experience of a Government office, and it left me a confirmed Individualist for the rest of my life. I saw clearly that everything—order, method, punctuality, efficiency—depended upon one individuality only. So I gripped the fact, to which I have held ever since, that the best form of Government is a beneficent Autocracy. Democracy went by the board as a thing of Mediocrity, the Apotheosis of Bureaucracy. So the files were rearranged; facts disclosed themselves during the process; and the report was, I believe, considered exhaustive. But to me, recovering as I was from a knock-down blow, it opened up hitherto undreamt-of chambers of thoughts as to the how and the why of many Governmental shibboleths.

By the beginning of December Dalhousie beggared description for beauty. Our house stood close to the Upper Bukrota Mall. From it I could see the snow invade Dyan-Khan during the night and disappear during the days. Far below to the west were the shiny shale-roofed barracks and houses of the military convalescent station, and between them and us rose the rounded oak-clad Terah Hill, where the officers and the habitual residents lived. It was quite a large community despite the fact that the hot weather visitors had returned to the plains, and ere long I was in the thick of it. I played the harmonium for quite a good male choir in the little church that stood on the *col* between

the two hills. I was running a Christmas Eve Ball, and most of all I was producing a play for the New Year. As there was no regular theatre, this involved much painting of scenery and arrangement of footlights and curtains. Now, as this sort of work was a very integral part of my life in India, even after I had found my greatest interest in the lives of the Indian people, I may as well tell the tale of what I learnt by it. First, I learnt that there is hardly anything which you cannot get in an Indian bazaar, provided you know the proper name for it. Secondly, I learnt that in nine cases out of ten this proper name is not to be learnt from the jargon of domestics and hangers-on. You have to go to books and dictionaries for it. Thus the necessity of being able to speak the language was thrust upon me.

Secondly, I learnt the wisdom of the adage—"If you want a thing done, do it yourself". Not because it is always quicker, or because it engenders a spiritual pride while you are doing the job, a sort of sneaking conviction that so far from being a mere speck on the universe you are a very important part of its mechanism; but because it is by far the best way of making others do it. More than half the world learns by the eye: that is why it is so grievous to see our cinema houses swamped by useless rotten stuff—mostly from America.

Thirdly, scene-painting improved my sketching. I learnt how much one had to leave out. How little often produced an effect. That, in life, is one of the hardest lessons to learn; how much to see, how much to leave unseen. Women are specially liable to mistakes in this respect. It is very difficult for them to compromise.

I was soon fairly immersed in theatricals. I forget

which play came first: I think *The Rough Diamond*, in which I took Margery's part; but it was a success and was the forerunner of many all over the Panjab. There can be no doubt but that in those days Anglo-Indians, as we were then called, were a very light-hearted crew. So, despite the fact there was no assembly room at Dalhousie, we amused ourselves wonderfully well.

I did, at anyrate. There were so many little quips and jokes—as when one Scottish member of the choir parried an attack on the purity of his tone by the irrelevant remark, "Ye see, Mistress Steel, ye're so verrsittle". Long after, in Euston Road, I was touched on the shoulder, with a "Maybe ye won't remember me?" But I did: I was sufficiently versatile to have many memories.

Then there was the solemn English basso-profondo who met my gentle hint that the note in question was a minim and not a semibreve with the hurt rejoinder, "I can, madam, sing it as it is written; but the other sounds more solemn like".

So the months slid by, and always, ever, the great beauty of the place was as an anodyne. The frost on the ferns, the crackle of the snow under our feet, the absolute solitude of the Bukloh Hill, were gifts—sheer gifts.

I think we were the only people who braved the winter so high up, the solitude especially was a perpetual enjoyment to me. From that further side of the Mall no house was visible: nothing but dark fir forests and white hills. The leopards were bad that year. One actually entered a lamp-lit room and carried off a small dog from the rug. And as I was riding one evening along the cut-out pathway to our house, something

sprang from the bank above me, just cleared my very small pony's head, and disappeared down the rhododendron-covered steep below. Whether it had intended to spring on the animal, and been frightened by seeing me on its back, or whether it had meant to attack the fox terrier running in front, I cannot say; but it was a leopard, and a large one at that. It subsequently clawed off the legs of the Christmas turkey that was hanging in the verandah!

The advent of the summer visitors brought more gaiety; but in comparison with these later days we had very little wherewith to amuse ourselves. There was no bridge; in fact, no cards of any sort. No tennis, only badminton, which, however, was both strenuous and scientific. Picnics and gymkhana races were the order of the day. The latter were held at Kujiar, about six miles on the way to Chumba, where a perfectly ideal little race-course surrounded a small pool of water that was fed from the encompassing hills. Immense deodar forests joined these hills to the oasis of greensward in which the sacred pond was set, with its peaked roof of a shrine close to the water's edge.

It was really, I believe, quite a pilgrimage spot; but the old priest in charge seemed rather to like the bustle of a scratch race-meeting, which, of course, always brought him in some "bakhsheesh". For my part, even in those days I felt that the base uses offended against the perfection of the scenery. I have seen Kujiar when the deodars are wreathed with rambler roses, when the scarlet of the small-leaved Virginia creepers reddens the very topmost branches of the lofty trees, when snow and frost have transformed them into giant Christmas trees, and I know not at what season they are most beautiful.

It was this summer that I first met Sir George White, the hero of as pretty and graceful a little tale as any I ever conceived and set down. So it shall be set down here.

He was then Captain George White of the 92nd; about eight or nine and thirty as far as I could judge. He was a disappointed, but not a disgruntled man. He would sit on the sofa in our drawing-room and discourse for hours on how impossible it was for him to hope for anything in his career. There was no chance of his getting his majority before forty. He was sending in his papers and must turn to something else. I used to do Mark Tapley and assure him, which was to my mind true, that Nature had not intended him for a soldier. He was much more the scientific, the philosophical build. But he was obstinate. His chance had gone. "Wait till the last moment at anyrate", were my words when he came to say good-bye on his way plainwards with his quota of convalescents. "Something may turn up." "My papers are on their way," was his reply.

I did not see him or hear from him for ten years. Then I met him at a ball in full uniform. I went up to him and put my finger on the gold oak-leaves that adorned collar and cuffs; for by that time he was Military Secretary to the Viceroy. The Afghan War had broken out; he had recalled his papers; he had done well exceedingly.

"Don't be rude", he said laughing; and we recounted old times.

I did not see him again for more than another ten years; not till after I had written *On the Face of the Waters*. Then, at a big ball, I saw a brilliant figure

crossing the polished floor with outstretched hands, followed by a somewhat startled-looking aide-de-camp. It was Sir George White, Commander-in-Chief, ablaze with decorations.

"You've done it too", he said with his own merry smile; and once again we recounted old times.

And what is more, when, dining with him next evening, an extra guest on a gala night, I went to say good-night, he offered me his arm, cloaked me in the cloak-room, despite his aide's protestations, and saw me to my carriage and shut the door, saying—

"Till next time!"

I often wonder when that will be—if ever. He has long since earned his rest. I await mine; still eager, vivid, full of misplaced energy.

It was about nine o'clock on the 10th of December in that year spent in frivolities at Dalhousie that I scrawled in pencil to my mother "Peccavi!"—"Sinde"[1] being a daughter three hours' old, healthy, red, ugly.

We had given no hint at home of our hopes. So much disappointment had followed failure that we kept our own counsel. It saved a great deal of anxiety.

[1] "Peccavi", Punch's famous cartoon on Sir Charles Napier's occupation of Sinde.

CHAPTER IV

WITH the birth of my small daughter the whole aspect of my life changed. I cannot say that I was conscious of any sentimental uprisings in my nature, or that I felt supreme bliss in gazing at her infantile ugliness; but she somehow completed and filled up my world. I felt something had been achieved.

I was by this time twenty-three and a half. I had seen somewhat of men and manners; I had been through some tight places; but I think my vitality was still unimpaired. I kept up my music, I practised my singing, I was for ever drawing and painting; and I made all my own clothes with the aid of the *dirzie* (the native tailor), and I was developing into a good cooking expert; it was a science for which in after years I became noted in India. In addition I was every day acquiring knowledge of India and its people, and learning more or less how to manage them. For instance, when the four *jampannies* (bearers) of my *dandi* refused to be sent out with the ayah and the baby I made them carry a good load of rocks beside me as I walked round the Mall amongst the smart company of neighbours. The ridicule it provoked was too much for them; I heard no more of the subject. Of the same ayah a word must be said. She was a hill-woman, neither Hindu nor Mahomedan. A tall upstanding woman, fair, good-

looking. Of her past I knew nothing, I know nothing; but years of experience incline me to think it must have been somewhat lurid: she was too good-looking. A better servant never existed. Few English nurses would have surpassed her in order, cleanliness, and discipline, and she managed to disregard the attentions and insinuations of all the Mahomedan servants with a dignity which was almost regal. And I am bound to remember her because of some words of hers that struck deep into my heart. I had to leave my little daughter for a while to the care of a friend when she was six months old. I suppose I must have been showing emotion—a rare thing with me—when Fazli's voice came like a shaft of lightning from on high: "You leave her in God's care, *memsahib*".

As the *dhooli* sped me plainwards, I said to myself, "And these are the people we dub heathen!"

This was not my first awakening. I have told of my discomfiture concerning peacemakers. Despite this I grew up unusually religious. Baptized a Presbyterian, I was the only one of my family who formally joined the Church of England by being confirmed when I was sixteen. Old Dean Ramsay prepared me: a nice old man, but I cannot remember his ever saying a word to me personally. We went to his house as a class, and came away as a class. Up till now I had been very High Church, though one or two qualms assailed me. One a ludicrous one, when I read a tract which was put into my hand by a dear old lady in a railway carriage, which professed to deal with the efficacy of prayer. It was the story of a hungry tramp who knelt down and prayed for food; thereafter finding, neatly disposed under a hedge, a spotted blue handkerchief full of bread and

cheese and bacon, on which he feasted—doubtless also pocketing the handkerchief—quite oblivious of the patent fact that it must have been some hungry workman's dinner. Such tracts do harm to the earnest mind.

There was another, more serious, shake when a good, honest English gentleman said to me at the close of an argument—he was a rabid Evangelical—"Well, Mrs. Steel, it doesn't really matter. If what you believe is true, I should be saved anyhow; and if what I believe is true, I am saved of course. So that is all right."

One does not exactly formulate and tabulate the effect of such an absolutely selfish state of mind in a truly religious person; but it is surprising how it weakens belief.

However, I was still fairly orthodox when in the autumn of 1871 I went down to my husband's new station, Kasur, a subdivision of the Lahore district. It lay thirty-five miles out on the Firozpur road. We were the only Europeans, as there was neither doctor nor policeman. For some years also there was not even a missionary. But, as we were to live there for long, it was a mercy we took to it at once; there was indeed something delightfully primitive about the only house. It was really the old tomb of some far-away Mahomedan saint, and round the big central dome (some forty feet square) had been added on a slip of a room for a drawing-room, another for a dining-room, with two bedrooms and dressing-rooms tucked away in the corner. But these with their verandah were overwhelmed by that big central dome. It had a queer, little, circular parapet at the very top, so that there was a wee platform about five feet in diameter to which access was possible by clambering up notches cut in the

five-feet deep masonry of the dome. This perch was, even on a hot-weather evening, cool and pleasant. My husband slept there sometimes while I stayed below to look after baby; the fear lest something untoward should happen if the personal eye is removed being common to most mothers.

Office work went on in the central dome room. It was very quiet, very cool, for the walls were five feet thick. There were but two doors, and the saint under the writing-table gave no trouble.

It was a bit dark, but that was amended by a hanging-lamp, and the echoes rather added to the solemnity of the alien judge who dispensed justice. I can see him now: on the table beside him a tiny Testament in red morocco tooled with gold, and subscribed with his great grandfather's name, "Thomas Henry Jordan Steel, Mayor of Berwick on Tweed". And close beside it was the little pot of Ganges water; for in those days strange oaths were permitted, and though holy water was not so binding, there were few Sikhs who would lie on *dharm nal* (by the faith), and none who would swear falsely, his hand on his son's head.

I used often to wonder which of the two holinesses had heard the most travesties of the truth. Personally I think the taking of an oath tends to falsification. One is so anxious to tell everything that events lose their proper proportions. Such at anyrate has been my experience. I was once nearly four hours under cross-examination, and I never felt so empty in my life as I did when it was over.

I think, however, that it may be said, in reference to the oft-repeated debate as to whether Indian or English justice suffers most from false evidence, that now-

adays, when oaths in England are for the most part deprived of all authority, it is more difficult for the judge to discern anything from the bearing of the witness.

Be that as it may, I loved the old echoing dome, and many a time I have stopped at the doorway tunnelled through the wall to listen to the monotonous echoing drawl as the *sarishtadar* (the head clerk) read over some deposition. It was all so dim, so mysterious, so dignified; the echoes might have reached high heaven.

But there were jokes even here, as when my husband came in with a letter in his hand from one of the clerks which ran thus:

"RESPECTED GENTLEMAN—Am unable to attend court to-day. Wife run away with another man. Oh, Lord! How truly magnificent!"

We spent that cold weather mostly in camp, my husband being an old-fashioned believer in seeing personally as much of his district as possible. I remember well his reply to the remark of a scholastic and captious superior, who had several times commented on a sad lack of schedules and returns. We were cantering through a village, and my husband had just replied cheerfully to a question about a rather difficult problem connected with it.

"You really seem to know a good deal about your district," was the surprised comment.

"I shoot a good deal, sir," said my husband coolly. It was not a tactful reply. He should have hinted at hard work; but it was a true one, and there is no manner of doubt that more friendliness, more knowledge, was gained in the old-time camping than in the modern

rushes out by motor and subsequent tabulating of returns.

It was glorious weather, and we camped chiefly in the low-lying river or *bajt* land which lay below the old high bank on which Kasur stood. It stretched for fifteen miles of inconceivably green wheat-land down to the real Sutlej river, on the other side of which, some ten miles farther, lay the military station of Firozpur. Of course there was no permanent bridge, so our nearest touch with civilisation was in Lahore.

I think my little daughter provided the first link of my subsequent enchainment to the interests of the village women. A baby is ever a good ambassador, and Fazli, the ayah, was an excellent attaché. So most evenings I held a regular court, and I picked up much more of the language than I should have done otherwise. I likewise did no little doctoring; for, before I married, I had quite made up my mind to it as a profession. Castor oil, grey powder, rhubarb, and ipecacuanha form a very efficient medicine-chest for most infantile ailments. At least so I found.

One ridiculous incident I remember well. We had gone to a village where never before had been seen a *memsahib*. Here the baby was quite out of court beside the fact that I was wearing scarlet stockings; and the women wanted to know if I was the same colour all the way up! Fazli was shocked!

In April we went home on leave, and the first grandchild was greeted with "How much a pound", for she was big and fat for her age—sixteen months. A placid child too; so I was able to take her home without an ayah. A quartermaster used generally to appear after breakfast with the request that the "young lady"

might be allowed "forrard", where she amused the crew enormously.

My great regret, however, was that this, the fourth generation, was just too late to see her great grandmother Kennedy, who had died during the winter. Had she been able to do so, she would have been enabled to carry on the tale that in 1872 she had seen a woman whose grandfather was twelve years old when Charles the First was beheaded. It is a vast leap in Time, but the Kennedys are a long-lived race. The dates are 1795, 1722, 1636. Her father was born when his father was seventy-one, and that father again to a father of eighty-six. There is a Gaelic poem on the unusual occurrence.

What I did during the year of our leave, 1872 to 1873, matters little. I was a good deal in the doctor's hands; for once more I had had to pack up and change stations before I was recovered. I only mention this to show that in those times Government really was without a body to be kicked or a soul to be damned. It went on its way regardless of convenience or feelings. You have but to read the letters of such a man as John Nicholson to see how the iron ate into his very heart. "Let me retire with honour", he says in one, "before I am kicked out."

Well, I left my little daughter asleep in her cot, and set out for Kasur. From the first there was very little hope of another child, and I had to map out my life as best I could. I was glad we were destined again for Kasur, since I knew and liked both place and people. I have always more rapidly become intimate with Mahomedans than Hindus, and Kasur was an old Pathân settlement. Originally, I suppose, they had come down with the Moghul invaders, but they had

remained in the old, high-housed township for centuries. The houses were brick, many storied, purpled by age, set cheek by jowl and windowless; intersected by thread-like, tortuous, evil-smelling alleys. But the people were distinctive: the upper class courteous to a degree, the lower, hangers on of all sorts, all almost passionately fanatical. The ruins of an older, far larger, city lay about, but there were still some six thousand houses. Except the garden at the Court House, there was no green about the place. Water was deficient, and when it was brought to the surface by means of deep wells, a skin bag, and oxen, apparently it only succeeded in bringing borate of soda with it! So every attempt at gardening produced a fine efflorescence like frost—and perchance the *ak* plant, a species of euphorbia that grows anywhere. But my husband was a lineal descendant of Adam: he had an almost uncanny sympathy with plants. Everything he touched grew, everything he grew flourished, and he knew by instinct when a pot-plant was not thriving. I have seen him say to a Scottish head gardener at a show place, "There's a wireworm at that geranium". Indignant denial was met by a swift upturning of the pot—and there was the offender! A big canal crossed the road some ten miles nearer Lahore, and my husband had, even during his previous short tenure of Kasur, applied for a cut to supply the town properly; and when we came back there was fresh, pure water at everyone's disposal. It made all the difference. Gardening was started with a will, and the dusty compound became a wilderness of every kind of flower and fruit. The swimming-bath which had been built by some nabob in the dark ages was also filled, and my husband

volunteered to teach me how to swim, for like all West Highlanders I was absolutely ignorant of the art. This he did by pushing me in at an unguarded moment, and bidding me swim to the end! Adding that he would pull me out if necessary. It was not so; and three days afterwards I was diving after hairpins from the board, and finding the gravest difficulty in getting to the bottom. We had a trapeze and floating *mussoch* or inflated skin bag. Altogether great fun. One day I saw a pair of glittering eyes in the drain-pipe which fed the bath, and thought it was a snake. But it proved to be a wild cat. Crib, the fox terrier, was after it in a moment, and they had a tremendous fight. My husband, stripped as he was, ran for his gun, but before he could get back both animals had fallen into the deep narrow cutting which brought in the water. Luckily the dog fell on top, so was at an advantage, for its enemy proved a most formidable foe—a real lynx cat with small, pointed black ears and semi-retractile claws.

So, what with horses, dogs, fowls, ducks, and his garden, one partner in the concern was supremely happy; but I was by this time mentally in that state of uncertainty about all things in which work seems the only anodyne—the one drug which enables you to present a bold front to your world. Hundreds of Indian wives have felt the *désœuvrement* which must come with the loss of one's children. Perhaps I was more reasonable than most, for I recognised its inevitableness and deliberately sought a way out.

I began by doctoring the women and children. I had in a way prepared for this at home; for I had read largely and I had brought out a medicine-chest which contained more than the amateur's castor oil and grey

powder and ipecacuanha. Looking back I rather wonder at my own self-confidence or rather cheek, in using quite dangerous drugs. But I really did know something, despite the fact that I had had no training—except that given me—oh! so kindly, so ungrudgingly—by medical friends. Why, my dear doctor at Ludhiana had once dumped down half a library on my bed, and said with one of his broad laughs, "Here, read them yourself—you know quite as well as I do what's the matter".

And fate was not kind to me, for my first big case in the city was puerperal fever. A mere child, the last wife of a Mahomedan gentleman who had lost all his previous ones. I found her in a little dark closet cooped up with a charcoal fire, all air excluded, being dosed with ginger, honey, and almonds. It required some sheer determination to get her carried on to the roof—it was the hot weather—to rid her of all wraps and quilts, to get the coldest water I could get to her head, the hottest to her feet. But the most appalling thing of all to the spectators was the lime-juice and water for her poor parched lips.

The rest I had to leave to Providence; and Providence was kind. She recovered. Of course it made my reputation. After that, had I chosen to order the painting a patient pea-green it would have been done.

They were very unsophisticated in those days: they knew nothing, and were aware of the fact. Truly a little knowledge is a dangerous thing. Of course there was a native doctor, a sort of dispensary at Kasur; but in those days not one of the women would have gone to him. Indeed, till quite late years the traditions of seclusion, the restrictions of *purdah*, were very strong

in this old Pathân town. A quaint remembrance crops up. The relieved owner of a young wife wished to make me some present. I put him off, much to his despair and disappointment, and at last conceded a pair of gloves to his importunity. His delight was almost touching. He posted off to Lahore and came back triumphant with a pair of number nines. I generally took sixes, but a deft twist or two at the end of fingers and thumb made the whole company shriek with delight at the admirable fit.

Meanwhile other interests cropped up. My husband had of course to inspect schools. I accompanied him, and the execrable English which was being taught to the upper classes decided me on a bi-weekly hour in the garden of the Court House for the most advanced English scholars, mostly lads up to sixteen. These hours proved a great success. I read—mostly stories—and above all I made my class speak. Afterwards, as a treat, they used to come into the drawing-room and listen to me singing. Now, one of the most remarkable things is, that though Indian music differs from ours in tone, rhythms, intervals, everything, these boys thoroughly enjoyed what I did for them. It was the age of the sentimental ballad, and one called "Far Away" used to bring actual tears into some eyes. "Home they brought her warrior dead" was another great favourite. "The Bridge" also. But anything sentimental with a haunting refrain to it did the trick. There was one student named Lajpat Rai, the son of a teacher, very clever. He afterwards took up the law, and I have often wondered if, by chance, I was instrumental in instilling first principles into an Extremist leader.

But my experience with these boys showed me the

extreme difficulty of educating India on Western lines while the environment remained Eastern. For instance, a nice boy of about thirteen was so conspicuously bad in the little written exercise I used to give out for home work, that I asked him the reason why. To my surprise he burst into tears and sobbed "My baby is dying".

And die it did, though I tried my utmost; but the mother was just twelve, and the poor little dear had no vitality. It was just one of those foredoomed babies, one of those children of immature parents for which there is a special name amongst the women, which means the "forerunner".

But give an instant's thought to the poor lad who was trying to mix up English grammar with fatherhood? and will there not be a heart-whole condemnation of trying to put new wine into old bottles?

Perhaps it was the success of my male teaching which induced the Chief Native Administrator of the place, who was also President of the Municipal Committee, to suggest the possibility of a female school. Anyhow, the suggestion came from the people themselves, which of course halved the trouble for me. A school was started with acclamation, and, at first, naturally, it went ahead like wild-fire. It was an excellent example of State-made progress such as exists doubtless over half India at the present day; since the inborn aversion to female education is as strong as ever —stronger mayhap than it was, because the older women are becoming more and more jealous of the younger ones, as is but natural. For instance, one secret to-day of the attitude of most elderly married women against the flapper vote at home is: "We didn't have it when we were twenty-one, why should they?"

But a convenient little courtyard was found, of course at an exorbitant rent, a toothless male, religious, either Hindu or Mahomedan—because, of course, though there were but few Hindus in Kasur it would never do to leave them out with a neutral Sirkar—was produced, also at an exorbitant salary; two or three dozen little girls from the bazaar, ranging from four to eight, were duly installed as the alphabet class, and from the better houses a scanty few were gathered who knew parts of the Koran by heart, and who could be trusted to recite some of the very dubious tales in the first Persian Primer as if they were reading them!

Thus the school—a fair example of the State-induced female education—was formed. I did not at first interfere. One soon learns in India the wisdom of waiting a good opportunity. So I left things alone, only teaching the pretty little alphabet learners to smile at me with their big brown eyes and laugh when I laughed. For it was now the cold weather and camp called; the most alluring, enjoyable camping that ever falls to the lot of an Indian official. What they call *durya burdi*, or river erosion, had to be measured all along the low-lying land through which the Sutlej wound its devious way. It was a vast stretch of land, water, and sand-banks. I see the procession now as we started from our overnight camp in the early morning; the sky a fair sapphire arch set in a frame of gold, for the mustard is in bloom. Far away, a glint of silver; nearer at hand, still pools where the egrets stand watchful. My husband and I first on our ponies, at his right hand the native official responsible for the immediate villages; behind a posse of bearded men, the rear brought up by the chain

men and the village accountant. It is a lengthy business this measuring up and apportioning fields that have been swallowed up by the river. And sometimes disputes arise that, after lengthy argument, have to be settled as they have been for thousands and thousands of years. That acre or two which will be good wheat land next year, does it belong to this side of the river or that? Who is to say, when there are half-a-score of streams around one, curving this way and that, to coalesce maybe, further down the stream? There is but one way to certainty as to which is the deep stream of division; the pots will tell. So, far up stream, empty earthen pots are set afloat, to be watched by eager eyes. That stream has taken off one; but there are many left—Two! Heaven grant no more! It is as exciting as a horse race! Ah, now we come to the crucial point where there is a swirl on the water—two swirls—which is the stronger? God show the right! Allah—It is over! Jitawallah village wipes its forehead and returns thanks. It had six pots to its enemy's five.

So runs the river away, while I sit watching God's beautiful world as it stretches out before me to a horizon of grey green tamarisk, yellow sand strips, and wisps of green catchcrops, here and there. But what is that streak of rosy-red low on the far sky? It is a flock of flamingoes rising startled, and showing their red wing-coverts. And hark! The big grey crane's monotonous cry and the sibilant hiss of the grey-lag goose sentinel as he gives warning of strangers.

Day after day. It is an education in itself teaching one hitherto unknown details of these villagers' hopes and fears, and doubts. And round the well at night what tales can you not hear!—if only you can get rid

of the red-coated orderly. He is generally fatal to confidence, especially in a cattle-thieving village! And there were plenty of cattle thieves in the river land. I put the story of one into ballad verse; my husband approved, so it was not consigned, as were my other efforts, to the W.P.B. So here it is—it gives a good idea of life on the banks of the river and the sort of people I met there.

SHURFU THE ZAILDAR

And you'll give me a really good chit, sahib, and say I'm a first-rate zaildar,
Not a man that has done half so much as old Shurfu to please the *Sirkar*.
Why! I've brought you full forty-five *badmashes*! That isn't bad for a haul,
Look you! forty-five rascals all present, and gone bail myself for them all.

And a word, sahib, for your ear alone—if you'd like me to bring a few more,
Just to make a round number on paper, and show that the work's to the fore.
Bismillah! they never shall say, while old Shurfu is one of the crew,
His collector-sahib's schedules were shaky for want of a *badmash* or two.

Well! And what do I think of the system? Oh! that, sahib, is '*khushi huzur*'.
My opinion? It don't pay so well now-a-days as it used, to be sure.
There are many more folk to be squared and the hire of security paid;
Still, that makes the lads three times as careful, and raises the style of a raid.

Yet the game, as a game, is no more, for your Raj has been death to all sport.
E'en the cattle thief's turned money-lender, giving honour and glory no thought.

'Tis mere money-grub *annas* and *paisas*. What? I in my youth you have heard?
Was a noted—oh *toba, sahib, toba*! You shouldn't believe such a word.

There are twenty-three schools on my *zail* where I pay all the Government fees;
I've made a canal and a garden; I've planted some thousands of trees;
I have headed the lists and subscriptions! I've tried queer new crops on my land;
Not a village of mine owns a dung-heap! My mares are all Government brand!

Not a hobby his district-*sahib's* had, but old Shurfu has ridden it too,
Though the number of *sahibs* has been awful, and everyone's hobby was new.
Well! I *will* take a glass since there's nobody nigh, you won't tell, I engage,
True! the Prophet forbids, but he didn't know brandy, and wasn't my age.

When a man's turned of seventy there arn't many sins left he cares to commit,
So his daybook can stand a few trifles—*taslim*—Wine wakes one a bit.
As for Fazla—we've all heard of Fazla—the best cattle thief in Panjab?
You're wrong when you say he had never a match this side of Chenab.

I could tell you a story—well! half-a-glass more—but I'd best hold my tongue.
So Mian Fazla had never his match? Come! that's good—why, when we were both young—
Toba! What am I saying? Yet devil take me but I cannot keep still,
I *will* tell how I swam the Chenab in full flood—yea! by Allah I will.

Mian Fazla had squared the police on his side of the stream to a man,
But I couldn't—the cowards were cautious, and had a new broom as Captan—
So Fazla got up in the bottle and sent me a message to say
He had fifty-three head of my cattle and when would I take them away?

Now the water was out, so his taunt was scarce fair, but I took up the glove;
We three, Mokkun, Dittu and I, that same night crossed the river above
While they thought all secure—but it wasn't—and dawn found us stealing along
With a herd of a hundred she-buffaloes, all of them lusty and strong.

We made for the river through tamarisk jungle and tussocks of grass,
And narrow-pathed tangle of *jhau* that would scarce let the buffalo pass,
With our thoughts on the footsteps behind, till the first level streak of the light
Brought us down to the stream, and by God! It had risen six feet in the night.

'Twas a broad yellow plain shining far in the rays of the sun as it rose,
And a cold wind swept over the flood that came hurrying down from the snows
With a swift shining current in eddying swirls—not a sound, not a dash,
Save a sudden dull thud as the bank, undermined, fell in with a splash.

Then we looked at each other in silence. The looks of the others said No!
But I thought of that challenge of Fazla's and made up my mind I would go

Tho' I knew that the odds were against me. So, bidding the cowards go back
With a few of the beasts on their traces, thus deadening and blurring the track—

For 'twas time—it was time that I wanted—I drove the rest down to the brink,
But the beasts wouldn't take to the water—they loved life too well not to shrink.
So I took a young calf by its mother, 'twas cruel, but what did I reck?
And I killed the poor brute with my hangar and fastened a cloth round its neck.

Then I dragged it right into the water and buoyed it well up round the throat
With a bundle of grasses and reeds that would keep the dead body afloat.
I thought of that challenge of Fazla's! Then turned and struck out like a man,
While the mother leapt after her young one, and all the rest followed the van.

The flood swept me down like a leaf, the calf swept me further down still,
But I knew 'twas a life or death struggle and breasted the stream with a will.
And the hope I could lead the beasts on till 'twas safer before than behind,
And the fear lest Mian Fazla should triumph, the only two thoughts in my mind.

It was half-a-yard forward to half-a-mile downwards; yet still I made way,
And behind in a long single file, the black heads of the buffaloes lay,
Till I felt we had reached the deep stream and that now there was no going back,
Then I gave one faint shout, and I cast off the dead calf, and let myself slack.

So we drifted, and drifted, and drifted; I strove to recover my breath,
But a numbness came over my limbs, and I felt I was drifting to death,
As the big heavy beasts swept past me, still breasting the force of the stream,
Till the whole world seemed slipping away, and I swam on alone in a dream.

Then I wondered how Fazla would take it? And how many miles I had come?
And guessed what the people would say when days passed and I never came home;
Till it suddenly flashed on my brain that the current was setting in shore—
And after that, *sahib*, it is strange, I could never recall any more.

Only this I can tell you—we measured it after from starting to end,
And 'twas over ten "kos" by the straight without counting the bend;
And Fazla—he sent me a *pagri* with a knot that his woman had tied,
And the song of the *Guzar-i-Shurfu's* still sung by the whole countryside.

Wahlillah! my tongue has been wagging! And I the *zaildar*. But in sooth
'Tis dull work for old Shurfu compared to the merry mad days of his youth.
Well! Salaam! and whatever you want, send for me, *Taslim-at-ji*, and sahib,
You'll remember that Fazla once met with his match on this side of Chenab.

I make no excuse for transcribing this, lengthy though it be, for as I read it I seem to see the big burly Gujar folk with their broad chests, broad faces, and broad laughs.

Do they exist still, I wonder, those people who were

so ready to respond to a smile, who were so tractable even while they poured scorn on our Western knowledge? Shall I ever forget the scene in a village school which my husband was peculiarly eager to encourage? since the only pupils who in that part of the district appeared to be benefiting by education were the moneylenders—a most undesirable consummation! So all the village elders had been requisitioned to send all their descendants to the third and fourth generation to benefit by Western sciences in the school. Never was such a gathering. Old, white-haired great-grandfathers, and bearded grandfathers, preserving youth by means of henna dye. Stolid, black-haired fathers, sceptical of knowledge denied to them and lavished on their graceless offspring. An expectant master-*ji*, voluble and doubtful. A row of scholars with clean slates and bright inquiring eyes. And the problem so simple! "If the annual rateable value per acre is so many rupees, anna and pies, how much would you have to pay on 100 acres?" I had warned my husband that it was far too simple. That a problem only involving multiple by 100 was not sufficiently intricate for brains accustomed to master-*ji's* imaginations. But, manlike, he had preferred his own wisdom. Well! the problem was presented, done by long and short division, rule of three, practice, mensuration, almost by vulgar fractions, with a hint of decimals. Needless to say the solutions were all wrong, and the hilarious chorus from the elders, who had done the sum perfectly on their fingers, drowned even master-*ji's* objurgations.

"Ho, brothers! the village would be ruined by that calculation", was the mirth-choked verdict of the elders.

So, after six weeks' real enjoyment we went back by

the higher land, where rain had not fallen for months and the countryside lay in the grip of drought, to Kasur, where the beloved water-course from the canal had brought hitherto undreamt-of growth—a perfect wilderness of flowers.

Looking back, I realise how much of my time had been spent with the men folk; how little I had seen of the women. That was to come afterwards.

CHAPTER V

IT is extraordinary how quickly the European recognises the difference in a thermometer heat between seventy-nine degrees and eighty. The one is summer, the next hot weather. And the garden knows it too. The English flowers meet the sun's morning kiss bright and sweet as ever, but by noon are weary and worn by his caresses. Yet there were heaps and heaps of Oriental beauties ready for it; more *voyant*, perchance, in a way more material. Some of them certainly were transcendently beautiful to my eyes; but I doubt much if the eyes of those who came every Sunday to enjoy the coolness of the garden and the opportunity of displaying their dignities noticed them much. These were the Municipal Council; for much to the gratification of that body the ex-officio President (my husband) had promulgated an invitation to all his co-members to assemble at the Court House Garden for what in England we should term "tea and talk".

Unfortunately tea was then out of the question, so I searched round for other comestibles, since humanity cannot really meet on friendly terms without eating something. This underlying, inborn need is at the bottom of all the many religious feastings in the world—the very sacrament of the Christian Church relying largely on the fellowship of food.

Now Kasur was a noted producer of melons, and in this early summer time they grew in profusion between rows of onions. Why onions, I never grasped: the one never tasted of the other; but they both flourished exceedingly. So, every morning, from one source or the other, baskets of melons were presented, some good, some bad. Some, with red flesh, tasted horribly of rhubarb magnesia, some were as fragrant, as delectable as a hot-house fruit. These, iced (we got our ice daily by special post from Lahore), suited our Sunday visitors to perfection; they devoured enormous quantities of them, *sans* sugar, *sans* spoons. Now, at Christmas time, the same magnates and worthies had been invited to a real English dinner. At the time Wahhabee-ism—not the political but the religious Wahhabee-ism, which advocates the eating in common with all followers of One God—was in evidence at Kasur. Those who did not entirely approve, still did not like openly to cavil; so we had quite a full attendance. Due care had been taken—and they knew it—to avoid the faintest suspicion of pollution, and I had served them with fish curries, red *pullaos*, and roast mutton instead of beef. Then the plum-pudding had been guiltless of brandy and beef suet. They had eaten, to my mind largely, and I had been disappointed when the leader, in reply to my husband's inquiry as to whether they would prefer sherbet or plain water, had said. "*Mir bân*, but we have not eaten sufficient to warrant our drinking."

However, the plum-pudding was an enormous success. Every atom of it disappeared; they could have managed two or three more. So I bethought me of cold plum-pudding, and it was substituted for cake at our Sunday receptions. It was greeted with enthusiasm.

So, all those hot months iced melon with cold plum-pudding was served to the guests; and it never disagreed with any of them!

Then cholera broke out all over the province and a case or two occurred in Kasur. Now, though I was, as it were, out to learn, I *could not* believe cold plum-pudding and iced water-melon (for by this time the real melons were out of season) was a suitable diet for cholera time. So the next Sunday I changed it to sponge cakes and jelly—the effect, I was told, being disastrous. At any rate, a petition was put in that, seeing the great indigestibility and richness of sponge cake and jelly, a return to the simplicity and entire wholesomeness of water-melon and plum-pudding was desirable. An excellent example of the saying: "What's one man's meat . . ."; an admirable setting forth, also, of the folly of treating humanity as homogeneous, whereas every baby that is born into the world differs from the next in glory. Anyhow, the Committee enjoyed its plum-pudding immensely and no casualties occurred.

The Committee used to appear at first, a round dozen or more, as the Municipal Committee pure and simple. So it would discuss problems appertaining to all things, and with immensely long Persian salutations take its departure behind some flowering shrubs. Thence it would emerge as the Sanitation Sub-committee, in number reduced to three, and would discourse learnedly about saucer drains and sweepers' brooms. This in its turn would, with infinite politeness and ceremonial, disappear behind the flowering shrubs, to give place to the Educational Committee, which—to please me, of course—was more numerous, including the only two Hindus who were allowed to sit on the Municipal

Council. And they would discourse in the most flowery of Persian, as befitted the occasion, about the necessity of having educated mothers. They in their turn would be replaced by the Gardens Committee (to please my husband), and so on and so on. The remainder, discreetly hidden by the flowering shrubs, would meanwhile be eating iced melon and cold plum-pudding. Of course, it was all, in a way, like comic opera; but oh! the "sweetness and light" of it! Surely, silly doubtless though it was, it was far better than yelling crowds of youths, and dirty shoes thrown recklessly at all the world!

Down in the city, which was a good mile away through sand and bricks and ruins of some past prosperity, there were now two thriving Mahomedan female schools and two thriving Hindu ones; for, of course, the rival religions had to keep pace with one another. Nothing has impressed me more in India than the absolute necessity for keeping the Scales of Justice without the slightest bias. Give an inch, and Moslem cannot help taking an ell from Hindu, and vice versa. We Westerners who have outgrown many social distinctions cannot realise how much they mean to the Eastern. Indeed, one of the gravest faults of our English education in England, for Indians, is that it has to be veneered on to a solid Eastern background. The young Indians who now crowd the Hammersmith bus forget that the great mass of the people in India would look first to see of what caste their fellow travellers were.

The Prince of Wales was coming out to India in the cold weather, and Kasur was almost beside itself with pride when I informed the Municipal Committee that

an order for a bed coverlet for His Royal Highness had been placed with their schools. What it would have liked to do, of course, would have been to pass the order on to the most skilled Delhi workman and then present it as the first fruits of female education. But, of course, this could not be allowed, and in the end a very fair example was sent in. I had not then entirely escaped from European ideas on art; so it was rather a conglomerate of Persian satin and Prince of Wales feathers; but it was quite pretty. The great difficulty was to keep the white satin clean. A native city, though it is free from smuts, has many other contaminations; and I sometimes think that a dirty smell soils quite as much as a dirty hand. That is one reason why I have always hated towns.

Of the Prince's expected visit there is nothing personal to record, except that at the big Ball I was adjudged by the highest authority the only woman who could really dance a Scotch reel. It made me think of my light-toed father, aged seventy-five, who, surely, was the best of reel dancers. A quivering jelly would not have been shaken under his footfall.

Curious, is it not, that the inheritance of pride has never been accurately analysed by educationalists? But, say what you will, there is little doubt that it forms an integral part in the characters on which all educationalists have to work as foundation. The grandchildren or great-grandchilren of those who have distinguished themselves in any way are more likely to feel *noblesse oblige* than the children and great-grandchildren of the ordinary ruck.

Anyhow, in my own case, I can only say that any self-conceit was quite overborne by the thought of my

father's lightsome feet. I can see him still like the Dancing Faun in the "Eightsome". So let him lie buried in this my Garden of Remembrance—for Remembrance is Fidelity.

And now, as I look back, something else shows itself before me connected with the large camp that was prepared for visitors at the festival of the Prince's visit to Lahore. It was my first pitched battle with authority, and so it stands out clear. The camp was, of course, arranged by Government. Hotels were almost non-existent in those days, yet a large influx of visitors was expected and desired. So to avoid the necessity of each person bringing tents from afar, Government had a fine camp erected of all the tents they could collect at Head-quarters. There is something very attractive about a large standing camp in Northern India. The sandy plain which *must* be chosen as a pitching place is all intersected with rectangular roads, along which the white tents stand regularly, every tent-peg square to an inch. This tent-pitching to a pattern is a great art; it must have been at its acme in Moghul times when the Royal camps sometimes stretched over miles. And much of the regality of those days has survived. So edges and lawns are sown with quick-sprouting barley and beds are prepared in which, a day or two before the great occasion, chrysanthemum shoots, full of buds, are planted; they flower profusely, looking as if they had roots! Even palm trees are transported to make a sort of avenue to the central marquees, where the flag-staff now shows the British flag. Yet those with seeing eyes can but regret that it replaces the big, shining lantern which in old time proclaimed far and near that here was the Lamp of Justice, ready to produce Light

out of Darkness by the wise councils of the King. It was a good symbolism anyhow.

In this case, of course, the marquees were apportioned to dining-room, drawing-room, etc. Now, my German piano wanted tuning, and the only person in the province capable of doing it (I had not yet, driven by dire necessity, acquired the art) was a certain bandmaster at Meean Mir. So, knowing the Government official in charge of the camp, I offered the use of the instrument for the drawing-room; for, of course, but for this suggestion, a piano would have been absolutely out of reach; there was none for hire nearer than Calcutta. The offer was gratefully accepted, and from our own tents, which we had pitched under some trees hard by, as my husband loathed constant society, we could hear it being thrummed upon with vigour. Now those who used the Government tents in the standing camp were charged ten rupees a day to cover the expenses of roads, lighting, sanitation, and lodging. We had none of these things, so I was indignant at being charged for them, and protested. Quite a wordy war ensued which ended by my husband sending in a bill of sixteen rupees a day—the usual charge—for the use of the piano. This abjectly foolish little episode lingers in my memory—and so lies in my Garden—as an excellent example of the strange niggardliness of Government which has done more to lower the prestige of our rule in India than anything else.

The recurring cold weather season always brought about the necessity for re-measuring the appetite of the big river. So harmless, so quiet it looked now; so contented with the low, sandy channels over which, but a few months before, it had carried its icy-cold burden

from the distant snows. And here one is forced to see, to understand, the enormous interest which those often unseen hills have upon every man, woman, and child in Upper India. A cloudless sky, brilliant sunshine, almost intolerable heat; yet causelessly, almost unexpectedly, down come the floods from Holy Himalaya. One has to reckon with that influence in estimating the character of the people.

There is, however, one more vivid memory of *durya-burdi* time to enter the Garden and remain there "for ever at rest"; to remain long after the personality which pens the remembrance shall have passed away. I was in a hurry to get back to Kasur—possibly something about my schools. Anyhow, I left my husband to go the long way, while I rode straight across the green fields, and so up the steep bank on to the uplands—those uplands which some thirty years before had seen the last stand of the Sikhs before the victorious British; for it was the field of Sobraon. And there I met an old man who told me the whole story of the fight. How there had been a rally here, a tremendous struggle there. How the Sikh guns had failed, how prodigies of valour had been of no avail. "It was not", he said, and there was a challenge in his old eyes, "that the Huzoor should think one was better than the other. All fought as brave men should—we Sikhs, you British. But"—and here he paused to shake his head and thrust out his left hand, the thumb showing about an eighth of an inch off the little finger-tip—"But—your leaders were *so* much better than ours—just *so* much—and it is leadership that tells—only leadership".

Beyond the fact that he had been in the great charge of the Sikh cavalry, I know nothing of this poor, pale

ghost that has to be laid to rest with his words—"It is only leadership that tells".

Leadership? And how are we—poor fools as a rule—to get at it? By council-school education? I trow not. It is like mercy. It comes from Heaven. And yet we fools will try to have it that all men are equal.

All this time the Municipal Committee was much worried about there being no proper offices in which it could exercise its several duties; for it was beginning to consider itself as of some consequence. So, to please it, I had, during the hot weather, given them my idea of what such a building should be. An office room of course, a library for the various books which the future was to provide, a small room for Sub-committees, and a large hall for state occasions. It was this latter which evoked unqualified admiration, for it had an arched apse to one side which was raised two steps above the floor of the hall, and, when set round with seats for the notables, would provide still higher seats in the middle for the President and the two Vices. They were enchanted with the idea, which, of course, was absolutely in accordance with their mentality; so much so, that they insisted on sending my drawings and plans to the Department of Public Works, so as to give it an idea of what was wanted.

And now—*miserabile dictu*—had come back a lengthy report, objecting entirely to the ground plan, which in truth was somewhat like a section of a wedding cake. For in addition to the apse, I had provided a semi-circular sort of verandah which had this advantage, that the real *rais* (nobles) could squat on the inside angle formed by two walls, the next in rank could similarly squat on the first step; and so on to the

second, third, fourth steps (for the whole building was on a plinth), until the garden and the *hoi polloi* were reached. This, of course, was also in deference to the ingrained sense of caste. Well! the Department of Public Works not only vetoed this, but it struck out the apse, and presented in its stead a very creditable drawing of a Swiss chalet! Anything more unsuitable could scarcely have been devised. Anyhow, the Municipal Committee would have none of it; they stuck to my plan. In vain I told them I was no architect, that the apse would require a sixteen-foot arch, and that I had never built one two feet wide. All difficulties were swept aside. There was an old architect in the town who would guarantee everything. Finally, it wouldn't cost a quarter of what the D.P.W. would charge.

I believed all this firmly. I knew that outside our modern science there still existed rules of thumb that had built such monuments as the Taj and the Fort at Delhi. I knew that the D.P.W. estimate was high; but still I held out; the thought of the sixteen-foot arch lay heavy on my soul. But it was no use. When we came back from camp we found the building already above its foundations. In a few months, at a ridiculously low cost, it was completed. Then came a real act of God to test its strength and durability. In honest truth, I scarcely expected it to stand the strain; but it did so, and as no such visitation has occurred since at Kasur, I have no doubt but that the Municipal Hall is still standing.

The story of the calamity is well worth the telling, for it illustrates admirably what Kasur was in those days at any rate. What has changed it?—if indeed it be changed.

We had not had a drop of rain for nine months. At the best of times Kasur gets but thirteen inches in the year. The monsoon had failed and the winter rains had not appeared. We were drought-stricken. Only where the canal cut—a very small one—reached, could we rear a blade of grass. So one Sunday the Municipal Committee informed me that they had decided on praying for rain. Twelve Hindu *yogis* and twelve Mahomedan *fakirs* (mark the absolute equality of both) were to be set naked in the sun, without food or water for twenty-four hours and pray for rain. It was an infallible recipe—that is, if the Merciful One could with justice grant the request. And here may I interpolate that the Oriental appears to me to be able to differentiate more easily then we do between mercy and justice. That is, I think, why so many of his verdicts appear to us cruel.

Now, when I found myself right up against superstition or unreasonable custom, I used, if I could, to combat it with gentle raillery. So I said that, since the recipe was so infallible, it was surely unwise to petition for rain without qualifying the noun with some limiting adjective such as a little rain, enough rain, or sufficient rain. This led to quite a discussion, in which they upheld that it would be blasphemous to limit the Creator's wisdom; whereat I pressed the thesis that, if so, it was surely best to leave Him the sole judge as to the desirability of rain or no rain. They departed, naturally, convinced that they were right. This was on Sunday afternoon. Monday was a very hot airless day, and I thought several times of the four-and-twenty holy men praying in the heat.

But the thought of them rushed clamorously to my

brain when, at 4 A.M. on Tuesday morning, I was awakened by a splash on my nose. At the same moment my husband from his bed in the opposite corner of the room called: "Good Lord! it's raining".

And it was indeed. Five minutes afterwards, in our dressing-gowns, we were tearing down pictures and curtains, pulling chairs, tables, even the piano, into the centre of the drawing-room, covering them with rugs and carpets. The walls were streaming. Of course they were only modern half-burnt brick; but even the old dome was dripping. Looking out from the verandah about five A.M. in the tardy dawn one could see nothing but literally sheets of falling water. The bearer arrived to say the ducks were drowning. His fears had to be allayed. The horses had to be led to an outhouse which stood raised above the rest. About six A.M. a messenger from the city arrived swimming and half-swimming with a note enclosed in a tin box tucked into his turban. It was from the highest native official. "Farewell, this is not rain. This is '*Tophan Elahi*' (the flood of God)."

So it went on till eight A.M., and then, as suddenly as the cloudburst had begun, it ceased. There was even a break of blue in the sky, a hint of sunshine.

But, ye heavens, what a washed world! There had been no wind, no storm, nothing but a pitiless downpour, not violent, not devastating, except to man's handiwork. Not a servant's house was standing; but the flowers, bent, sodden, were yet unbroken.

My husband and I put on wading trousers—he was a great fisherman—and splashed knee-deep across the high road to the office buildings. On the roof we found the Deputy, a stout little man whose stomach was the most prominent part of him, naked save for his loin-

cloth, squatting beside the rain-gauge. He put his palms together as if praying for mercy and said plaintively: "It is not my fault, Huzoors! I have been baling for hours, but I have not been able to keep count".

Small wonder, when at the canal station some twelve miles away, two officers had measured no less than twenty-four inches in the eight hours.

Well! the city was isolated from us by a roaring river, some half-a-mile broad, for ten days, and two thousand of the five thousand tall houses in the town were down or partially down. Luckily our system of housekeeping involved large store rooms, for, being on higher ground, we were completely cut off from supplies for several days, since a boat had to be brought from the river, before we could stir. By degrees, however, news filtered through, and we learnt that the cloudburst had started higher up the river, causing it to revert to its old bed, a deep *nullah* between us and the city. Fortunately, occurring as it did during the first hours of daylight, the loss of life had been very small, though, amongst a very few others, our ice-bringer had been swept away on the high road and drowned.

But it was a good seven days before the Municipal Committee assembled in the Court-House garden once more; and then you could have knocked me down with a feather, when I was met by almost tearful upbraidings.

"Oh! *mem-sahiba*. Why did you not tell us *you knew*"?

Why indeed? It had not struck me before, so I was simply speechless.

Of course it appeared incredible at the time; it seems more so now, after the lapse of so many years; but it

is a fact that those good, honest, in a way reasonable folk firmly believed, that, had I chosen to do so, I could have warned them. And it was not a faked opinion, for about six weeks afterwards a rumour ran through the town that I had had a dream, and the whole population of Kasur, some fifteen thousand persons, camped out for the night on higher ground.

It is curious, the effect of such perfect belief and trust upon those to whom it is given. It makes one feel as if one was bound to justify it; as if it were a heavy burden one was bound to carry. I remember one of my dispensary mornings when a poor mother said to me: "If you haven't time, mother of mercy, to give the baby medicine, just write your name on a piece of paper, and I'll give it as a pill. That will do till to-morrow."

I could have cried.

And now, they tell me all is changed! I read the newspapers and hear of boycotts and outrages and bombs.

What has changed these people?

Surely it must be the devil.

Anyhow my sixteen-foot arch stood triumphant and I hope still stands so.

But, as I am relating these evidences of trust, I may as well add to them one which I believe is unique, one which it grieved me to reject.

A company of some twenty tall, bearded landholders from the river land, delegates from about eighty more, came to me one day with the following proposition:

"Our land in the village is growing short. We are too many for it. We want more. Now if the *Mem-sahiba* will consent to buy thirty thousand acres of the new land which has just been opened up by the Chenab

canal—she will be able to buy it easily—we will move there. A hundred of us, wives and families, oxen, sheep, ploughs, everything that is necessary. We will build our own village and we will build you and the Sahib a fine house, and we will reserve five thousand acres for the angelic one (my husband) to shoot in, and you will be able to go to the hills whenever you like. You shall be the Begum, and *mem-sahiba* ! we will swear *never to go to law*, but to refer all quarrels to you."

It was a fair offer, the last temptation the strongest, as they knew very well, for even in those days the pest of pleaders was evident. But the offer had to be refused; not the least reason being that India never suited my husband. But it is a fine Utopia to have, as it were, for my very own. What a tyrant I should have been! What a thorn in the side of any self-respecting British Government!

I was that almost as it was; for, during a very short period in which my husband had acted for the officer in charge of Lahore, I had aired some of my views in the then local newspaper; its editor, becoming suddenly ill, had unwisely asked me to write editorials.

This I did. And I drew attention to the lack of wisdom manifested in allowing the land to pass from the husbandman to the usurer. The procedure then was this. The peasant mortgaged his land, the usurer foreclosed, the sovereign right over the land which from time immemorial had existed being ignored. The usurer became owner, the peasant a slave. The only remedy, I urged, was to make the interest of both husbandman and usurer identical by claiming sovereign rights to choose a new tenant in the event of sale. Thus the usurers would be in no hurry to foreclose, and the

peasant would feel that it was to the usurer's advantage to give him ample credit.

It was nearly twenty years before Mr. Septimus Thorburn, to whom all honour is due, managed to get the laws amended, to achieve the object of my suggestion, which was, briefly, that the interest of the usurer and the peasant should be made identical. I also aired other views, none of which, I fear, were very acceptable; but I was beginning to feel that I had sufficient knowledge of the people to speak up; that circumstances had so favoured me that I was able at any rate to give some of their views. And I was beginning to understand what the outside attitude of India towards women conceals from all outside observers: that the husbands of India are, as a rule, the most henpecked men in existence.

CHAPTER VI

It was now the beginning of our third hot weather in Kasur. It had been lonely in a way, but fortunately so far neither of us had been ill, though constant care was necessary to keep my husband fit. But mercifully, a great friend, a doctor, had suggested arsenic instead of quinine, and that kept the fever fiend away. But I had had one really dreadful yet laughable adventure with a wisdom tooth. I had borne it till Nature could no more. At last I decided on having the offender out; so I sent for the native hospital assistant. Tentatively I asked him if he thought he could pull out a tooth?

"By the blessing of God I will," was the reply.

I could not think it satisfactory; but, as I had no choice, the nearest dentist being miles away at Simla, I duly ventured.

The result may be inferred from what a first-class English dentist said, nine months afterwards: "You have suffered the direst agony possible to a human being."

Briefly, the blessing of God had crushed into atoms, on the nerve of a perfectly sound tooth! next door to the offender! It was certainly a case of like cures like, for the lesser evil was lost in the greater. For a fortnight I beat my head on the bed as I crouched on the floor while my husband fed me on brandy and water. It

really was a terrible time. Still it ended, chiefly, I think, through the medium of red-hot knitting needles, and it left me quite glad that the three months' privilege leave which had accumulated were to be spent in Kashmir. A preliminary, as it were, to our going home on furlough the next year.

We were a *partie carrée:* ourselves, the Commissioner of our district, and the Superintendent of Vaccination, who had to go on inspection duty. We were all old friends, and I think it may be said that we enjoyed ourselves immensely; at any rate I did, for in truth all the three men spoilt me terribly. The dear old Colonel was a walking encyclopædia, and had but one fault—his ineradicable belief that a Spiti pony could carry his sixteen stone up a perpendicular cliff. It managed the feat as a rule cheerfully, being a splendidly strong beast, but with such slitherings, slidings, and backward slippings that we onlookers were terrified. Then the doctor was the most cheerful of Scotsmen, owning a big collie called "Lovat" who kept the whole camp, including our two terriers, in great order: he also owned a charming voice when uplifted in Scottish ballads. Indeed, I have never heard "Corn Rigs are bonnie" so well sung as I have heard it often amid the Kashmir Hills. Then there was my husband, absolutely content. So we were well fitted to enjoy ourselves; and we did. For the first time in my life I kept a diary; chiefly, I think, because I had nothing else to do—except sketch.

And here I may as well, once and for all, refer to a terrible loss that befell me some years afterwards. I left my portfolio full of nearly all my Indian sketches at home for safe custody. By whose fault I know not, but I never saw them again. It was a sad, sad loss, one

which by no possible means could be lessened; not that the sketches themselves were of any value, though it is idle, useless, and really conceited to say that I had no talent; I had undoubtedly considerable talent—Sir Noel Paton's dictum that I should be brought up as an artist was possibly a true one—but as I sit writing in this my Garden of Fidelity I feel how helpless words are to convey anything material. One can convey an emotion, because it has never been seen, and varies with each individual; but the Matterhorn, for instance, remains for all time changeless, unapproachable, ready to give the lie to any description. A base imitation is better.

The first thing I set down, at starting, in my diary was wonder at the engineering skill of the newly-opened bridge over the Chenab. "I could scarcely believe", I wrote, "that I had really, in a few minutes, crossed the great River. Six months before it had been a wearisome sea passage of eight hours."

My next wonder is at the extreme inconvenience of the *kilter* or pannier which, carried on the coolie's back, has to contain everything required. Its refusal, being round, to carry anything square is horrible; as Marjorie Fleming puts it, a paintbox is "dreadful", but a book is "devilish".

We entered by the Murree route, and immediately after passing the cholera barrier at Kohala bridge, found that in consequence of the Colonel (whom we immediately nicknamed Mr. Barlow) being a Commissioner we were immensely distinguished. The Maharajah of Kashmir, indeed, had sent what they call a bungalow or native *jhan-pan*, for me. A wonderful edifice of scarlet cloth with a dome roof and a gilt knob. I am afraid I did not use it much, as I preferred my

Arab pony "Chip"; but I afterwards found it very useful to convey "Spech", the prick-eared Highland terrier, who elected to have five puppies on the journey.

Had I understood as well as I did in latter years the objection which most Indians have to dogs, I would not so have desecrated the Royal palanquin; but though I had learnt a good many things during my three years at Kasur, I had not learnt all! No! not even when I left India finally in 1889 had I learnt half; it is a hard country for a Westerner to grip.

My record runs, for the first week or so, mainly of hills and dales and rushing rivers. The beauty of it all was, I think, rather oppressive. It eluded my paint-box and pencils; I was reduced to impotent admiration. But the description of the Pass of the Jhelum river tends to show that even then I felt the possibility of another medium besides paint. "Overhanging cliffs of schist, broken and contorted into a myriad fantastic shapes, rise from the narrow strip of land where lie scattered huge boulders and blocks of slate, bordering the Great river, which here, from the extreme rapidity of the current, shows one sheet of foam. Tall, straight cedars overshadow the whiteness; over the fir-crowned cliff a patch of snow glistened brilliantly. Surely a deodar forest is the most beautiful of sights. The indigo blackness of its foliage, the downward sweep of its branches, the intense blue of the shadows it casts are perfection".

I added the remark that "with true native obtuseness to the beauties of Nature, the rest-house was built in the only ugly part of the Pass, where, also, the flies were, like the scenery, beyond description".

I am afraid this criticism is true. I have often won-

dered why it is that with eyes so attuned to colour and form in art as seldom to produce anything crude or false, the native of India should have no appreciation *at all* of natural beauty. I am inclined to think that this appreciation which he has of form and colour in art is really due entirely to heredity. Generations of craftsmen following on each other crystallise colour and form beyond the power of any one man to alter them. Of course there are exceptions, but the mass of the people have the greatest difficulty in recognising exceptional beauty in Nature or art. Very few of those uneducated, indeed, can translate a two-dimensional picture into the three-dimensional scene it represents. So they are totally unable to enjoy pictures.

I think the scenery around us in the Pass of the River Jhelum was almost too grand even for us Westerners. At least I note our delight in a "churning stream eddying, swirling, dashing over many-coloured boulders with deep pools between that carried us homewards thousands of miles and set H. longing for fishing tackle". Alas! however, those pleasant Kashmir streams then held no trout. There was a species of grayling, but it seemed to prefer a purely mulberry diet.

The houses, to be seen mostly up secluded glens, reminded me of Swiss chalets. Pitched roofs, entirely of timber, carved and ornamented: the lowest story, some eight feet high, raised from the ground on six-inch wooden feet. The flooring of this resembles parquet from the deft way in which it is fitted together. Above this is a story but half the width of the lower one, the rest being used as a verandah. Then comes the high pitched roof supported on wooden pillars so as to form an open-air attic where the family sits by day and the

fowls roost by night. But the roof itself is the glory. It is thatched with grass, and on it purple and white iris and many-coloured anemones grow profusely.

We found the town of Baramulla, at the entrance to the valley proper, prepared for our coming. Such trays of cherries—better than those in the Antwerp markets, and that is saying something—mulberries, water beans, and, most alluring, the trays themselves, neatly turned of unbaked clays and mosaiced all over with inset wild flowers. Beautiful always, of course, but for a day or two, beautiful exceedingly. And a grand boat awaited us on the river—a real royal barge, with a raised platform in the middle canopied in red velvet and tinsel, with twenty boatmen seated fore and twenty aft.

I realised then, what I had not realised before, how much we owed to the fact that our "Mr. Barlow" was the premier Commissioner of the Punjab, and, as such, the representative of Her Majesty the Queen. But he was so modest, so regardless of etiquette, that one could not realise his immense dignity. He was a charming companion, always ready with criticism, even about subjects of which he knew nothing. This suited me exactly, as I believe in such criticism being the only way of acquiring information. But his chief merit in my eyes was the fact that he was almost the only official I had as yet met who accepted the fact that I knew, say, the difference between a *patwari* and a *kanungo* without a perfectly silly surprise. Silly, since what person other than a congenital idiot could *possibly* live in daily communication with these two village functionaries, as every civil servant's wife must do when in camp, without differentiating them?

We went for a row up the river, which here is a broad placid lake, as we could not shoot the bridge and get to the town, because our grand, gold-tipped canopy was too lofty. For these Kashmir bridges, of which we were to see many, are very low. They are made of huge logs of wood overlapping each other cantilever fashion. I found this row demoralising even to my energy, lying as I did on soft cushions, while forty rowers showed off their fancy strokes. It is surprising what a beautiful effect some of these have; one specially which by a feather into the water throws up a hissing line of spray. Of course, all depends on the rhythm and accuracy of the stroke, which is made with a heart-shaped paddle; but these boatmen had most likely been Royal rowers for generations, so were perfect. One has to count for this accuracy in art, due to the caste system, all over India. It is wonderful. For instance, the native carpenter's adze is an instrument which no European workman can use without cutting his wrist, except by long practice. A native carpenter boy of eight will use it successfully the very first time. A skilled European craftsman in an arsenal demonstrated this to me.

Our voyage towards Srinagar in the Royal Barge was delightful, but I could scarcely summon up sufficient energy to sketch, yet I made rather a good pen-and-ink of Kashmir girls husking rice on the banks, of which my party approved. They always sized up my work! As we neared Srinagar, boats became plentiful; mostly small punts steered by women. The Doctor had for ever been raving about the beauty of the Kashmir boat-women, quoting Moore as witness . . .

"If woman can make the worst wilderness dear,
Think! Think! what a Heaven she can make of Kashmir."

So I amused myself by caricaturing those I actually saw, under the title, "The Doctor's Dream of Fair Women". It caused merriment at night, when I was generally made to display my day's work.

About sunset time we were met by the Commander-in-Chief, a stout little man with a big nose, a big *pugri*, a big sword, and the general appearance of a Levantine Jew. So we passed through three of the quaint wooden bridges of the town, which were crowded with spectators to see us pass. By this time we had quite a following of Royal canopied boats, and I began to feel that desire to be extravagantly dressed which always besets me when I find myself in any honourable position, especially when a magnificent creature in yellow satin and silver appeared with a hundred and ten trays of sweetmeats, fifty-five baskets of fruit, and a thousand and ten solid silver rupees. These, of course, were returned, with Mr. Barlow's most modest politeness. Thereafter we were left to dinner, and so, as Pepys says, to bed. Magnificence is fatiguing, and I admit that even my energy had deteriorated.

I spent most of my time in Srinagar wandering in and around the Dhal lake. The floating gardens, formed by matting together the lotus stalks and water weeds, covering them with soil, growing melons and cucumbers on them, adding to them year by year, were beautiful, but even in those early years my interests were centring themselves around the great Moghuls, and I spent whole days in the gardens which they planted on the shores of the lake. Of these, the Nishast garden was the finest, with its magnificent avenue of silver-barked plane trees, its water courses, its fountains, its delicately carved central pavilion. But what has remained

with me most clearly all these years is the Takht-i-Suleman or Throne of Solomon. It is an isolated peak over a thousand feet high, the sharp, rocky summit of which is crowned by a ruin of black marble. Approached by a long flight of steps, it dominates the whole valley. From it you see the river curving and twisting itself into the bends which suggested, so they say, the famous shawl pattern. What was the ruin originally when it first arose, some two hundred years before Christ? Buddhistic, Hindu, or something earlier than either? Who can say? It is now Hindu; though some of us may question the wisdom of our rulers in setting a Hindu over a Moslem people. Still the Takht-i-Suleman fascinates one. For over two thousand years it has been held in reverence by many faiths and creeds; and he who first built it had at least the foundation of all religion—the desire for something beyond this world, the instinct to worship upon a mountain.

So by leisurely marches we went on up the Sind valley. But ere we left I had an insight into the shawl manufactories, which has left me with a perfect hatred of these products. Wretched low reed huts, filled with boys and men looking as if they were all consumptive. The Maharajah had the monopoly. The weavers worked ten hours a day and received a pay of one anna—one fourth of that which we gave to the coolies who carried our baggage. It is to be hoped conditions have improved; as it was, I carried away the impression that Kashmir was crushed under its alien ruler.

I could fill pages with my delight in its beauties; they, thank Heaven, must remain, an evidence of Something we must see, but cannot, as yet, understand. This thought consoled me when, one day in the

most marvellously beautiful part of a marvellously beautiful pass, snowy mountains before and behind, a carpet of flowers, an emerald-tinted river rushing at my feet, I came upon three men. Two with drawn swords leading a third, handcuffed, scowling, full of tired fear.

"He killed his mother."

The words lingered in my ears for hours, nay, days.

We stopped a while at Sonamurg, surely the most beautiful place in the world. In fancy I built a house there years ago, and to this dream-house I retire when I lose my temper with my present surroundings. It always soothes.

We passed over the Zojilah Pass into Baltistan. It was a new experience; a rainless tract, with no green anywhere, but the hills were beautiful in their soft, warm colourings. The people, too, were different; evidently of the Mongolian type, with oblique eyes and high cheek-bones. It was difficult to tell man from woman there by reason of their wearing much clothing, just as it is difficult to tell them here nowadays by the scantiness of it! It was here I first saw polo played; not our game, but similar, and played on small twelve-hand ponies.

After Dras, some ten thousand feet above the sea, we turned back, our time running short. On the way Kashmir-wards I picked one morning thirty-two different kinds of wild flowers and blotted them all in my diary book before noon. I look at them as I write, and I still feel proud of them. Certainly the fairy godmothers gave me a talent, for the rough sketches have crystallised an idea.

So, day after day passed. Not a page of my diary

but records something I would fain bring to my Garden of Fidelity. The flowers! the fruits! Walnuts, apples—I have seen a whole hillside covered with ripe red apples, which, however, were not good to eat—pears, apricots, plums, quinces, raspberries, currants, gooseberries, grapes, mulberries, strawberries, peaches, pomegranates, all growing wild—for the bears, if for no one else. Doubtless it is all changed now; perhaps they have wireless at Sonamurg.

But then it was the "Golden Meadow", a paradise. As I said, "Surely, surely no one could feel otherwise than happy there".

We saw so many things on our return journey that it is idle to attempt an abbreviated record. One thing, however, may interest. In those days birch-bark books were in common use in Kashmir. One day I cut from a birch tree with my penknife no less than fifteen good layers of writing material no more absorbent than straw paper. But there are so many entries of incidents in my diary that even Remembrance gets crowded; and yet I cannot forget. Surely remembrance is the most marvellous thing in the world. One moment we have it not. The next, without cause perceptible—to ourselves as we are, at any rate—it returns full-fledged. So I see, as I write, a bare hillside dotted with sheep, fringed with deodar forests. At its foot I see an angry *mem-sahiba*, a calm doctor, and at his feet a sable collie dog, its limpid brown eyes fixed on its master. "So", comes a voice, "the brutes won't give you a sheep, won't they? Not even for ten rupees? Here! Lovat!" Just a word, a wave of the hand, sable swiftness over the corries! But a minute, and the fattest wedder of the flock comes, unhurt, almost unruffled, to

the master. No! I shall never forget the look of bewilderment on the headman's face. He had been stickling for a still more exorbitant price, and magic was against him! pure magic! Those who possessed such powers must have everything they desired.

Before we left Kashmir we attempted to get as far up the hills as the sacred cave of Amarnath, some sixteen thousand feet high, but were completely beaten by the weather. Doubtless it was wisdom which made all my three travelling companions decide to turn back, but to this day I feel irritated by their caution, the more so because the morning on which we were to have started broke fine and clear.

The time of leave, however, was nearly over; but on the way back from the Liddar valley something occurred which, despite its triviality, gave me much insight into Eastern mentality.

It so happened that through some ignorance (or perversity) of our servants—all Mussulmans, of course—they pitched our tents over close to, if not encroaching upon, the recognised halting-place of Hindu pilgrims. It was at a sacred spot, and the men-folk spoke of shifting. I asked to be allowed to see for myself. So off I went amongst the little umbrella tents of the pilgrims, who, in truth, scowled at me. They were a queer-looking lot of men, naked, ash-smeared, their lime-bleached hair done up in chignon fashion. I took care not to go within defilement range of them, and as I walked I wrapped my skirts close round me, and once when a man brushed past me carelessly, I gave the pollution cry: "Don't touch me". Instantly came the question from a group of peculiarly holy men.

"Why did you say that?"

"Because I don't want to lose my caste. It's as pure as yours. We must not defile each other, must we?"

A *yogi* who was curiously like Victor Emmanuel said instantly: "Sit down, *Mem-sahiba*, and talk. That won't hurt *us*, and won't hurt *you*."

And talk we did. I understood enough about Hindu philosophy to return fragments of Grecian; so we went on at it until, a new-comer arriving, Victor Emmanuel cried out: "Don't mind the *mem*; she won't hurt."

I think they thought I was mad; that is always a passport in India. At anyrate we heard no more talk of moving. And when the holy men moved on next morning there were smiles instead of scowls. Yet, after all these years—nigh on sixty—I am as far as ever I was from understanding the personalities, the mentalities, of these men. There they were, as much immersed in this world as they could well be—I saw that by the way they cooked their food—and should put their general behaviour down as unsaintly; and yet—they considered themselves saintly. The amount of drugs they consume is, they tell me, stupendous. They were enmeshed in fine-drawn niceties of phrase—well! perhaps I wrong the genus, but I have felt unable to trust any of the *swamies* and *sunnyasies* I have met in India, save one, and he upset my growing admiration by showing me with pride that William of Prussia, when Crown Prince, had written a praiseful notice in his book.

It rained continuously on our return journey through Jammu, and the more it rained the more numerous became the fleas. They were almost unbelievable; not in houses or any place where humanity might be supposed to bring them, but in the open, far

from the haunts of man. Deodar forests were the worst places. I remember one terribly wet day, when we had to wait for even-fall ere a slackening stream from the snows would let us pass, so we arrived at our camping ground long before our baggage. It was a glade in a deodar forest where a great tree had fallen. Of course, no rest-house, no village, nothing around us save dripping branches and a regular quagmire. With great difficulty we managed to get a fire lit, and such a fire! Our only hope lay in size; and after much smouldering a tiny spark held its own in the dry tree-trunk. I only waited till, the servants coming up, our six-foot tent was pitched, a cup of hot tea provided; then I went incontinently to bed in a soaking drugget-cot, the blankets, the sheets as if they had come from the wash.

But the fleas were nothing daunted. Had they but been unanimous, they'd have pulled me out of bed!

So, very wet, a little tired and discouraged, we reached the outskirts of Jammu. They sent elephants to meet us, as the floods were out. It is a strange method of progression: up hill and down dale, reminding one of trying to cross a choppy channel sea on the knife-board of an omnibus. The Prime Minister came out to meet our Mr. Barlow, and a regiment as guard of honour played what they thought was "God save the Queen". Eleven guns should have been fired as a Commissioner's proper salute, but they fired thirteen; I presume in deference to us.

A fine house, got up with cane-bottomed chairs and red velvet had been built for the Maharajah's guests, and here we found a fellow Commissioner, fat, fair and flighty as usual. He was full of the beauties of the shawl manufactures, so we quarrelled. He took one's breath

away with his violent transitions, so that after half-an-hour I didn't know what he was talking about, and consoled myself by thinking of my husband's definition of him when, at the game of The Stool of Repentance, he went out as a chimney. He was quite annoyed when the verdict was: "Carries light matters a certain distance, but ends in smoke."

So our holiday ended.

On our way into British territory I wrote:

"Nothing remarkable, save the difference between the two sides of the little boundary ditch. On one side, cultivation to the very verge of the road: herds of cattle, ploughing, people passing. On the other, waste land, comparative death."

That was in 1876. I am told that it has all changed now; but, so long as I was in India, till 1889, the difference between the English and the native States was most marked, and migration from the borders of common occurrence. That is all I know first-hand.

CHAPTER VII

I AM now at a great turning-point in my life. Hitherto I had been learning. People have often asked me how I came to know a certain amount about Indian ways, to acquire a certain small understanding of Indian mentality. To this I have but one answer: "Kasur".

But for the fact that for a circle of some sixty miles in diameter I found myself absolutely alone save for a busy husband, I should never have set myself to do the things that I did. I should have frittered away my time, joined an association or two, inspected a school or two, been full of good work and talk, and doubtless in due time have got the Kaisar-i-Hind medal or the O.B.E. But at Kasur there was literally *no one* but the natives. There was nothing but the garden to care for. Therefore I had no choice. I had to observe—or die, since that, without some work, I should die was a foregone conclusion.

But now, soon after our return from leave, we found ourselves transferred; the time had come when we had to go elsewhere. I often wonder how some English households would take an experience which comes very often to Indian households. You have just interviewed the gardener, settled where seeds should be sown, plants planted. You have perhaps arranged for some festival to be held somewhere, next month; and

as you come in to breakfast there is your husband saying calmly: "My dear! we are transferred. I had better see about carts to-day as it is rather urgent." During the first three years of my married life we had been moved nine times. Wherefore, Heaven alone knows; it was a Government fetish. Then had come a year and a half at home; so on to Kasur, when I was just smarting from the wound of having to leave our child to the care of others. I say wound advisedly, for it is one that takes long in healing. In some cases—I should say mine was one—it never heals at all. My husband's health was poor; he loathed Government service, was always talking of premature retirement, which, as we had no private means, would have been fatal. Therefore I could not, as so many Indian mothers do to-day, halve the time between husband and children. Now it is all very well to talk of absorbing mother-love and instinctive filial affection. The first may exist, if nothing comes to take its place; the second, I think, does not exist at all. At any rate it is not born; it grows. In many Anglo-Indian families it has no chance to grow; so many mothers have bewailed the fact to me that, though their children have been good, considerate, friendly, it seemed as though something were lacking. And I do not see how this is to be amended; it must be accepted as quite inevitable, and, therefore, as a detraction from Anglo-Indian marriages.

Regarding the extraordinary isolation of our life at Kasur, I may mention the following incident. My husband, who was very fond of horses—he used to race a good deal at one time—had ordered the dogcart, with a rather restive chestnut Belooch mare in the shafts, round to the door one evening, when the Rajah of

Faridkot appeared unexpectedly for an interview, the result being that the mare was kept standing. My husband had got into the dogcart, I was following, when the mare reared, the head-stall came off in the groom's hand, and the animal, turning sharply, bolted into the garden. I called to my husband to jump out, as he was absolutely helpless, but, not seeing the danger, he stuck to his seat, pulling for all he was worth against the mare's chest. There was an awful collision against a tree, and I saw my husband shot out like a ball from a catapult into—thank Heaven!—a bed of newly planted chrysanthemums. His gardening saved his life; but he was quite unconscious. In a second every soul in the compound was around him crying "Master is dead, my master is dead." I got him carried lifeless into the nearest room. I laid him on a mattress on the floor, I put cold water to his head, hot bottles to his feet.

And then? . . .

What was to be done? The nearest doctor, the nearest European, was thirty-five miles away. I was not yet twenty-five. I was alone. That sort of thing either makes one or breaks one: in this case it was the former. My diagnosis of no bones broken, simple concussion, proved right; though to the day of his death my husband could remember nothing of what had gone before; but is there any wonder that when Fate presented such problems I learnt to rely somewhat overmuch on myself, that I became too autocratic? And there always was something to learn at Kasur, when once I had managed to get inside the skin, as it were. I remember once arriving alone in the evening at the only railway station in the district, miles and miles away

from home. I had expected to find the mail phaeton and pair awaiting me. It was not there, and I had to choose between sleeping on a string bed in the open by the police post, or hiring a native gig to do the journey. I chose the latter; the memory of a pariah dog which had barked three hundred and seventy-two times causelessly the last time I slept out decided me not to attempt sleep. So a native *ekka* was produced and I climbed on to the two-feet square platform which constitutes the passenger room. It has a canopied roof from which depend curtains that can be drawn at pleasure, and invariably are so drawn, if the occupant or occupants—for I have seen six crowded on to the two feet square platform—be discreet females. But the night was glorious. I can still see the moonlight glistening on the ripe ears of corn as we jingled by, for an *ekka* is not like any other wheeled conveyance on earth. It has not a nail in its construction. It is all bamboo, tied together with leathern thongs. The wide bamboo shafts hang precariously on straps adorned with bells, from the yoke of an otherwise unharnessed pony, while on one shaft sits the driver urging on his beast. As can be imagined, to sit an *ekka* sedately requires practice; you have, briefly, to rise in your stirrups.

Still it was better than attempting to sleep with a barking dog; and after a time I addressed a remark on the goodness of the golden glistening crops to my driver, a big, burly, black-bearded Mahomedan. He made no reply. I addressed another remark: still no answer. A third, a fourth met with like reception. I began to wonder if he were deaf, when suddenly the jingling ceased, he got down leisurely and drew the curtains round me. "The mother will be more comfortable", he

said a trifle reproachfully, "if she sees less." With that he climbed to his seat again, and answered my last question. Then I understood. I had really outraged his sense of propriety, and he was not going to countenance such behaviour from a modest woman. Thereinafter we discoursed quite amicably through the curtains, and I heard many things I would not otherwise have heard.

A trivial incident, but one which showed me, once and for all, how easily one can dry up, or open, the springs of confidence. This man really was a good sort; I had shocked him.

Before leaving Kasur and its many activities, it is difficult to choose from the crowding memories such incidents as may at once interest and illustrate the life that two Europeans had perforce to lead amongst the people of the place. The appearance of that place had changed considerably since we came. It was then a perfectly barren plain, dusty, sandy, forlorn. A few funereal-looking *farash* trees, stunted and dingy, could be seen, and in what was called the Court-house garden stood a few evergreen shrubs. But with the advent of the water-cut, things had changed. For half a mile along the city road a garden had been planted, only some hundred feet wide, yet sufficient to give a double row of shady trees, a strip of grass, a winding path bordered with common roses, jasmines, dracænas. This was a favourite plan of my husband's, and more than one such garden in the Panjab testifies to his desire to bring comfort into the lives of the people.

How this garden had grown! Heavens! how things do grow in India! At Chumba I have seen a Gloire-de-Dijon rose planted one year, wreathing the chimneys of

a two-storied house in eighteen months! And here, I cannot help wondering whether we Westerners take this rapidity of Nature into sufficient consideration in dealing with the humanity of India. Here gardening comes in with a warning. It will be found that while indigenous plants go on growing, exotic ones are apt to fail after a few years. The Gloire-de-Dijon rose was most likely a skeleton in five years; its roots were not sufficiently strong for its growth. Now, we all know the danger of forcing bulbs before they have strong soil-hold. May not, therefore, the rapid intellectual growth of the Indian schoolboy require repression, rather than stimulation? In his own, as it were, indigenous branches of knowledge, nature, heredity, and custom give him strong soil-hold; but in our Western ones the growth is apt to outstrip the root.

Be that as it may, the road-garden flourished chiefly because no exotic plant was allowed therein. Here we used to have festivals; I remember one given on my husband's birthday. On that occasion the Municipal committee gave him a dinner. Such a dinner! At least forty different dishes, each one of which I had to sample, for my husband point-blank refused more than ten, and the Vice-President set great store by his cooking; and indeed he, or his women folk, were excellent cooks. A dish of boned and curried quails sent from his house was really a triumph, and the numerous spinaches and root crops coming as an adjunct could not be bettered. He was a fairly small, spare old man, with a hawk face and close white beard, whose manners were perfection. And wherefore not, since he had been fencing master to Ranjit Singh? as such, a courtier of courtiers. He never alluded to or recalled his lost voca-

tion, except by his superlative skill in single-stick, even when matched against his son, a younger, slimmer edition of himself, with a black beard. One would not have credited the old man as a swashbuckler, though there was that in his roving eye and ready address which hinted at a lurid past. I used to feel a thrill of past romance when I saw father and son meeting each other. Whether by chance or collusion I know not, but the father always won. Then we saw wrestling matches and various feats of strength also: the former absolutely boring to alien outsiders, consisting for the most part of much slappings of thighs, interlocking of arms, and constant transgressions of all the laws of sport.

So the years passed until we had to leave. This was a fateful happening; we felt it, and I think the natives did so also. The townspeople were bent on making me a presentation; and of course I had done more for them than the majority of British officials' wives; but there was no real occasion for a presentation. Without mock modesty, I admit they had some reason on their side, but I also had much on mine when I protested that I had benefited as much by Kasur as it had benefited by me. However, they prevailed. The Government graciously acceded to their request that as an official's wife I should be allowed to accept a present, and everybody put their heads together to devise some suitable one.

Now the result of these cogitations was so remarkable, so touching, so clearly a token of what their feelings were, that I make no apology for giving the whole circumstances *in extenso*.

Imagine then the Town Hall which, in defiance of the D.P.W., they had built, and which, entirely by the wisdom of an old architect and the confidence and

trust of many supervisors, had withstood rain and storm triumphantly. Imagine this on a moonlit night in a lush garden hung with lanterns and crammed, literally crammed, with unsorted humanity. Then imagine the semi-circular steps of the building filled to overflowing with those of higher class; and so on to the Hall itself, each rank overtopping that behind it. Finally, to the apse; here was a semicircle of notables centred by two cane-bottomed arm-chairs whereon sat one Englishman, feeling, no doubt, as if he would like to put his head in a bag, and one woman waiting, as one always waits at such times, for something new, something exciting, something, as it were, on the other side of all things.

And something new, something exciting, something most distinctly from the other side, did come.

For the round, gem-set brooch they gave me was given with the simple explanation that it was indeed a token, since every jewel in it had been taken from those worn by their womenkind.

I stared at the row of threaded pearls around what looked for all the world like a pantomime jewel; I looked at the inner circle of almost valueless table-diamonds, I looked at the splinters of rubies, and finally at the bigger emerald roughly set with a verse of the Koran in the centre. I looked at all these. I essayed to speak. And then I broke down. . . .

And so, mercifully, did everyone else. We wept profusely. That, then, is my farewell to Kasur. I doubt if anyone ever had a better keepsake given them. I used to call it my Star of India, until it was stolen from me in England. Not that it matters. I can see it still; see the moonlight on the roses in the garden, the lighted

lanterns swinging in the breeze. As long as I can remember anything, I shall remember that. It is as fresh to-day as it was then; yet good learned folk tell me that life passes and is no more seen. I cannot believe them. What has been can never cease to be. As Nettleship said, "There is no room for death". The "I" which was "you" has gone too far afield; not even Death and not even God can recall the infinite rootlets which have spread from that "you" outwards, each outwards, to lay them in a grave. Yet I still ask myself if any Christian congregation ever thought of such a keepsake? Did they, I wonder?

So, rather grieving, yet still full of desire to see more over the other side, we were whirled away to home. The summer we spent in the West Highlands, where my welcome from an old retainer was "Deed, if you stop out much longer, you'll be as black as the best of them". It was pleasant going back to find all things as they had been. A merry party. And I went back in early winter to Oxford where my husband's belongings chiefly lived, and there I met endless well-known folk —Jowett, Ruskin, Pater, Pattison, Goldwin Smith, Dodgson, Sayce, and others. They were all very pleasant and kind to me; but I remember feeling them all a trifle too scholastic; as was natural after the three years of barbarism. My brother-in-law, Professor Nettleship, was a real friend of mine; the most modest, the most lovable of men, and his brother Lewis, who died in a snowstorm on Mount Blanc a few years later, was, I think, quite the most truly interesting man I ever met. I shall never forget a spring day we spent, he and I and his brother, up the river. It is good to remember their light-hearted, almost childish enjoyment of the sun-

shine, the birds, the flowers, even as they talked grave philosophies.

We spent the winter in Italy. A large party, my sister and my sister-in-law bent on sight-seeing, my husband, my little daughter of seven, and a nurse, out for sunshine, and I to learn lace-making thoroughly. Our plans, however, were much upset by the child taking whooping-cough. I, of course, followed suit—I have had the disease five times, and I believe I should succumb even now at eighty-two were I exposed to the infection—so, after a while at Naples and its surroundings, we went north to Rome. But here the whoop became so pronounced that it became necessary to remove it from the big hotels. Thus, of this, my first sight of Rome, I have but confused recollections. I remember long acres of old masters, darkly beautiful, no doubt, but still lightless. I remember sitting down aghast, overwhelmed, in a blue satin chair before Velasquez's portrait of Clement VI., in the little cabinet where it used to hang alone, supreme, feeling that Art could no further go—that here was the finest piece of painting in the world. And I remember my irritation at sightseers who used to ask me in the evenings after dinner what was the name of the great work they had so intensely admired during the morning.

But above all irritations was that caused by an American lady who failed to grip the common quip, "If Moses was the son of Pharaoh's daughter, then he was the daughter of Pharaoh's son". We tried commas, semi-colons, colons, full stops in the attempt to make her see. Finally, with distinct scorn, she said, "Of course I have seen *that* from the beginning, but I don't think

that view is borne out by Scripture; besides, it spoils the whole beauty of the story."

Now, what did she see? The question remains unanswered after all these years. Down the lapse of ages her reply echoes still, as do so many another, witness to a something which humanity has thought, but which now, to modern knowledge, appears inconceivable. How often in the history of the world one stands bewildered by the beliefs with which we meet!

So we infected ones and the nurse trekked to Viareggio, and my husband did courier to the two sightseers in Florence. The pine woods at Viareggio were balmy, the sandy dunes healthful, and we were in a quiet little hostelry where there were no children. In these inflated days it appears incredible that we three, nurse, my daughter, and I, should have been taken in collectively for twelve *lire* a day. But we were; and we were fed like fighting cocks; for Signor Palludini—my nurse called him Parafini, she had a genius for turning Italian into English—was a great cook. He would appear in white robes and cap, as the coffee came round, and ask if his guests were satisfied. And he would invite the artistes who sang at the itinerant opera which happened to be in the little town at the time, give them *sirops* and coffee, so that they might amuse the whole household; for, of course, everyone came in to listen. It was here that I first heard "Crispini ed il Comara" and many other light operas, of, to us English folk, unknown masters.

But though Signor Palludini deserves a place in my Garden for all these good deeds, there is one of his actions for which, assuredly, he deserves the highest honours possible to hotel-keepers.

My husband came down unexpectedly from Florence, a three hours' journey, on my birthday.

"What!" exclaimed Signor Palludini, "after ten years of marriage the Signor comes leagues to felicitate his spouse on her *festa*. It is angelic, heart-inspiring. It puts the rest of the world to shame! We must make of it a real *festa*."

And he did. A magnificent bouquet, at least eighteen inches in diameter, with a fine lacy frill, was immediately forthcoming; whence procured, Heaven knows, for Viareggio in those days boasted no florist—it must have been sent for six miles to Pisa. The lunch was luxurious; the dinner delicious. And for all this Signor Palludini refused payment. It was sufficient for him, he told me, to see connubial bliss which had lasted ten years! All hail! Prince of hotel-keepers.

I did what I came to do. I learnt lace-making. Only the simple coarse Italian lace, but I afterwards found it very useful. Afterwards, again, I gripped the fact that as an industry, even for schools, it was not sufficiently indigenous to flourish really in India. Had I my time over again, I should have sought for something more cognate to the lives of the people. But at that time there was little from which to choose. Sewing and embroidery were in the hands of the men, except for real *phulkari* work. And this was prohibitive in price for the only market—the European one. European ladies would not pay for really good work, because they did not understand its value; the result being that cheap imitations were faked by the professional tailors and bought readily as curtains and hangings. But real *phulkari* work, viewed as an Indian handicraft, is a very different thing. I wrote a beautifully illustrated mono-

graph for Mr. John Kipling when he was Curator of the Lahore museum. I also supplied the museum with specimens. The monograph was published by the India Office and doubtless exists there still; but as such things in a big office get inevitably overlaid by dust, a brief explanation may find its place in the Garden.

Phulkari work, then, is entirely a diaper embroidery. It is done from the back by a darning stitch in which each thread has to be counted. Given a very fine diaper such as is done in the Hazara district, it may take years to make a *chuddar* or veil. The work is done entirely by peasant women. The material is always *kadr*, the coarse native cloth which Mr. Gandhi has appropriated without a thought for its original purpose. This is dyed a deep red with oil and madder. That dyed in the past is absolutely fast; as sun-proof as even the products of the Imperial Dye-Stuff Company can be. The diapering thread is raw silk—a coarse floss silk of a golden colour. This is chiefly produced in Upper Bengal. Except for a little bleached white silk, with occasionally green dyed silk, used to make the lozenge showing the exact point of the veil which, to secure graceful draping, should come over the forehead of the wearer, no other colour is used. The aniline atrocities seen on the cheap man-made *phulkaris* are entirely the result of European bad taste and missionary aspirations.

The peasant woman, therefore, takes a length of *kadr* (which is about eighteen inches wide), rolls it into a tight roll and sets to work from the back. As she darns, she rolls up the portion finished, and it used to be considered extremely unlucky even to look at the right side until the length of stuff was finished. In almost every case it was a labour of love. Married at

extremely early ages, the girls before going finally to live with their husbands used to employ their leisure in making a veil for themselves; a veil to last a lifetime. When I was inquiring into the subject I found some evidences that different patterns were originally associated with different districts or tribes. Certainly some old women were able to say at a glance—"That comes from Hazara, that from Gurgaon". But at the time I had not got hold of a theory to fit my facts, so I lost much opportunity of proving or disproving anything. Since then I have learnt that such variations are found in the clothes worn by some of the hill tribes of Assam, where each village has a different pattern. So true is it that it takes a lifetime to know one thing perfectly. At the same time, I can imagine nothing more interesting than to trace this old, purely Indian art to its origin. I fear, however, that the time for such inquiries is over. Real *phulkari* work is seldom seen nowadays. There is neither the time nor the patience for it. Jazz colours, cheap stuffs have once more ousted sober toil. In fact, now I come to think of it, my coarse Italian laces might be more in touch with the needs of the people nowadays, since frills and furbelows will be doubtless required by Indians who become completely Westernised. Yet I still hanker after the old village industry and believe something could have been made out of it.

Another woman's work which deserved inquiry is the woollen embroidery done by the women of the Bhatias race in the Gurgaon and Hissar districts. This is very remarkable, for the stitch is unlike any other in India; it is virtually Russian stitch and is the same on both sides. Even in my time it was hard to get, as the

owners are averse to selling, and I did not come across any modern work. The Bhatias are supposed to be Rajputs, but I have my doubts as to so simple an ancestry. They have many queer customs, amongst them, if report be true, that of, among certain of the lower tribes, burying their dead beneath the hearth-stone.

But to get at truth in India one should have nine lives like a cat.

There is one thing which should be mentioned before passing on to civilisation. One day at Kasur a squirrel's nest fell on the dining-room table from the roof. In it were two pink bits of jelly. It was really difficult to tell which was head, which was tail; but they were young squirrels. I know no animal born so helpless, except possibly marsupials; but as a girl I had reared most young things. I essayed to rear these, and with the help of a sparrow's feather nipple to an essence bottle, and a bit of hot brick always kept warm in their basket, I succeeded. No more dainty pets could be imagined than the lovely little creatures who were so absolutely fearless. Tweedledum and Tweedledee I called them, for they were absolutely alike. Handsome little souls no bigger than small rats, with their barred bushy tails and dark markings down their backs. And they were useful to me also. They travelled everywhere with me, and I wonder how many friends I made through their dainty ways! They were an unfailing source of amusement, and in some cases they served as introduction, as when an old Brahman said to me, "The *mem* must be a servant of Ram's since she is so good to Ram's creatures". Then he told me the following legend:

"When the great God Ram lost his peerless wife, Sita, through the wickedness of the evil demon Ravana, He called on all His creatures to aid Him in His search for her. Now the first of all His creatures to respond was the squirrel; bright, and cheerful, and golden; for in those days it had no marks upon its back. And it leapt to Ram's arms and sate awaiting orders. But the great God's heart was gentle. He saw the beauty of the little creature. So He said, 'Not so! Thou art too pretty for strife. Live to show mankind the beauty of a life untouched by care'. So He laid His hand on the squirrel's back in blessing; and lo! the imprint of His fingers remained dark on the golden body to show that even the touch of care can cloud a life.

"For Ram was sorrowful."

Anyhow the little creatures have brought much pleasure into my life. I took them home to England one summer, and the way they accommodated themselves to shipboard life was very amusing. The rigging amused them much, but some of the passengers objected to their being free, so I had to keep them in their collapsible cages, or shut them up in our cabin: though I cannot see the ground of their offence, for daintier, cleaner, more entertaining pets could not be. They were, however, extraordinarily wilful. They could not bear my writing. They would try to stop it by laying hold of the pen and jerking it, and if that did not succeed would absolutely pass along the line with their dainty feet, and lick off the ink as I wrote. This was done with a determination to have their own way which was unmistakable; and success brought about an instant change of attitude which was almost touching. Dumtoo would snuggle down into the palm of my

hand, and with her bushy tail almost covering her eyes look at me, as who would say, "You're a dear! I thought you would give in". This may seem to some an exaggerated picture, but the more one lives with animals, the more things do we see that are inexplicable except by postulating much more power of ratiocination than the majority of mankind are inclined to grant to animals.

Take for instance this little incident. I was in a friend's house. The mantel border was a braided one and one tiny end of braid had become unsewn. Dumtoo set to work at this. I drove her away; she fled to the other end of the mantelpiece whither I pursued her to put her in her cage out of mischief, but she ran back, and as she passed the loose end of braid, she gave it a little tug. This happened a dozen times till she tired of the game.

But what does not this action show of brain power? Almost everything on which we humans pride ourselves. Above all the self-consciousness which says to itself—"It is I, little I, who am doing this thing".

No! there are very few virtues, very few vices which we cannot find reflected, faintly it may be, in what we term the brute creature. That is to say, if we are prepared to endorse that saying in the Koran "For every beast that walketh the earth and every bird that flyeth with wings is a people like to ourselves. From the Lord they came; to the Lord they shall return."

I am glad the verse does not include things that crawl! For I have a horror of snakes. The first one I saw in India was a four-feet brown cobra. It was hanging, a long rope of a thing, over the top of the pantry door; mercifully with the head portion the other side. So I

shut the door on it for all I was worth, and shouted for someone to come and despatch the caught reptile; which was satisfactorily done.

I think there must have been a pair of them about, for a day or two afterwards, yells were heard from the fowl-house where the sweeper was holding on like grim death to a similar snake with the kitchen spit. He had seen the cobra, and being (as most *sahib-logues'* sweepers are) the most virile and active of all servants—besides being the cleanest—he had rushed to the kitchen for the long iron spit. With this he had pinned the snake to the ground—alas! almost too close to the tail; for the beast, enraged, was nearly long enough to reach the sweeper's hand. Those who rushed to the rescue could hardly help laughing, for the man's face was a picture as he circled round the snake and the snake circled round him. But he was a man; he held on bravely, and the snake died.

Kasur had few snakes. I only saw those two all the time I was there.

So, farewell to it—for a time only. In later years I was to return and learn still more from it. For the present I had learned mostly about Mahomedans and Mahomedan customs, and I had gripped one thing that has never left me. I had gripped that the Mahomedan women in towns and therefore in the *purdah*, were inevitably over-obsessed by sex. It was not their fault; they were strangely unaffected by the fact; but they had nothing else about which to think. That was the simplest fact; so the question arose—How are they to be released from this stagnation? By making it less endurable?

I could not quite see my way.

CHAPTER VIII

LIFE in a large Indian station is practically the same for all Westerners. Indeed, when you come to an Indian cantonment, it is almost monotonous in its round of unchangeable amusements. At times it is extraordinarily pleasant, as when, on one or two occasions, I found myself the only lady left to amuse half-a-hundred young men; for it *is* amusing to be the centre from whom all blessings flow! So my badminton parties, my tea parties, my picnics, my theatricals went with a will. And here I must say a word, and a very emphatic one, in favour of the young men in India. One sees them so often represented as gay Lotharios, and society portrayed as a sort of nursery bed for divorce proceedings, that it is time someone told the truth; which is this. The man may be quite ready to make love to the woman if she asks him to do so; otherwise he is—or was—a gentleman. Not that there are no matrimonial troubles in India. On the contrary there are many, though, admittedly, I think, it is invariably the woman who begins them. And wherefore not? For heaven's sake let us be common-sensible and tell the truth. The majority of European women in India have nothing to do. Housekeeping is proverbially easy, there is seldom any urgent need for economy, as it is when the wife of a man on four hundred a year at home has perforce to

buy foreign meat and deny herself a new furbelow. The Anglo-Indian has few companions of her own sex, no shop windows to look at, no new books to read, no theatres, no cinemas; above all, in many cases, an empty nursery. Then the Indian husband is generally hard-worked, he often has a liver, he also feels the loss of children's chatter, their pattering feet. What more fruitful *nidus* for an anti-matrimonial bacillus can be imagined? I think it stands to the good of every married couple in India that they have not quarrelled.

And the quarrel comes sometimes about such trivial things. One comes to me, as I write, that for sheer absurdity deserves a place in the Garden of Memory. He was a clever young engineer, devoted to his tall elegant, bronze-haired wife, whose pale sculptured face made her look like a Della Robbia virgin. While she was away in the hills with the babies, he built a bath; a beautiful masonry bath lined with *chunam* plaster like marble. The sort of wide, shallow bath of transcendent purity in which an empress might have bathed!

And on her return she said it was cold!

Briefly, that was the absolute origin of the matrimonial quarrel.

They sent for me at last; for Heaven knows why, both the woman and the man often referred to me; possibly because I found it so hard not to laugh. And in this case the impulse for mirth was almost irresistible; for, stripped of all the side issues, and, of course there were thousands and thousands of them, it resolved itself into something which a little hot water could have cured. I suggested this; I even suggested that he might turn his engineering talent to the erec-

tion of a furnace so as to make it into a real Roman bath. I suggested that she might bathe in a royal robe made of blankets; but ridicule and reason alike proved useless, and there was she, looking like a queen, tearing off her wedding ring and flinging it on the floor!

And then? It is surprising how undignified a man—who, mind you, *must* in such quarrels have the superior position—can be. He would have been down on his knees to pick the bauble up but that I dragged him upright by the tail of his coat and bid him not be a fool.

What I said subsequently matters very little. They lived after that in perfect amity for five and twenty years, and doubtless, long ago, have passed to their rest. So let them have their niche, if only because long years have proved again and again to me that humanity has no weapon against plain unvarnished truth. Only you must not mind if you get killed in the telling of it.

The threat of death absolutely came to me once when I quite causelessly interfered in a grave scandal that was setting a whole station by the ears.

It was not our station, but the feeling of outrage had run so high that a definite report to Government had been agreed upon. Now this report would undoubtedly have ruined a man. I did not know him, I did not know his wife, who was at home; but I knew they had nine children and that he, quite a middle-aged man, had been caught by a Becky Sharp. I knew also that he had had a nervous breakdown and was not therefore quite capable of judging his own actions.

So I interfered. She was a clever little cat, and for two of the three days I spent in that house I doubted success. But the threatened shooting did not come off, though in the previous breakdown he had shot free;

and on the third day she caved in and retired from the Head-of-the-District's house to quite a nice little bungalow which was got ready for her, and where her baby was born twenty-four hours afterwards,

The astonishing part is that everyone was pleased! So I returned home again and the Government report was not sent in. An *amende honorable* had been made to the proprieties; and I really think that if this could only be made in the inception of most matrimonial scandals, we should hear much less about them. I think people would only be too glad to back out of a false position if they could.

I know I have had several letters of thanks from those who have so backed out.

The fact is that when two men and one woman or two women and one man find themselves *à trois*, common sense seems to desert them. And no wonder. From their earliest youth they have been taught to believe that that sort of thing is irremediable, that if people think themselves in love they must yield to their passion; that everything, even the future of innocent children, must give way to the sense of outrage, either in man or woman. I am told that to believe otherwise is contrary to nature; but I still believe that both man and woman, disappointed, betrayed, are as capable of doing their duty as they were before the knowledge came to them; and that perfect friendship, perfect love, can exist between a man and a woman to whom the thought of any physical tie is abomination.

Nevertheless it is hard to get some folk to see even a pale simulacrum of this angelic truth. I remember one man, a dear good fellow, but short, stubby, broad in the beam, who was matched with a woman off whom

you could not take your eyes. Not because she was pretty, but simply because of charm. In her white clinging draperies, her white feather boa, her pale eyes and goldy hair, tall, *svelte*, she dominated all crowds—at least to my eyes. She had married young, without loving her husband: had told him so beforehand, adding that she would tell him if she ever fell in love.

Well, she did, and he of course, madly in love, lost his head. It took some time to make him realise his own disadvantage. I had to tell him plainly that physically he was enormously her inferior, that his rival was young, good-looking, *beau sabreur*, and infinitely more suited to her than he was: that his only chance lay in the mind. With infinite pains a heroic figure was built up. He interviewed the culprits. He told them unvarnished truths, he agreed to their writing to each other, feeling certain that honour would prevent the taking of any advantage, for a whole year. He, on his part, would ask nothing more than his adversary. After that, if the two were of the same mind, he would give her ample grounds for divorcing him. I suppose it would have been a sort of collusion, but it served the purpose. So far as she was concerned it certainly eased the situation until—ye Gods! how I laughed—the first letter arrived, and the stout little husband brought it to her in the tongs! Heroic attitude went by the board, and the feet of clay became manifest.

It was in this *imbroglio* that I did something over which even my husband shook his head. I kept an assignation made by the lady to meet the man at half-past eleven at night in a lonely deodar forest. It was a beautiful moonlight night. I was thirty-two years of age and he was about the same, but I told him I had

come because I couldn't have my friend who, he knew, meant no evil, slinking out like a housemaid at night to meet her lover. And he, being, as I knew, a gentleman, agreed. So we sate and talked together quite amicably for half an hour, and when we parted he saw me to my dandy which was waiting some little distance away, and kissed my hand and murmured something about ultimate truth, thus confirming the belief I wrote down a few pages back, that humanity has no weapon against it.

Well! the years passed, many years passed. So did the passion, as it does invariably if only you give it time. I am by no means certain that in this case the proprieties were the best choice. But it was distinctly a good one. She blossomed out into a real good woman, the *beau sabreur* married money, and the husband was happy.

All this is very trivial, but as several years of my life at different times were spent in big cantonments it seems well not to leave these experiences absolutely unrecorded. At Sialkot, at Firozpur, I was what they called in those days "the burra mem", the big lady. As such I found my talents—such as they were—very useful. I was a good actress, I painted scenery, I sang at concerts, and I played the harmonium in church. The *padre* was a charming man and a great friend, despite our differences of opinion. The harmonium was behind a pillar, so that I could not see my choir; this was because I was a woman, and my suggestion that I should cut my hair off and wear a surplice, met with a dignified silence; but I once roused him to a mild anger. He was a very poor intoner, and I suggested that in one place he should take C instead of the G he attempted.

"But", he said loftily, "you do not understand. We should lose the deep teaching of the lower note—the words are 'Open Thou our lips'."

I could not help it; the retort that, in that case, he ought to put up the petition before attempting a note that was out of his voice was too obvious. But he was an excellent man and everybody liked him, though one Sunday there were few in his congregation who did not curse his action. The church at Sialkot was beautiful. It had a very fine spire which had been built by the Maharajah of Kashmir—wherefore I have never been able to discover—and this steeple contained a peal of bells. But they were never rung. This *padre*, however, decreed that they should be rung one Easter morn. The church was most beautifully decorated, we had been at it almost till daylight, and the roses, the lilies were magnificent. Now a military church is to me ever a very fine sight. I love a nave filled with bright uniforms, I love the order, the stateliness, the piled arms at the end of each pew, for in those days troops came to church armed, in memory of the Mutiny. And this Sunday it was inspiring. The officers clanking in, the General so stiff and stately, the flowers, the bells ringing—badly it must be confessed, rather a tumult, a jangle—and as a voluntary "Lift up your heads".

And then? A hum as of many bees—wild bees! The spire was full of them! They were disturbed by the bells. There were flowers, endless flowers, below!

Everyone did their best. It was "Excuse me", "Oh you brute". But it was no use. The General had to rise at last and dismiss; but it was very funny.

We had a charming garden, the only one in India in which I have seen asparagus grow. I have told the

story of the old gardener elsewhere; the old man who had married a young wife, and whose infant used to be put under a handglass to grow "like the *soot ullians* and *gerabiums*" (sweet-williams and geraniums). For the old man was mad, undoubtedly mad. I believe the young wife used to drive him so. He was hanged for killing her at the last, for I was at home when the crisis came, and there was no one to speak up for the poor soul who used to crawl hands and knees to my feet in the drawing-room to thank me for having put a blister at the back of his head, so enabling Draupudi his darling to grow like the celery under a handglass. Mad! Undoubtedly mad, but my bearer was quite stolid, quite satisfied, as he explained, "You see the woman told him the truth at last, that Draupudi was not his child; so he killed her, and they hanged him righteously".

Undoubtedly according to conventional standards —but—but this raises the question of how far humanity can go without earning extinction. But I, personally, think this woman had earned it; I think that there are many evils in this world which deserve instant unfaltering extinction. When I used to drive round cantonments on the hot, stifling summer evenings there was one low hospital building from the sight of which I used to shrink. You could see the men in their blue dressing-gowns gasping, as it were, for a breath of Heaven's air in the verandah, and you knew that there were dozens more inside. Two hundred and twenty, a doctor told me once as he drove me to see his other hospitals and discussed the question—a burning one in those days. And he agreed with me that what was wanted was common sense. Like drunkenness, the disease resulted in a definite incapacity for duty: like

drunkenness it should be punished. No question of morality, no question of degradation should be raised. Simply, "Private A. or B. is incapacitated from duty, etc., etc." This, combined with a regular hygienic inspection *for all ranks* once a month, would suffice. I am told that the question is no longer a burning one; that salvarsan and cleanliness have worked wonders.

Have they? I wonder if the next generation has or will benefit by the discovery? One thing is certain. The character does not.

Doctors have always been so kind to me. They have never stinted information, they have always accepted help. In those days there were no nurses in India, except a few Mother Gamps in the married quarters. So we always placed our spare rooms at the doctor's disposal should he have any patient requiring special care. We have had a good many in our time—boys who wept into their beef-tea, and talked of mother when you bathed their hands with eau-de-Cologne and water. Most of them, thank Heaven, like the lepers of Scripture who straightway went away and forgot, passed out of our ken, but some few, after a struggle, remained, some for years and years, and others for all time.

One poor boy, a gentleman who had enlisted, I remember well in hospital, a bad case of typhoid. Mercifully he was a Roman Catholic. That faith makes death-beds easier as a rule. And I learnt, at his, the extraordinary gentleness, the extraordinary sympathy, of the hospital orderly. I often compare it with the terrible uniformity of many of the professional diplomaed female nurses of to-day. But men are, I think, more gentle than women: they are far more afraid of hurting.

There was a bad cholera epidemic one year. Fifty or sixty cases were dying in the city—some mile and a half from cantonments—every day, and nothing struck me so much as the calm of the Indians, compared with the alarm of the Europeans. I had to lie freely to allay the fears of the ladies at the public gardens, by minimising the death-roll, and we had to have a constant succession of penny readings, theatricals, and so forth, to keep up the spirits of the barracks. One very vivid memory crops up of an incident which has taught me much. I thought a new drop-scene might enliven some theatricals, and I set to work on an impression of the White Cliffs of Old England. All went well. There was the blue sky, the white clouds, the little strip of goldy-green turf, the serrated chalk, the distant bit of blue sea, the waves dashing up on the black wooden jetty, which somehow always gets into a picture of this sort. But the wave which should have curled up amongst the posts and swept skywards with a backward shower of spray, refused to look natural, and after unavailing attempts to reach my ideal, I gave it up, climbed the ladder, and began a few higher lights on the clouds. And then suddenly my foot slipped, the pot of white-wash fell and——

There was my shower of spray! Never was there such a wave! It drew rounds of applause from the audience; not least of all from the figure in scrupulous evening dress, white tie, flower in button-hole all complete, who always sat in the second seat of the second row of spectators at every entertainment. A figure not without its sharp personality, not without an arresting power. It was that of a bombardier in the artillery, who was known to be a gentleman, but lived the life of a

simple Tommy, not even making his class known to comrades or superiors; but he solidly bought a reserved first class seat in the theatre, and appeared there resplendent in full dress. How often have I not heard him say, *Brava! Bravissimo!* to some supposed excellence of mine. So pass to your niche, unknown bombardier, keeping your secret, as you kept it in life.

Now all this time (we were nigh two years in cantonments), though naturally much time was taken up with social duties, school work was going on in the city. As ever, my husband planted shady strips of gardens along the roadsides, and through these I used to walk before breakfast and inspect the numerous schools which grew up. I always read of the difficulty of starting these with amusement. In those days when the prestige of our rule was still strong, given a Municipal Council and an *ex-officio* President with a will towards female schools, nothing was more easy to start; they were the quickest crop to sprout; chiefly because it was a well-known method of securing distinction. The difficulty arose in keeping them really alive; but, thanks to lace-making, ours flourished well enough. We had about a round dozen of them, Hindu and Mahomedan; but the latter were the test. There was some difficulty in the former about vaccination during a very severe epidemic of smallpox, but it was overcome, though, in the end. I had myself to be vaccinated many, many times. Rather a disingenuous trap, since I never took. I believe, in fact, and so the doctors reluctantly admitted, that I must be smallpox-proof, for I have often heard the lesson at my knee of a child with fresh scars of the disease still all over it. The Hindu parents take "Basanta" (so they call it) as a direct visitation from the Goddess

Mato Devi Sitala, and every village has its little altar where the mothers bring their simple offerings to placate her wrath. "A child belongs not to you till it has had the smallpox", a common saying, and it was rare, indeed, in those days, to find anyone over three who had escaped.

It was in my work in the city close to a big military cantonment that I had my first and only experience of insult. A lewd woman, in a street through which I would not have gone had I not been a stranger to the town, cast a bad word at me. Within ten minutes I had her bound over for using language calculated to cause a breach of the peace, in the Indian magistrate's court hard by. I have very grave doubts as to whether the action taken was legal; but it was singularly effective. I was never disturbed again. This little incident again shows an important truth—the absolute necessity for high-handed dignity in dealing with those who for thousands of years have been accustomed to it. They love it. It appeals to them, they know—or they did know—that authority has to be justified.

At any rate, I never found, and Heaven knows I was autocratic enough, that my insistence on obedience where I had a right to command ever roused the very slightest antagonism. We were great friends even in the neighbourhood of camps where one meets with the very outcastes of servants and dependents.

I attribute this largely to the fact that the English regiments, their officers, their wives, their families, scarcely know the language at all. So they submit to things to which they should not submit, and fail to get what they have every right to expect. Thus they seldom learn to like their servants. I had an old cook

once whose chef-ship was so famed that my aunt, the wife of the General commanding the Division, entreated to have him while we were on furlough. The lady in question was noted for her kindness and her knowledge of the language; her husband had so many decorations that, though his chest measurement was forty-four inches, he had to wear his medals in a double row. Altogether it was most distinguished service, and I thought I had settled the matter. But no! When I came out again, there was Imam Khan awaiting me. He had not gone, he said, to the lady *sahib*; he was very sorry, but all his long life he had never served the army gentlemen; he had only served the real *sahibs*, the district *sahibs*, yes! Had he not served Ricketts *sahib*—had he not taken Ricketts *mem* and the *baba-logue* safely to the hills as ordered, when Ricketts *sahib* was killed in the bazaar on the 10th of May 1857?

And here followed the tale of the Mutiny to which I listened! oh! so many times, while old Imam's liver turned to water and his body's wool stood up on end. But it was good hearing. A tale of absolute obedience, of fearless devotion to duty.

The failure to get what they pay for, which is acquiesced in by so many ladies, is aptly illustrated by my turning dairy farmer. Few mothers in those days nursed their children; patent foods had not become the hygienic substitutes they are nowadays; so wet nurses were common. So was their habit of running away, leaving baby disconsolate. In these cases an urgent appeal was invariably made to the deputy commissioner of the district—namely, my husband. Wet nurses are hard to get, but cows were possible. These were supplied, to be followed almost invariably by com-

plaints either of the cowman or the cow. It so happened that once the number of sucking infants in cantonments was abnormally high, so, to save trouble to the district officials, and avoid what must entail a certain hardship to owners of cows whose animals would be reft from them willy-nilly by the native jack-in-office, I arranged to keep the cows myself and sell milk at bazaar prices, milked pure and fresh into the buyers' own cans. There never was any difficulty, and after paying all expenses I was well in hand after the end of the year. *And I had no trouble* except that of giving orders.

It was the same with everything; though I admit that as Vice-President of the "Victoria Female Orphan Asylum" I was involved in the enormous difficulty of finding a suitable orphan to open that Benevolent Institution. It was started by wealthy people—mostly money-lenders, who, of course, had some axe to grind with Government—as a memorial of the Queen's assumption of the Empire. So far, good; but the question remained how to find an inmate before the great opening day when a real festival was to be held. However, at the last moment a child was actually found; her mother was still alive, but the girl would pass muster as an orphan, as that mother was something of an evil walker. So the festival was held, and the poem, which had been composed by the local poet, duly recited. Now this poet prided himself on his English; he had insisted on reading his effusion to me beforehand. It was extremely lengthy, and one line I remember ran thus: "Likewise the moon-faced Secretary to Government whose cheek puts the whole Panjab to shame." I strove in vain to get it altered, for it was really only too awfully true,

the gentleman in question having considerable side; but naturally I failed. So on the day in question it was read out, nearly causing my husband to choke. But the rest of the huge circle of the *élite* greeted the statement with the vociferous applause reserved for the mention of Government, so that I had not the heart to smile. They were such good creatures and they meant so well. Unfortunately, however, a disappointment awaited them which no amount of sympathy could lessen. The poet was well into his stanzas about the beauty of the new building. The whole universe was blossoming as a rose. It was above all buildings blessed by being situated where it was, in a district favoured by the Gods, where flowers flourished, where neither storm nor wind ever——

At this moment a puff as of smoke blurred the outlook. I knew what was coming, for we were in the middle of the hot weather, and the morning had been sultry, dry, overcast; besides, the district was famous for its electrical dust-storms. In a moment one was on us. The air was a mere dust-screen, becoming darker and darker as more and more particles sprang up into it; a raging wind swept them into eyes, nose, mouth; the only safety lay in covering what you could and seeking the first shelter. Out in the open, sandy plains such storms are dangerous, and many a man has been found suffocated. But here, flight was possible; though, owing to the darkness, it was necessarily slow. Isolated claps of thunder were already overhead, and a few large drops of hot, dry rain were falling ere we reached home, a sure sign that the visitation would not be long, and that it would have a welcome coolth behind it.

It must not be supposed, however, that a civil

officer's life keeps him forever in the big cantonment which centres his district. We had many welcome holidays out in the open. I loved the sandy south beat, where the patches of grass grow between the low hills, and the ravine deer fled gracefully in long bounds before our horses' galloping feet. There is no more beautiful sight in the world than a grey-green feathery *gram* field covered with diamond dewdrops, its blossoms peeping out from the feathers like amethysts.

Oh! Happy hours spent on horseback, while the sparkling air nipped my cheek with kisses cold yet warm. Surely I used that phrase in something that I consigned to the W.P.B. in the evening. Yes! Here it is, remembered through the years:

> The gram's low tufts like diamond feathers rise,
> Through crystal veil each amethyst blossom peers.
> Gaining a deeper glow—as children's eyes
> Seem brighter for their tears.

Then we had State visits to pay to feudatory States. They were rather a trial, for we could not stay long enough to enable friendly relations to be inaugurated. One difficulty in the way was the *russud* or rationing arrangements. These were fixed, as it were, by international law. A feudatory of such-and-such a status had the honour and right to provide the Government official with one day's rations; the next of higher grade with two. So you could not overstay your welcome without running the chance of being an illegal burden. On the other hand, if you did not stay your appointed time your *russud* might be overwhelming. I remember once when, through press of business, my husband had to cut out two days of his visit. I had infinite trouble to rescue the apportioned offerings from the hangers-

on. But when six bottles of brandy, six of whisky, a dozen claret, six port and sherry, two bottles of liqueur and three dozen beer are sent as allowance for three days, one's gorge rises. And the tinned stuffs! I used to wonder where all the stale tins of the itinerant vendors went to! I myself never saw tinned beetroot except on a *russud* selection. Here again we touch on something which we Westerners often fail to recognise. A very important, highly-thought-of Commissioner once said to me with an air of superiority—"I am sure no hanky-panky about supplies ever occurs in my camp. I always have the head men up before I leave and pay them myself in rupees." I was polite, I did not tell him in so many words that he might as well have spat on them, but that was the truth. No payment to head men will ever reach the foot man in India. Even with constant personal supervision it is difficult to make money circulate. And as for tyranny——!

I was sketching one day under a tree when I heard a crying in the cooking tent. There I found an old pantaloon clasping to his breast and trying to comfort a sobbing child, while the cook was in the act of slaying a fine young white cock. Of course, "Hold, sirrah!" was the instant order. Inquiry proved that the cock was the child's pet, that he had reared it from egg-hood, and that his grandfather's promise of a new one would not console him——

There you have a tragedy, the like of which does infinite harm. I wonder if my saving of that cock's life prevented the boy from being an extremist in the future?

After nearly two years of cantonment and big station life, we were once more moved to a small one.

Those years had been very pleasant. I had found a good opponent for chess and we played pretty regularly. Then the youngsters in regiment and battery were all so cheerful, so charming. The Artillery mess was next our house, and over and over again when I have heard laughter and noise after twelve midnight, I have got up, gone to the piano and played the *Dies Irae* so that all might hear; and I remember so well one Boxing Day morning after having, at a Christmas dinner overnight, said I would sell my soul for a snipe, finding twenty-one couple of them on the breakfast table. Nice, good boys who responded to ever so little care.

And the districts were rich. In one of them where a previous official had opened a small canal, they were so rich that, having nothing better to do with their money, they inlaid the solid wheels of their waggons with two-anna and four-anna bits.

There was one family of farmers, to the north of the district, who begged me as a favour to visit their homestead and see their great-great-great-grandmother. So I went. A cloudless day, a square courtyard of mud bricks, rows of beehive-shaped grain-hoppers round them. And such a congregation! There must have been a hundred of them, young men and old men, matrons and maids, all full of merriment and pleasure. The old great-great in the centre, so old, so wizened, so shrunken, but still alive, her dark eyes bright. She cracked every one of the knuckles of her hands and called down a blessing with each crack.

There was a posse of young men, from twenty to thirty, standing together—such tall fellows, bearded for the most part, well set up, strong looking. But my question as to how many of them served the Sirkar met

with a shout of derision. Did not the *memsahib* know that no Cis-Sutlej man was a soldier? And then the grandfather, a patriarch with a long beard, told me solemnly that Ranjit Singh never enlisted a Cis-Sutlej man. He made recruits count up to twenty-five and all who said "parhis" were rejected, all those who said "panjis" retained; this difference in pronunciation being the mark of the Sutlej and Cis-Sutlej race.

What a convenience it would be could we have so easy a shibboleth to distinguish between the capables and the incapables!

It was on my return from this reception that I very nearly met my latter end. It was the rainy season and shallow flooding was common. I was riding alone a clever Waziri mare when she plunged forefeet foremost in a well which had been hidden by a foot of flood. Luckily, she was a fine vigorous beastie and with a stupendous effort she bounded forward, thus freeing her forelegs and bringing her hindquarters into the well. This enabled me to throw myself off, get hold of her bridle and pull. There was an awful struggle, but in the end she stood trembling, the danger over. And I also was trembling as I clambered into the saddle once more.

Such incidents lose very much in the telling. Things pass so much more quickly than even speech can tell them; and yet, curiously enough, the impression left upon one by a modern cinema's representation of such facts is one of hurry. I wonder why that is? Perhaps the lack of hurry in the percipient has something to do with it. We know so little.

CHAPTER IX

THE sudden change from pleasant society, endless occupation, and ever-varying interests, to admittedly the most sterile in every way of all Panjab stations was in itself depressing. What we met with there was more so. The causes, however, were such that the very expression of them must have no place in this, my peaceful Garden. Let it be forgotten.

We were the only sober people there. I had to nurse a young English woman—a lady by birth and education—through delirium tremens. It was a terrible experience. When, my patient doped, I could get home for a half hour or so, the degradation of it made me say to my husband, "Don't ask questions till I've had a bath." Some taint of that still clings to me at the very thought of it all. I did my best. I wrote to the woman's parents: the father was an English country clergyman. The reply was, that so much trouble had been given before marriage that they could take no more.

So let me leave it at that, except for this. I wonder if any of my possible readers can match the following for devilish malice.

A gifted, wild young man was coming again and yet again upon his doting old father for money. His stepmother, an old love, married after seventy, determined

that this drain should not be, so picture her, maliciously, advisedly, making up a match for him with a drunkard like himself, so that he should have no chance. And he had none. A pretty woman too: but oh! the baby! Two months old, it would have lain on a dinner plate; scarcely a rag of clothing and covered with flies.

Terrible, most terrible! Thank heaven our stay only lasted a few weeks. We needed our outing in Kashmir to take away the taste.

I kept a diary again, and as I re-read it, I feel inclined to use much of it in my Garden. The difference in style is very remarkable; I had evidently learnt something in the last five years. We were alone, this time, my husband and I, and we were determined at all costs to reach Amurnath; so we made our camping outfit as small as possible. We only had seven coolies and two servants.

We started by the Pir Panjal pass, the highest, but the most beautiful. I was something of an invalid, having been delayed in Lahore by an unusually bad "sudden death" attack which my hostess thought was cholera. But the doctor turned out to be an old dancing partner of my Edinburgh youth, and, in talking of old times, I forgot my ailments. Coué may be right or wrong but there is no denying what old Bhishma said —*circa* 1400 B.C.—"When the life agent is otherwise engaged, the body heareth not."

We began well. Almost regal arrangements had been made for us among the lower hills by the then District Officer. I little thought as I said good-bye to him that within a year he would have died by his own hand. The poor soul, a bachelor, suffered torments from gout and arthritis. I remember his saying to me "I don't

want to go to heaven, Mrs. Steel, I should have gout on the wings." Peace be to him; he has learnt better.

So goats were laid out every sixth mile lest I should desire milk, and every bit of bad road produced coolies to help the carriage along. Of the carriage, the less said the better. It was simply a bamboo cart, a vehicle built expressly for the purpose of teaching that there is no philosophy of life to equal a loose seat and an absence of settled convictions. So we passed through those marvellous lower hills full of sunshine, butterflies, flowering shrubs and that overwhelming scent of distant pine trees which absolutely interferes with the automaticity of respiration, by making it a blessing to breathe. Wise by previous experience, we carried breakfast with us on my *dandi*; so, unhampered by ignorance and servants, we could light our fire when we chose, and I could cook the food. At one march we found a little cross marking the grave of a five-months old child. It gave me a pang of pity for the poor parents who had lost it on their journeyings; possibly their first, for they were young; the father only a lieutenant. We were now, of course, on the Badshahi road, taken by the Great Moghuls when they made Kashmir their summer resort; so it was full of romance for me. We had first to cross the Ruttan Pir, 8200 feet high, over a grassy meadow set with flowers, and so down into a gloomy valley of chestnuts, firs, deodars where the golden oriole flitted like flashes of light through the dense shade.

Here I had a relapse, and, after being very ill all day, I recovered sufficiently with whisky and chicken broth in the evening to go on next day to the Pass itself. I note here: "Certainly I am an animal: I have such

recuperative power." This must be true, for another entry says: "Halfway there was the most perfect subject for a picture I have ever seen on the Himalayas. A regular composition. I shall regret that sketch to the last day of my life." Then I go on to set down the immense fun it was pitching our own tent for the first time in the wildest of nooks just under the snow, close to a magnificent waterfall.

But the news of the Pass was bad. It should have been open in May; it was not, and we would be the first travellers to attempt it, so we must start before break of day in order that the upper crust of snow should be hard enough to walk upon. We made every preparation we could, and started amid a mixture of hail and sleet. I think we were foolhardy to go on, but it was not until a thunderstorm broke over us that we realised that we were attempting the Pass in very foul weather. The lightning was curiously vivid and variegated in colour, and, after a time, seemed to flash and crackle in the very air we breathed. The cold was intense, the wind bitter. Still, after two hours steady climbing—on foot, of course—we reached the round stone tower built by the Moghuls to mark the top of the Pass. But before us still lay five miles of snow, and the sun was rising. We paused a minute or two to let our straggling party pass, amongst them the cook. Now of him something must be said. He was new, as my old friend, Imam Khan, had pleaded his age. The master and mistress were so adventurous—he would supply them with a younger, more vigorous substitute. This he did, thus giving himself—the old scoundrel—a holiday wherein he could retire to his wife and family in Bundelkund. Still, he had not seen them for five years, so he must be forgiven.

No substitute's hair could have been blacker, no substitute could have appeared more agile; still I had had my doubts, when, during those few days of the lower hills, I had noticed a distinct frostiness about the roots of his beard. Yet he walked well, and we had given him money wherewith to buy himself warm blankets and clothes. But here he stood on the top of the Pir Panjal in white raiment! He was almost past shivering and looked bewildered. I did what I could. I took a heavy tartan rug from my *dandi*, wrapped it round the old fellow, bade him lay hold of the *dandi* shaft and on no account to let go. So with an injunction to the bearers to see he didn't do so, we started again, of course on foot, since it was impossible to use the *dandi* as a vehicle.

It was a weary five miles. Fresh snow had fallen and that underneath was melting. We were often up to our knees; once or twice I sank over my waist. There was, of course, no path, but the snow peaks on either side prevented any serious deviation, though the curves and bends invited short cuts, sometimes disastrous.

However we two pushed on somehow, and at long last the square stone enclosure of Aliabad Serai was reached, and I felt a throb of gratitude to those old Emperors who had built it. There were dry logs in an outhouse and, with the help of two coolies who had managed to keep up with us, we had a brave fire blazing before the *dandi* arrived with the breakfast basket. The *dandi*, but no cook! The bearers explained that he had insisted on trying a short cut and would doubtless arrive ere long. Hours passed and no cook! At last we sent out search parties. They were unsuccessful until a sharp-sighted coolie noticed something fluttering in

the bitter wind in a waste of snow. It was the uttermost end of the McCallum tartan, and to it, undoubtedly, the still living cook, who was discovered in the drift below, owed his life. His feet were badly frostbitten, and as soon as we got to Srinagar we sent him to hospital with money enough to take him back. Glad indeed to get rid of him, though it left us cook-less.

We hired ponies, so soon as the road became rideable, and I found the high peaked native saddle most comfortable, for, warned again by previous experience, I wore knickerbockers and had cut my hair short; this facilitated bathing in the rivers we passed.

We stopped some days in Srinagar, being prevented, by the absence of dress clothes, from joining the crowd of English visitors in the latest Paris fashions at a State Queen's Birthday dinner given by the Maharajah. The fact did not distress us, we were out for barbarism.

So to a big village on what is called in Kashmir a *karewa*—a level plateau some two or three hundred feet above the present valley-level, evidently a relic of some higher level through which a mighty flood has forced its way. The saffron fields were in full bloom, indeed my diary is full for some pages with my delight at the flowers we saw. Here we stopped, for the place was charming, out of most travellers' way, and the people were friendly to a degree. I sketched, and successfully incited them to tell stories. An annual fair is held here, and I was shown the smooth worn rocks down which the pilgrims slide. Several dignified Pandits slid down solemnly to show me how it was done, but I was not vouchsafed an illustration of the most meritorious method of descent—head forwards on your stomach!

So we marched across the Westerwan, a low range of hills, across the valley of Kashmir to Palgam in the Liddar valley. Here I learnt the Legend of the Westerwan, which is so beautiful that it must come into the Garden, though it has been published in the first book I ever wrote, *Wide Awake Stories*, a collection of folk tales gathered during my many wanderings in India.

THE LEGEND

Once upon a time Great Westerwan was King of all the Mountains. So high above all other hills, that when the clouds closed on his shoulders he was alone under the blue sky. So he grew proud, and the surrounding peaks became envious and said spiteful words. Only beautiful Gwash-bari, the smallest of them all, cold amid her glaciers, kept silence.

But once when clouds had hidden Westerwan's proud head she laughed at their wrath. "Stars crown his head," she said, "but his feet are of the earth! He is made of the same stuff as we are—wait and see!"

So calm and serene the summer day passed, but with the setting sun a rosy radiance fell over the whole world, and Gwash-bari's pale face flushed into passion. She shone on the fast darkening horizon like a star.

Then mighty Westerwan looked at the rosy flush, and lo! it deepened as the sunset deepened, as though under the great King's gaze, so that he cried passionately "Kiss me, Gwash-bari, or I die". And she, triumphant yet humble, answered back: "On tiptoe I cannot reach your star-crowned head. Bend down and seek the kiss my lips cannot choose but give."

So Westerwan stooped, slowly. The rosy flush of

sunset faded from the fair false face, but Westerwan's head lay on Gwash-bari's cold glaciers. He lies there still, but every night his lost star crown hangs in the heavens as of yore.

A fine tale, which affected me deeply; indeed, I believe it to have been to me the inception of a belief which, gaining strength with every year of my life, appears to be now sufficient to explain all human evil. But of this, by and by.

Palgam proved almost deserted. Beautiful as ever, it had suffered much from famine. Then the remaining inhabitants, quarrelling with the tax collectors over the licence of one rupee per walnut tree, showed more spirit than I should have deemed likely, cut all the trees down, and left.

We then went on to Aro, surely the most beautiful place in Kashmir. An open flower-set "marg" or alp surrounded by snowy peaks. We stopped here several days, making excursions, my husband after pheasants and *chikore*, I after sketches. Once, nearly to the ice cones of Gwash-bari, passing at first several rude platforms on which the villagers dry the orris root, a field orchid which here grows plentifully. I tried to buy some, but could not. Like all valuable products in that miserable country it was a Government monopoly. After much moraine and grass slope work—surely the most fatiguing part of a Himalayan climb, since a single step may mean death—we came to a gap through which we had to pass. Here was a long half-frozen lake held by gigantic rocks and boulders, at the further end seeming to tilt over into the unseen valley thousands of feet below; it was beautiful. The tarn must have been at

least 14,000 feet, for the map put the surrounding peaks at close on 18,000.

After a few days' rest at Aro, where I succeeded in making the few inhabitants tell me stories round the camp fire at night, we went on to Liderwat, intending to get as far as Kalahoi, of which place we had heard much. But the road was so exquisitely enchanting that we lingered. Then we had to make bridges, and in one place, so beautiful were the flowers and ferns, the asphodels and anemones, that perforce we had to stop and make gardens and rockeries around our little tent. It is useless to attempt description of Kalahoi, but even now after all these years I can see the triangular peak of grey trap rock, so steep that it is only patched here and there with snow, which rises above the great glacier. But, as I say, description is useless; there was such a confusion of beauty that I hardly had time to sketch. I remember, however, being very tired once, after a two days' roughing it more than usual, and so, being very angry with my husband because he claimed bread-sauce with his roast fowl, I contended that bacon from a tin, sorrel spinach with stewed rhubarb, and custard should have sufficed him. In this, as it were, side walking, we had brought only one six-foot tent, and we slept on juniper branches which were soft and warm. We had no servant, and we did not bring the *dandi*, so four coolies sufficed for our whole equipment. In the course of the trip we saw Lake Tar-Sar-Mar-sar. It was not much to look at, being only about a mile long, save for its colour; this was pure aquamarine, with crystal blocks of ice, almost icebergs, floating on it. But oh! the flowers. Here for the first time I saw a Himalayan azalea in full bloom, a pale yellow; I put

my head under it and sniffed. It was heaven. The rhododendrons were small, of two colours, white and purple. Every cranny and dell was set with familiar faces. But it was steep walking, and my wind gave way utterly, for I had started somewhat slack; but after struggling in a distracted sort of way, both I and the road got better. My husband was a very fast walker, and had small pity for inefficients.

On our return to the comparative comfort of our garden-camp at Liderwat we found our post-coolie there with letters—absolutely home letters! Joy indeed.

So we returned to Palgam, thence to attempt Amarnath. We were discouraged in the attempt, however, by the vociferous assertion of the natives that the road was usually bad, and that a really strong party of three *sahibs* and five *mems* had had to turn back from Shisha Nag. But as inquiry proved that they had no less than seventy-five baggage coolies, while we had only seven, we felt considerably heartened up, especially as we had made up our minds to leave half our belongings behind at Shisha Nag so as to enable the coolies to carry wood for their fires, that shortage being the most serious.

Before starting I had quite a two hours' talk with the chief men of the place, trying to convince them that the universal Kashmiri excuse for unlimited lying and extortion, namely, "famine", was really a putting of the cart before the horse. They listened attentively while I preached all the Christian virtues, of course without expecting the slightest effect.

The road as far as Shisha Nag, though it took some time, was easy in comparison with what we had done, and tame also, beautiful as it was. On my last visit to

Kashmir I had done most of the country and had considered it perfect; now it took a bad second place beside the beauties of Kalahoi and Liderwat. Shisha Nag itself, however, is fine. Perhaps more weird than fine. An opaque lead-coloured tarn almost devoid of reflections from the quantity of gypsum brought down by the streams; lead-coloured mighty peaks: an *ensemble* magnificent but uncanny. We saw some skeleton bones along the lake side. Hundreds of pilgrims die on the road every year, but mercifully we were ahead of their time. We had the stunted juniper bushes for firewood; they made a fine blaze, thanks to their resin, but one had to be careful of their smoke, which produced dizziness. Next morning we started for Panjtarni amid threatening clouds. I was so filled with fears lest after all we should not be able to get to Amarnath that, on arrival about eleven o'clock after a very easy march, I suggested going on another eight or ten miles to the cave. We were dissuaded by all sorts of protests and prophesied evils, but, taking two of the most stalwart young fellows with us, we started up the stiffest brae I ever climbed; then came a slight descent, another long pull, and behold! the Cave of Amarnath. It was dreadfully disappointing—a mere grotto in the gypsum rock, not a hundred feet deep, and very wide; so very light, with no mystery about it. At the extreme back was a frozen spring which, after the manner of such springs, had frozen into a small mound of clear, aquamarine ice. This I fancy, from its distant resemblance to the "upright stone", which is the nucleus round which the Saivite religion clusters, was the first reason why the cave was considered holy. In front of it was a fragment of, apparently, black basalt, carved

with the claws of some monster. It had been brought possibly from the remains of some ancient temple, possibly pre-historic. In front of this again was a very small stone Brahmani bull roughly carved. There were no other signs that the grotto was sacred. No priests, no altars: just a rather insignificant grotto set amid a waste of snow.

Yet its very triviality impressed one. Thousands, nay, millions of humanity, beset by the desire for redemption which is so curious a passion in the race, have braved death through ice, snow, avalanches, to reach it. Hundreds of them lose their lives on the road every year, for each pilgrim discards every stitch of clothing at Shisha Nag and continues the journey, naked, drugged by opium or Indian hemp. I have been told that scarcely one reached the cave without some form of dope.

What a scene this raises before the seeing eye. Humanity, drugged, seeking salvation. Why? Because of some universal sin? What was it—there lies the question. What was it? What went wrong?

So, my mind full of longing that I could believe in the purchasing power of pain, we set off homewards, it being already late in the day; but ere we went, we sacrilegiously chipped off an unimportant fragment of the frozen spring, and had a whisky and water with some oatcake, honey, and butter I had brought with me. We needed it ere we reached Panjtarni after dark, for the road—a short cut, involving an ice-slide on a coolie blanket down a purely precipitous slope—was very difficult. And even when we got to the valley we had to surmount the difficulty of a river, swollen to a torrent by the day's thawing of the upper snows. My husband,

pick-a-back on a coolie, managed all right. I, carried Queen's cradle between two men, was too light a burden to steady them, so I had to stop them mid-stream, to prevent further stumbling and wait till two more men from the village came to add their weight to the convoy. It was then that I was told, seriously, that the bears in fording a fierce stream invariably pick up a heavy boulder and carry it to add to their weight. I believed it at the time, and, knowing as I do, after eighty-two years of life, the intelligence of all animals, I see no cause to doubt it.

I never was so tired in my life as this day; we had done over twenty-four miles of very stiff going; we had been twenty-two hours on the journey. I could only swallow one cup, two cups, many cups of hot tea and snuggle into the juniper branches in our six-foot tent. And there I lay, it seemed for hours, long after my husband and Corrie the dog were asleep, imagining all sorts of evils, the least of which was pneumonia, until I was awakened by my husband, and a cup of tea. And lo! I was quite well and rested, and so was Corrie the dog. Truly we are all animals!

We went back by Aston Marg—a difficult road; in one place such a steep descent that the coolies had to cut steps for us in the ice, but it was very beautiful, and the country-folk being entirely unsophisticated had never seen a *mem-sahiba* before, and told her endless stories. Then the sketching was more than she could manage. It would have taken a really good artist. So perhaps, after all, it was well the sketches were eventually lost, only one or two happening to remain.

Our goal accomplished, we spent the rest of our leave less strenuously. Amongst other things we visited

the Lolab Valley, the beauty of which was much extolled. We found it tame and uninteresting, except for the view of those distant snowy peaks where we had spent such happy and arduous days. I chiefly remember a Homeric battle I had at Baramulla with a Maharajah's official over a tax of two annas per rupee which was extorted from each coolie's wages. Our men, having come with us for days, complained to me. I sent for the pandit in charge, paid the money claimed, under promise that the men should be allowed to go free. Subsequently I learned he was endeavouring to extort the money a second time with sticks and staves. So trouble ensued. I do not often thoroughly lose my temper, but when I do I am very fierce—an inheritance, I expect, from my father. Anyhow, the poor men were grateful.

As this reminds me of the only occasion on which, literally, I had recourse to physical violence, I may as well recount it. On our third visit to Kashmir we had more luggage, being a party of five. At one change of mules a beast was brought up with a terrible wither-gall. My husband refused it in consequence, and the contractor promised another; in fact, took away the mule to bring a better one. As luck would have it we arrived at our destination before the luggage and tents, and I found the very same mule staggering under the heaviest load. I kept my temper, I took out a pocket handkerchief, dipped it in salt and water, and I bandaged that mule. After lunch, the men-kind having gone shooting, I went down to see the patient. There was no handkerchief, no bandage, the poor creature was covered with flies. Then my temper gave way; I sent for the mule man. I seized him by the scruff of the neck—I was still in my habit with my whip—and I belaboured him with

it till I nearly dropped, he shrieking with terror, thinking a female demon had got him, the surrounding coolies and servants, however, saying, *Shahbash, mem-sahiba, shahbash!* which, being interpreted, is "Well done, madam, well done!"

I don't know if it was, but it was done, and if anyone blames me for having horse-whipped a man, I don't blame myself. I confess that I never do get angry without an intense desire to hit, but I know it is unladylike, and I condemn myself, *as a rule*, to inaction.

On leaving Kashmir we were met by orders to proceed to the other end of the Panjab, where the very language was different, a dialect of Sindhi. The dialect itself, however, was most interesting, and though female schools were out of the question, there was no lack of novelties to learn. It was in the delta between the river Indus and Sutlej. Rain seldom fell, but all things grew luxuriantly. For why? Because if you dug down two feet you could ladle the water out with a tablespoon! And it was curiously cool; even in the hot weather a breeze from the two rivers—or one of them—blew till ten o'clock in the day, and the nights were almost always bearable out of doors; but the place was alive with snakes, and one had to take precautions against them.

I had a narrow escape of my life here. My husband had gone to his bath and bed, but I had sat up finishing home-letters. Whether the thought of all these had got into my head, or what it was that made me forget to raise the lamp and peer before passing to my bedroom I know not, but I did forget until—sudden, insistent—the knowledge that I had not so looked came to me. I raised the lamp. At my very feet was a coiled cobra.

A step, half a step more and . . . Well, it is no use probing into the future; one can but accept things as they come, knowing that no possible mistake can be made by the Strength and Stay which upholds all Creation.

And when this sort of thing happens, one can but buckle to work more eagerly than ever. It has happened to me several times in my life. I take these things now as a sign that I can still be of use.

We were quite a happy party in this little station. Our fellow officials were all country-bred, and only one had ever been home, so I had endless topics of conversation with the ladies—such dear, good—more British than the British—women. And we had reading parties when I read aloud Thackeray, Dickens, Scott, and sometimes George Sand's novels which I translated as I went along. It improved my French, which I had almost forgotten.

But there was one woman whom I must not forget, for she was our immense amusement. She was nurse to a Salvation Army family. And she would come with her two little charges—such demure, pious children—and discourse for hours. And her comments on the strange environment where she, a Salvationist from the slums of Oxford, found herself were extraordinarily entertaining.

"No!" she would say, "I 'adn't, please God, a feather to fly with w'en 'e took me, no! not a feather, for, see you, I was allus wild; but 'e's a real Christian, 'e 'ave the letter S marked on 'is shirt collar. But the pore hoya! (ayah) she 'asn't even a chemee (chemise) and she eats 'er dinner off little saucers like as we feeds ducks on. But wot beats me is that they don't 'ave no corffins. I give you my word I see a dead man carried

by to-day. 'E 'adn't a corffin—no, not a bit of a corffin."

So she would run on, bringing a curious amount of common sense to bear on the many strange things she saw, always reverting when absolutely at a loss to the fact that master were a real Christian and 'ad the letter S marked on his shirt collar.

It was here, on the low-lying land on the banks of the river Indus that I came upon Lal's field, the account of which opened the literary world to me years and years afterwards. It appeared in *Macmillan's Magazine*.

So the little station, so friendly, so healthy, so pretty, with its wide stretches of flood water, its floating lotuses, white and pink, its palms, has a soft place in my heart. I can see it as a write, a grove of date-palms, the agile members of the family up aloft shaking down the many-tinted jasper-coloured fruit, the women beneath sorting them into mats, and the children's little stomachs growing visibly larger as they swallow down the luscious sweetness.

Yes! at that season of the year everyone in the district grows fat!

I learnt many things here. About the women a good deal, though not as much as I should have liked to do; but, of course, the dialect was against me, and we were once more moved ere I could really get hold of it. And one needs real knowledge before one can speak to a woman of her womanly habits. Indeed, all over India in every dialect there are terminations and idioms only used by women. These it is impossible to learn from men. One of the most curious habits the women had here was the immediate moulding of a new-born female infant's forehead by means of an earthen

cup of the requisite shape. This was bound tightly to the head and not removed for three or four years, by which time the skull had been moulded to what was considered beauty. I do not know if it compressed the brain at all, but it certainly produced a curiously bomb-shaped forehead.

What will not the female sex do for the sake of fashion?

As a Frenchman once said to me, "Madame! it is ze hump they mus' have: ze have it on ze head, chignon; ze have it behind, bustle; ze have it everywhere where nature not put it! Ze will not have it—bust! So zere! What will you?"

I fear it is true.

CHAPTER X

WE were suddenly, causelessly moved. The original possessor, as it were, of the district had come back from leave, and in those days I think political considerations had little to do with the postings of officers. The seniors got a lien on the best posts. I daresay it is quite right, but it has a demoralising effect on the officers, and it absolutely prevents their getting any real hold on their districts.

The move this time, however, was to a much more important and civilised district close to Lahore, in fact in the Lahore Commissionship. So I felt sure I should have little difficulty in getting foothold, since Kasur was but a little way off. One difficulty was the impossibility of getting a house. There literally was not one vacant. Not that it really mattered, since I was summoned home in early spring by my mother's illness. I left at two days' notice, but I was too late. She had passed on the day I had left India. My husband followed, on six months' leave for "urgent family affairs", and after a summer spent chiefly in arranging these family affairs we brought out my daughter, aged twelve, and my youngest sister in the autumn. At Bombay, however, a bomb awaited us: we were again transferred, why, I am unable to say. It was a blow, as all our goods and chattels had to march many hundreds of miles. Also, the new

station was very far away from civilisation, and as my sister only intended a year's visit it was inconvenient.

Of the next year I say nothing. It was a blur, though much of it was spent at Dalhousie where I was impresario of the theatre, a new suitable one which really required to be fitted up; so I was once more busy scene-painting. We produced some quite good entertainments. Concerning one, a topical piece founded on the "Palace of Truth", an amusing incident occurred. Great excitement as to what it would be arose among outsiders; and a certain number of them chose to attempt knowledge by attending the dress rehearsal. The theatre being also the assembly rooms they had a perfect right to be there. But when I, as manager, expostulated courteously and begged consideration, they refused to budge. So I rang down the curtain, and we played to the back of the drop screen!

Some of the summer we spent in Kashmir. We went in a party of five through the Chumba State, an entirely new route. But once in the valley, all was much as ever, save that we could not rough it as heretofore. Still it was pleasant: my most vivid memory being the finding of a really blue *real* poppy. Not a meconopsis but a real large single-flowered poppy. I have often asked for it since at horticultural shows; I have even been assured it has been discovered and that it has a long botanical name; but I have never seen it since that day on the hills between Chumba and Badrawar. I left it unplucked because of its beauty.

My sister and daughter went home in the winter, and almost immediately afterwards, overtures were made to me regarding the inspection of schools. The offer was not a good one, pecuniarily, but the work

attracted me, and I accepted it. I was, indeed, the only woman in the Punjab, outside the ranks of mission ladies, who could read and write the vernaculars. And mission ladies were vetoed, since one of the most important functions of the Inspectress would be to apportion the grants for missionary schools. I was only to work during the cold weather for a term, it was suggested, of two months, and during that term I was to draw deputation allowance of sixteen rupees, about a pound a day. Before beginning work, however, I had to go home and settle my daughter in a school. This I did, and came back to find that we had once more been transferred to the civilised district near Lahore. Why, Heaven alone knows. In a way I was sorry, for I was just beginning to feel at home with the people, though the most of them were Hindus, I felt, however, that here was a Hinduism which was not enervating, which was worthy of respect and admiration. They were a tall people, men and women, physically fit, and they were excellent cultivators; most of the land, for miles round the canal, was like a garden. It is curious how one thing leads to another quite unexpectedly. This good cultivation was the cause of the physical superiority of the race, in this way. The work of women in the fields was valuable; thus a father though marrying his daughters off before puberty, after ancient custom, would keep them from their husbands' houses as long as possible. Years would often elapse before the bridegroom could get possession of his bride, with the result that children were seldom born before the mother had attained her full growth. Indeed, the husband often had to sue for possession of his wife in the courts. I know of one case in which the bride, thus sued for, was twenty-three

years of age. The result in the general stamina of the people was quite noticeable. The district also partly contained Sirdhana, which was, of course, the fief of Begum Summroo, so there were plenty of legends and tales to be gathered about the Delhi dancing girl who ended by being a most respectable Roman Catholic old woman, whose position was recognised by the British Government.

But the most fascinating attraction of the District was the existence of the old Salt Hedge. It was no longer guarded day and night to prevent the smuggling of salt, but there it remained almost as impenetrable as ever, with the bungalows, where the Salt patrols had lived, at ten miles distance from each other where the roads were cut through the dense cactus barrier. What a barrier it was! Forty feet high by as much broad! A tangled growth of thorn and prickly pear, with here and there a palm or *babool* tree uprearing itself above the matted growth. A home for many snakes, they said; also the flitting ground for innumerable butterflies. I could not, if I would, forget my first sight of it one spring morning. A grey-green mighty wall of leaves all starred with pink and yellow and white cactus blossoms, over which butterflies and dragon-flies fluttered, while on the round fleshy leaves the cochineal insects gathered, scarlet. And yet my most vivid recollection is not of this beauty but of a ridiculous little incident, which must come in because it taught me something very valuable.

The Lieutenant-Governor's camp was to spend Christmas Day in the district. My old cook—he who had saved the *mem* and the *baba-log* during the Mutiny—declared that it was necessary for honour and

dignity, that beef, fit to eat, should be purchasable, since, of course, the *Lât* would want to send his "Kissmus" offering to the *Kerani-log* (the clerks, etc.) of his camp. I assented; we fatted a prime beast, we killed it, I superintended the cutting of it up English fashion, and, properly decked with Christmas decorations, the beef was sent over on Christmas Eve to the camp, under the charge of the local butcher and of my old cook, starched to the cuff, in white raiment. To return alas! minus the two tit-bits, the hump and the tongue, which were all that had been taken.

I shall never forget old Imam Khan's face; or his remarks. They were guarded, of course; but the downfall of the British Raj showed through every word. I tried to soothe him; his face lightened a little at the thought of the "Spice-beef" and the "Unterbeef" (hunter's beef) he could prepare, but his confidence in our rule had gone absolutely, and we had in the end to bury half the carcase.

This is a very trivial tale, but it impressed on me the absolute necessity for keeping up prestige; that story of the refusal to buy specially fattened beef because it was a halfpenny a pound dearer than the ordinary skin-a-malink stuff of the common bazaar doubtless went round the district, *with additions*, and did us much harm.

We were now, however, under orders to march to a more civilised district, leaving harm and good alike behind us, and I had to begin once more.

During my brief visit to this new station before, however, I had started schools. There were now eight of them, four Mahomedan, four Hindu; poor things, but they were a start: besides there was Inspection duty.

I had an area of some 141 thousand square miles to cover, that is to say from Peshawar to Delhi, over 500 miles. There were few railways, and half the schools were really sham. The mission schools were, indeed, the only ones that counted; but there I had to be instantly autocratic and definitely refuse a grant to any school which paid its pupils for attendance. This created an outcry; but the result justified my action. We got a much better class of girl.

Now, it is no use blocking up my Garden with dates and statistics generally. It is best just to make room for the salient points of the next three years.

To begin with I must note an occurrence which, even at the time, gave me room for thought. A comparatively high Indian official called on me one day and offered me a very handsome sapphire ring. I stared at him, then, remembering that I was now in a way an educational official, I told my husband, who had the official up and reprimanded him, accepting his excuse that he had done the like before without blame, but would never do it again. I was doubtful; and instinctively disliked the look of the man and wondered why he should have offered a bribe, but I practically forgot about the incident, for I was busy rewriting the primers for the schools, and, with the help of Mr. John Kipling, illustrating them. They were a success, at any rate more so than the old ones, which were hardly decent. For instance, a favourite story in the Persian primer ran thus:

"A man accused another man before a judge of having stolen his male donkey. The accused replied by showing his only donkey, which was female; on which the plaintiff remarked that his donkey after all had not been such a very male one."

I think this excerpt shows, as well as anything can, what female education was at the time.

In almost every female school there was an alphabet class of two or three dozen, then perhaps a medium class of half-a-dozen who could, with difficulty, spell through the first primer. Then two or three older girls who could recite the Persian primer. These were gathered from the households of the *raises* or nobility or from the teacher's family.

The mission schools were better; but here I found grave difficulties in satisfying myself that the Government money was spent as it should be spent. Naturally there was a great temptation only to give four rupees of a six-rupees scholarship to the pupil, and keep the remaining two for purely mission work. I remember once having to meet the almost tearful remonstrance of a dear, good woman who complained that if she put the cost per pupil too high I cut it down, and if she put it low it did not pay, so what was she to do? My reply was to say, I hope gently, "Tell the truth, my dear, it comes out best in the end". But my chief quarrel with the mission ladies—we were great friends as a rule, and they admitted my methods were just and good—was their lack of dignity in dealing with their *clientele.* I remember in Delhi, once, being taken to examine a *purdah* class in the house of a *Nawabin.* She was of the late King's family, and I was prepared, of course, for all sorts of ceremonials. Luckily I knew them, for I had carefully learnt the necessary etiquette.

The arched doorway and entrance was, however, to my surprise, full of young rakes—by the look of them —engaged in dicing, cards, and fighting quails. I passed this over, since, at any rate, they did not leer, or make

insulting remarks. But inside, the *Nawabin*, in a dirty dress, received us chewing and spitting *pan* in a most unceremonious style, and after a while actually had the cheek to tell a woman, whose look betrayed her sweeper caste, to sit down beside me and read her lesson. Then I rose and employing every high-falutin' Persian phrase I knew thus addressed the mission lady—*not* the *Nawabin:*

"Will you kindly inform that person that since I came in she has treated me as she would not dare to treat her youngest sister-in-law (the height of rudeness), and that I take my leave."

"Who, who is this *mem?*" faltered the big lady.

Half-an-hour afterwards she, taking two steps on the striped carpet, was calling down the blessing of Heaven on my head, and I taking two steps also, was reciprocating her wishes. We were the best of friends, and what is more there were no young rakes in the entrance courtyard as we went out!

Once outside the ladies were profuse in thanks. The *Nawabin* had given them much trouble, but they had been afraid to resent her treatment for fear of their mission report suffering by her refusal of admittance. Perhaps my insistence on the value of dignity and prestige gained support from the fact, of which the ladies informed me next morning, that the *Nawabin* had sent a servant round with a basket of fruit and flowers in the evening, and a hope that we were not tired!

"She never did it before," they said half ruefully.

I think this story shows indubitably the value of etiquette in dealing with high-class Indians. We all know the story of Mutiny Nicholson at Jullundhur, the youngest of three generals who were holding a

durbar of native notables to test, if they could, their possible loyalty or disloyalty. How the first of the chiefs came in with his shoes on and two generals said nothing, but Nicholson thundered: "Back to the door and take the shoes off your fellows."

It was enough. The ruler had spoken.

But the work of the missionaries among the lower classes deserved all praise; nothing could have been better. And all round, they did excellent work.

When I made my first visit to any school, my great aim was to make the little frightened-eyed children laugh. There were, of course, very few women teachers in the country districts, and I had too little time to have much effect on the *posse* of bearded men who met me at each place, and convoyed me to their schools. Schools of which, mind you, they entirely disapproved at the bottom of their hearts.

I think it is not too much to say that, at my first tour of inspection, there was no Government female education outside the Normal school for teachers at Amritsar and the Victoria School at Lahore, except, perhaps, those I had started in various places. The Victoria School, under Miss Rose's guidance, was excellent, though I confess that the spectacle of a pretty young girl of sixteen nursing her first baby and puzzling her brains over fractions in the upper class gave me qualms, especially when I found out that she was married to an absolutely ignorant man. But, of course, the six rupees a month for her scholarship was an efficient aid to family finance.

So I returned to manage the schools, which were more or less under my control, as I chose, and (for by this time I had been put on the Educational Board)

suggest what I thought was best for the entire Province.

My husband had extorted a sort of promise that we should not be moved without necessity, and, indeed, having in view the fact that it was convenient for reference to have their Inspectress close to Lahore, I did not think a move likely. So seeing that the difficulty of house room still remained, we turned our attention to an old *Bara dari* (or garden house) of uncertain age which stood in a fine mango and orange garden. The oranges, especially, were super-excellent, the original trees having been sent from Malta at great expense. They were blood oranges, the finest I ever saw, and they commanded a very high price. This, however, had never been properly credited to Government. It was so now, and by adding a staircase to the *Bara dari*, it made an excellent house, and the prettiest I have ever lived in. The upper central room was really beautiful with its slender pillars, its gold and mirror roof, its tessellated pavement. Above this was the sleeping-room; above this again the flat roof. The four marble water courses, which had originally been filled with water, were now full of Persian roses—those roses with grey-green leaves and superlatively scented flowers of a pale pink. The gardener told me that on spring mornings, at dawn time, you could hear the buds open with a little sort of sob; but I never heard it. Still, the fact is mentioned in some of the old legends. The garden was very shady, only a few dracaenas and jasmines remaining by the water courses; but the squirrels loved it. My original pets—I took them home once and brought them out again, dear little mischievous souls—increased enormously, and after a time I had only to

stand and call, for dozens to come flirting their tails and climbing all over me. And the tame ones brought wild ones who would advance timorously by leaps and starts, finally to nibble at my fingers under the belief that I was *all* made of almonds. And one of my special pets made her nest among my clean pocket handkerchiefs, and many a time I have seen her, stretched full length on a slender mango branch, yawn in my face, showing an enormously long tongue, as much as to say, "Thanks, but I'm not coming. I've had plenty of mango-flower honey." They were a great amusement to all who saw them—to me, above all.

I found endless things to alter in the conduct of the schools and had to go warily so as not to arouse antagonism. For instance, it had been the habit every year to have a general prize-giving, at which every pupil received something quite indiscriminately; a sort of reward for coming to school at all, which did not suit my ideas of the dignity and honour of education. So I said it was not to be in my schools. Never was such an outcry; no mother would consent to send her daughter to a school where she did not get a prize. I refused to budge; so did they; at last, after trying reason without success, I turned to ridicule. A big meeting of mothers was convened in the largest courtyard, where I announced, in order to meet their wishes, I had hit on a plan. The first prize would be given to the best scholar, the second to the worst, and so on. It did not take long for my audience to perceive the drift of this; smiles grew, until there was a burst of laughter, and amid much good-natured chaff as to whose daughter would get second prize, the meeting dispersed, satisfied that whatever was ordered would be just. Of course it goes

without saying that at the first prize-giving there were an enormous number of consolations and not a few gifts!

Another difficulty which arose was the question of chaperonage. Hitherto some of the pupils had been conveyed to and fro in *dhoolies* paid for by the school. To this I demurred. Certainly the very young children might have an escort through the bazaars. The old woman who brought water and looked after them generally during school hours was sufficient for that. If more than mere escort was wanted, parents should pay for it themselves. The outcry this made was met by the undeniable fact that there were thousands of girls of lower status waiting to be educated, who would serve my purpose quite as well. And here I cannot help setting down my experience that I have invariably found that the native women of the Panjab races have an unerring instinct for the truth. If it is put before them, fairly, they recognise it, except, of course, in religious, or rather dogmatic questions. For instance, they would resent any limitations of Mai Kali's power; but they would join heartily in reliance on some Great Unknown Power which upholds Creation.

When inspecting I began work at 7 A.M., coming back at 11 for a lunch breakfast, resting and correcting exercises during the hot hours and so to work again till late dinner time; and sometimes after that at work again till the small hours of the morning. For I was always in a hurry to get home as swiftly as possible. And I was very strong; in mission inspections there was ever a joke that I required three relays of ladies to keep up with my speed.

And now comes a somewhat painful part of my

experiences; those experiences which were otherwise so pleasant, for it was a pleasure, on a crisp clear winter morning or even a balmy summer's dawn, to walk through wheat fields to the town and be met, down some alley, with the chanting of Sanskrit hymns or the murmured intoning of the Koran; for, though it was strictly against rules, I always allowed an extra hour in my particular schools for instruction in the pupils' religion. Then when one entered the courtyard, what a sudden chorus of greeting, invariably checked, ineffectually, by the teacher. Yes! it was pleasant, but unpleasantness had to follow the fact that I was an educational officer. As such, and yet as a semi-independent non-official, I had heard rumours of grave scandals in the new University at Lahore. I must make it clear before going on that I was in a curious position. I was a distinctly independent critic; my tongue has always run faster than it should for what is called charity, and, despite my appointment as Inspectress, I was not a *persona grata* with the innermost circle. How could I be when such incidents as the following constantly occurred? The Secretary to Government, at one State dinner party at which we were present, quite unprovokedly challenged me by calling across the table, "I am going to puzzle you, though you do know most things. *Kammer hashen dhu.*"

Now, by great good luck, my Highland youth had brought me some knowledge of spoken Gaelic, especially of the common greeting, and I was able to reply calmly, "'Ha cum ha, kammer hash e pein,' but you should have said '*ven* dhu' for you were speaking to a lady."

The general laugh was, in a way, unfortunate for me.

Anyhow the Panjab University was a pet project of the then Governor, and I could get no notice taken of my guarded suggestions for inquiry. The rumour, however, grew. A junior official in the Forest department, it was asserted, could barely read or write but held a diploma. How had he obtained it? At last I consulted the senior Indian official of the whole Punjab—a man respected by all, in a position of great trust. I knew him well, and I asked him to tell me, as a non-official, what his friends and countrymen thought of the reported scandal. After some preliminary hesitation he said openly, "We think you English know, but wish to burke the scandal for reasons of your own."

Now what was left to me to say, save what I did! "*Mir sahib*, no one shall ever say that to me again."

I suppose I was over cock-sure. I have always been told that. It has been my weakness and my strength all my life.

I had not, however, reckoned with the strength of the cabal against me, but I soon found that the man who had offered me the sapphire ring was in the thick of it. The whole subject is so disagreeable to me, even in remembrance, that I should like to slur over it altogether, but its effect was too marked for that. Suffice it to say that one false charge after another was trumped up against me. Now that I have begun I may as well finish the sordid tale, and return to my schools. It culminated in my husband being transferred to the other end of the Punjab. And when I remained where I was, Government was unwise enough to ask the reason why. My husband, being a wise man, sent me the letter for reply. This I did by saying briefly that I had yet to learn I was under Government's orders,

which was true, but the fat was in the fire. "Why don't you keep your wife in order?" wailed a helpless Secretary. "Take her for a month and try," was the amused answer. It was, of course, an *impasse*. So, for nearly a year things remained. I did my educational work as usual. They knew it was valuable. I lived alone in the big house, and slept alone on the roof under the stars. Rumours would go round that I was to be assassinated, and forty or fifty women would come up from the city to watch all night to prevent this. A friend in the Beloochi regiment wanted to send up a sergeant and four to protect me; but I was not really afraid. I knew my foes were too cowardly; besides such a consummation would have brought immediate inquiry. What really hurt was the desertion of several friends.

But at last Mr. Baden-Powell, brother to Sir Robert Baden-Powell, came across indisputable proof; a commission was appointed from another province, and I, amongst other witnesses, was on my oath for four hours; I never was as hungry as when my examination ended —I suppose from telling so much truth. Anyhow the scandal was proved.

To this day I am uncertain whether the scapegoat, a European, was the prime mover, or whether he had only fallen into the hands of a gang. When I think of the sapphire ring, I am inclined towards the latter. It seems like a direct attempt to implicate and silence me; since had I accepted the bribe, I should have been at their mercy. So let it pass. I will not have it in my Garden. But it brought me one experience that is worth keeping there for ever and ever a day. My scholars in the town, nigh four hundred of them—from four to fourteen—though none knew particulars, had an ink-

ling that I was in a tight place, and I was solemnly informed that they wished to set a watch for me. I inquired what that was, and was told I should see in good time. All I had to do was to come down to the big school at daybreak—not a minute later. There I should find the door barred and a noise as of singing birds within. So I was to chant, "Little birds, little birds, why do you sing the night long?" And the answer would come back in chorus, "We sing for freedom, for freedom. Let us go! Let us go!" Then I had to unbar the door with the words, "Fly away, little birds", and the rest would follow. It did follow with a vengeance. Such a rush of four hundred children never was. Helter-skelter, shrieking, laughing, chattering, and as they passed me they flung at me the spools of cotton which the elder ones had spun during the long night during which *every one of them*, babies and all, had sat up, hungry, thirsty, singing hymns. I was literally snowed under. Afterwards they gathered the spools up, they wove them, they dyed the cloth, they embroidered it, and oh! the delight when I actually came down to school in a dress made by them. I have it still and I shall wear it when my time comes to pass on and find out what life has really meant.[1] Ye Gods! surely that remembrance is sweet enough to take away the bitterness of much. That is why I have left it to the last. And there is so much more of real pleasantness to recount of the various schools and grave-eyed, large-eyed pupils I saw there. Draupadi was the prettiest. I think the prettiest thing I ever saw. Wheat-coloured, a Brahmani girl with a low, broad forehead, eyes that flashed like summer lightning under sweeping lashes, and a

[1] This happened as she wished on April 12, 1929.—M.H.W.

perfect Cupid's bow of a mouth above a column of a throat. Then there was Dhun Devi, the Goddess of wealth, a little thin child of ten, with the brightest of eyes and a monkey-like mouth. She had romped through alphabets and cipherings and primers at an astonishing rate, and now stood sober, energetic, before me, full of the project which had apparently stimulated her past successes. "*Madr Mihr-ban* (mother of mercy, for so they often called me), if you will listen it will be to your advantage. Your alphabet class is over full. You spend time and thought over it, but still it remains full. The pupil teachers are little use. Now if the *Mem* will only give me sixpence for every pupil I bring to the school who knows and can write her alphabet, and can cipher up to one hundred, I shall be able to support my invalid father and my crippled brother." I looked at her determined little face and said "Done". I do not know if she was able to support her invalid father and her crippled brother, but she brought me in many well-prepared pupils. I had, however, to draw the line at one who was seventy years old and a widow! But honestly, the plan worked well and was far superior to the usual one of trusting the A B C class to pupil teachers in school. And in the then state of the public mind regarding female education, it was everything to spread the touch of it as far afield as possible. So little Dhun Devi teaching her pupils in the bazaars was an object lesson to many more spectators than would have been possible within the limits of a school.

Then there was good old Sobrai, a Mahomedan chaperone who, for long years, had piloted the children through the bazaars. An excellent woman with her

wrinkled hatchet face, her large horn spectacles, her scanty hair, and most decorous dress. She came to me one day, her blear eyes full of tears and said, "*Mem-sahiba*, I am too stupid for the girls. They are getting too clever, and they will not obey. Now, thanks be to God, I can match them in El-Koran. And I have learnt the Persian alphabet, it is even as the Arabic, but not so good. It is the '*rhythmitic*' that beats me, and the children laugh if I do not sums. So I must learn! I must learn!"

After that she did manage to learn simple addition, subtraction, multiplication, but division remained beyond her. It was indeed a "sight for sair e'en" to see her laboriously ciphering away, counting the while on her bony fingers and knuckles. And when she brought her slate to be corrected, I often was perforce obliged to put full marks on it only to hear her thanks to God. "*Sobhan-ullah-Sobhan-ullah*" used to echo out over the dingy streets, the unthinking multitude.

There was one Hindu school of which I was particularly fond. It did well in learning, and better still in character and conduct. This was owing to the fact that the two teachers, aunt and niece, were both widows indeed. Widows, that is, of the best type of self-sacrificing, self-denying womanhood. They gloried in their widowhood. And here I must point out that we Westerners fail to realise its inherent sanctity. One comes across hundreds of miserable stunted lives bereft of all that makes life living; then one runs up against such a pair as these two were, respected, almost revered, the centre of their homes. Briefly, the position of widows *religiously*, in India, is comparable to that of a nun. These two were dreadfully anxious I should submit to

be got up as a widow, when they would take me to Benares, and I should see the inside of Visheswa's Temple, and all the things that "*mlechchas*" were not allowed to see. They guaranteed my safety, and I believe I could have done it, for any fault in my accent could have been put down to my having come from the Afghan frontier; but it would not have been fair to Government to risk a row.

All this time I had been doing some medical work; but I was now in the way of civilisation where there were hospitals and doctors, so I was chiefly anxious to induce women to avail themselves of this outside aid. I have always held that the Dufferin nurses and lady doctors were a mistake. They perpetuated a vicious circle by bolstering up the *purdah*. But for the fact that Mahomed, as it were, went to the mountain, the mountain would indubitably have come to Mahomed. It was, in fact, beginning to come; for pain is the strongest fulcrum Nature knows. This antagonism of mine to the new scheme was not tactful: but it remains to this day.

There is one thing which certainly deserves a place in my Garden, which I have not mentioned. One winter I recruited for a native regiment. A friend of mine was anxious to include a Gujar company in his regiment and sent a recruiting sergeant to our district. I can still see the large, broad, good-humoured smile on the big boys' faces when they learnt that a woman was to pass them; but the sergeant was a jewel. I could *not* have made a mistake. Great tall fellows he chose, but at the chest measurement of some of them I looked doubtfully at my mentor.

"He is bare seventeen, *mem-sahiba*", he would reply. "I'll make a man of him, never fear!"

I believe he was right; at any rate my recruits were allowed satisfactory.

Of course there were many other incidents that happened about these years which remain clear in memory; one especially when, on a hot April morning —it was my birthday, I remember—I saw a figure I knew coming through the caladiums, yuccas, and crotons, with which my husband had decorated our drive. It was the doctor from the next big station, who overlooked our minor hospital.

"Don't come near me," he cried, "but for God's sake give me a cup of tea." So at a little table in the verandah, apart, he sate and—looking utterly outwearied—told me, what I knew, that there had been a serious outbreak of illness at the canal jail, about thirty miles across the desert part of the district, where some twelve hundred convicts were digging at the new Chenab canal. The Inspector-General had been down and diagnosed epidemic pneumonia. The Scottish doctor in charge of the jail had differed, saying it was typhus, and had gone on making post-mortems to prove himself right. "He got saturated with the typhus poison," the tea-drinker said in the rich Irish brogue which so ill suited his tired anxious voice, "then, poor fellow, he sent for me. I nursed him all we could—he came back twice from the Valley itself, and I said, 'Sure, he'll be making an April fool of us after all,' but last night. . . . Well! we've carried him all through it—there isn't much road—for a Christian burial, and your husband will read the service—but——"

"What is it, doctor?" I asked. Then it came out. There was an English lady—the wife of the canal officer—down with fever. "I don't think it's typhus,"

went on the tired, anxious voice, "but I can't be sure; only she'll die if she stays there; she's frightened—and I can't say for sure." As I write I can almost see the wearied, kindly face against the flowerful garden. And, after all, it was not typhus. The fever broke after three anxious days, and my husband could come back from the dak bungalow, whither I had made him retreat unwillingly; but where was the use of multiplying the danger of infection? And my little school of what I used to call my black-and-tans—the children of Eurasian parents, for whom there was no possible means of education, rejoiced in a holiday for the time. Such grand names as they had, and some so inappropriate. Lily, as black as your hat, Myrtle, a mere *gamine* of the bazaars. Horatio Menelaus, a real handsome boy, and best of all Elflida Norma. I never fathomed the genesis of that Saxon name.

Then the district itself was full of mysteries. The grand new road made by a rajah to his palace, which would not run to the thirty-six milestones which he had ordered for it from the Roorkee workshops. But he insisted on using the milestones; so that the last four miles had the appearance of a disjointed cemetery.

Then the real mysteries in the outlying desert stretches of the Bar land; land, that is, where the limestone soil is as white marble dotted with grey caper bushes, and no life is to be seen, save, mayhap, a goatherd tending his unseen flock. "Where is the ancient city?" you ask him, and he will point to a faint, scarce visible curve on the distant horizon that shows against a sunset sky. Just the faintest curve in the distant purple.

"Yonder is Eskub," he will say simply; but when

you reach it—lo! there is no curve. Only the unending stretches of marble soil, the stunted grey caper bushes. Once I made some coolies dig below a slight unevenness and I actually found a slab brick about twelve inches square. Was it a bit of the buried city? I cannot say, but there are many such "Eskubs"; they are part of the vast mystery of India. I suppose in time India will be industrialised, her imagination will be stifled, and these bricks will all be dug up to build labour exchanges.

Of course, so soon as the University scandal was settled I had no further reason for staying in the beautiful *Bara dari*; but before I rejoined my husband I was sent for to Simla and solemnly whitewashed by staying in Government House! A new Lieutenant-Governor had arrived, a dear fellow, who did not deny the soft impeachment of an ulterior motive in asking me up. So I made a joke of it, though really I did not require any painting.

Still I had a good time, and the theatricals we got up were so good that Lord Dufferin nearly fell off his chair with laughing at the Infant Phenomenon, a favourite impersonation of mine for which my round face and high colour suited me.

But the time was fast approaching when my husband was to retire. He had always disliked Government service, and I fear my many tussles with it had not made him like it the more. But I had always been successful with my own work. Over 20,000 girls passed through my hands on this my last tour, and I really do not think I had made an enemy amongst the women.

Nor had I antagonised the men. At any rate I was asked to nominate my successor: which I did.

My last act on the Educational Board was to promise to write a primer on Hygiene for the girls' Middle-School examination which was to take the place of the perfectly useless Euclid.

Then came the good-byes to my own particular schools. Doubtless we wept a good deal, but my last recollection was an extremely cheerful one. A crowd of some three hundred veiled women on the platform of the railway station, far too excited over the strangeness of their own behaviour, to think even of tears!

In the autumn of 1888 my daughter joined me for a brief cold weather, and on the 1st May 1889 my husband retired—getting on board a P. & O. boat just two hours after his pension became due!

For years afterwards he suffered (after an underdone potato no doubt) from a nightmare that the Accountant-General had discovered he was a fortnight short in residence and must go back to India to serve it. But it never materialised.

AUTUMN

CHAPTER XI

I WAS now forty-two years of age, twenty-two years of which I had spent in India. I was still full of work, I had many roots and tendrils, which had to be ruthlessly torn up and broken away. So I had, as it were, to take stock of my position. And of course in doing so the inevitable regrets that must assail thinking humanity when it surveys its past actions came uppermost. I saw then that I had had unique opportunities and had missed them. Still I could count on some achievements of a sort. I had, so far, helped the prestige of the British Raj, that wherever I had been, among whatever class of the Indian people, I had always, as it were, "gone down". The people had liked me, liked my autocratic ways, my habit of calling a man a fool, if he was one *in my opinion.* And here I must protest against the foolish habit most civilised people have of considering that one person's opinion is worth nothing. It has its value, of course, as a human document, and if we have ulterior reasons for considering that the person who gives it forth has special weight, we give it what it commands. But, as a rule, it should make no difference to us whether other people approve or disapprove. In the St. Thomas à Kempis from which I learnt to read, there is one sentence the wisdom of which has been a guiding star to me all my life.

"Whether men think well or ill of thee, thou art not therefore another man."

After all, your opinion is only your opinion; so why should you not give it without proclaiming the fact that it *is* only your opinion. *Cela va sans dire!* What is the use of saying your own ignorance is great; your audience can generally find that out for themselves.

I think the cause of humanity's mock modesty is really the underlying yet totally unfounded belief that everybody must like you. Now there is no proposition more untrue than this. It is quite impossible that everybody will like you, unless, indeed, you are a mere nonentity.

Looking back, therefore, over those two-and-twenty years I spent in India, I could find, amongst doubtless many errors, much that I still approved, even in official affairs. I regretted, as who would not have regretted, that again and again, moved by some stupid fear lest such a gibe as "the grey mare is the better horse" should be thrown at me, I had abstained from putting in my oar in many cases. I *had* special knowledge which might have been useful. For instance, it was I who told the Western police officials in the Panjab that it was the woman's habit, when she had no sons, to expose her new-born female infant outside the village for the jackals to carry off; since, if they dragged it from the village, her next conception would be a male one. This and many other things I brought to notice.

Then, from having been born with a pictorial memory, my thoughts often run towards a pictorial exposition of facts, what is nowadays called a graph; then seldom used except in sciences. Thus, when my

husband and four previous officers were accused in set terms by an irate Financial Commissioner of "disgraceful delay", I rescued all five of them from undeserved imputations by a neatly drawn design, coloured from pale pink to crimson, showing indubitably that the area of greatest delay was in the office of the Financial Commissioner himself! Concerning this same advantage of pictorial representation, which enables one to see at a glance a fact which by means of words would take pages to show (and that inadequately) I have several examples: one being that of a new railroad. By a slight deviation it would open up a large wheat-growing district. The authorities were adamant until my husband sent in a map showing at a glance, coloured of course from pale pink to crimson, the actual facts. This was sent back with the remark that it was most valuable; so valuable that copies of it were being sent out to all the districts in the Panjab, as a specimen of what might, in many cases, be done. And it is not only in India that the pictorial design has met with encomiums. At the Staff College a paper was asked for, showing the constitution and defects of the War Office. Egged on by me, my nephew sent in a map. It was rather like a spider's web, but in lines of the whole spectrum it showed indubitably the silly references and cross references which existed.

It met with unqualified approval, even though the youngster had put a photograph of Lord Roberts as the *fons et origo mali*.

So, as I left India I had regrets.

Two very big ones loomed largely, and exist to this day. One was the loss of the little daughter who, as the doctor specifically told me, had been sacrificed to my

future. I often wonder how much more she might have done than the mother who *might* have been sacrificed. Another is a far more trivial one; and yet as I write I can see the *porte cochère*, the mail phaeton and pair, standing at the steps, a great poinsettia bush, thrusting its scarlet fingers at us from the sunlight outside, and the doctor standing, his hand in mine: the same doctor who owned Beelzebub, who played the violin, whose feet used to go up into the air with a shout of laughter at any funny story. Still broad, his red Scottish head a little grey, his rugged Scottish face a little lined. He had married about seven years before, married a charming wife who had brought him two children and had died with her second. That was a year ago. So he had sent the babies home and was alone in the big house, and we had driven over to be with him for a day or two. Once more we had played Mendelssohn's *andante* and Beethoven's concerto together, and once more those feet of his had gone up with a laugh. So we stood saying good-bye, when suddenly he broke out: "Leave her with me, old boy, for a day or two—do—it's such a comfort!" And my husband laughed. "She shall come back and stop a fortnight; only just now—well—she'd better come home, eh?" And I went; undoubtedly it was best, for I had a dinner party on that evening, forty miles away.

But he—he was indeed away by next morning; for he was dead—dead of cholera in the night. So the regret has lasted to this minute that I might have been there, perhaps to be a comfort. As it was he died without a friendly hand.

Those are the chief regrets, beyond a posse of minor ones that I should have been always so quick in re-

partee. It does not pay among stupid people, and a very large section of virtuous humanity is dreadfully stupid.

But, of course, there were pleasures in looking back too. Who, for instance, can over-estimate the joy of my Star of India? Who can belittle the satisfaction that snowing under by spools of cotton gave me? I ask myself, at this moment, if ever such a thought as the inclusion in a keepsake of things prized and worn by the givers ever occurred to a Westerner? And whether any Council school children would be allowed to sit up all night singing hymns? Even the memory of those guileless women on a railway platform, so obsessed by their own delight in doing what they did and outraging every propriety, that they had no time for tears—even that is heart-warming. But were I to put on paper all the pleasures which have been given me in India I should write volumes. The offer to take me to Benares, the offer to make me a Begum and *dispense with lawyers* —the tears in young eyes when I sang sentimental ballads to my pupils—and a thousand thousand others. Why, the world would never contain all the books that should be written!

However, this much may be said. My twenty-two years of India had been on the whole, very happy ones. We had been knocked about a great deal; but in the only three places where we had been allowed more than a year's residence I had learnt a good deal and made many friends.

Up till 1889, when I left India for good, I had not even tried to publish any of the literary work which I have attempted all my life. As I have mentioned, I did some press work for the editor of the Indian *Public*

Opinion, and I had brought out, in India, a volume of Folk Tales which I had collected, with a few of Captain Temple's notes; I called it *Wide Awake Stories*. I wrote it entirely for children, so that I considered it suffered considerably by being published in England with copious notes as *Tales of the Punjab*. I also with a friend's help had published a housekeeping book, called *The Indian Cook and Housekeeper*, which has since gone into ten editions, has been translated into the vernacular, and is still, I believe, going strong. For, all my life, I have been a good cook—I may say a very good cook. Many a bridegroom's sword has cut a wedding cake of my making, true lovers' knots and real orange blossoms all complete; and my cream toffee and scones had a universal reputation. In fact, of all the good, if any, which my pen has done, I think the cookery book has done the most. I have had letters without end, thanking me for it, from would-be housekeepers, gardeners, cow-keepers, and chicken-rearers. Even from one poor man, delighted at having brought his wife through childbirth in the jungle with the volume in his hand. For it treats of everything. I spent a good deal of time over it, one leave, reading at the Radcliffe and Bodleian at Oxford; for I wished to be sure of my facts. My brother-in-law, Henry Nettleship, was fond of a joke, and I well remember, when I was agitating about the normal temperature of a cow, he met with Goldwin Smith in the street, to whom he presented me in these words: "Oh, Smith! This is my sister-in-law, she wants to know the normal temperature of the cow; no doubt you'll be able to tell her." The professor's face was a study!

But perhaps the most striking testimony to the

value of the book was when, in a far away Hebridean island, one of the carriage horses of the rich shooting tenant fell desperately ill. My brother, who happened to be one of the shooting guests, said, "Try my sister's book; you have it". Try it they did, while awaiting a reply from the smart Staffordshire stud-groom to whom they had telegraphed. And lo! when the answer came the treatment had not to be altered, it was identical. But then I had really taken "a immense o' trouble" over the compilation. When one knows nothing or next to nothing to begin with, one has to be very careful. That is why I, as a rule, trust encyclopedias; one brain could not possibly contain all the information contained in a whole book of reference.

These two books then, both published in India, were my sole attempts at literature. I had not even any manuscripts; all had gone to the W.P.B. But I had, and still have, a very retentive pictorial memory. Though in theatricals I had no difficulty in committing my parts, I should not say that my memory either for books or faces was above the ordinary; but I have seldom met with one so absolutely pictorial. An instance will show this. Driving for the first time through a north-west province town, a friend said to me, "You see no difference, I presume, between this bazaar and Panjab ones?" "Yes, I do," I replied instantly, "the colour of the chillies in grain sellers' shops is different. It's more yellow than red." He laughed. The district we were in was famous for its yellow chillies. Now, before I go on to a totally different milieu in my Garden, it may be interesting if I envisage, and, as it were, size up the Panjab as I left it in 1889.

Except close to the large towns there was no visible

sign whatever of unrest, though the Arya Somaj had started its teaching. I had inspected—unofficially, since they received no Government grant—two of their female schools. They were very earnest, very praiseworthy; but absolutely ineffectual; still the movement was making headway. The Mussulmans were, I should say, quiescent. We heard nothing of communal riots, but, of course, there was much less admixture of race. The railways had not yet made the *moulvie* sit cheek by jowl with the Hindu *yogi* in a third class carriage all over the countryside. On the other hand, those same railways had brought an immense number of Bengalis up country. The craze for reports and schedules had begun to rage, and the Bengalis were, of course, much better clerks than the Panjabis. As an instance of this invasion, I remember once when taken to a great missionary rally by a dear friend who mistrusted me utterly and bound me over not to open my mouth, I broke my promise by asking one question, and one only.

"How many of the hundred and four houses you visit are Panjabi?" The question caused confusion, for only one was Panjabi; the rest were Bengalis. Not but the Bengalis are excellent folk, but they are born agitators. It was only two years before that the indigo question had roused Bengal to fever heat; so here we had the "little leaven" ready to work. Then the Westerners themselves were showing signs of unsettlement. The constant change of officers from one station to another had its effect. We ourselves had been moved fifteen times in sixteen years, which, as three years had been spent in one station and two in two more, shows a sufficient amount of instability. It left no time

either for the ruler to know the people or the people to know the ruler. And the increased facilities for getting home on short leave added to that instability. Finally, and more than anything else, the freedom accorded to the press was distinctly injurious. Some wretched malcontents—mostly alien to the Panjab—purchased a lithographic stone, and thence belched out the most defamatory lies. I myself have seen Englishmen of unblemished respectability credited with every crime on God's earth.

Now such statements should instantly have been nailed to the counter. But English ideals prevailed with Government, and officers were not even allowed to prosecute the offender. "*C'était magnifique mais ce n'était pas la guerre.*" We see the aftermath now when the native Indian newspapers have become quite unreliable as to fact. They cannot, very often, distinguish between truth and falsehood.

And here, perhaps, I may say one word as to a very great difficulty in teaching Western ideas to Eastern people; and doubtless *vice versa*. We do not mean the same things by our words. The moment we come to abstract ideas, the hopelessness, for instance, of translating "Maya" by "illusion", "truth" by "Sachai" becomes apparent. So far as I know for instance, there is no Eastern language which contains the equivalent of "national". *Swarâj*, of which we have so much nowadays, is simply "self-government" and would apply equally well to a caste or race; but *not* to a nation. In fact, the national idea is foreign to the Indian. He has learnt it, doubtless, but it is alien. I found this difficulty of transliteration very patent when I taught my schools. "Charity", not in the sense of giving alms, but of be-

lieving the best, I found required much circumlocution. Doubtless some of my difficulties arose from my failure to know abstruse Sanskrit words; but we must remember that our words for these abstract ideas are as Sanskrit to them. We stand, therefore, at a disadvantage.

India then, as I looked back on Bombay from the deck of the ship that was bearing me away from all personal touch in the future of the country, appeared to me temple-crowned, mosque-crowned, a blue mist enveloping both, and hiding alike the factories, the hovels, the offices, palaces, and the millionaire mansions. All things seemed merged in that blue mist. Even the distant hills were lost in it. So India loomed homogeneous, and so looked a lie.

For India is as multitudinous as the sands of the sea. What has Bengal to do with the North Countree? Nothing. As well might the South Italian peasant claim kinship with the Esquimaux. That, at any rate, I had learnt during my two-and-twenty years. I was to learn more in the years to come, but of that I knew nothing at the time. So as we sped over the Bay I was chiefly occupied in wondering whether the hero Arjuna's God-given Bow which he flung into the Western sea, remained at the bottom of it to this day? All have heard of the great belt of twisting, twirling seaweed through which each traveller to and from India has to forge a way on his passage over the Indian Ocean. Ancient travellers have it that the belt is of serpents, set to guard the treasures of Hindustan. We moderns know it as seaweed set in motion by the movements of the microscopic animalculi by which it is infested. I am not sure which is right; but of this I am certain that those

travellers who, looking down through the blue water on the brown, restless, snaky coils, can see nothing but seaweed had better not go to India. They will see nothing there; they will only try to import industrialism.

Be that as it may, I was now on my way to an industrialised country. I remember Walter Pater saying to me once, when I remarked on the loveliness of the green spring fields and trees about Oxford, "Don't you think they are almost offensively green?" Well, England struck me as that. It was, at first, almost offensive in the crudeness of its colour. Green fields, red brick houses, flowers everywhere, no dusty haze to tone down the blare. At first, however, what with the London season, friends to see, and plans to make, time passed quickly enough. Then, yet once again, I caught whooping-cough, which is an occupation in itself. So it was not before some months had passed that I began to find time hang heavy on my hands. Mercifully, however, recurring summer brought me enough occupation and to spare, for I was mistress of a very large house in the Highlands, which we shared with Indian friends. It had a fairly good shoot with it, and here we invited, in turns, both families. Eighteen in the dining-room was quite a normal number, and as we were ten miles away from shops a considerable amount of forethought was needed, for we were comparatively poor folk and could not entertain what is called a large staff. But I found at once how desperately ungrateful I had been to Indian domestics, who, at least, would do as they were told. I found the English disregard for orders especially trying in the kitchen. An Indian cook would follow a recipe. Most English ones disregard it in some trifling yet all-important matter, the result being

fiasco. But we had a very pleasant time, and it was worth much to see the menkind's delight in killing creatures—fish, flesh, fowl, even herrings, though not red ones, for we were close to the sea. Of this six months, however, I have but few memories to bury in the Garden. I was too busy. I have a faint recollection of an Engineer officer's horror when, through a window where he was shaving, he saw me brushing and polishing the boots. But, as I explained, someone must do it if the boot boy was incapacitated, and it was not the place of other servants to do thirty-six pairs of boots and shoes.

I also remember much adulation of my courage by the ladies for having hung on to the one side of a runaway pony in a pony cart down a steep incline. As if anyone could do otherwise when, had you let go, the man on the other side must inevitably have fallen over the cliff and very possibly have been killed! On such occasions there is no such thing as courage: simple necessity.

The ensuing winter, however, brought leisure, and a very dear friend suggested that some of my experiences might prove acceptable to the minor magazines. So I wrote *Lal* and sent it off to I really forget which magazine, the most minor I could find. It was, of course, returned with thanks. Now this rebuff had the usual effect of rebuffs upon my militant nature. I re-read *Lal*; I came to the conclusion it was good, and I sent it somewhere else. I was very persistent. Having made up my mind it was worth printing, I determined it should be so, and having exhausted all the minor magazines I tried the major ones, beginning with *Macmillan's*.

I received a courteous request for more; and from that moment until now I have never been in want of a publisher. I have steadily refused to write to order, but everything I have written has been accepted without demur. I mention all this as a heart tonic to young authors. My advice is briefly—make up your mind that you have done your best, and then try every single editor in the United Kingdom; if you don't succeed, and you have sufficient money, publish on your own, if, on mature thought, you are convinced that you have something to say.

Anyhow, Mr. Mowbray Morris of *Macmillan's Magazine* was my literary godfather. He told me once in after years that he had never been set upon so fiercely as he was by me when he ventured to make a slight alteration in my work. But he was kindness itself, even when he discovered after nearly three years of constant correspondence, that the F. A. Steel, Esq., whom he had been addressing was a woman.

There had been no reason why I should undeceive him, and the mystification of the public had amused me. There is, in fact, nothing so amusing or so educative as to follow the mistakes which humanity makes in judging from incomplete premises. To illustrate this, let me set down a reader's report that was given to me by a very famous publishing house on my *Red Rowans*, of course before people had appraised my work as passable:

"The authoress, when she deals with London life, with which she is evidently familiar, does well. Her work is accurate, sprightly, eminently readable. It is when she turns to the West Highlands that she shows her complete ignorance of the country and its people.

Who, for instance, ever heard of an Episcopalian curate etc., etc."?

Now I had *never* lived in London, but I had been almost all my young life in the West Highlands, where Episcopalians are as plentiful as blackberries!

Thus it had amused me to read criticisms that were absolutely beside the mark. Especially one, made by a *very* literary paper on my story called *Harvest*:

"If this is not by Kipling, then it is by Diabolus." Macmillans published many of my stories and likewise my first novel, which Mr. Mowbray Morris rechristened *Miss Stuart's Legacy*. To this day I prefer my title *Legacy Duty*. In fact I only know one case in which I consider my title to have been improved. And this stands to the credit of George Routledge. That chosen by him, *India through the Ages*, is infinitely better than the jejune one I had chosen. I really forget what it was, but I know it was something causeless and uncertain—Indian something or another, dreams, or facts, or problems, one so like the other that there is hardly any difference between them. Now, titles to me are very serious things. As a rule they are, as it were, the keystone to my whole book. *On the Face of the Waters* was chosen years before I put pen to paper; my characters, my scenes, all had their genesis in that title. That is why I felt so aggrieved and outraged when a good, lion-hunting lady who, at the author's dinner reception, could not get near enough to me for speech, called out above the crowd: "Thanks! I have just been reading your splendid *On the Surface of the Sea*."

It was humiliating.

I have often been asked to give, if I can, the incep-

tion of my stories, such as they are. Everybody who tries to write has his or her special method of so doing. With me, though I deprecate any formula, since I have no rules, no real knowledge of style or punctuation, and as often as not little knowledge of what my characters are to be, the very first thing is the title. It appears full-fledged. I scrutinise it to see if it had any foundation in fact; if, briefly, a story worth writing is inherent in it. Now, curiously enough, as often as not, notable events and characters seem to crowd round it. For instance, *The Hosts of the Lord*—I think the most dramatic of my novels—simply came to be associated immediately with the Pilgrims' march in "Tannhäuser"; so by research to the picture of Pidar Narayan on the Hilltop giving the "Addio del marito" while the sun set over the rose-flushed peaks.

Sometimes a title appears, but meets with no corroboration. Something goes a-jee, the dates won't fit in, the idea of the title will not work out; so it slips away from me and is never used. So I am afraid I must confess myself a firm believer in outside help. In this materialistic age it seems a silly creed to confess. It is so easy to laugh at what is to a certain extent a claim for inspiration.

Naturally I don't claim that. I had no education, my work therefore must in some ways be poor. But I do claim that I, as I know myself, sometimes—not often, but sometimes—do not write my own stories.

Who, for instance, can explain the following story, except as a proof that sometimes—not often, but sometimes—an increment comes from without? At any rate it does so to me. And not only in story-telling, but in many other ways. Twice in my life I have been dis-

tinctly conscious that extra skill has been added to my hands' work both in music and painting. I am able to do one day what I was not able to do before, and the facility thus acquired remains with me. I do not attempt to explain this; I simply note the fact.

To return to my story. I was the mistress of a large house. It was full, mostly of young people, girls and boys. It was a pouring wet day in Aberdeenshire; cold, raw. After lunch I set them to work on snookers, with prizes, and I said to my daughter: "That should do you till tea-time. I am going to write this story which has been annoying me." I sat down in my own room, as ever. While I was considering I became conscious of a figure beside me, conscious, not with the physical, but with the mind's eye. A figure in the white uniform of an Indian railway guard. The uniform was soiled and crumpled, the brass buttons tarnished; the man middle-aged, middle-sized, stoutish, with a corn-coloured beard, a red face, and clear blue eyes. I often fancy I should know him again if I saw him. Without preamble he began to tell me a story, asserting that his name was Nathaniel James Craddock and that he was an engine-driver on the G.P.R. I had no knowledge of such a name or such an occupation. He told me, word for word, the story called *The Permanent Way*. Over and over I have been told it is one of the best, if not the best, of any I have ever published. I know I laughed myself over some of his quaint diction.

The story was finished by tea-time. I took it downstairs with me, and, as it still rained, I suggested further amusement by my reading them what I had written. In truth I had an urgent desire to see how it would be received.

"But, Mother," said my daughter quickly as the reading ended, "that isn't the story you intended to write, surely?"

"No, it isn't," I had to reply. "Someone came and told it to me."

There was no more to be said—was there? And there is little to add now save that twice more in the years "Nathaniel James Craddock" has come and told me a story; and those stories are good ones, better than most I turn out. The names of them are *The King's Well* and *The most nailin' bad shot.*

He comes no more, I am sorry to say; but, if my solution of the puzzle is true—for the present, I keep that to myself—he may return any day.

But of one thing I am quite sure. If you have a definite aim in your work, if the desire to achieve it is keen enough within you, you are helped. It is exactly as if you were in a dark room with electric switches all round it. Stretch out your hand decisively. You will touch a button. There will be light.

There is yet one story I will tell, for I think it is a very striking one. I was writing *On the Face of the Waters*, a book which occupied my thoughts, or part of my thoughts, for many long years—in a way ever since I came out to India.

I was writing the fifth chapter, telling how Alice Gissing and young Mainwaring saw, at the fair, the two "many-faced vices" Jhingi and Bhingi, caricaturing an Englishman and an Englishwoman dancing together drunkenly, and how young Mainwaring's passion was checked by his companion's whisper "Laugh! Laugh, I tell you—it's the only thing to do." I wrote and rewrote that chapter fourteen separate times. There was some-

thing wrong, I felt; but as I never leave a chapter and go on until the one I have been writing is ready for print, I was checked.

At last I made the experiment of putting aside what I had finished, and beginning the chapter anew, without looking at my previous one. When I compared the two they were identical.

Then I realised that something outside me was interfering. At last one day, as it were by chance, I added one word, "Bravo!" I made Jim Douglas, disguised as an Afghan in the crowd, say it; I made Alice Gissing wonder who the speaker was. I made her say: "It must have been the man in the Afghan cap—he was fair—an Englishman, perhaps, disguised. Well! I should know him again if I saw him."

I had not the slightest conception why I put that interpolation in. I knew nothing; but it pleased me, and the book went on.

It was not *till ten chapters afterwards* that I knew. Then Alice Gissing lay in Jim Douglas' arms, dying, just after she had saved the child's life. Her eyes narrowed into sight, she looked at him curiously, clearly—"Oh! it's you, is it?" came the old inconsequent laugh. "Why don't you say 'Bravo—Bravo—Bra——'"

A crimson rush of blood dyes his hands. She is dead.

Then I understood *the purpose of what I had written.* But why? That is the puzzle. I can only say that as far as my conscious consciousness goes, I was unconscious.

That is a terribly confusing statement, but how much further does even the most abstruse metaphysic take us?

The facts are clear. Something of which I was unconscious made me write the fifth chapter fourteen times. It requires something pretty strong to do that, anyhow.

I set down here, to many, idle tales, because to me they are not idle; because to me they give promise of great fellowship; because they make me feel that, call me what you will—fool, idealist, congenital idiot, anything—my imagination is stronger than you are, because it is in touch with all things.

So, to descend from the clouds.

In the first two years of my English life I did nothing; in the third and fourth I wrote chiefly for Macmillan. Then I met William Heinemann at a relative's house, and from that time onwards he published all my writings. But in the winter of 1894 I found it necessary to return to India.

Ever since I had left it, the conviction had been growing on me that I had sadly wasted my time when there. I found also that heaps and heaps of things must be learnt before I could finish what for years and years had been lying at the back of my brain—a book on the Mutiny. As one gets on in life, the impulse to finish becomes stronger and stronger. I was nearing the great climacteric for most women, and I was beginning to feel—not any diminution of energy, any failure physical or mental; but the exact contrary.

I doubt, in fact, if in all my youth I had ever felt so much alive as the day in the autumn of 1894 when I set sail, alone, for India.

The fact puzzled me. I had not yet learnt the reason of it; I was not to learn the full reason of it for many a long year.

Looking back on those four years of varied life, I

find I had written and published six books of sorts, two of them being republished stories, and I was constantly being asked for more. Otherwise I seem to have learnt little. Two things crop up which should, I think, go into my Garden.

One is my husband's face, honest gentleman, as he came home from shooting on the moors. And such moors! No one who does not know the Dundonald hills can have any idea of the sense of freedom, of recklessness of all earth's trammels, that they rouse in you, as you tramp over the heather, with the peaked limestone crags sheltering some dark tarn, the red deer silhouetted against a frosty sky, the sudden challenge of some old cock grouse in your ears.

So tramping, feeling quit of care, my husband entered a shepherd's cot to beg a drink of milk. It was given; but with it came a cry awful in its strangeness. "It'll be the bairns," quoth the shepherd's wife, "there's five o' them in the pit yonder. Ye'll see they were born so—just the lot o'them—ane after anither, God knows why. Sae they're just troublesome, so most whiles we put them tae the pit where they canna do harm. Likely they smelt the milk."

Likely they did. But what a tale! The woman, my husband said, seemed strong and lusty, though a little wanting. The husband he did not see. There had been more of the degenerates, but mercifully they had died.

I know nothing more. The neighbours—miles away from the shepherd's hut—took it as a dispensation of a merciful Providence! I did not.

But they have strange religious mentality, those dwellers in the remote Highlands. Coming, as one had to do in those days, thirty miles from Garve on the

coach, one had opportunity of occasionally gauging the views of one's fellow passengers. "What," said one respectable, dour elder of the church, when entrapped into an argument about matters ecclesiastical, "Mayhap the fowk in England like to hae their minister speiring round their cottages, tellin' them what they shud do; but we are no' needin' it. We ken oor duty weel. An' if ye ask the differ between the Free Kirk and the Established, I'll tell ye. The Free Kirk man preaches the Gospel extem-pore, an' the Established man preaches from a paper aboot Jewish History. An' that's no gude for salvation, as I ken fine, havin' sat under one for twenty year. So that's that!"

Not quite so conclusive as the Aberdeenshire man, who, when asked the "differ" between his sect and another, said at first: "Aw! naething much," then advanced on pressure to "No muckle ava," and finally said, "Weel, ye see, we'll be saved and they will be damned."

Good souls both of them doubtless, though the first one with eagle eye had descried a half-full whisky bottle on the side of the road which must have dropped out of some previous vehicle, and insisted on picking it up and giving snacks all round.

Which reminds me of another incident. Our parlour-maid, a fine, handsome, Lowland Scottish lassie, was taken in to supper at a tenants' ball by the English valet who chose to boast about his rich master, the turkeys, and hams, and jellies and creams with which the table was loaded. Only to be met with the scathing remark: "Aye! ye've a many things we haven't—a drunken master for one."

The girl resented any disparagement of *her family*. Are there any such servants nowadays, I wonder?

CHAPTER XII

THOUGH I had published so many books, the idea of the one on the Mutiny was ever with me, and I felt the need of more information.

So I went out to India again in the autumn of '94, and went out alone, my husband and daughter stipulating that they must join me for Christmas.

In Bombay I saw Violet Nicholson, otherwise Laurence Hope, for the first time. She had lately married a very old friend of mine, who, a few months back, had put a postscript to a long letter saying curtly, "By the way, I was married the other day." I remember my reply was equally brief. After the usual budget of news and airings of views, my postscript was: "By the way, I died the day before yesterday."

She was very interesting, but, unconventional as I was, I felt a little embarrassed at having to sit beside her striking figure, dressed in a low-necked, short-sleeved, pink satin gown, in an open victoria in broad daylight. It seemed a pity, with all those dark eyes looking on and British prestige looming in the distance. But the two were very happy, and outweighed hundreds, nay thousands, in brains and brilliancy.

During the next few weeks I kept a diary; therefore, the few following pages are actual excerpts from it. I had a somewhat troublesome journey up country, my

fellow passengers being a Parsi lady and her little boy of three. A refined looking, birdlike, slender, graceful woman, who wore extravagantly high-heeled satin shoes. Her first act was to undo three parcels: one of cocoanuts, one of sugar candy, one of jasmine and rose-buds. These, she explained, were to be thrown into the Tapti river to secure safe passage. Then she blew her nose, reserving her handkerchief for the wiping of her fingers. The boy was a perfect specimen of a spoilt brat—bold, shy, at once docile and preternaturally naughty. I had a restless night, being awakened at short intervals by a shrill voice to know why I slept! I stopped at Firozpur for a night and found it dust-covered, so different from the colour of Bombay. Even the sun yellowish-white, and the *khansaman's* pony in the compound looking like a biscuit!

So I arrived at Kasur about four in the afternoon. I had no servant, no luggage save a cabin trunk, and the station-master was a complete stranger; but my idea was to venture straight without warning among the people and see if any recollected me.

"You are mission lady," said the station-master superciliously. "I am not a mission lady," I began, for I disliked his tone, "but I want a porter." Then I repented myself and added: "I am Mem Steel *sahiba.*"

His face changed; he became vocal; "Cho!" he said —he was a Bengali—"then you are full of interest in educational work, and have also part in celebrated University case and notorious Sunt Singh."

"Yes!" I said, "I have come back to Kasur after twenty years to see if you have memories." He made an elaborate bow. "Madam," he said "your name is

provincial, and your good deeds remembered far and wide."

That was not a bad start. Then I found my trunk and bedding being carried by three coolies, one of whom was the old, old *bhisti*, who nearly had a fit when he discovered who I was, and when, after a mile of such ankle-deep sand and dust as only Kasur could produce, we came on the metalled road along which my husband had planted the trees and the slip of garden, he deliberately put down his burden and fell at my feet, muttering incoherently of flowers and seedlings and *sahib bahadars*, while the two other coolies joined mournfully in regrets that they were too young to remember when the Big People honoured Kasur. I felt inclined to fall on their necks and weep! And there in the sun-setting, with the scent of the overgrown roses and jasmine in the still hot air, it was quite romantic.

The old water-carrier raced on to the dak bungalow ahead of me. He dragged the *khansaman* in charge out of his bed, he commanded "teaantosh", and then—then he was away to the city.

But before three in the morning the place was full, and I had everything I could desire. Even children who could have no memories were crowding round, and there was a regular jubilation when I told them I was no mere migrant, but that I intended to stop one month, two months, perhaps three months!

But where? That, I said, was for them to arrange. Surely they could find me some roof in the city where I could live quietly, see my old friends, make new ones, hear all their rights and wrongs, and generally get the experience I wanted for my "muckle bookie".

They caught on at once. Such a house could be

found, must be found, would be found. And it was; by the next night I was established in a new house, lately built by a pleader who had not yet come to inhabit it. So, as my *impresario* averred, "it must be clean". Then they supplied me with a boy of fourteen who was said to know everything that ought to be known to a *sahib's* servant, since he could make "tosh" and cook a "mutton charp". I demurred to the latter, as I said no such cooking would be required. It did not take long to furnish that flat! It only required a matting, a rug, a string bed, two or three nice new gay-coloured cotton quilts, and some cheap printed hangings to screen off the arcaded end which was to serve as a bedroom. A few reed stools did for chairs, but I had to indent in Firozpur for a galvanised bath and table. Crockery is to be had in any bazaar, and not much was required. My greatest difficulty was soap, but someone brought me a highly scented variety from Lahore. Thus I was set up with all the necessaries of life, and was astonished to find how few these were. Even so, I felt I could have done without some of them. Two luxuries I allowed myself, one a soft pillow cut on English lines, the other a coffee-grinder. With this and the lid of a native *deghchie*, or pot, as a roaster, I made the most delicious coffee I ever tasted. Roasted five minutes before it was used, the full flavour and aroma of the Mocha coffee, which you can buy in India in its original bags, came out splendidly.

Yeast bread in small, flat, round buns is to be had everywhere, and an old cowman, mindful of past days, supplied me with milk and fresh butter every day. So my breakfast was assured. And my dinner? My *entrepreneurs* began by supplying fresh meat every day, but

they soon realised I did not eat it; then as a rule they would send in some of their own cooked pulse or vegetable curries. In some of the houses they would offer me tea with about a quarter of a pound of sugar and a pinch of cinnamon to each cup. It was inexpressibly nasty, but I drank it solemnly, and offered the like brew to those of them who still kept up the old Kasur Wahabi fashion of breaking bread with "People of the Book". But my old friend the Reformer was dead; carried off by the lung trouble from which he had always suffered. I was glad my husband had been instrumental in getting his services to Government recognised. I verily believe that in those days some of those in high places did not really know the difference between a political and a religious Wahabi-ism until it was pointed out to them. But he had eventually got his fine gold watch with the inscription on it, of which he was very proud. Still, his was a wasted life. His wife was the millstone. He was for ever preaching the emancipation of women, but refused to bring his own wife out of the *purdah*! the reason being writ clear when I discovered, during one of his illnesses, that she was years older than he, marked by smallpox and blind of one eye. He was clever and could quote the New Testament more readily than I.

To return—I had made up my mind from the first that I must show the people that I was doing the game for a purpose; therefore I must pose. I must be lavish and give food to the poor. I must be an impostor to a certain extent, above all I must be histrionic. Briefly, I must make use of the magnetic power which, Heaven knows why, I always have had with Indians. So I used it to the full. As a natural result, of course, the first

thing that happened was that the police reported me as a dangerous person who, without cause, had settled in the bazaar and was holding perfect levées both of men and women. But that, of course, was soon settled by a note to the Inspector-General of Police. I think, however, that a certain doubt continued to exist in the force, though it never troubled me. Of course it *was* an unusual procedure for a real *mem-sahiba*, and what could they know about the exigencies of copy?

I had brought out a photographic camera, and my studies of both men and women were immensely popular; also immensely bad, for the lack of colour has always depressed me, and I preferred sketching.

Now as to what I learnt when I lived on the roof of a house in Kasur. I scarcely know; on the other hand, what did I not learn?

First of all, I learnt that the smoke of an Eastern town after nightfall is almost unspeakable; it made my eyes smart, and drove sleep from me, until I became accustomed to it.

I learnt the melodious cry of the modest sweeper who gives warning to the ladies that he is about to invade their sanctity, and the raucous and far less artificial one of the water-carrier. And I have lain awake listening to the exotic insistent cry of the telegraphic bearer who, sometimes in the very middle of the night, will wake the echoes of the tall houses with his call, 'Oh Khuda Baksh or Ahmad Ali or Hussan Abdul, there is wire news for you." Verily a call from the outside world from things beyond.

But most of all, I learnt the atmosphere of the place. I learnt how small a roof is, how limited is a world confined to it. And yet how busy—with nothing. These

town-bred women appeared to me to have little to do; yet to have no leisure. They quarrelled a lot, generally over points that could be ultimately referred to sex. And, of course, I saw and heard much that would have shocked most Western women, notably Miss Mayo. But these things were said and done with such perfect simplicity and so many of them as religious duties that blame was unfair. This of course refers mostly to the Hindus, with whom, for the first time, I was brought into close contact. The Mahomedan outlook upon sex was simplicity itself. The woman was created for the man's pleasure; viewed otherwise she was "*sab mukr wa fareb*" (all guile and deceit). Yet one knows that this is not always so. One reads in Indian history of chivalrous passion and wifely devotion, and never have I been more touched by the relations that can exist between man and woman than in a case I was asked to prescribe for by the man. He was a distant member of the Afghan Royal family, about fifty years of age, with an anxious face and a deferential manner. His wife, he told me, was much beloved, and her mind was affected. He had heard of hypnotism, of psycho-therapy. Could I come and see her; for she was very dear to him? I went, and found a woman of about forty, slim, very fair, very hysterical. They had no children, he had no other wife. His devotion as he sat holding both her hands, imploring his heart's dearest not to be frightened at the *mem* who would do her no harm, was pitiful; for, of course, I could do nothing. In England the order for prolonged rest and absence of devotion in a nursing home might have done good; but here, bromides were but a palliative. I left her sobbing on her husband's breast.

Taken as a whole, however, the tie between man and

woman, at any rate up country, appears to be largely material. It is all so ordered; there are so many ceremonials concerning the physical tie, that it is impossible it should not bulk largely in the lives of secluded women. After all, an event is indeed an event on a roof twelve feet by twelve.

In regard to what I heard I cannot do better than excerpt a portion of my diary.

"I have now talked to many sensible, intelligent men, and they all, without exception, give the same three reasons for the unrest which they all admit is beginning to prevail among all classes. These reasons are 'the law', 'the pleaders', 'the police'. These are, of course, cognate, so I set myself to find out what is wrong with the law. 'What we want', said one, 'is a return to the simpler, more despotic rule of forty years ago. The people are too ignorant to understand the intricacies of procedure, so they are looted on all sides by the pleader and the letter-writer, etc. I, for instance, can send a stamped "*ergi*" for eight annas and get a letter sent for half-an-anna. The peasant will pay two rupees for the former and eight annas for the latter. Even for an ordinary letter there is four annas for getting it written, an anna for paper and envelope. He will be told it is not safe unless there is another two annas for registration, and he has in addition to fee the postman. It is all his ignorance, doubtless, but how is he to know better?' But all had the same tale to tell. The law—the pleaders—the police. Certainly in regard to the second factor, the evidence of wealth is patent. Almost every new house has been built by a lawyer."

I spent one day going out about fifteen miles to see my own well, a holding of some fifty acres. Nuttu, my

farmer (he worked on the contract system and the money went to an old servant) was greatly distressed about a disease in his pepper; but the country looked green and pleasant after the town. I took some children with me and they did nothing all day but roast Indian corn in the embers and then gnaw them like squirrels. Other peasants came in to see me, and the burden of their cry was ever the same old "The pleaders, the law, the police". And they all spoke kindly of "the Sahib who planted gardens". But I was to find this name for my husband wherever I went. It is a nice reputation to have.

I did an immense deal of doctoring during my stay in Kasur, having very often as many as fifty patients a day. The town was fever-stricken, and the people refused the Government quinine from the dispensary. But they took mine cheerfully. It was really Mr. Caxton's saffron bag; they said if I gave them *dust* it did good. My time was chiefly spent in interviews and doctoring, but I had one incursion into the law courts. A distracted young female, followed by an equally distracted mother, who had torn her earrings out of her ears, and so, slightly bleeding, was shrieking for "justice, justice," invaded my quiet roof one night about eleven P.M. It appeared to be a divorce case; the girl was certainly bruised; so I had to give her sanctuary for that night and back her up next day. The case was settled amicably. I believe it was largely the mother-in-law's fault. It often is.

After some two months of the roof at Kasur, I had the offer of a week's sojourn in a Hindu household in Lahore. So I went there. It was a large old house, guiltless of garden and courtyard, dark, windowless

and crammed full of women and children. The ostensible mistress of it was a stout, mild lady who never did anything; the actual mistress, the owner's widowed sister. She was a real Tartar, and ruled the tribe of nephews and nieces and their children with a rod of iron. She would come into the kitchen just when the carrot curry was beginning to bubble over with grease, and say, "What! carrots on a Friday! Never in this house." And the family would have to betake themselves to pickles. But the women bore with her quietly, knowing they had a *force majeure* behind them if she became unbearable. Then they would refuse to heat the bath for the early morning ablutions, which all widows *must* perform; and she had a horror of cold water!

I do not think I could have overstayed my week in that house, kind and hospitable as it was. For they had a seraphina or a dulciphone or a portable harmonium in what answered to the living-room, and the moment the menkind—they were all of the clerkly kind—came home, they used to play to distraction. It was worse than a concertina played by an ignoramus —hee-haw, hee-haw—for it had sometimes a lingering resemblance to a tune that set one wondering what the tune could possibly be. And it went on interminably. The Indian has no set time for sleep, so the infernal din sometimes went on long after I had been tossing on a hard pillow in my little cubby-hole of a dark room trying to forget that there was such a thing as a musical instrument in the world. The worst part of it, however, was when I was asked to name the tune. "What am I playing, *mem-sahiba*?" I could guess God save the Queen, but little else.

From here I went to see my own old schools. I found them very flourishing, though with all sorts of new regulations and curricula. But to my great pleasure, I found that the primer on Hygiene which, in accordance with my promise, I had prepared in Oxford with such care, and sent out to the Educational Department, had been approved, translated, and was now in use in all female schools. I was also told that it had been adopted by the Madras Government. If so, I hope the Panjab Educational Department had the gumption to get a royalty, which in the case of these readers must be worth having, as their sales are enormous. Anyhow, when I asked a thirteen year-old pupil how she would treat her baby who had a threatening of bronchitis, I received an answer that would have done credit to a Harley Street specialist. So, at any rate, I had some reward. I was ill all the five days I spent in the schools, but I managed to give a real *jïlsa* fête to the three hundred girls. They were pleased.

I had asked the Panjab Government for leave, in view of the book I was writing about the Mutiny, to inspect certain confidential boxes of papers which I knew existed in the Delhi offices. The answer was long in coming, and when it did come I laughed, though it contained full license to see everything and anything. For it was so exceedingly crafty. It began by expressing full reliance on my discretion, my judgment, my loyalty, my everything in short. So, having thus tied my hands, it proceeded to allow me everything!

This, however, was indeed good hearing, and I set off to Delhi, where at Christmas I was to meet my family.

Here I lived in an hotel; but I had a most interesting time. The confidential boxes which had not been

opened after they had been sealed up, were placed at my disposal. But for that stifling confidence reposed in me, I could have burnt the whole contents of the huge brass-bound chests in my sitting-room fire; for it was cold weather, and I had somehow contracted the worst cold of my life.

Ye Gods! How interesting those contents were. Many of them I implored the Government to place in some Museum; I do not know if this was done. There were tiny notes in quills, one in a *chupatti*,[1] and confidential reports from all quarters. Little scraps that yet bore on disputed points; and with things of endless value, accumulated masses of useless papers.

I worked at them literally day and night, for they were absorbing. It was like digging for gold, uncertain each instant if some priceless treasure would not turn up. And there was a breathless haste, an inevitable hurry about it, almost as if the spirit of the times had been caught and prisoned in the papers. I don't think I learnt much that was absolutely new in them; only —on both sides—details which I felt must be suppressed; but I found that corroboration of my fiction by facts, on which I have all my life learnt to rely. Briefly, I had not to alter one single thing in my projected story of the Mutiny; all, every incident, could have been inferred from what passed through my hands. Perhaps I worked too hard. Anyhow, one day when an old friend and his sister called on me, and she was condoling with me on my evident seediness, he suddenly rose, six foot two, as fine a man physically as ever stepped, and said quietly, "Helen, take Mrs. Steel to her room, put her to bed, and make her stay there till

[1] Unleavened cake.

the doctor comes." There was no question of obedience or disobedience. I *had* to go meekly; so to that six-foot-two man belongs by right the honour of being the first and last person to send me to bed! However, it was well. I did as I was told, and after a very short time was about again; for much still remained to be done. At Kasur I had steeped myself in the habits and thoughts of the common folk. At Delhi I had to learn court ways and the more civilised life of a big city. So I used to prowl about the alleys and bazaars; and I went whenever I could to good houses, especially those who claimed descent from the Moghul Dynasty. There were several of them known to the Authorities as pensioners, owing to their relationship to the late Emperor Bahadur Shah. I was told that, in all, these numbered about three hundred and fifty; but as a very large proportion of these were helpless women, whose pensions averaged from five to ten rupees a month, it had been suggested by their male relatives that the money should be paid to them *en bloc* for distribution. How anyone with any knowledge of what I may call the business attitude of Moslem men to their womenkind, could have acceded to their suggestions passes my comprehension. It was, of course, provocative of much fraud. I have in my mind's eye—I will not name names—a Moghul Nawab—a near relative of Kings—I can see him as I write—his yellow satin coatee matching his yellow face, his jet black oily hair framing his beardless cheeks, the fine black moustache following the lax corners of his full *pân*-reddened lips, his thin yellow fingers lavishly covered with rings, a scent as of a thousand musk rats perfuming his whole person. A decadent Moghul princeling to his finger-tips. Of un-

certain age, since who can tell of dyed hair and endless arts to preserve youth. This man had many pensions to distribute. I can tell about one of them. A thin, haggard, half-blind, old woman, supporting herself hardly by the last resort of Indian womanhood, the spinning wheel. Yet cheerful withal, and ready to tell you that the Sirkar had gifted her with ten rupees a month because she was a near relative; but that the Nawab had represented her, forty years before, to be young, flighty, of uncertain conduct, and so, of course, the management of the gift had been entrusted to him. Which was a pity; since she was no longer young, flighty, uncertain, if indeed she had ever been so.

There were dozens of like cases in those days. Doubtless the pensioners have now died off. I wonder if they have? Or if the males of the family are still drawing money for young, flighty, uncertain women who have been for half a century resting peacefully in their graves?

Many of these relatives of royalty were engaged in the *kalabutoon* or gold thread industry. It seemed to suit their yellow fingers, their high-bred hatchet faces. But even then it was a dying industry, and by now doubtless the Delhi embroiderers get their gold and silver threads from some Western factory.

The Big Mosque interested me much, where in those days the prayers for Kings and Emperors were recited somewhat ambiguously every day. I was there on one of the feast days, and it was a sight to see the congregation—some thirty thousand, all men—doing their genuflections. They swayed rhythmically like a field of corn in a strong wind. They made one understand the

force that lies at the back of the Mussulman creed; and what a fight women will have for it before they can hold their own.

As I write, news comes from Afghanistan which may well make us pause. Here we have a king imbued with Western knowledge, a queen determined to liberate her sisters. With what result? Absolute *fiasco* before wild tribes of lawless men, to whom the thought of womanhood other than as man's chattel, his pleasure, is anathema. One can only hope that poor King Amanullah and Queen Suriya may not have to pay for their temerity with their lives. It is curious how little humanity gauges its own differences. Because Kemal Pasha has enforced reform on his people, the Afghanistan rulers thought they could do so also. They did not reckon with the psychology of their subjects. The Pathân is, take him as a whole, the most bloodthirsty creature in existence when he is roused. An officer of the Frontier force, high in command, beloved by his regiment, almost revered by the wild tribes, told me that once he asked his favourite *rissildar*, the smartest of soldiers, what he considered the best fight he was ever in? To which the man replied unhesitatingly: "Sahib, we were out after them. We were ten, they were fifteen. It was a moonlight night, we came upon them asleep behind some rocks. Kerrick-ick-ick!"—he slashed his hand across his throat—"they were all dead before they woke!" The following was also told me by the officer to whom it was said. A sniper among the hills had given a lot of trouble; they had tried to get him again and again, without success. Then a Pathân sepoy volunteered and returned triumphant. "How did you manage?" was the rather astonished question. "Huzoor, it

was easy" came the diffident answer, "I know his ways. He was my father."

Now a psychology like that is very different from the psychology of the race with whom Kemal Pasha has to deal. Then think of the environment! Afghanistan, far from civilisation, surrounded by almost impassable mountains, immutable in most ways; Angora, the very opposite.

But to return. There was one subject on which I wished peculiarly to gain accurate information, and that was Major Hodson's capture of the Moghul Princes in Humayun's Tomb. I had succeeded in getting oral traditions about most Mutiny incidents, but the stories of this were very contradictory. I succeeded at last, however, in getting the testimony of an eye-witness of considerable authority, and to that account I have adhered.

Of course it is well known that an Englishwoman (of whom my Kate Erlton is type) was concealed in the town of Delhi during the siege. I found evidence of this in my brass-bound chests, but I was fortunate enough to come across circumstantial corroboration of it. It was from a man with *bright blue eyes* who told me that as a child he remembered being kept close to the house for fear of being mistaken for a disguised Feringhee, and that his father had nearly lost his life from the same cause. The peculiarity was hereditary, whence he did not know; but for generations his family had shown it occasionally. I saw the man's sister; her eyes were even of a brighter blue than his and, as she was fair in complexion, it was quite conceivable that if concealed Europeans were known to exist, children might have run considerable danger. This man—he was a writer, or

munshi—had many tales to tell; but practically the whole place reeked with them despite the seven and thirty years that had elapsed since John Nicholson had fallen by the Burn Bastion with the cry: "Come on, men! Come on, you fools. Come on, you ——"

I have often wondered what was the word that death arrested on his lips.

Of one thing we may be sure. He would have uttered it with more impassioned force, more indomitable will in these latter days of ours. It is a curious problem, that of trying to imagine what John Nicholson would have said, for instance, to that insensate murder of a young Englishman in the streets of Lahore, because an agitator well past middle age who had suffered for years from heart disease died after exposing himself to the rough excitement of a crowd bent upon being childishly hostile to a perfectly unconcerned committee. One can forgive much when there are brains behind the outrage; nothing when no rational soul alive can find any connection between the outrage and its supposed cause.

Well! "A man uprose" during the troublesome times of the Mutiny. Let us hope that in these troubled times some men of brains and action will also arise and bring peace.

Much of my time in Delhi was spent naturally amid the buildings of the Great Moghuls. And it was here that I first designed the series of four books on the most royal dynasty the world has ever seen. It is a record: Father, Son, Grandson, Great-grandson, Great-great-grandson. All in their way excellent specimens of a strangely gifted race. Not only good kings, but striking personalities. Of these Shahjahan, the Great-great-

grandson, has undoubtedly most to do with the beautiful Moghul architecture. That is to say, if we except Fartehpur Sikri, that unique memorial of the great Akbar's hopes and disappointments. For myself I set the Great Arch of Victory, that rears its red square above the whole plains of India, higher than the Taj with all its beauty. For most of that is exotic, and the purpose for which it was built is so trivial compared with that of the Buland Darwaza; at any rate if we accept the conventional explanation of why it was built. For myself, again, I have never been able to reconcile the almost divine affection for a wife who died when her fourteenth child was born with the outrageous profligacy, the almost inconceivable licentiousness, of the life Shahjahan led after her death. But I have laboured my view in the final book of the series I have since published, so no more of it here. For all that, the royal buildings at Delhi remain with one as beautiful exceedingly; beautiful with a beauty that will not stand civilisation. So I often wonder how Lord Curzon, with his fine artistic sense, came to allow a big ball to be held in the Diwani Khas. It must have been appalling to see mankind handing ices to womenkind under the beautiful legend "If Earth hold a Paradise, it is this, it is this." In truth, Kipling is right. "East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet." So far as I can judge to-day the offspring of their unnatural coupling is bastard, bereft utterly of the fine qualities of both races.

Meanwhile, my family had come out, and we spent a very pleasant Christmas in Adam's Tomb, close to the Kutb. It was a fine building and, with a perfect camp of tents which had been pitched in the compound,

formed, as it were, an excellent mess-room. In those days the whole country-side was a wilderness of past glories. Out to Toghlakabad all was ruins. Unrecognisable brick mounds, with here and there fragments of cut stone; even a broken pillar or two. And beyond, beyond, lay the mythical Kastinapura, the semi-historical Indraprastha. On all sides relics of the past, known and unknown. How many kingdoms had come and gone over those desert stretches? Away to the north, beyond the curving river, must lie the cock-pit of India, the field of Panipat. Ere long the thickets of the stunted *dhak* trees would be glowing red over the sands, that ought to have been stained by the millions and millions of soldiers who, in the different battles, have lain dead upon it. So, perchance, the *dhak* trees have taken up the task. Anything redder than they are cannot be imagined, covered stem and branch and twig with scarlet flowers.

I am told that now these desert brick-strewn sands about the Kutb are covered by a fine city, that has cost Heaven only knows how much gold to build. Well, I think it is rather a rash experiment. It only adds one more to the many cities that have risen and fallen there. Delhi has an ill name. No dynasty that has chosen it as its capital has survived long. It may well be, therefore, that it may see India given Dominion status; and in its turn Dominion status may fade into the Independence of many States, for that India can ever exist as a homogeneous entity appears to me impossible.

However, at this time the memories of the place were too strong for aught else; there was a ghost at every turn.

Still, we had a very merry Christmas, the younger folk dancing every night; and they were mostly younger folk. My two nephews, one in the Civil, the other in the Military service, had come from far to join us. Clever fellows both of them; but I used to look at them and others of their kind, and wonder what the future would be, for by this time the problem which of late years has absorbed me utterly was beginning to stir.

One little incident I remember well. I have always been an early riser. Coming into the big domed central room of Adam's Tomb about 7 o'clock, after a dancing night when the company had not retired till 2 A.M., I found mine host—quite a young unmarried man—he who had sent me so cavalierly to bed—busy tidying up the litter of newspapers and magazines of the previous day. He blushed a little at being found doing woman's work, but we mutually did not remark on it.

Nevertheless, my walk among the graves of past civilisations was full of thought. Were we going through a radical change of attitude, and whither would it lead? I had always been a vehement Suffragette. I still think that Woman has suffered sadly; but as I saw that typical figure of manhood at its best, tidying the drawing-room while his sister lay abed, I wondered, at that time somewhat sadly. Later on, to more purpose.

When the party broke up, I went with a friend to the North-West Province. Apparently I had had bronchitis, for my cough continued, and I was very much run down. So my husband went to visit his uncle in the Doon, my daughter to her cousin in Meerut, while I was sent for a month's quiet camping in Moradabad district. Here I had an opportunity of comparing two Provinces and their methods of Government; for I was

in the camp of a very good district officer who allowed me to do as I liked. I found the North-West Province a little more backward than the Panjab. The people much the same, but distinctly poorer and less independent. For instance, there was a curious lack of brass vessels in the houses; the people seemed to use pottery instead. No one who has been accustomed to the extraordinary lighting up of a dark corner by a few well polished brass pots can have any idea of the poverty-stricken appearance of a house without them. And I found the women more shy, in a way more depressed. Otherwise my month passed very much as other camping months. One old man, I remember, was nearly frantic with gratitude because I cured his indigestion with carbonate of soda, and the whole camp was admiringly angry when I pointed out to the district officer that his camp following was getting flour at least four pounds a rupee cheaper than the current market rate. He would not believe it at first. But it was all useful, especially the insight I got into the way to treat a wild pig and to get up on an elephant.

The first was simple. I had gone out sketching after tea as usual, and I was sitting on a fallen palm tree in one of the bare patches which occur in tiger-grass land. This was a large one, and sunset over tiger-grass is attractive. Looking up, just opposite to me, about a hundred yards away, I saw an old boar with big, gleaming tusks. Now we were in the Kadir pig-sticking country, where pigs are occasionally savage. So I wondered what was best to do. To run away might precipitate matters, so I began by sitting still. But the brute stamped his foot at me, and I realised that active measures had better be taken, and at once.

So I rose quietly and took three steps towards my enemy. Only three—for he turned and fled.

Of course on my return to the tents I was told I had escaped danger; but I don't think I had. The flight was too decisive and rapid; that pig was a coward.

My adventure with the elephant was less exciting.

Marsh-land lay ahead of us, only to be negotiated by leviathan; so a little rajah or *talukdar*—there are heaps of them in the North-West—had sent his pad-elephant for us. Not being aware that there was a lady in the camp, he had sent it without a ladder. And it was very tall, very tall indeed. I looked at it aghast. "How on earth am I to get up?" I asked. "Get up?" answered my host cavalierly. "Why, by the tail of course." I did as I was bid. The elephant sat down, I stood on its hind pads. I seized the tail, I put first one foot, then the other on the pachydermatous back, so deliberately walked up that elephant till I could get a clutch on the pad ropes. And there I was, breathless but triumphant, to be greeted by a heartfelt "Thank the Lord " from my host.

It seemed that no lady had ever performed the feat in his sight before, and that his reply had been the counsel of despair!

Now, had I known this before attempting, should I have succeeded? The question raises many psychological problems.

CHAPTER XIII

I WAS now home again, with, I hoped, a sufficiency of material for my purpose. As luck would have it the summer was a peculiarly busy one. For some years past we had leased a large house in Aberdeenshire, where there was excellent salmon and trout fishing, and good low country shooting. And this summer the old house was full of guests, relatives, boys and girls, some home from India, some from school. It was a great charge, but I have always loved housekeeping. I have been told that I am good at it. I hope so; there is nothing I like better.

I emphasise the fact that we seldom sat down to dinner less than fourteen, and that we only had five servants, because I want to show that solitude and absolute leisure is *not* necessary to literary work of a certain calibre. I do not set my own efforts very high; but such a subject as I had chosen—the Indian Mutiny —did require a certain amount of concentration. It could not be dealt with adequately between a sandwich and a glass of beer in Fleet Street. And I am glad to be able to say truthfully that of all my critics not one advanced a single mistake in *fact* out of the thousands I registered; except this, that I confused the Christian names of a father and son. But it was a strain. I remember one morning—I had been trying to describe

Alice Gissing's death, and my head was full of God knows what—when the luncheon bell rang. I had to go; there were eighteen to serve, and though my dear old cook was a pillar of strength, it requires some guiding hand to portion out food for eighteen. I opened the dining-room door. I was a bit late, so the table—it positively groaned with good things—showed its hungry horde already at work. Then my husband's placid voice rose above the babel:

"My dear! why is the cucumber bitter?"

If I had been shot, I could not, at the moment, have told him.

Perhaps, if I had had more leisure, I might have written something worth the subject; but I doubt very much if I ever had more than two hours at it without some quite senseless interruption.

And here let me say that the subject had more to do with the success of the work than any quality of mine. It was one to touch all hearts, to rouse every Britisher's pride and enthusiasm. The Indian Mutiny was then the Epic of the Race. It held all possible emotion, all possible triumph. So it is no wonder the book, when it was published, sold like hot cakes; it is no wonder that after almost countless editions and formats, it still sells.

But while I was writing it, I was assailed by many fears. And as I scarcely ever consult anybody about my work, such as it is, and as none of my family have ever read my books until they are published, I had to take my courage in my hand.

It was rather a knock-out blow when my old publishers rejected it; and for a month or two I felt very dejected. And yet on re-reading the book I could not see where it had failed conspicuously. I honestly liked

my hero Jim Douglas, and I knew that every incident might have happened. Now, when this feeling comes to one, there is no more to be said. There is no more going back.

So I went on. William Heinemann told me that he could not conceive of the work being better done. He was an immense believer in it, and for this I owe his memory a very deep debt of gratitude.

But he could not secure the same appreciation in America. For that, however, I was largely to blame; for, after having carefully scrutinised American publishing charges, etc., I had come to the conclusion that the royalties offered to British authors were not sufficiently high. The highest at that time offered by American publishers was ten per cent; I stood out for twelve per cent. Of course, no matter what I say, this will be put down to personal greed; but in reality it was not so. I had come to the conclusion that ten per cent was not just. I was in no urgent need of money. My husband and I were not rich, but we had a sufficiency; so it appeared to me that I was by God appointed to make a stand for others. So I stood.

Time passed, until a week before publication my agent wired "Please accept. If not you will be pirated."

I wired back. "Cable out. Have it published at the White House at my expense."

So I backed my luck. I knew it would cost £400; but by this time I believed in the book and I stood to my guns.

Events were in my favour. Three days after publication my agent telegraphed to me, "I am having the time of my life. Every half-hour brings in a cabled offer."

To make a long story short, I not only got my twelve per cent but the publisher paid the £400 I had spent.

It was a great victory, perhaps the biggest of my life. But the success of the book was immediate. The bookstalls were piled with it.

And I felt so glad! Oh! so glad! It told me that, despite the intervening forty years, the heart of the old country was still in the right place. Is it so after these thirty years I wonder? The Great War showed us, indubitably, that for sheer dogged courage, for the will to win, the race was good as ever; but did it produce one man like John Nicholson, not only supreme in warfare, but in grip upon the whole world; a man who held all other men, friends and foes alike, in the hollow of his hand? I do not think so.

Mr. Heinemann told me he had never known a book so universally praised. I do not know if this is so. I only know that it brought me one piece of criticism which I cherish greatly. A perfect stranger wrote to me and said, "I lost my wife in the Mutiny, and after forty years you have enabled me to forgive." That was something worth having.

But in regard to criticisms generally, I often wonder if the critics really read the books, for they make such absurd mistakes; not only about such books as I write, but in regard to others. Be that as it may, I must confess that I have never received the slightest help from any criticism, possibly because I have never had a "real slater". But what use could one conceivably make of such a criticism as this: "In this book a young lady most unnecessarily confesses her love for a young gentleman; though the parties subsequently marry we feel sure this incident must have marred the full per-

fection of their bliss." And this, from a well-known and most deservedly honoured critic: "Mrs. Steel often ends her sentences with a preposition; but this is possibly a modern style which we ought to be ashamed of ourselves for not being acquainted with." But this, of course, *may* have been "writ sarcastic".

Still, I found criticism of so little real use that for the past twenty-eight years I have seen none; the pounds I used to spend on Press-cutting agency have been more profitably expended elsewhere. Sometimes I feel as if I should like to know what the public think of my work, but that one does not get from criticisms in the Press. And I in common with all authors generally get a number of letters from readers.

In the years before the publication of *On the Face of the Waters*, my daughter had gone to Bedford College, and as some London *pied-à-terre* seemed advisable, we took a flat in Palace Gate. Here, of course, I immediately began to see an enormous number of people of all sorts and sizes. It was pleasant enough, though, if I am to tell the absolute truth, it was rather boring. I hated being handed about at tea-fights as if I were a plate of cakes, and though I, of course, met with a number of charming clever people, the majority of them knew nothing about the things that had interested me for the last thirty years. It was my fault, of course, and the world was very kind, ever kind. I was asked everywhere by everybody worth knowing. But during these years I got to know many people whom otherwise I could never have known, and I learnt many things about the seats of the mighty which otherwise I could never have learnt. I learnt, for instance, how unhomelike and uncomfortable some of the grand houses were

for people who, like myself, travelled without a valet or maid. It was difficult to get hot water in the mornings; to get one's boots cleaned was an impossibility. I have, however, one charming recollection about a very great house where there were no less than three butlers, and the menu for meals every day was printed in gold, where I and a celebrated French painter used to sit waiting for dinner supposed to be at 8.30 till 9.30, and he, poor unfortunate Frenchman, used to get more and more excited till he would pause in his pacing up and down before me to say, in heartrending tones, "Mais Madame! c'est affreux! c'est incroyable!" I can see him now, a stoutish, well-dressed figure, with a white waistcoat which he rubbed convulsively. Peace be to his ashes! He must be dead by now and have forgotten that unpunctual household.

In fact, for the cold weather of '96 and the summer of '97 I was a real lioness. I have always had the gift of the gab, and the discovery being made by various organisations, I was very often asked at public dinners to respond for the ladies. On one occasion, I remember, what I said was so much liked that the very gentlemen of the press got up and cheered and waved their manuscripts. And yet it was only because I ended with Touchstone's words:

"When I was at home I was in a better place."

So true is it, that success comes from the listener, not the speaker. Hit the right note of your humanity and it does the rest.

In the spring of the year I received a report from Delhi that, owing to scarcity and other reasons, there was great distress amongst the secluded women gener-

ally. It was Jubilee year, and I thought that fact might be used to stimulate charity. So by my orders we started making muslin ties edged with "kalabatoon"—real gold thread—they were long and narrow; so suitable as a trimming for a hat or as a necktie. And I wrote a round robin to the Press, stating that these Jubilee scarves were to be sold at two shillings each. I must have sold thousands. At any rate, I was able to send out hundreds of pounds to help the poor old women, and as long as I kept the sales in my own hands and devoted a good portion of my time to the business it flourished. But here, again, not for the first time in my life, I had ample proof of the enormous power each and all of us have in our personality over the personalities of others. It will of course hardly be credited, but it is a fact, that during one week when every scrap of my attention had to be given to something else the sales dropped almost altogether. Yet there was no reason for it save the fact that my personality had not been sending out S.O.S.'s all over the world. None. The sales went up again the moment my unconscious self began work once more. Of course materialists will find a thousand and one causes for this sudden failure and renewal of interest; but I am an idealist. I believe firmly in the words, "They also serve who only stand and wait", I believe that by simply grinding out good thoughts we do as much to regenerate the world as if we were to spend all our energies in action. Not that I minimise the value of the sturdy running of your head against a wall; but, when this is impossible, there is yet something to do. My favourite motto, "One and the truth make a majority", preaches patience.

Something must be said here regarding the cause of

my attention being withdrawn. It was the Diamond Jubilee year. Festivities of all sorts were being given in honour of it. Women were doing nothing; yet the honour was being shown to a woman.

I pointed this anomaly out and suggested a Jubilee dinner at which twelve distinguished women in each line of life should ask a like number of distinguished men in their particular line to a public dinner. The idea caught on, a committee was formed, and I was nominated the secretary. I don't think I have ever laughed so much as over my experiences in that capacity. I had to tell one lady that we were not a divorce court, and that if she really held her husband to be the most distinguished man she knew she had better ask him as her guest. And I had to face my whole committee when, after turning down one lady's name because of her reputation, they acclaimed her partner in gossip because of his rank.

"That will be very convenient," I said. "He will be able to ask the lady."

My remark was met by an outcry as to what I meant.

"That what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander," I replied.

How dear Mary Kingsley laughed; she was a tower of strength to me. I think the most capable woman I ever met; she was absolutely free from feminine conventionalities.

The question was finally settled reasonably, everyone agreeing that when a woman's husband takes no notice it is an impertinence for the public to do so.

There was no difficulty in getting our hundred and twenty distinguished women, and they in their turn

[*Elliott & Fry, Ltd.*

IN 1897.

found none in securing some distinguished guests. Though, owing to popularity many did not get their first choice. Mr. Arthur Balfour, as he was then, was undoubtedly first favourite, and Mr. Lecky second. It is idle to give a list of them, practically everyone of note was there. The great question was to make sure of the dinner. For this I consulted Mons. Benoit in Piccadilly. I can see him now, as the idea unfolded itself to him. "Madame!" he cried, "C'est magnifique. It will repand itself throughout Europe."

Certainly so far as he was concerned it deserved to do so. The Grafton Galleries were a wilderness of flowers. Japanese screens of smilax and jasmine and rose at each door, exotic plants everywhere. And the dinner was superexcellent. None of your turtle soups, salmon, stewed ducklings and peas affairs, one sees so often, but real delicacies, with the proper wine for each.

I could lavish myself in praise, for I had nothing to do with the arrangements. It was all Mons. Benoit. And they must have been good, since every newspaper in London devoted next morning a column or two to the occasion, and more than one remarked on the fact that though men had been giving dinners for centuries it was left to the women to achieve perfection at their first venture. A conversazione was held after dinner which more than a thousand persons attended, amongst them, I remember, Madame Réjane. French women have the art of making compliments sound sincere. I well remember hers. We did not break up till 2 A.M. in the morning, and we all enjoyed ourselves hugely. Lady Henry Somerset made a splendid speech, Bishop Creighton responded for the guests, and I gave the Queen. Altogether it was great fun. And it was not dear;

the double tickets, including wine, were only £2:5s., cheap for such a really first-class entertainment.

In spite of all this I have never liked London. It oppresses me. As Kipling puts it, one is so apt to "think the next man's thought". And this is fatal. I do not think that life is worth living unless you can feel yourself. And in London all is such a conglomerate of many minds that I seemed to lose myself.

And I had no inducement to live there. My daughter, working at Bedford College, did not care for society; and as for my husband, what really finished my attempt at being a lioness was this. One Sunday in April he said he would go out for a walk and take his lunch with him. He had seemed a bit dispirited all the week. I had taken him out to one or two literary gatherings, which doubtless were the cause. Well, he returned late for tea, his hands full of primroses, blackthorn, shining chestnut buds, mosses, every conceivable *spring rubbish*. And he was so full of smiles too, and he had such an appetite, that then and there I made up my mind it was sheer cruelty to keep him in towns. Yet when he was not there people thought I was a widow, and one man actually, in the first bloom of my popularity, got himself asked to many places by passing himself off as my husband. It seems incredible now, but I really had to take steps to prevent the fraud. However, it emphasised my dislike to a society which could permit of such things being attempted. If people had not been silly sheep, they could not have been so deluded. Briefly, everything was too artificial. I remember once giving a ladies' lunch. There were twelve of us, and I had taken some trouble to have everything very nice. Unfortunately, half-an-hour before luncheon time, the

waitress who was to have come in sent to say she was laid up. My little Scottish maid was horror-stricken. "Oh, Mum, what'll I do?" she wailed. I told her she would do splendidly, and at first all went well. We were very stately, very literary, and very cultured; even Lizzie was beginning to look relieved till she had to hand the soda-water. Then—there was a perfect explosion and her voice was heard in a wail, "Oh, Mum, isn't it awfi'." Away went our stateliness, our literacy, our culture. We laughed like children, and had the merriest party imaginable. In fact, I believe that if I could have taken Lizzie about to all the grand dinners they would have been much more amusing. But as I said, people were kind, over kind.

But by this time I was at work over a new book, and an opportunity of getting out to India again came in my way. The old friend who had first recommended me to write had been appointed to the Commissionership of Lucknow; and Lucknow happened to be the *mise-en-scène* of my new novel. The temptation was too great. His wife, occupied with the children, could not go out to him at the time; he wanted someone badly to do hostess. So we arranged matters comfortably. We were to share his house, my husband would get the racing and riding he loved, my daughter would have the distractions of a large military station, and I should be once more the *burra mem*, and, in addition, have heaps of leisure to do for Lucknow what I had done in Delhi. It was an ideal arrangement and worked very well. I had been told of much change; I found none, and the household went on very smoothly. I believe it also went well as regards catering. At any rate, the master, when he went out to dinner elsewhere,

used generally to report that he was given "some filth"; from which it was to be inferred he did not get it at home. I had not, however, come out to be a cook, and there was much to see in Lucknow.

Taking it as a whole, and comparing it with Delhi, its artificiality struck one unfavourably. There are fine buildings, but they are all of stucco, and in many cases the designs are debased. Briefly, it is the outer shell of a lower form of life. In many ways it is beautiful, and its natural surroundings are far superior to those of Delhi; but somehow the whole leaves a bad taste in the mouth. Even the Residency gardens fail, or at any rate failed in my case, to rouse real emotion. One recognised the heroism of it—who could fail to do so—but—despite the British flag which, in my day, never ceased to float from the tower—I missed the certainty of triumph such as one feels when looking from the Red Ridge down to the city of Delhi. I spent many days wandering about the town. It struck me as being less friendly than Delhi; as if some grievance were left in the minds of the people. And, of course, the prevailing type of face one saw reminded me immediately of my *bête noire*, the Moghul princeling who defrauded his womenkind. Most likely, all the young loungers I saw in slum and street were excellent fathers of families and men of business; but their appearance was against them. Yet, as I say, it was all very beautiful. There is scarcely anything prettier in India than the Chatter Manzil Palace, with its many cupolas, overhanging the river. It is now used as an English Club. And what more cogent criticism of it can one make, than that one feels no sense of degradation in its use!

But all through Lucknow one feels that strongly;

it could not be more degraded than it has been in the past. Wandering through the town one notices the immense number of barbers' and perfumers' shops; one smells them in the air. It is as if the influences of the infamous barber who practically ruled Lucknow under the last decadent king, Nasir-ud-din, still poisoned the air.

Small wonder that the British Government in 1856 rose to the righteous assertion that it "could no longer be guilty in the sight of God and man in sustaining an administration fraught with evil to millions". It takes something to make the tail of the British lion curl in that fashion! But it curled, the Nawab was deposed, Oudh annexed, and Clive's only mistake, in giving the province to Suraj-ud-Dowlah's care, rectified. At what cost, who can say? The Indian Mutiny uprose the following year, and a large majority of the native army was recruited from Oudh.

Be that as it may, I, personally, found the atmosphere of Lucknow very different from that of Delhi.

One incident I can never remember without amusement. I got to know many of the pleaders who, of course, thronged the High Court. Many of them were quite inexpressibly European. They were chiefly of the Bengal race. But there was one, quite a nice boy, who though—or perhaps because—he had not been to England was very friendly. He insisted on my going to see his family. This I did, and found a semi-circle of females of various ages, seated on cane-bottomed chairs and looking self-conscious curiosity.

"Madam!" he said, with quite a theatrical gesture, "These are my females; they are all idiots."

Mercifully they did not understand English, and I was able to conceal my smiles.

It was at Lucknow that I made the acquaintance of the Rayleighs. They were guests of the Commissioner, and as his housekeeper I had to entertain them. I also showed them the New Year fair, to which Europeans were not supposed to go. Their amusement was great; they purchased a lot of toys and expressed their astonishment—which I have heard so often—of the ready response to a smile and a jest given by the people. Lord Rayleigh's mental powers impressed me deeply. I had never before seen a man capable of real abstract thought. For instance, I was showing off the cleverest conjuror in Lucknow. Amongst other tricks was a very intricate one with a piece of string and his fingers. There are, of course, endless ones of the sort, but this particular one intrigued Lord Rayleigh deeply. He retired from the *séance*, which went on. Going through the drawing-room a few minutes afterwards, I saw him sitting on the sofa doing nothing; but, half-an-hour afterwards, he came back to the verandah, and to the conjuror's bewilderment did the trick!

I afterwards asked him how he had arrived at it. He said simply, "By gradual elimination of all impossibles."

That is a mind worth having!

There was yet another thing which should find a place in my Garden, among things that have affected me greatly; and that was the total eclipse of 1898. I had the chance of going with a large party to see totality—some thirty miles south of Benares, or stopping to see the Magh Mela at the town of Benares itself. I chose the latter, and have never regretted it, for the sight of something close on three million sinners waiting to wash away their sins at the auspi-

cious moment is one never to be forgotten. A vast, vague expectancy had brooded over the whole of Hindustan for weeks; something was coming, they knew not what. Prophecies of a new ruler were not lasting, and the half-dozen or more of white-faces who were responsible for keeping those millions of dark ones from sudden fear, sudden emotion, sudden turmoil had been flashing messages far and wide in case of danger. But now the moment had come. A greyness showed in the blaze of sunshine, a low sigh, like the murmur of a distant sea, surged along the banks of the Sacred River. North and south, far as the eye could reach, packed faces, nothing but faces. And above them the gilded spires of the temples. I was on a river steamer. Just opposite me on a plinth, a young police officer stood holding in his hand a piece of smoked glass.

Greyer—still greyer—greyer! What had happened? What was going to happen? Like heralds of disaster, a flash of many wings sped past. It was only a flight of the temple pigeons, scarce seen; but it thrilled me to the marrow. Then I heard one word from the young police-officer: "Patience, patience"! Now it was almost dark, our faces looked deathlike. But still that word, "Patience, patience!" Still that bit of smoked glass showing to many that there was time yet, that the mad rush for the waters of salvation was not necessary. Greyer and more grey. A surge of struggling humanity for miles and miles; but above it, somewhere, that quiet cry, "Patience, patience". So at last the grey gave way before the coming light, and the cry merged into a cheerful request to the river steamer for a glass of beer.

So it is all inextricably mixed up in my memory.

The packed multitude, the smoked glass, the cry for patience, the request for beer. It is odd how memory holds the little and the great.

Still it was a great sight, and even as a purely material episode holds its own. The only other really startling phenomenon I have ever seen was once in the Mediterranean when on a calm evening sky I saw five moons. There was the real one in the middle and from it radiated a cross of light to join a perfect halo. And at all the four points where the cross joined the halo was another moon; not a crescent moon but a moon not quite so irradiated as the central parent, briefly a gibbous moon. Of course the captain could explain; but he told me privately that he had never seen it but twice, and then as the forerunner of "shocking weather".

It was so here. Never before or since have I seen waves like isolated peaks rearing themselves around the ship, while St. Elmo's fire bathed the mast-heads. It was, of course, electrical. We were battened down, and the female passengers refused to go to bed. At about 4 o'clock A.M., just as dawn was breaking, the most awful uproar arose, and the women shrieked that we were all going to the bottom. I could, by climbing, get at a dead-head light, and I looked out.

Two officers and several A.B.'s, all roped together, were chasing pigs about the deck. Dangerous work with the loss of three lifeboats and a pigsty, for it was in the days when liners carried live-stock.

I left Lucknow with a temperature of 103°, which I carefully refrained from declaring lest it should delay our down-country journey and shorten our visit to General and Mrs. Nicholson (Laurence Hope). But this

time I did not gain anything by my temerity, for I was a fortnight in bed at Mhow with what the doctors called "terai fever". The malarial mosquito had not been invented in those days; but, in my delirium, I drew a picture of the beast which I averred was coursing through my veins, which in after years proved to be a striking likeness of the noxious microbe. Possibly I was right, as the house we were in at Lucknow swarmed with mosquitoes; so much so that the three pairs of curtains the house possessed had to be given to my husband, my daughter, and the Commissioner.

They got me down to Bombay with difficulty; but the sea air soon set me up.

So ended, somewhat disastrously, my last visit to India. This was in the spring of 1898. I don't think I learnt very much during this time, except that *hashish* may well be held responsible for the lack of vitality, the dreaminess of the people; above all for the mysticism which enables them, in the face of railways, the telegraphs, gramophones, and wireless, to maintain superstitious beliefs which a European child would scorn. For the doctors gave me *hashish*, and I found it reduced me to smiling placidity, full of beautiful dreams.

CHAPTER XIV

As I had now in 1898 left India for the last time, it seems as well that I should bury all that I had learnt in my long years of residence in that country and have done with it once and for all. I can also give my outlook upon the future; in so doing I can supplement with remarks on the general trend of events since the year 1898 until now—a period, as I am constantly reminded, of thirty years. True; on the other hand, it was twenty years before my crude suggestion regarding the alienation of land in the Panjab found fruition in Mr. S. Thorburn's Bill.

And the first thing I must note in the list of what I learnt in India is its immutability, its perfectly amazing stability. Read Arrian, read Megasthenes; then turn to actual facts. They are absolutely the same, or they were so when I was in India. I had, of course, small experience of the life led by those who had been across the black water; I had none in regard to the home life of Bengal; but so far as the Panjab was concerned there was no change—there had apparently been none for close on three thousand years. Yet we are told that thirty has wrought complete change. I cannot believe it. Let us take, for instance, the life of Indian women. On all sides I am bombarded by assertions that in some occult manner the Mahomedan invasions of the last

two millenniums are responsible for their seclusion. I cannot find this is borne out by history. We hear much of a Golden Age in India, when the Brahman was kind and all things were as they should be; when learning was universal and the *purdah* was not. But reference to the few works which can give us any reliable account of these past glories say nothing as to education, while the feeling which underlies the seclusion of women is palpable. Take Kautilyai's *Arthasastra* for instance. What more reliable reference can one take? The date of it is confessed by all as being 300 years B.C. It is adjudged by competent scholars to be older than the better known Institutes of Manu. In it, at any rate, with its marvellous detail regarding laws and customs, one must, perforce, see the trend of current opinion. Kautilya, by the way, otherwise Chanakya, was the Prime Minister of Chandragupta, otherwise the Sandracottus of the Greeks. His book, the *Arthasastra*, is virtually a record of laws. It touches on all subjects, from the life of a saintly king to the suppression of wicked living, from the superintendence of prostitutes to the duty of a wife. It is thus somewhat far-reaching. Now, in regard to women it begins by asserting that a man may marry any number of women, *since women are created for the sake of sons*. Thus the position of woman is definitely settled once and for all. Woman was created for the sake of sons. There is no hint of her being a helpmeet for man. In fact, the laws of marriage expressly exclude this. The first four forms of marriage, which are indissoluble, involve the gifting of a maiden dowered in one way or another (a couple of cows, for instance, being an adequate price). The next three are dissoluble, and include the voluntary union of lovers.

Thus it would appear that mutual love was of comparatively small account.

We are thus thrown back on the original theme, that woman was created for the sake of sons. Now, the adoption of this view brings many things in its train. First of all, the necessity for sexual purity, and once we get this, seclusion follows as a matter of course. In the *Arthasastra*, it is true, no distinct mention of the *purdah* or the veil is to be found; but the penalties laid down for those who, for any cause save danger, venture beyond their husbands' houses are severe, very severe, and the details of the various offences a married woman may commit against her husband curiously defined. Some of them raise a smile, such as this: "A woman of a refractive nature shall be taught manners by three beats with a bamboo bark, or a rope, or with the palm of his hand on her hips". Her punishment for jealousy of a prostitute is also laid down, while the chapter devoted to the proper superintendence of the latter class of women throws a lurid light on their position. Take this as a sample: "A prostitute who does not yield her person to anyone under the orders of the king shall receive a thousand lashes with a whip". But the whole chapter on the superintendence of prostitutes proves that, even in those days, the physical tie was the only recognised bond between man and woman. Her purity was the essential. It is therefore idle to speak of Mahomedan outrage as a cause for the strict *purdah* which exists, in its strictest, just where the wave of Mahomedan conquests did not reach. The cause of it is quite patent. It lay in the status which was accorded to womanhood in the beginning. Bit by bit that status has altered with the years, but under-

lying everything is the belief that women were created to bear sons. There is little in Kautilya which has reference to the age at which marriage was consummated; but one rule that "from the age of eight years a prostitute shall hold musical performances before the king" bears on it. But the chapter which holds that sexual intercourse with a maiden before she has reached her maturity is punishable by the loss of a hand gives no age, though the rider that if the maiden dies *in consequence* he shall be put to death is suggestive.

Thus we are left with the original status of womanhood. It is enough. One can see how the leaven has worked; one can see that those who attack the *purdah* must do so directly. There must be no palavering with the *fons et origo mali.*

This is why I had, and still have, no sympathy with zenana missions or zenana doctors. By their means we undoubtedly lessen the amount of suffering. But pain is Nature's strongest fulcrum, and I firmly believe that but for our well-meant efforts to make seclusion more bearable, India would by now be half free of the curse of *purdah.* Yes, we have built up a vicious circle by trying to minimise disease which is the direct result of the conditions we stabilise. Personally I cannot see that the Indian woman is to blame for those conditions, but before considering these one must draw a sharp line of demarcation between the women of town and country. The peasant women of the Panjab are, on the whole, comparatively free from the obsession of sexuality. Not so the town-bred, whether Hindu or Mahomedan. On a roof of twelve feet square every little incident is magnified a thousand times. Her defilements, her ablutions, the actual physical union, are all subjects for

prayers, priests, and gossips. The first appearance of the signs of maturity in the girl is blazoned abroad among the neighbours, often by a regular festivity. That fact alone surely shows the atmosphere; and as I have before remarked, the wealth of ceremonial which has gathered round the exercise of the sexual function has necessarily made it the central topic of lives confined to twelve feet square of roof. I may be wrong, but I hold, and shall continue to hold, that time-worn assertion, "women were created to bear sons", as the root of the evil.

Now, in this the women are not to blame; it is the dictum of man. At the same time, women are largely responsible for its continuance. Many a man would gladly let his womenkind have more freedom, but they refuse it. Seclusion suits them. It is genteel. And it is, in my experience, never so irksome as the women themselves would like to make out. It does not prevent them from joining in the festivities of their neighbours; I have even known many cases of women who laid claim to the gentility of absolute *purdah* going out at nightfall disguised as boys.

No doubt zenana missions, by education of the women to have other interests, must do good eventually: but I believe the best policy would have been to make the *purdah* as irksome as possible. Pain, let me reiterate, is Nature's strongest fulcrum, and my own experience taught me that a resolute refusal to recognise *purdah* led to its being discarded.

Miss Mayo has been much abused for her book, especially by the advanced menfolk of India, yet surely all thinking men must see that their sex is inevitably a partner in all the regrettable obsession by such matters

that one finds in the zenana; without them such obsession would be impossible. And if more evidence were wanted we have only to point to the innumerable advertisements which appear in the native newspapers, advertisements which would not be allowed in any newspaper in England. A few months ago I sent samples, some twenty in number, of these to all the great English newspapers, also to the Prime Minister, without any effect whatever. I can only suppose that, as an evil, it was considered too slight for notice. And yet, only last week I had confirmation that those advertisements do receive notice from Indian men. A book was sent to me by an Oxford M.A., a member of the I.C.S., which contains what claims to be stories of Indian women. I have nothing to say against the book, but the first story I read turns entirely on the temptation which is broadcast in India, apparently through newspapers, by pamphlets on sexual bliss, married love and sense in sex, which asserted that human happiness consisted solely in sexual pleasures, and that all diseases due to an immoral life could easily be cured by certain medicines.

Surely that in itself is significant. Surely if such things do not bulk largely in Indian manhood, one would not have the spectacle of as many as twenty-four such advertisements appearing in one issue of a newspaper. Surely those Indians, so full of high ideals, so set on liberty, fraternity and equality, on all the ancient virtues and a few new ones, might find time to free the Indian press of such a scandal.

Enough! There is no use in the pot calling the kettle black. Both men and women are equally to blame, judged by Western ideals.

The question remains: Are these the right ones? and not only in regard to what is called morality. In almost every direction infinite tact is required in attempting to reconcile the mutual differences in thought and manners. Doubtless much of what the Indian sees in our aims and amusements is grievous to him, but, on the other hand, does he quite allow for the shock some of his culture gives to us? Let me give a trivial little example. There is a small volume of poems written in English by the Bengali headmaster of a big school—a B.A. I do not know if it was intended to be read by his pupils; possibly so. It contains the following, entitled a "Coolie and his wife".

It pictures the pair amicably seated outside a reed hut, three feet high. It goes on to say:

> "He was smoking, quite at ease,
> She was busy with his hair.
> Nature's child! Ah! how she sits
> Close to him and picks the louse,
> Truly happy and content
> In this man—a coolie though—
> Glows with joy her coloured face
> From behind her husband's brow—
> Finding louse a pleasant task
> To the wife must be, I trow."

Now, if this were put into the hands of an English schoolboy, what would be the result? Naturally this is purely trivial; naturally, also, the Indian could doubtless find many similar shockers to be put down to our discredit; but doesn't it show the urgent need of a few more years of patience before the English schoolboy can take the Bengali schoolboy to his heart and vice versa?

Now for the few remarks I have to make on the

future. There is no greater mistake than to disregard the wisdom of a fool, for even fools are sometimes wise.

Lewis Nettleship—I think the most original man I ever met—once with an eagerness and an assertion unusual to his modest nature held forth that it is always true that in no two consecutive hours is a man's brain-power equally armed for defence and attack. "At four o'clock", he said (it was tea-time), "I may be next door to a fool; an hour afterwards I am armed at all points and fit for an ambassadorship." If this be so, let me trust I am at my perihelion!

Let me preface my remarks by using that adverb of time:

"Now."

Looking back, then, on those long years of life spent in India, and trying reasonably to account for the changes which, judging by the purely Indian newspapers, have swept over the country, I can find no better cause for them than that which met me in the remarks of the Panjab peasantry and small traders in 1894—"The law—the pleader—the police."

Everything that I shall say has been said before many times by many people, but a true tale "is never the waur o' bein' twice tauld".

The law, undoubtedly, was in fault. It was too legal, too systematised, for the ignorance with which it had to deal. The people failed to understand it; the old summary jurisdiction would have been more cognate to them. Thus they welcomed the advent of the pleader. Him, we created—not of malice aforethought, but with a blatant idiocy which surely can find no parallel. We deliberately educated him on Western lines, then gave him nothing to do, so forced him to the law courts. I

suppose we were cocksure that our education was the best possible, that a Bachelor of Arts degree was better than a *Fajal-alam*; but it was a terrible mistake. Thousands of diploma-holders were created and sown broadcast over the length and breadth of the land.

Try and visualise it. Prem Nath, the darling and pride of his mother's heart, has been head scholar in primary, in middle schools; has gone on to university honours. And then? Nothing! The pride of the village is idle at home. But here, Westernised knowledge shows the ignorant fathers of the community how to avoid the many pitfalls which the new intricacies of the law place in their paths. Here we have a pleader, ready-made; most likely an agitator, for he has come into contact with real hardships.

Then the police. They, representatives of the new law, naturally found the pleader antagonistic; also he doubtless deprived them of some *backsheesh*. It came to be war between them, and in war all things are fair—to both sides!

It was Lord Macaulay who first declared in favour of Western education. He made a mistake; he forgot that adverb of time.

Have I any panacea for the evils the system of Western education has brought about?

To begin with, there should be no race bar. At present by its senseless attempt to Indianise the services, Government is in danger of trying to rob Peter in order to pay Paul. Up to the present it has done this consistently by its regulations for recruiting of the Provincial services. No European is allowed to enter for any Provincial post which is worth more than Rs. 200 to Rs. 800 a month. Of course, special appoint-

ments can be and are made by favour; but the rule stands, and it is unfair, because many young Europeans, born and bred in India, are yet not statutory natives. I have known one or two hard cases in this connection; young Anglo-Indians have been debarred by lack of Indian domicile. Of course, to talk of a colour bar is sheer nonsense, since many natives of Northern India are as fair as Europeans. The nomenclature has, I believe, only been imported into the question by extremists to embitter the strife.

The abolition of race and country is therefore necessary. I am told that the present scheme for staffing the railways is that 90 per cent shall be natives of India; mind you, not British subjects in India, but statutory natives having a domicile in India. It almost seems as if Government (and the extremists) have been studying geography. They seem to have forgotten that the "Earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof".

And I would extend this non-race rule to every post in India, making merit the only test, but hardening it for all with certain defined stipulations concerning training, which shall be binding upon all alike. Practically there is but one stipulation beyond those which at present obtain; and that would apply only to certain well-defined posts. That is, a five years' training at a British public school. The present university course for Indians is not sufficient to put them on equal terms with British candidates. And there is no "public schools" system in India. That this stipulation would fall hardest on statutory natives of India I admit. On the other hand, the statutory natives of Britain have other difficulties to contend with, and the examination as to Indian history, customs, and languages should be

made far harder than it is. I say nothing about exile, for, although the extremist upholder of a united India would scout the idea, it is quite as much of an exile for a Panjabi to be posted to Bengal, or a Bengali to Madras, as for the British-born to go to India.

For instance, when Mahatma Gandhi went up to Assam, and could not speak without an interpreter, he was far more of an exile than the English official who was fluent in the local dialects.

For the rest, I cannot see how India *now* can possibly speak for herself. She has many very vocal sons, but she has an extremely imperfect electorate. One also that it is extremely difficult now to amend.

And that again opens up the woman question, on which, perhaps, I have some claim to speak.

Now, the errors we make about Indian women are legion. To begin with, she does not mature, as a rule, with such phenomenal speed. Signs of coming maturity may occur, but Indian girls are as a rule curiously small and undeveloped until the age of twelve years; from then till fourteen they grow like Jonah's gourd, yet still at sixteen they have often not reached their full growth. Up to a certain point their brains are quicker than those of the boys. But, once mature, the sex question has a very large hold on them. It is impossible that this should not be so, for, except among the peasantry, women have little else with which to occupy their minds. Many of them doubtless are as intelligent, as well educated as the males, but their dependent position precludes them at present from outside interests. For instance, property is the qualification for the electorate, and few women in India can qualify for this; not one, I should say, in a hundred

thousand. I note that some of the learned ladies have made this point in a petition to Sir John Simon. But for the present the question of the woman's vote in India is negligible; it means nothing. Nor, briefly, does anything *now*. It is the old question of the owl and the eggs. Which is to come first? Independence, or an electorate? In time India will govern herself, but only in time; so, in the interests of all, let us take it.

WINTER

CHAPTER XV

THE book *Voices in the Night* which I went out to Lucknow in order to finish was not so successful as *On the Face of the Waters*. It could not be so; the theme was not nearly so appealing, and yet there is good work in it, perhaps the best I have done. I think Jan-ali-shan is one of the most striking personalities I have drawn.

But I was now hard at work on many manuscripts; of these the *Hosts of the Lord* interested me much, the title of it having come to me in Lucknow, and I wrote it far quicker than any of my other books. I was now in the zenith of such reputation as I had achieved, but I had given up the flat in London. A silly mistake regarding the tenancy of our Aberdeenshire house, which we really had leased for a period of twenty-one years, made it necessary for us to move at seven, and after much searching we finally settled on an unfurnished place in Wales near Machylleth, which we took for fourteen years, and never regretted it. Talgarth in springtime was ideally beautiful, the house was large and roomy, and it had both shooting and fishing. The wild hyacinths in its woods were so plentiful that quite a commonsensical man going through them was forced into the sudden remark: "The floor of heaven". Indeed, it was a good simile! Never, anywhere, have I seen any-

thing more beautiful than those woods, with the young crinkled beech leaves swinging overhead, a "carpet of the heaven-blue hyacinth spread, starred with narcissus, set with campion red." As I wrote at the time. All was delightful, but Fate had in store rather a severe blow. My only daughter married her cousin and went out to India. My husband and I both objected strongly to cousins marrying, and I have no doubt made ourselves very disagreeable; of course to no purpose. The young people had their own way, they were duly married, and we were left in, surely, the most beautiful of places, to fill it with other people's children, and make the best of life. This disappointment, which ought to have been a slight one, since it was only natural that the young birds should leave the nest, had a very marked effect upon me. I daresay—I was just fifty-two—I was miserably nervous; but I did feel a sudden disgust to work, and I gave up writing altogether for nearly two years. But Talgarth was not a place where anyone could be unhappy. We had the garden of our lives, we crammed the house with other folks' children, we reared all sorts and kinds of animals, and my husband fished and shot. As for me, I thought a good deal as I wandered about the woods. I used to go down to feed the young pheasants at four o'clock in the morning. The field where they were reared (we incubated the eggs and kept them in brooders with large wired-in runs) was nearly a quarter of a mile away—I used to go on summer mornings barefoot, just in my loose cotton gown; and oh! the joy, the freedom of it, and the touch of the pattering feet on my arms, as the wee birdies swarmed round me to be fed!

So the months, the years fled.

Then one winter we went to Italy. And here a curious thing happened. It was at Florence on the night of the 6th of January. Of course I had been making good resolutions all these last lost months and years. It has always been a daily luxury of mine! I had told myself a dozen times that I was only fifty and a bit—all to no purpose. I can hardly myself believe now the pass of cowardice and despondency to which I had come inwardly; for outwardly I was as ever. Then suddenly an almost forgotten memory of my comparative youth came to me. I was once more the *entrepreneur* of a large picnic amid the Himalayas, and an old Brahman had appeared saying he was a soothsayer and fortune-teller. No one had seen or heard of him before. A small, thin ascetic-looking figure with a lined brown face and gentle brown eyes. To amuse the guests I set him to work, and he went about the company telling the usual tales of fortune-tellers. Then, finally, he asked to look at my hand. At his first glance he began making a buzzing noise like that of a cockchafer on a pin, and he said at once: "The *Huzoor* has a double life." Then he went on. He certainly guessed some things in my past with which I thought none were acquainted. Then, while a few people gathered round, attracted by the curious noise he had made, he said: "The *Huzoor's* is the hand of a *Lat padre sahib* (bishop). She will live for 108 years and then commit suicide from disappointed affection." Of course there was a roar of laughter. Never was such a fortune, and all my life since, those who heard have joked me about the suicide. The 108 years have also been thrown at me often. I think, in a way, the idea of that long life has helped me to remain, as I am to-day, curiously young for my years: but only in the

vague, uncertain way in which outside influences do affect us.

Now, on this 6th of January at Florence, about ten o'clock in the evening as I was getting into bed, like a sudden flash of light, came the old Brahman. I could see him, as I saw him that day, small, thin, ascetic, his gentle brown eyes looking into mine. And, like a blinding flash, came these thoughts:

"A double life.

"I am fifty-four.

"That is the half of 108.

"What am I doing but committing suicide?"

Now that is all; positively all. But it altered my whole life. I don't attempt to understand. The old man may have been Koot Hoomi himself; he may have been the archangel Gabriel. I only know that those words of his, spoken long, long years before, and set aside as a joke, enabled me to see clearly what I was doing.

Possibly without this memory I might have had in the future a clearer vision of realities than I had then; but—there is the tale! I have set it down *in extenso* for what it is worth to others. To me it is everything. Whether I am really to live till 108 I don't know, I don't care. But this I do know, that I have had years and years of hard work since then, that I have tried to do my duty, and that, close on my eighty-third year, I am still working. Whether I shall achieve anything I do not know. My last novel sold very well. My next one may possibly damn such reputation as I have; but it is the outcome of twenty-five years of study, and if I am right, it may set some things right. So God go with it!

One of my first attempts at beginning work once more was a book about animals. My life for the last

three years had been spent largely amongst them, and a sense of the deep debt which humanity owes to its dumb friends had grown up on me and finally found fruition in the

"Book of Mortals"
"Being a record of the good deeds and good qualities of what humanity is pleased to call the lower animals.
Collected by a Fellow Mortal."

I dedicated it to the memory of a delightful dachshund puppy called Angelo, of whom I wrote:

"Son, grandson of faithful family friends. He found even a dachshund's brain too small for his inheritance of larger life, so chose instead the illimitable liberty of death."

Now, as this little piece of absolute trust, absolute confidence, meant much to me, I will transcribe here what I felt and still feel for him. It must be buried in my Garden.

What was it, Angelo, you bore
Hid in your sun-brown eyes?
A message from the skies?
Ah no! You know no more
Than I
The secret things that lie
Far on the further shore.

What was it, dear one, that I loved
In your quaint sun-brown face?
A spiritual grace?
Ah no! Your small soul moved
Apart,
Even my loving art
Knew not that sweet dim place.

But now, my pretty, that you lie—
Sun-roses on your grave,

[Photopress.

THE GARDEN OF FIDELITY.

I understand! Death gave
The clue—Death was itself the tie
Between
Our seen and our unseen;
We meet there—you and I.

So, since little Angelo must have a place in my Garden, I will also transcribe L'Envoi of the Book of Mortals.

Yellow green beech leaves swinging overhead,
A carpet of the heaven-blue hyacinth spread,
Starred with narcissus, set with campion red,
Where Angelo lies dead.

Dead as the lily that I laid with him
To bear him company; yet on the rim
Of his small grave, a lily tall and slim
Offers her cup's white brim.

Brim full is it of sacramental Wine—
The Wine of Life Eternal—that is mine,
The Lily's, Angelo's, since all combine
Body and life divine.

Divine the world—soul seeking—who knows why?
A body in the earth or sea or sky
Close clung to life and yet, without a sigh,
Giving itself to die.

Die then, ye bodies! Let the dust we make
Pass to fresh moulding. Let our souls forsake
These little lives, and to those next to wake
This mystic message take:

"Take, mortal, thou, this body given for thee,
Preserve thou it for life thou shalt not see.
Seek not to keep it—give it back to me—
I am Eternity.

"Eternity whose Harvest none can reap;
Whose hands, all equipoised, the Balance keep.
Eternity who smiles although men weep,
And watches while men sleep."

The book, a quarto, most beautifully illustrated, did not sell well. It was too expensive. Ten shillings: too much to spend even on a memorial of gratitude. And Mr. Heinemann did not care for it. On the other hand, someone wrote me that she kept it next her Bible; surely praise could no further go.

Some day, perhaps, I may, myself, try a cheaper edition.

I began work again at once, and I have worked ever since very steadily. As one gets older, responsibilities crowd in upon one. After three years of married life a son came to my daughter. It was born at home: the prettiest new-born baby I ever saw, but at first very delicate; however, he is now a strapping young fellow of five-and-twenty, well out in life. Three-and-a-half years after, another son put in an appearance; it was also born at home, under our roof, and was strong. Since then both children have entered largely into my life, for we have had charge of them during their parents' absence in India. They have been an immense pleasure.

But while all these grand-maternal interests were growing, and I was publishing book after book, a further and a far more absorbing idea had taken possession of me. I think the possession began at once after my conversion at Florence. I hate the word conversion, but I find no other to use. I realised then that all real death is suicide; that it is an inefficiency of will-power to live; that nothing but this had prevented my saying: "I

will not have this; I will live as if I had my life to live over again". I realised briefly that, if I chose, I was imperishable, and I was absolutely content. And here Lewis Nettleship's words came once more into my life, to give me help: "If we could energise a great deal more continuously than most of us can, we might experience physical death without being aware of it". I used to sit out in the woods before breakfast every fine morning and try to know. When I shut my eyes it seemed as if a warm, golden sea of light was my world, and somehow the words, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock", used to come to me. I think the first thing I grasped was my own inefficiency, even for all material sensations. The millions of ether vibrations were beyond me, and absolute awe came at the thought of a thermometer's steady rise in the dark lines of the spectrum which my eyes failed even to see. I felt it was a true Seer, telling us triumphantly of things beyond our present sight.

So the absolute unthinkability of the whole puzzle came to me. The mere thought of a beginning seemed to turn cause into an effect, and there you are; only to begin again!

About this time I read a good deal in metaphysical and philosophic books; and always the sea of golden light which shut out material things as I closed my eyes in the woods, and those words, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock", came to me. They brought perfect peace. I felt that some time the door would open; that it was pure pleasure to wait. Thus I got the idea of unending, unbeginning Force, what I suppose the metaphysicians called "The Unconditioned".

Then came the eternal puzzle: why this should con-

dition itself? To postulate an inherent tendency involved something not homogeneous. So, back to a deadlock again. It was all dreams! dreams! dreams!

But from dreamland came a certainty that the very first hint of condition must have limited the Unconditional. "I am here, I am not there", must ever be an act of self-sacrifice.

Then came a vague feeling—doubtless without metaphysical foundation—that the One must be Two before the One can really be said to exist. So the thought that somehow the key to the puzzle lay in sex began to haunt me; and here once again Lewis Nettleship and his mysticism helped me. "The idea of a bisexual God", he says, "is as old as the hills, but it fetches me, because I can't help believing that there is some real point of contact in the love of mankind as represented by Jesus, and concentrated in the idea of God as love, and the '*das ewig weibliche*' of Goethe, and that the world won't be happy till it finds this out!" He goes on to say that love is a difficult and dangerous subject, though it would throw more light on life than any other.

This fell in with what I had thought for years, and it started me afresh. I began to read in the British Museum, and I read every book that treated on the subject. Up till then I had taken knowledge, as it were, at second hand; I had not understood the universality of the sexual obsession in humanity. So it startled me to find that all the medical dictionaries in the Reading Room needed no index. That opening theme—you saw at one glance what pages treated of sexual matters. Thumbed, dirty, worn away, rotten as it were, no further evidence was wanting to show their constant use.

Well! I read everything I could get hold of. I studied serpent worship; I lost myself in Egyptian mysteries. For seven long years I tried to find out what had gone wrong with the sexual functions in humanity, for that there was something wrong became patent as I studied. All this time we lived among the perfect beauty of the hyacinth woods, and my grandchildren were growing up to be a joy. We were very happy, very content. Only two things troubled me. One was that, try as I would, I could not learn Welsh. I lived for full fourteen years by the most Welsh of Welsh villages, and to this day I cannot say "How do you do" properly in the language. This was most strange, since I have rather a gift for languages, and learnt almost every dialect with which I came across in India. The other was that my efforts to train servants were completely frustrated by the educational officers. I tried getting young girls from London to be trained—two under the parlour-maid, two under the housemaid, and two under the cook. But it was a disastrous failure. I found it absolutely necessary to get the girls young, if possible before they were fourteen; indeed, the matrons of various institutions with which I was in contact assured me that fifteen was far too old to hope for good results with girls from the slums. This, however, did not suit the Welsh educational authorities. I was hauled up at last, before the petty sessions, between a poaching case and a drunk and disorderly case, and I believe only escaped sentence because the Inspector had inadvertently and foolishly omitted to examine the girls in question as to their knowledge, which, in truth, was far above the standard of their age; for I taught them "whiles", as we say in Scotland. Still it was not worth while braving

the authorities, so I gave up my canaries, as the household generally called them, from their habit of chattering like young birds in a nest. Yet the experience was useful. Without it I should never have believed in the absolute heathendom of the London slums; I should never have endorsed the saying of a dear friend of ardent missionary tendencies, who told me, with tears in her eyes, that after five-and-twenty years of India, she had had to come and live at Norwood to know what a real heathen was. It was not that these girls had no knowledge of religion; it was that they had no knowledge of anything. I remember once asking a "canary" where a new one called Selina was. "Mod*dam*," she replied, "she is up in her room looking over her jewel case." In after years I was to come upon something even more startling. A girl of sixteen who had passed out of a Council School in the sixth standard refused to lay the servants' dinner on the ground that tablecloths, knives and forks were a superfluity. Her people and her neighbours dispensed with them. They had no set meals, just tore their meat in pieces. I inquired and found it was sometimes true; briefly, there was little civilisation. About this time I was full of trying to organise domestic service, which, even then, was going out of fashion with young girls. In this connection there is one memory that must be set down. It gave me the soundest slap in the face I ever received. I used to go round the servants' bedrooms to see all was tidy and in order—a sort of ship's captain's visitation. One morning I found a bed unmade, and, all too patent, the signs of an over-late uprising. The cause but too clear: an enamel candlestick—mercifully not a china one—with the candle burnt to the socket and beneath it a paper

book. Full of indignation I went to it inwardly cursing the penny novelette, but—it was the cheap edition of *On the Face of the Waters*. I slunk downstairs without a word.

My canaries had already done me infinite harm in my environment, and I attribute much of my failure to learn Welsh to the slight friction caused by their presence. For the Welsh people, intelligent and courteous though they are, are curiously clannish. Despite the fact that I was a West Highlander, and that I called the Englishman a "Sassenach", while they called him a "Sassenagh", they never really admitted me as a compatriot. There was, however, only one point on which there was even the semblance of a quarrel. A rather silly book was published, abusing the country and the people. Certain folk fathered the book on me. It was written in such bad English that I felt outraged, though I never said so.

These were what I may call the Suffrage years, and so, of course, they brought some outside excitement to me; for all my life I have been keen, not so much on the rights, as the wrongs of women. I spoke a good deal, and twice, though I was never militant, I solidly refused to pay rates and taxes—for I owned a week-end cottage at Aberdovey—on the ground that I was not a citizen. But my refusals were really great fun, and we had quite a festival when they came to sell me up. The village was tremendously interested, sympathetic, and excited, and there was loud cheering the first time when my publisher, Mr. Heinemann, bought in the first lot which was put up, for £10—more than the whole of my rates! And it was only the first chapter, in manuscript, of *On the Face of the Waters*! But I had

put it into a big envelope emblazoned with some of the fine compliments with which the book was greeted. One of them, I remember, was: "Many an officer would give his sword to write military history as Mrs. Steel has done." Another: "The student of India and her peoples will find more reliable information in this book than in all the Blue-books ever published." I had a fancy that this might show the world the folly of lumping brains into sexual compartments, but it did not!

However, bit by bit, despite stupid mistakes at headquarters and violent breakaways from reason, we won our way. But personally, I regret, I still regret the hysterical, emotional way in which the vote was finally granted. It would have come more nobly had it not been done under stress. Yet, in a way, it was so done in effect, though sanction was not given to it for long months afterwards. But when the Board of Trade published its circular, stating in so many words that all those doing man's work at home were serving their country as well as if they were shouldering rifles in the trenches, the deed was done. At any rate, my daughter and I, over two hundred miles apart at the time, thought so; for after reading it she went to her post-office and telegraphed to me; and I, after reading it, went down to mine and telegraphed to her. And curiously enough we both wired but one and the same word: "Victory."

It was so palpable.

I think, however, that the struggle for the vote accentuated my desire to find out what lay at the bottom of woman's disabilities. I could find no trace of these in other animals.

How had it come about?

I asked myself this question again and again, but it was not till I had been some years in the hyacinth woods that I read Gerald Massy's book, the *Natural Genesis*. It filled me with wonder. It is a congeries of undigested facts; a regular rag-bag! Yet in it I found a glimmer of light, though the reasoning appeared to be most unsatisfactory. I had always loved animals of all kinds; Gerald Massy looked on them as automata. This roused me. I began to compare the beasts that perish with humanity, and in many ways I found humanity wanting. In fact, I was for some years in a whirl of conflicting thoughts. I tried at times to settle my beliefs by writing them down, and I find this rather pathetic preface to one attempt: "Shall I ever have the brains to disentangle the knot? I doubt it."

Thereinafter I wrote:

"Matter, surely, is practically non-existent. It is only Force; we can't think of it otherwise. And, somehow, Force seems to me so indissolubly bound up with Will. I cannot understand how those who deny Free Will do not see that the very idea of a First-cause, without which our finite minds refuse to work, contains in it the idea of Freedom in choice. It all seems to me perilously like sitting in a clothes basket and lifting oneself up by the handles. Now, the origin of evil gives me no trouble at all. Any movement must differentiate what was from what is. Two things are where one was; and one must of necessity be centripetal, the other centrifugal, in proportion as the movement is in assimilation to or in divergence from—What? Something—give it what name you please."

There is one little odd scrap which I include, partly

from amusement, for I have learnt better after the long years:

"I am not satisfied because I cannot include my fellow-man in my beatific vision. I really think I feel more sympathy with an isosceles triangle than I do with men and women. This must be seen to. I think it comes from the great effort one makes to understand them; to get at the real subliminal self that is behind the mundane self. In digging for this treasure one seems to come on the dead bones and bodies of so many lives. That is an idea! Supposing you were an ark of salvation for many selves? That by your actions you could raise or degrade, not one life, but many. This, of course, is the belief that comforts and consoles the Hindu widow. Still, it would be nice, after a useless fit of anger, to be able to say: 'You are a bit of "kaim plasma", from some dead and gone sinner! Be still, friend, and rest.'"

I add one more thought just to show my own foolishness:

"I have an idea:

It is the 'Gate of the Soul'."

Imagine it! The difference between the thousands of vibrations, or waves, which go to make the ultimate sound appreciable to human ears and the millions at which human sight begins.

A wide gate this—wide enough at least for one soul to slip through to the world beyond—to something ultimate, something that is neither hot nor cold, light nor dark, sound nor silence.

So, as the years passed, so happily, so contentedly, our tenancy of the beautiful hyacinth woods came to an end. The rent was raised, it was beyond our means,

we had perforce to flit. We were very sorry, but we had no choice. As it was, it had taken all our comparatively small income to keep the place going as it should be kept, to pay the wages of the men who were employed on it. But increased taxation and rates and rent made this impossible, even with the strictest economy and a very, very good cook! So four men joined the ranks of the unemployed!

But before we moved to Shropshire I had to make a sudden visit to Jamaica. The agent on the old property there had calmly left it in his will to his wife and children. Now, undoubtedly, my brother, who had had the charge of the property, had been in fault by a silence lasting many years, but being a Scottish lawyer he had not realised the danger. In Scotland sixty years would have had to elapse before any claim could be made, but Jamaica follows the English law making it only twelve years. Now we were still a large family, and the property indubitably belonged to us under our grandfather's will; but we were all poor and could not afford a lawsuit. All except me. I had saved a little from my books, and my grandfather's spook troubled me. I am supposed to be very like him; my grandmother always said so; therefore I realised the disappointment it would have been to the good gentleman, if the property he had worked hard for was, as it were, stolen, or lost by negligence. So I took up the glove (and an English barrister) and sailed for Jamaica. On the way out a laughable incident occurred which, surely, *must* find a place in my Garden.

I went out to New York second class in the *Mauretania*. I had only just enough money for my emprise, and the second class of the *Mauretania* is as comfort-

able as the first class of any other steamer I have ever been on. My dead eldest brother's son went out with me as heir to the property, and we were very comfortable.

But at New York, while he went to get a taxi, I had to pass the emigration officer, a stout German-looking doctor. I gave my real age—sixty-seven—I told my name—and—and I was incontinently sent to Ellis Island! I protested. I showed letters which had been brought on board by the pilot from notable New York citizens inviting me to stop with them, I showed a hundred pound note in my purse which I contended was quite sufficient to bury one old woman if she did die during the twenty-four hours she had to stop in New York before embarking for Jamaica. Thus, I could be no expense to the U.S.A. I did everything to placate the good gentleman and protest against his decision that I was suffering from "senile decay"; finally, losing my temper, I offered to race him round the quarter-deck. This, I fancy, made him adamant, for he knew he hadn't a chance! So there I sat, unable to leave the room, listening to what went on till my nephew, returning, brought male protection and I was set free—I, a woman of sixty-seven, he a man of twenty-five. I burnt with feminine indignation, he with outraged manhood. But he was appeased next morning when every single New York paper devoted one or two columns on the outrage that had been offered to the authoress, Mrs. Flora Annie Steel. For the first thing I did on arriving at my hotel was to 'phone for an interviewer. And, thanks to my listening while I was waiting, I was enabled to tell America some home truths as to the treatment that was then meted out to single women by the authorities. But it was on my return through New

York that the incident reached its climax, and has ever since produced uncontrollable laughter. For I had written the British Ambassador saying I trusted no such undignified reception would be accorded to me again; so ceremonial was in evidence. Captain and purser attended me to a nice-looking young man, who, with a smile struggling with his gravity, suggested I should forgive an unfortunate mistake. On my replying that I had no intention of so doing, he laughed outright and said, "Oh yes! you would if you had seen the offender this morning when we told him you were coming and that he had better go and pass you. He said 'Damn!' and disappeared."

So ended the incident, but I fear I am of an unforgiving nature, as some months after, having to reply at a public dinner for the guests, one of whom was the American Ambassador, I could not help apologising for having to speak for one who represented a country that, but a short time before, had pronounced me to be suffering from senile decay.

I had scarcely made this tempting *riposte* when we were all startled into forgetfulness of trivialities by the Declaration of War on the 4th August, 1914. Twenty years before, a very intelligent Intelligence officer had told me that the war with Germany, which he held to be inevitable, would not come before 1914; and only the year before I had found, as the coping of the cairn on the top of Clee Hill, a bit of the blue ballast stone on which was scrawled "*Deutschland über alles*", a motto which so angered me that I scratched it out and in my enthusiasm wrote "Rule Britannia" with two t's!

And I recollected the reply of a German schoolboy when, in fun, he had been asked to be kind to his hostess

when his people invaded the country: "There is no chance—Cardigan Bay is too shallow for our purpose."

So I was not so much surprised.

Of the next four years who shall speak? Not I. I offered my services like all other women, and once again my age stood in my way. In London amongst other old women who did splendid work for their country, I might have been of use. As it was in the heart of Shropshire I had to follow the advice "Stop at home and knit comforters". My daughter, prevented from rejoining her husband in India, went nursing, I fed the school-children, and amused them by burning the effigy of the German Emperor on Guy Fawkes' Day, in the field in front of the house. How the fire crackled and flared! How the children shouted as the upraised sword arm fell with a clatter into the burning embers! All that has passed—the anger and the pity of it; and are we any the better, any the wiser for it? I think not; but then I am a back-number. As I write a queer little recollection comes back to me. Yet, as it is one that seems to me to be typical of what England was at the time, it shall find place here. I am in a railway carriage. I am telling a story of my youngest grandson to a stranger, a woman, fat, fair, and forty, dressed in a plenitude of black bugles. "The child," I said, "he is but seven, was playing with bricks, but his face was all serious. 'Neil,' I said, 'what are you thinking of?' He looked up. 'They say your heart is where your treasure is—well! I wish I were where I want to be.' 'And where's that?' I asked, thinking perhaps that the child's mind was with his parents. He looked at me coolly and replied, 'Beside the German Emperor with my pistol at his head.' So he went on playing with his bricks."

Now this in itself is remarkable, but the fat and fair one's comment thereon was simply shattering—

"The lamb," she said admiringly.

Now, were I to spend tons of paper, pen, and ink I could not surpass the above as an epitome of what England was at the time. And now? *Eheu fugaces.*

It is as well perhaps. But are second thoughts always the best? If we rely upon the wisdom of humanity it is undoubtedly so. But is there not something beyond the reasoning from uncertain premises which is all we can, as a rule, compass in this world? I believe there is. I believe that herein lies the difference between the great man and the smaller man. The former has the gift of touching the button of the electricity that lies behind all things; and lo! there is light!

People are fond of attributing insight and instinct to women; but, like the accusation of more easily disturbed nerves, this is not so. Boy babies are infinitely harder to rear than girl babies because of their nerves. As for insight, animals easily take the palm. How many dogs have saved their masters by unexplained instinct? What marvellous foreknowledge some insects have of coming bad weather! But the whole question of this almost second sight requires examination!

So the weary years dragged on. I bought a good magic lantern and went about the countryside giving war lectures; and the knitting class, begun at Clee Hill amongst the quarrymen's wives, developed into a Woman's Institute with nearly a hundred members, which still persists and does good work. And here I feel I ought, in common fairness, to record one action of the members which vies with those of the Indian children. On my seventy-fourth birthday they gathered seventy-

four members together; they gave me such a tea, a pair of silver candlesticks, and, best of all, a clever member made a crown of laurel leaves with which they crowned me "Queen of Clee Hill!" It was nice of them, and I dried that crown as a remembrance. It is these little things that make life worth living. They stay with one through thick and thin. Surely, surely, they are immortal. They have been, they are. There is no piece of Indian wisdom which attracts me more than Krisha's saying on the Bhagavad-Gita. "What has been, can never cease to be". It is there in the history of the world, for all time, all Eternity—though which is Time, which is Eternity, it would puzzle anyone to say.

One must wait for the solution of the puzzle—or for the forgetfulness of it; yet, as every stone you have touched during your life has changed somewhat by that touch, though the impression one has made on one's world must remain, I cannot see how forgetfulness can come about.

It is very curious the hold which absolutely trivial incidents often have. One forgets, or seems to forget, quite major matters: small ones leap to life in an instant if the stream of memory flows nigh them. I can never think of the war without seeing in my mind's eye a typical English child's face as it looked up from a really excellent treacle pudding made with maize meal —we were feeding the school children—and said in broad Shropshire, "Aw doa'nt eat carlves food". (I don't eat calves' food.)

He was a nice little boy. British to the core. In that moment he seemed to me to personify England. Obstinate, ignorant, determined, conservative *au fond*. I regret to say that I was even more so than he was; so

he went without his dinner; whereat he wept. The other children sat alarmed, for the British mother has of late years thought dinner must never suffer at the hands of discipline. But somehow, that trivial incident has remained with me to explain much in the psychology of our race. There are many other trifles of those four years of stress which have, as it were, illumined the path.

For instance: It was one spring, about March, that an American friend coming home from 'Frisco said to me, "In six weeks America will have joined the war". I asked "Why?" and the answer was given that, coming over to take passage at New York, he had seen that half the railway stations were blocked with corn waiting to be despatched. So soon, he said, as the Western farmers realise what the submarine blockade means there will be war.

He was right, whether the reason he gave was correct or no.

There are yet two stories of the war which seem to me worthy a place in the record of those long four years when every fibre of one's being was strung to its fullest in the mad determination to win. They are both quite trivial but they have this merit—they are first hand.

One is of a curious dream an American lady had in March 1918. For the first time America was beginning to realise what war meant. The great German offensive had just started; the outlook seemed black, everyone was half-startled, half-alarmed. Now, this lady was a bit psychic. She had had veridical dreams before. One night she dreamt that she was walking in a pleasant, sunlit garden when she overtook a gentleman who was going the same way. A man of about fifty, stout,

well-dressed, with perfectly charming manners. They entered into conversation and discussed the war, the great topic of the day. He proved to be curiously well up in all details, also curiously hopeful. "You people need not distress yourselves," he said with a charming smile. "I can assure you Britain will win, and by November the war will be over." She was so struck by his graciousness and his intense pro-British certainty that, when their roads parted she asked if she might know his name. His smile, she says, was perfection, as with a faint bow he said, "Well! I suppose you would call me the late King Edward the Seventh."

So she woke, but she certainly proclaimed her conviction that the war would end in November, which it did.

A trivial and yet a pretty little story.

My other story is less polite: it was told me by my nephew, who guarded the North Sea for three years from torpedoes. It was when the German Fleet lay captured in Scapa Flow. In order to prevent hanky-panky an English quartermaster and some A.B.'s were posted on each vessel. So, to an English quartermaster who was leaning over the taffrail came a German quartermaster who had a little English.

"I sinks nos'ing of your ships," quoth he. The Englishman looked at him without reply.

"And I sinks nos'ing of your sailors." Still no reply.

"And I sinks nos'ing of your officers, your Jellicoes, your Beattys——"

And with that, overcome by his feelings, the German, after their habit, spat over the taffrail. Whereupon the Englishman turned and said calmly:

"Now! Look ee 'ere, I don't care a tinker's dam wot you thinks about our ships, our sailors, and our officers; but don't you go spittin' into our sea."

That, I think, is a fitting end to those years of war.

CHAPTER XVI

THE four years of strain were over, and for the next two all Great Britain was what the nurses call feeling its feet; that is, it was trying to walk in new ways. Regarding women, this was especially noticeable. Most of us had lost something; many of us had lost all.

Personally, I had lost no blood relation. Sometimes, when the women talked of "kushi jobs" and envied me, I used to feel ashamed; but reflection told me that there was no remedy. Organisers were as much needed as fighters, and if soldiers were forced, against their wills, to lay down their swords and spend their brains in securing safety for others, it was not their fault. So Admiralties and War Offices absorbed them, and to the second and third generation the family came out of the war with decorations but never a scar. But those who had lost, those who, by nursing, by doing men's work, had come nearer than I to the realities of war, had to come back in many ways to pre-war paths. And it was difficult, very difficult; in a way it was disastrous to the men who had come back. The feminine impulse to keep and cosset those they loved best had naturally strengthened towards all men during the time they were counted, and rightly counted, as heroes. The men themselves, counted and rightly counted as heroes, had become accustomed to adulation.

There is no use not looking things in the face. I do not minimise—I could not, if I would, it was too great —the heroism, the horrors of the trenches; but—it was ten days of trench to three weeks of base. And the whole nation was out to make that base bearable. Often, in war time, as I have gone about lecturing, I have encountered trainloads of lads singing "It's a long way to Tipperary", and similar songs. And almost against my volition has come the memory of—what was a favourite of my childhood—one of Retsche's outlines—I copied it many times—a knight kneeling before an altar, dedicating himself and his sword.

It was such a contrast! And often, so often, I have wished to see a boyish mouth unmarred by a cigarette! I mention this not in any spirit of blame. As an old Scottish Law Lord used to say on circuit to the junior advocates who were in charge of the commissariat, "I'm no complainin', I'm simply statin' a fac' ". I am only mentioning these quite undeniable facts in order to try and find out what were the disorganising forces at work during those first four years of peace. Briefly, it seems to me—heaps of men—men who had never even crossed the Channel—were spoilt, and all the women were ready to spoil them. I think both phenomena were unavoidable, therefore unblameable.

Then came the granting of the vote to women, and the refusal, the perfectly justifiable refusal, of most of the girls and women to give up the jobs they had got into in consequence of men being otherwise engaged. The question, however, is so beset by conflicting interests and opinions, that I venture no word on it. I only wish to stress its far-reaching effect.

During the war most of the domestic servants had

been attracted to munition work; at first from genuine patriotic feelings; later on by the discovery that they had more pay and much more liberty. During the war the previous employers of domestics did their patriotic share in less histrionic fashion, by doing much of the work themselves, and by giving a double wage to one girl to do the work of two. The discovery that one, *if she chose,* could easily do the work of two, parallels the discovery made in many a factory that skilled workers could generally be trained to competence from ordinary workers in six weeks—*if they chose.* In fact the exigencies of war taught many employers that skill was very easily acquired. As an overseer in Vickers, when I was inspecting, said to me, "machines make skill".

This being so, it was only natural that the more money, with more liberty, of the factory was infinitely more attractive than domestic service. The result of this is palpable everywhere, so far as mistresses of households are concerned. Women's heroes have deteriorated; luxurious comfort has disappeared, and the whole female population is either more or less hustled, or has more or less ceased to care about things that used to be considered women's duties. Now all this—barring the nerves—may be to the good; but it is an appreciable change, and, like all other changes, even of the slightest nature, it has brought many other changes in its train. Take, for instance, the appearance of the attaché case. A slight thing; but consider its consequences. It grew to be the week-end case; week-ends have simply revolutionised Great Britain. The home is now something from which to escape—if you can. Furthermore, the attaché case has revolutionised woman's dress. It began by scrapping flannel petticoats

as too bulky; it has gone on simplifying, shortening, lightening, narrowing garments until absolute extinction seems not far off; and as even the brush and comb have disappeared, there is plenty of room left for cigarettes.

This being so, one is justified in putting down many of the changes one sees in society to the love of liberty among women. And this is only natural after the long ages of slavery they had endured. The question remains, however, how this slavery had come about—a question which had occupied me for years and years.

I had found, I thought, a solution to it. I had even during those years of war published, at my own expense, a pamphlet called "The Fruit of the Tree", in which I had tried to set forth my views to the best of my ability. Fifteen hundred of these I had circulated to every institution and person occupied with the cause of woman. It had met with one appreciation. A Suffrage Society had, with my consent, republished it, but I know nothing of its circulation in the new edition.

Now, with the granting of the vote, women ceased to interest themselves in causes, and a general stampede towards such freedom as they could get, a general dislike to the drudgery from which they had in a measure escaped, seemed to me to possess them—as a mass. No one is so foolish as to generalise—at any rate, I am not; there were, there are, there always will be exceptions—many of them; on the other hand, just as many women —most of them, perhaps—will not accept my conclusions. I am prepared for this.

But I was now seventy-five. In many ways I was a complete back-number; for home duties of various sorts had kept me fairly occupied. Fairly I say, since there is

one little incident about this time which may amuse; which at any rate amused me, and which shows that I still had enough youthfulness to remember my old childish days when I used to make a dour Scottish household laugh over my "conceits". I was president of a large Woman's Institute. We were fearfully solemn; we improved ourselves religiously. We district-nursed, we child-welfared, we generally "kept the home fires burning"; and we sent up specimens of our work to the great Exhibition that was held in London. Now there are certain toys made of horse-chestnuts of which I have held the patent all my life. So, as it was horse-chestnut time, I proposed that the Institute should send up specimens. It made me feel so young. Grubbing about under the trees, where the nuts lay half-hidden, half-rifled by the squirrels, to find those whose paler ovals suggested a face. Only that faint suggestion, a little wire, the petal of a flower, a half-dead leaf, almost any woodland rubbish which an eager eye and hand could gloatingly collect, made all that was required.

We sent up a splendid collection. A Friar Tuck, drinking from an acorn, jolly, rotund; an Esquimaux, ski-ing along on the dry pods of a runner bean, his furry coat of brown moss, his wire legs wrapped round with *puttees* of dead ribbon grass; and last, but not least, a magnificent set piece of "St. George and the Dragon". No one who has not personal experience knows the delight of making a dragon out of horse-chestnuts. The choosing of the nuts, the delicate grading of them from the uttermost tail through splay-footed legs till the narrow neck, where a carefully chosen yawning "*écorse*" forms the head, turned inside out, so that the spines are formidable teeth. A darning needle with a

rose-hip, bright-scarlet tinted, as tongue, a crest as your fancy takes you, and it only needs a twist or two to the long body to make it perfect. St. George is an easier task. Acorns make a cream-coloured, piebald horse—a wisp of dry grass the tail. The knight himself has choice of almost everything that grows for casque and shield. The lance, of course, headed by the biggest thorn to be found, is always ready.

Anyhow, the toys went up to London. The Queen stopped to laugh at them, and the judges awarded them first prizes for "Imagination and Workmanship". Now, as the judges were the first toy salesmen in Harrod's and Selfridge's, I think the Institute has every reason to be proud of the two gold medals that hang under my picture in the Institute rooms. Perhaps I also have some justification for conceit; it is something to be able to make toys at seventy-five.

But I was really occupied in trying to tabulate the changes in the outlook of womanhood. The observable phenomena were easily explained. What more natural than that employers should prefer to use feminine agency if it was at once cheaper and as efficient? It should not have been the latter, however, for approximately one-fourth of a woman's time must necessarily be on a lower level by reason of sexual divergencies. This fact is seldom emphasised as it should be, for it is absolutely and really true. A woman may be outwardly and apparently at her usual; but her pulse and the reactions of her nervous system show distinct differences. Temperamentally she is below—or above—her general level; and this should be allowed for by all employers of female labour. I do not think that men fail in like manner because of their sex; but I do not

know. That a very great deal of ill-feeling was caused by women retaining men's jobs is indubitable; but there was more at work than that in the problem of unemployment. In fact, no amount of selflessness on the women's part would have prevented the present terrible *impasse*, when we find ourselves with a million and a half, not only of unemployed men, but of men who, by no possibility, can ever be employed in this country.

But, for many years after the Armistice, both men and women were too hysterical to judge fairly of anything. They missed the excitement, and the outlook of commonplace life was distasteful to them. One can only speak truthfully of one's own actual personal experience. Before the war I used to boast, truthfully, that I had never had a servant give me warning; many I had dismissed as incapable or unsatisfactory, but they had stuck by me. But now, no mistress could have been more harassed than I was. We had had once more to give up our country house because the necessary men's wages were beyond our means. This time we migrated to Cheltenham, where my youngest grandson had won a scholarship. I could literally fill pages with the terrible experiences that beset my domestic arrangements there. I have been ballyragged by a would-be parlourmaid in the pantry, accused by a cook of intent to drug her with chloroform in the kitchen, held up to contumely on the stairs by a charwoman because I suggested Mansion House Polish. In thus suffering I fared no worse than most of the mistresses in Britain; perhaps, after long years of autocracy in India, I felt it more; also I resented it more; which of course was fatal. But I had not then, as I have now, learnt the lesson

most housekeepers have learnt, that is, to treat a breach of manners as if it had not taken place.

Nowadays, I am such a back-number that I feel I ought only to laugh when I see the plight to which the homes of Great Britain have fallen because of the deadly fear most mistresses have of their servants. Yet I cannot do it gracefully. When I see a girl scamping her work, to put on a fur coat, a cloche hat, silk stockings, high heels, drench herself with scent, and possibly poison herself with a lipstick, in order to spend hours at a cinema with a boy's arm round her waist, my heart burns within me, and, occasionally, almost before I know it, my lips speak. The poor soul is so ignorant of eternal values, so hopelessly deluded, that it seems unkind not to warn her as gently as you can. But this is a fatal habit of which I often wish I could rid myself. And yet, in the old Indian days, I have so often spoken kindly, openly, truthfully, to both women and men. In fact I used often to say that, provided I appealed to the highest in man or woman, there was no fear of a rebuff. But as the years passed after the war I could not help noticing the gradual growth—of—what was it? what is it? I do not know.

Possibly, probably, it was my fault. I have grown old, I have lost the power I once had of touching the right cord, of making the music of the spheres. Be that as it may, my life was still a full one, and the boys of my grandson's house at Cheltenham College did not seem to find me old. We had great fun; most of all over a little Greek play, which my grandson wrote, and which I, finding that the house were determined on producing it, determined should be a great success. How young I felt, even at seventy-six, as I stood perched upon a

rickety ladder trying to make a Greek façade out of black and white paper! And it was made, and called down rounds of applause. And the play was good, it was neat and witty, the plot had been well chosen, and by and by, perhaps, the young author will use it to better purpose; for it was short and left half its points unpunctuated.

When I remember my own youth, which was spent till I was thirty-two in silence as far as setting down my thoughts on paper was concerned, I have my hopes for his future, since, indubitably, the thoughts are there waiting to be expressed. What a curious thing is heredity! How it tricks you again and again; then suddenly blazes up—a real furious fire. I think, were the mass of the people to be informed of the danger of trying to grow figs on thistles, the Eugenic Society would have less difficulty in making its way. But here again I touch on the great question which, despite servants and Greek plays, was beginning to absorb most of such brain as I have.

I had, however, some leisure during the next four years. My husband's increasing dependence upon care prevented me from any real enterprise, but as there were no less than two Parliamentary elections during this time, to say nothing of one in Stroud, I had a good deal of speaking to do, especially to women, for, here again, I have always found my personality tell. Indeed, I shall never forget the reception accorded to me by an audience of fifteen hundred women in the Theatre Royal. Absolutely, it was five minutes before I could say a word.

I remember going home so dejected. I felt, as I have so often felt in my life, that I was not utilising myself

as I should. There can be no question of the influence I can exert. What have I done with it? Very, very little. Is it conceited of me to put this down on paper? I think not. It has been so evident, all my life, that I was gifted at my birth with unusual —what shall I call it—charm, vigour, personality, influence, something at any rate which was meant to be useful. So, now that I approach my eighty-third year, there is surely no harm in recognising that I have horribly misused the gift I was given.

Speaking in public is a delightful occupation, and though I have spoken often and at rather rowdy meetings, I have never yet been rudely interrupted; I think because I have a keen sense of humour. I remember once, during election time, having to speak after frightful interruptions from one man, whom I diagnosed as an ardent Welshman. Now, I generally begin by waving the British flag; but this time when I spoke of Britain I added, "and gallant little Wales, Mr. Jones! we mustn't forget gallant little Wales, must we?" It brought down the house. Mr. Jones—I had overheard the name from a comrade who had attempted to quiet him—got up and waved his hands at me. It was really very funny, and shows how slight a thing man is. Not only will "raisin' kill him", but the poorest joke will restore good humour. But I think that of all the wisdom which has come to me, or which I think has come to me during my long life, this is the most indubitable. Average humanity does not reason; it feels. Here again I am not blaming; I am simply stating a fact. Just as in India the intricacies of our laws have done much to alienate the mass of the people, so here, in Britain, the mass of the people do not, can not understand much

of our legislation. Take the Derating Bill, for instance. How many of the electors who will have on its merits or demerits—for it will be the deciding factor—to choose their representative will understand its bearings? Judging by what I hear among educated people—very few. * * *

CHAPTER XVII

(Then the record ends abruptly, and I add this final chapter to my mother's book.—M.H.W.)

Soon after this my father died. Under a very quiet and completely kindly and considerate exterior was the keenest wit, the most penetrating humour and insight. To him my mother was the one entirely right thing in this world, and the loss to her of this background to all her life and activity was immense.

She stayed on at Cheltenham, where her grandson was still at the College. Then came a glorious tour in the Italian Lakes and Venice with my mother, the youngest of us, filling her sketch book with the most delightful things.

Then—my husband retiring from India—she and we settled in one of the most beautiful corners of the Cotswolds. There she wrote *The Builder*, this finishing her series of historical romances of the Moghul Emperors.

Of these she writes :

"This book finishes one of the finest chapters in the history of the world, the record of the reigns of the four great Moghul Emperors of India. I have attempted to portray the men themselves and their times, first in *King Errant*, which shows Baber the Knight Errant; secondly, in a *Prince of Dreamers*, which shows Akbar

the great Dreamer; thirdly, in *Mistress of Men*, which gives Jehangir, the Compleat Lover, and finally, in the *Builder*, Shah Jehan the Magnificent, how he, perhaps the ablest monarch of them all, failed to keep what he had inherited from his forbears. Thus my task is finished, the story is told."

When this was written my mother turned to a subject on which she had thought much, and she determined to illustrate in the form of a novel on modern life some of her conclusions on the "Curse of Eve"—over-sexed womanhood tempting man as in the old Genesis story.

These are some of her notes—intended for incorporation in her memoirs.

"I remember one day going up to speak at some function in London. My train was halted on a viaduct outside the city. Below me lay mean streets, dull, interminable. I could see no hint of higher things far as the eye could reach. But they were crammed, literally bubbling over, with children of all sorts and sizes. I suppose it was the dinner interval. Anyhow, the overpopulation of the world came home to me as it never had before.

"The train stopped for perhaps five minutes. In our tangled ways of civilisation some signal had possibly gone wrong. But five minutes was enough. *I saw.*

"For years I had pondered over the 'Curse of Eve'. Now, for the first time, the relevancy of the words, 'I will greatly multiply thy conception', became apparent. Alone among animals mankind is the victim of sex. It claims them always, and holds them at all times prisoners in its power.

"For days, weeks, months, our humbler fellow-

mortals live together peacefully, male and female, undisturbed, forgetful of the dread heirloom of the immortality of the race of which they are the transient possessors, and then, simply, unconsciously, as seed-time and harvest come to the green things and herbs of the field in their season, so comes as simply, soberly, faithfully, seed-time and harvest to these, our fellow-mortals. They may be but unconscious puppets in the grip of the mighty creative force which uses them for its own ends, but at least they have not, as we have, broken loose from that control and found no other. How has this happened? Why, in all the records of primitive man, is there—as Sir James Frazer in the *Golden Bough* put it—'that deep ingrained dread', that belief that woman is held to be charged with a power dangerous to man? The supposition that the fall of man was the perversion of the seasonal racial instinct to that of an ever possible individual pleasure explains many things—this instinctive dread—in its innumerable manifestations, the sense of sin and shame, so foreign to the whole living world except ourselves.

"As the scientist Metchnikoff puts it, 'The sex functions in man are the greatest disharmony in nature'. Now the question is, can we get back and choose the right instead of the wrong way? Can woman find her lost reserve, and man his lost sense of fatherhood?

"At any rate, let humanity realise how far it has strayed. And when I came to think of the cause—the clue came suddenly in those idle words I have recorded elsewhere, 'The woman thou hast given me is as jealous as old boots'. That is the clue, 'jealousy', that unfailing attribute of sex, the male of the male, the female of the female; but in the animal world seasonal

as sex itself. In the desire to have and to hold, to keep the man from straying, the 'woman's desire was to her husband'—not seasonally but at all times. This may seem to some an idle clue; to others it may seem I have wasted my time, brought nothing worth having to the storehouse of the world, but for myself I have no alternative, what came to me must be given to the world, to the dustheap perhaps, but it will have been given."

These, my mother's last written words on this subject, show the importance she attached to the view that woman's jealousy was the primal cause of that disharmony of the racial instincts which is the root of so many of our social evils.

The *Curse of Eve* was finished in the spring of 1928. For a year my mother had been suffering from the result of a slight abrasion, which, extending its borders, gave her extreme pain and trouble, and for a time crippled her completely. Then suddenly came one of her crises, accesses of vitality, her indomitable will triumphed, and to the astonishment of her medical advisers she became perfectly well and whole. It was then she went to Jamaica to visit the family property, taking her youngest grandson with her. Jamaica welcomed her royally. She toured the island, enjoyed herself extraordinarily. On her return she wrote her experiences and views on the West Indies, and started an animated discussion in the Press, which has, I believe, been of distinct value in the cause of Empire Trade.

Then she began work on this *Garden of Fidelity*.

She became much interested in the modern conception of space and time, and read and re-read

Professor Eddington's last book. More than ever, she said, she felt the truth of Lewis Nettleship's words, "There is no room for death". A short time this spring she spent in her grandson's rooms in Oxford—reading daily at the Bodleian—"A most plucky attempt to keep term", wrote the President of his college. Then a reading party for him in Wales, where her old friends welcomed her to the beautiful hills and woods of her sometime Welsh home. There she passed her eighty-second birthday.

Then she turned from her *Garden of Fidelity* to a tale planned long ago, *The Gates of Pearl*, and while telling of those who sought them, suddenly and splendidly passed within them.

THE END

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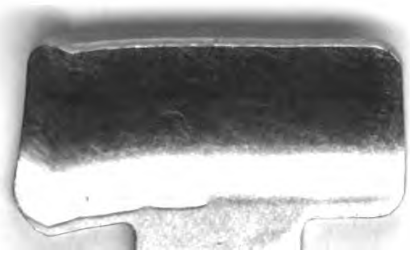
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