

# American Sahib



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JOHN FREDERICK MUEHL

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# Foreword

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IF I were to write a book about India . . . what would I say?

Would I discuss the politics and economics of the country? Would I choose and display one of the dozen arbitrary sets of figures and statistics which purport to disclose the condition of the people? Or would I write a novel, abstracting all of those intangible human factors which can be derived from every social equation?

Well, really, I haven't much the heart to do either, for in the first place, they've been done before and to little avail. But more than that, neither would adequately convey the specific knowledge which I absorbed from the British and Indians directly.

It's uncomfortable to know something inarticulately, to know it so intimately that you can't readily explain it. I'm a little embarrassed when my friends come to me and ask, "Can't you give us a true picture of the Indian situation?" No, I can't give them a "true picture of the Indian situation," at least not in a cryptic, quotable phrase. I do not know India as a glib generalization. I know it rather as the memory of a year of my life.

I sailed for India with the American Field Service, a volunteer ambulance corps attached to the British Army. I sailed for India as a curious American who had read just enough to be genuinely confused. "Cripps Offers Dominion Status to India" . . . "Churchill Expects to Hold His Own" . . . "Atlantic Charter Guarantees Freedom for All Peoples" . . . "Atlantic Charter Doesn't Apply to India."

Say, what in the hell is this all about? Have you asked that too? Then we have it in common. Just what in the hell is this all about? That is the blunt way of stating what I wanted to know. Statistics could never answer me

fully, nor could biased discussions by interested parties. But as I stepped ashore in Colombo, Ceylon, the answers began marching, wheeling, crawling around me.

"Personnel of the American Field Service are invited to a tea to be given at the Officers' Mess."

"American Sahib! American Sahib! Nay British Sahib! American Sahib!"

"I say, mate, could I bum a cigarette from you? Lumme, but that last month's pay went fast!"

"You say you're interested in the co-operative movement? I have some Indian friends you must meet!"

I found that I could associate with officers or ranks, British or Indian, high caste or low. I could travel the length and breadth of the country, with the blessing of the raj but without its stigma. I was a "pukah sahib" in the Poona Club, a tommy in the Lady Lumley Canteen, an American tourist in Gorpuri Bazaar, and simply a friend to Raman and Singh.

So how can I present "the true picture of India"? Can I abstract or distill what has become a part of me? Still there may be one way to convey what I have seen.

Here is my journal.



# I

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AS I sit here in the eyes of the ship, I scan the horizon for a glimpse of land. I know that none will appear for days, but when it does, I'll see it first. The sky is blue and the sea more calm now; we are riding along on gentle ground swells. We've lost our aerial convoy of albatross, and even the bosun birds are dropping behind with the fog.

We've jettisoned cargo in a hurricane at the Horn, and the sea is into our drinking water. The mate lost a finger in a slamming hatch, and most of us have been sick from rotten meat. But we're leaving the antarctic behind with the wake. Our bow is headed into tropical waters!

I do not know what this journal will become, or even if it will be diligently and regularly kept. But as I write this first entry, I do so in humility, conscious and frightened of what it begins. Perhaps I am foolish to be so solemn, so overweighed by my own introspections. Perhaps in a week I'll have forgotten this book and the serious intention which it represents. But perhaps, on the other hand, I'll not forget it. Perhaps it will become very important to me. And if it should, then it will eventually become the record of my worldly education. It will become the biography of a point of view, the thesis of a practical doctorate. It will become the log of my personality as it sails into unfamiliar water.

How many are the changes I must undergo to become a soldier in the Royal Indian Army! How great the transition in temperament and attitude! How staggering the assault already has been! But I am not simply concerned with the facts of this journey, with their diligent, earnest, exact recording. I am interested rather in my own reactions, in the sophistications which they will undergo.

To be truthful, I suppose that I am keeping this record partly in fear of what may happen to me, for I know that I am on the brink of a great experience, an experience which must reshape my whole way of thinking. I have much to learn, and to learn I must change, and yet in one sense I am afraid of that change. There are certain provincial values which I feel I must keep, certain standards which I am determined shall not be relinquished. So it is these which I guard by such a zealous introspection. It is these which impel such strict self-scrutiny.

"I, Walt Whitman, twenty-two years old . . ." I think I know exactly how he felt. I, John Muehl, in sound mind and body, do proclaim these principles which I hold inviolable: that men are to be treated as ends rather than as means, regardless of their race or the accidents of birth; that the "meaning of the universe" lies within the individual, and in his duty to find or create it; that the only "burden" which any man bears is the sacredness and dignity of all mankind; that my first allegiance is to these principles, and to the brotherhood of good men in every nation.

In all other things I am willing to change, but in these I must neither swerve nor weaken. My self-respect and my sanity depend on them. There is no alternative but degeneracy!

I was awakened this morning by the sounds of running, and by the jubilant shouting of deck hands and crewmen. I dressed in a hurry and ran to the rail, but for several minutes I saw nothing beyond the monotony of water ahead. Then finally a spot appeared in the distance, the land which the crow's nest had reported earlier, and it did not seem long till we were close enough to the shore to see the riot of its vegetation. A long sand spit sweeps out ahead, guarding the mouth of Mombasa Harbor. Black forms run up and down its beach, launching canoes and paddling furiously.

As we ease into the mouth of the shipping channel, some natives are riding in the wake of our ship. I have expected them to turn over momentarily in the froth, but they handle their outriggers with amazing skill. When the garbage was thrown over, the boatmen fought over floating tin cans and bits of ham rind. A few of the ship's company have begun throwing cigarettes, precipitating a general free-for-all below.

We're anchored and waiting for a pilot to board. I think I can see his launch approaching. It bears the maritime Union Jack, though it is little cleaner than the scavenger outriggers. The officer himself, if this he be, is precariously balanced on the rolling foredeck. His clothes are grimy and his face blue stubbled. He seems to be waving to the passengers by the rail. I should judge that this fellow was some derelict beachcomber if it were not for the official insignia surrounding him. But apparently he's actually a competent helmsman, responsible for the safety of this enormous floating investment.

The beggar boats have left the sides of our ship, only to be replaced by floating peddlers. Coconuts, bananas, and native cigarettes are passing across the gunwales in quantities. The latter seem to enjoy the most healthy trade. I suppose that our fellows are buying for the novelty. But I have noticed some packages labeled "Lucky Strike." Apparently we've been buying our own gifts back.

A China boat has just entered the harbor this morning, slow moving, soot blackened, and leaking oil. As she creaked to a stop a slick spread out across the water in every direction. Midships the deckhouse has been cut away, revealing ancient and laboring machinery where sweating coolies in oil-soaked loincloths scramble over dangerous moving parts. There is no modern system of communication, so officers simply shout above the racket. Hissing clouds of escaping steam frequently obscure al-

most half of the hull. The decking is matted with tangles of rope, slippery with a coating of oil scum and coal dust. Two mangy dogs stalk the deserted fo'castle, fighting with each other over scraps of food.

The *Shantung* is berthed between us and a "Dutchman," which latter seems considerably cleaner than our own ship. But the master of the Dutchman has protested the position, insisting that the newcomer is a menace to the harbor. The master apparently has won his point, for he is swinging away from the shabby China boat. With a powerful blast of twin stern screws his boat is flipping her skirts at the offensive one.

We have been anchored here for twenty-four hours, in the crowded waterways of the harbor itself. The ships are jammed in like hats in some checkroom, with barely enough room to swing with the tide. But we were put ashore yesterday for a twelve-hour liberty, each bearing a shore pass that lasted till midnight. The majority of the passengers made straight for the cafés, but I set out on a quest for ice cream.

I met two young Australian officers on a bus where I learned to my embarrassment that I did not have fare. I had quite forgotten that the American greenback is not the universal medium of exchange. But they paid for my ride and took me in hand, correctly supposing that I needed some help. And though we changed twenty dollars' worth of traveler's checks, they refused to let me spend a penny. We proceeded first to the Officers' Club, where they kept gin and limes almost constantly before me. But since they drank considerably more than I did, they soon began to mutter about the "Goddamned British." The Englishmen present were quite indulgent, laughing at the Aussies' indignant charges. And finally, when the two were far gone with their liquor, a major helped me load them into a cab.

I returned to talk with the major and his party, all of them permanently stationed in Kenya. They were hard-

drinking men of a bitter turn of mind, typical of the real colonial officer.

As one of them explained to me himself, "It's the bastard sons that ship off to the colonies. If you're the black sheep of some prominent and wealthy family, or the illegitimate son of an earl and a chambermaid, or if you simply can't make a go of it at home, then you drink yourself to death in British Siberia." I didn't ask my friend which description was his, but I'd bet that he's either the black sheep or the bastard. Any man who possesses such remarkable insight could "make a go" in any country.

We talked on all sorts of trivial subjects, chiefly women. The major remarked, "This climate is so bad that you haven't the energy to do more than talk." A few girls were seated at an adjoining table, and though homely they were surrounded by a host of men. The competitors were out-bidding each other in drinks and we all agreed that it was a "seller's market."

I picked up a newspaper upon leaving the club, just to see what made news in Kenya colony. The headline told of the mauling of a party of natives by a lion which had crept into town during the night. An editorial lamented the deaths in passing, but it derived all its meaning from the sagacious observation that "it might have been whites instead of these natives."

I want to visit the native section, but I have been warned not to go there after dark. It appears that the black men resent white visitors and "it's hard to tell what they're liable to do." I questioned the policeman who told me this, since I was surprised that such a primitive situation could exist. But he seemed to find nothing unusual about it and was, in fact, so uncomprehending as to be unable to answer my simplest questions.

"Are they allowed in this section after dark," I asked, "or is the resentment more or less reciprocal?"

The policeman laughed. "If they're here without a good reason, we shoot them first and ask questions later." I



asked what constituted a "good reason" in this sense, but the fellow admitted that he could not think of one. "But if they're alone, sir, and not attending a European, then it's safe to assume that they're up to some mischief."

I am becoming accustomed to the caste system already, though it will be several weeks before we land in India. For on the corners there is frequently a row of urinals, quite open to the public, but marked with dignity. On the right the sign reads, "For Asiatics Only." On the left the card says, "For Africans Only." Resplendent in the center is a much larger legend, written in three scripts, "For Europeans Only." I was surprised to find that this latter was not gilded, and I wondered what would happen if some mistake were made. Apparently we are not only of superior blood, but of genuinely superior urine as well!

This evening I entered a shabby restaurant that is tucked away on a Mombasa side street. The front was open and the floor was of dirt; flies and black beetles circled the naked light bulbs. The proprietor sat leaning on a rusty cash register, grinning foolishly as if partially drunk. His clothes were stained with grease and sweat. He seemed not to have shaved for a matter of weeks.

I stared for a moment at the disorder and filth, then I turned around, intending to leave. But my host had jumped down from his stool perch and had run to the door to block my path. "'Ere, guv'ner," he chirped in a cockney accent, "does something seem to be unsatisfactory?"

I answered bluntly, "This place is filthy," unaccountably angry with the grinning little man.

"Oh, I wouldn't say that, sir," he whined sarcastically, "though it ain't the same as Blighty or America. The kitchen is really surprisingly clean, and after all, that's all that counts. Why, you know, I just leave the front lookin' like this to preserve the original atmosphere."

I wanted to ask whether the filthy clothes were also just props which he wore for effect, but I was tired and hardly in a mood to argue. More in despair and fatigue than in agreement, I sank down into a near-by chair. My host clapped his hands in a businesslike way and an enormous black fellow padded out from the kitchen. He was dressed in a long white cotton nightgown that dragged the floor with its dirty hem. As he approached, the gown flapped back and forth, revealing a pair of great calloused feet. He wore an expression of abject servility, which found agreement in the ugly functionality of his dress. But the most startling thing was the sign which he wore, hung from his neck on a dirty cord. For this surely revealed his status in life. The sign read simply, "Boy Number 5."

He handed me a menu with a questioning grunt. I assumed that he wanted to take my order. The square piece of cardboard was greasy and gray, and I handled it gingerly, avoiding the worst spots. Boy Number 5 stared off into space, absent-mindedly scratching his buttocks. I felt less like eating than like disgorging all I had eaten in the last three days aboard the ship. But after a moment I ordered ham and eggs, handing the menu back toward the waiter. He seemed puzzled as I did so and only stared rather blankly, so I loudly repeated the order again. Finally he took the menu from my hand and placed his thumb under "Fish and chips." I took the menu roughly from him and pointed to the line that read, "Ham and eggs." Apparently this was exactly what he wanted, for he carefully substituted his finger for mine. The proprietor slipped quietly into the kitchen, anxious to conceal his second status as cook.

As I waited for the meal I could hear the sounds of squealing and scratching between the walls. The plaster was cracked and the laths were broken; rats apparently were nesting behind them. Over two or three of the most serious breaks, old pictures of the royal family were hung askew. King Edward VII was about a foot off the floor,

while the Queen Mother balanced above, at a precarious angle. The pictures were held with large spikes and twine. The monsoon rains had come in upon them; George V was stained almost beyond recognition, while Wellington was curling out of his frame. As I lifted my sleeve from the wooden table it adhered to a spot of chocolate or fat. I shifted uneasily in the wicker chair, verifying my suspicion that it too was dirty.

Finally Boy Number 5 returned, bearing cold ham and eggs on a metal tray. I pushed the food back and forth on the plate. I toyed with it but I could not even taste it. The cockney was obviously displeased with this, but he pretended not to notice when I made ready to pay. On my way through the streets I stopped a fruit vendor and bought a banana, which I peeled with relish.

Suddenly today the reality has struck me: I am actually here, in Africa! Byron Kelly and I started early this morning to see the countryside on rented bicycles. Unfortunately, I picked up a nail in my tire, but that happened quite late this afternoon. Before that time we had managed to cover most of the outlying beach and jungle. It was a tremendous thrill, when we crossed Nayali Bridge, to see how the foliage presses in on the town. Only by cutting and blasting at the stumps have the natives thrown back its tropical assault. Byron called my attention to a sign which read, "Travelers not permitted on this road at night." The reason for this was plan to see, since "darkest Africa" began at the bridge. As the road wound on, the heavier thicket gave way to a parched and rolling plain. The land was dry and the road was dusty, so it was not very long till we were caked with dirt. After about five miles of hard and steady riding Byron suggested that we cut in toward the ocean, for a look at the surf and perhaps for a dip. I needed no urging on this account, since the dirt and the heat had softened my resistance. As we wheeled between two coconut palms the blinding white sand of the beach appeared.

A reef formed a small lagoon before us, the perfect setting for our afternoon swim. Neither Byron nor I had brought a suit, and we hoped that the beach would be deserted. As far as we could see in either direction, the sand was dotted only with driftwood. Byron hung his clothes on the frame of his cycle and I followed suit just as quickly as I could. Together we ran splashing into the water toward the gentle waves that rolled over the reef. For more than an hour we lolled about, alternately soaking and sunning ourselves. During one interval Kelly taught me several ballet movements, which we practiced up and down the sand.

I have never before felt so completely free as I did on the beach this afternoon. After months aboard ship, cramped and confined, I could run about as I wished. The shore curved outward in either direction, fading with a suggestion of infinite extension. And in the warm soft sand I finally managed to shake the sense of the responsibility of these last few years. Now I have broken completely from my textbooks! Now the professors are nothing but memory!

I was finally jarred back to the world of reality by Byron's insistence that we were getting very red. I crawled into my shirt and trousers, which by now had almost completely dried in the sun. I suggested that we cycle down the beach a way, rather than returning to the road and its dust, and though at first the idea proved rather impractical, we found that the sand by the water was firm. If we steered just a little too far to the right we would bog down in the wet and sticky places, and if we steered too far in the opposite direction we were dragged to a stop in a soft, dry powder. But there was one path, neither too wet nor too dry, where the bicycles pedaled without too much trouble. Following the twisting and curving shore line, we rode along for several miles.

At length a rock wall rose up in front of us, jutting obliquely to cut off the beach. I suggested that we try to wade around it and pick up our trail on the other side.

But unfortunately there was no "other side," since the cliff replaced the beach for several miles. Still, assuming that it was only a matter of yards, we set out with determination and rolled pant legs. The footing was sharp and treacherous in places, covered with slime and dipping suddenly. In spite of all this, we continued for an hour, sure every moment that we were just about through. At first we had carried the bicycles out of the water, being careful to keep the sprockets dry. But gradually our unselfish concern diminished, till at last we were riding over the rougher terrain. When we reached an unattended lighthouse, standing alone on top of a rise, I decided to climb aloft to its tower to survey the situation before us. I reported the dismal truth to Kelly, and he insisted that he would remain where he was indefinitely, for neither of us had the strength to start backtracking at once over those same monotonous obstacles which we had just overcome. Yet actually we were aware that we could not remain, in spite of our genuine inclination to do so. Already the sun was sinking in the sky, reminding us that it would soon grow dark. As we sat there pondering the seriousness of our plight, a native boy poled by in his dugout canoe. Byron jumped to his feet at the sight, to call and wave to attract his attention. Quickly the dugout headed in toward shore, and Byron turned with a sigh of relief. "We'll hire him to take us back to the beach, and from there we can ride back the way we came." I insisted that the canoe would not hold our cycles, and I laughed when Byron declared that it would. But since I had no better plan, I watched in amusement while Kelly bargained. The boy saw the inherent ridiculousness of our position and understood at once what was wanted of him. At this I took heart and joined the discussion, arguing shrewdly with fingers and gesture. I offered the shilling that was left in my pocket, suddenly realizing that it was all we had. But the youngster stubbornly shook his head, aware that our bargaining position was weak. When I explained that this was

our total asset, the boy pretended not to understand. In despair Byron drew an American quarter from his pocket and offered it too, in feigned indignation. The boy examined the coin very carefully, then looked up at Byron, overwhelmed with gratitude. "Amer-ee-can?" he asked in awe. Kelly pointed gravely to the "E Pluribus Unum." "Amer-ee-can," he said, imitating the accent, "and worth just the same as the shilling you refused." I recoiled instinctively as he said this last, unable to realize fully that the boy could not understand. But Kelly winked and said with a grin, "Now you are my witness that I've told the truth." Yet as Byron was literally telling the truth, he was making expansive, full-arm gestures, suggestive of the store of gold at Fort Knox or at least of the J. P. Morgan estate. Without any further hesitation our cycles were slung across the craft, while Byron and I crouched at either end, blinking and wondering if we had acted wisely. With a thrust of a pole we left the shore, skimming out over the gently lapping waves. Our craft settled awfully low in the water, so low that even its owner seemed worried. Byron and I were apprehensive, and we stared at each other for mutual support. Then suddenly the humor of our position struck us and we began to laugh at this strange situation. "A year from now," I said to Byron, "this whole afternoon will seem like a dream. And already I'm pinching myself to make sure that it's not—the whole idea seems so impossible." We laughed again, and the boy seemed surprised. He turned with a grin and said, rather happily, "Amer-ee-can!"

## II

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I HAVE always been told that the slave ship was a thing of the past, but with God as my witness, I'm on one now! Below me in the holds is a human cargo of fifteen thousand East African troops, black Swahili tribesmen out of the jungles of Kenya, with rings in their noses and ornamental scars covering their bodies. There are limping old men and rickety young boys, stumbling cripples and the withered, scrofulous sick, bulk manpower in its crudest and most readily expendable forms. They are aboriginal and untrained, barefooted and seminaked, equipped haphazardly with knives, obsolete rifles, and regimental campaign hats. But around the neck of each of the troops, suspended on a piece of dirty string, hangs the proud insignia which bears a legend of His Majesty's Royal East African Rifles.

For three days they waited beside the ship to board, confused and overlooked, herded together into a tight, guarded square. For three days they stood unshaded and blistering, mumbling thickly to each other and milling around. For three nights His Majesty's Royal East African Rifles have slept in shifts beside the ship, shivering and coughing in the dampness of the docks, gazing mournfully back toward the brush fires along the shore.

Finally today the Swahili were loaded, with such pointless haste and cruel unconcern that legs were broken and heads split open. They were loaded by ladder and they were loaded by crane. They were poured into the hold like some bulky, inanimate cargo. By nature the process was brutal enough; but by choice it was made even more inhuman. On the forward deck the loading had been mechanized, to maximize speed and to minimize trouble. A group of blacks, ranging from ten to thirty, was herded

onto a loading net which was attached by a cable to the power boom. With a jerk the net was swung into the air and down across the deck to an open hatch. Through this hole it would plunge with the speed of a fall, to be checked just a few feet from the bottom of the ship. But occasionally a boom would swing too far and dash its load against the deck machinery. The black men would scream and reach through the netting in a futile effort to avoid the crash. Whenever this happened a ripple of laughter would rise from the tommies who lined the railing. Frequently I could hear individual cries of "Lumme, what a crack he give 'em!" or "Hit em again, Alf, there's one beggar on this side is still alive." The waiting troopers fidgeted in terror as their turns approached by agonizing degrees. A few, less timid, peered into the hold where the injured were frequently dragged from the nets so that they would not delay the loading operations.

On the afterdeck another group swarmed aboard the ship over an improvised gangplank. They were prodded along in threes and fours, then divided to descend by a number of ladders. Even for the normally agile Swahili these strange new obstacles presented problems of adaptation, but no hesitation or caution was permitted. A delay was simply a sign of stubbornness and was treated as such by the tommies in charge. As each Swahili hurried down the ladder he was slapped on the back by a counter at the top. For a while this progressed in excellent humor, with the troops making a game of it. They dodged the routine slap which the counter aimed and feigned great pain if a blow chanced to land. They were like children at a slide, laughing and pushing, eager to outdo each other in pantomime and mimicry. But the work of the counters was nervous and irritating; the friendly play began to grow serious and slowly took on a vicious aspect.

The tommies began to develop a rivalry; their slaps grew harder and then became shoves. A few of the troops slipped and stumbled. Finally one fell to the deck below.



For a while this sobered the gleeful sergeants, but their hilarity returned as the hours wore on. Bored with their seemingly endless jobs, they vented their anger and tedium upon the black men. Often, as one was descending the ladder, a hobnailed boot would push him from above. He would plunge down on those below, carrying them all to the iron deck. If one of these victims dared look upward and curse, another Swahili might be hurled down at him. At least a dozen times this happened, and in more than one case the men were injured. On my way to the mess for afternoon tea I passed the lower end of these ladders. As I suspected, the treads were spattered with blood and a few little drops had stained the deck.

This evening the Swahili grew reluctant to descend, and a few of them hung warily back from the ladders. Their sergeant barked an angry order, but still the line refused to move. The other counters drew their lines to a halt, and attention was focused upon the frightened mutineers. I knew what must happen and I wanted to turn away, but somehow I felt unable to move. The sergeant in charge moved slowly toward the men and halted in front of the nearest one. For a moment he glared upward in hatred and disgust, into a sweaty black face that stared rigidly over his head. Then suddenly he struck, hard, and with a closed fist. The victim managed to ride the blow; he remained on his feet, swaying a little. As the sergeant deliberately set himself for the second punch, the frightened black man was breathing heavily and bleeding profusely from the nose and mouth. He looked fearfully out of the corners of his eyes and twisted a grimy hand into his dirty loincloth. As the sergeant swung he groaned rather softly, but he made no move to avoid the fist. He fell, barely conscious, to the deck, where he lay till dragged out of the way so that the loading could proceed.

The steward has just come into the cabin to introduce himself and to bring tomorrow's dinner menu. "Skinner, sir. If there's anything you want, just be sure to ask me for

it." My quarters are wonderfully cool and roomy, like those of a first-class passage on a luxury cruise. To judge from just a glance at the menu, messing arrangements must be equally agreeable. Lobster cocktail, consommé, roast beef au jus, vegetable salad, chocolate mousse, and tea or coffee. I have learned from Skinner that there are facilities aboard for a daily bath in fresh water. I'm very pleased, since I expect to make good use of the shuffleboard and deck tennis courts on the sun deck above!

The troop officers came aboard last night, and I had a good opportunity to meet them at dinner. They are good-looking fellows from Oxford and Cambridge, who can talk quite as easily about Whitehead or Spencer as about their recent Ethiopian campaigns. A few of them seem rather cocky and supercilious, and I have a feeling that they are only playing a part. But they are personable and charming, one and all, and most of them don't take themselves as seriously as they pretend. They are given to a rather bitter and caustic wit, but they respect the opponent who can accept their challenge. It seems to be more of a conversational manner than any genuine antagonism or disrespect. I am amazed at the extent to which they fit the stereotyped idea of the British colonial officer. It is almost as if they were making an effort. And now that I think of it, I suppose they are.

I managed to get acquainted with Pierce and Richards over several bottles of South African wine. Pierce is inclined toward habitual overstatement, whether talking about the conquest of an Italian garrison or about the equally important conquest of a naïve Welsh milkmaid. All of the others have warned me against him, ostensibly out of fear that I'll be taken in. But I think that in reality they simply enjoy playing their parts as much as they enjoy watching Pierce play his. Last night's conversation ran to hunting experiences, and Pierce was able to hit his stride. He told of hunting antelope from the back of a

horse, armed with only a six-inch skinning knife. The object, it seemed, was to drop on the antelope and stab it to death before it could reciprocate. When I professed disbelief Pierce pronounced, with a crestfallen expression, "Oh, look here now! Someone's been talking to you about me."

The ship is still lying motionless at the docks, though we have all been aboard for quite a while. We've taken no more cargo on, but I cannot forget the black men in the hold. Even if the the foul odor did not rise to remind me, I am sure that I would continue to brood over them. When the tribesmen boarded their food came with them, carts full of bitter and rotting squashes. I asked Dr. Marlowe, a medical officer, if they could live on that without physical harm. He dodged the issue, intentionally, I suspect, by assuring me that they have little more in the jungle. That is easy to believe when you look at their bodies, but somehow I cannot be satisfied with the answer. I am not sure whether it is a proof of justice, or simply a proof of greater injustice.

Now that I think of it, it is not this callousness or conscious cruelty that bothers me most. I have often been angry and unreasonable myself. I have been cruel and selfish on too many occasions. Yes, I can understand brutality, and I can understand calculating selfishness. Unfortunately, I can understand too well most of the baser motives that undermine the dignity of man. But I can argue against these, I can argue effectively, because they are essentially departures from a moral norm. There is nothing in them to undermine my idealism, for they are exceptional rather than characteristic states of mind. But in the loading of these black men there was something worse, something more terrifying than simple hatred or brutality. Worse than the counters, worse than their officers, worse than any emotion or profitable evil, were the tommies who lined the railing and laughed, simply be-

cause they could imagine no other response. This was no momentary assertion of the will. It was not the outbreak of uncontrollable emotion. It was rather a simple and utter detachment, a sheer and awful lack of concern. On this boat with me there are men who can look at other men and yet can somehow fail to see them as such. On this boat there are good-natured, smiling tommies who can watch another human's pain, and laugh.

I am puzzled and confused by what I have seen. I am angry because I don't know how to feel. After watching their treatment of the Swahili below, I want to hate the tommies who are responsible. And yet I cannot bring myself to it, for they are all, individually, likable men. Sergeant Gelston has just shown me a picture of his wife, a typical homely Englishwoman. Their "kiddie," as he calls him, was there by her side, hiding in her skirt from the cameraman. What can I think of a man like this, gentle and friendly, a little too respectful, who can suddenly become hard and unbelievably cruel with these helpless black men in the hold below? What am I to say when he turns from mistreating them to talk quietly with me of his home in "Blighty," of his family there, and their little plot of ground? As he thumbed through his wallet to show me the pictures, I noticed that his thumb was stained with blood. Perhaps he cut himself shaving this morning, but it is just as probable that this was black blood. Gelston is symbolic of all his fellows, for they are all the same strange paradox. Their humor is homely, their jokes are pleasant, and they are all rather quietly amusing among themselves. The red-headed sergeant who struck the mutineer lends out his pay as fast as he draws it. And the little cockney whom I recognize as one of the counters serenades us each evening with a squeaky but well-meaning concertina. I should be happy, I suppose, to see them so, but I feel immeasurably more bitter than I did before. The counters and the sergeants were out of a nightmare, evil men who enjoyed their brutality; they were few, and again, exceptional cases. But the

world is full of generous redheads and of happy cockneys with concertinas. If I tried to hate these men and their kind, I would finish by hating everyone about me. Here is a riddle which has occurred to me in my present disillusioned state of mind: If a generous redhead is a brutal bully, and a cockney with a grin is a sadistic beast, then how far is it from London to Nurenburg, and what is the difference between a concertina and a cat-o'-nine-tails?

I talked at length with Richards this afternoon and I think I've found a kindred spirit. I learned that he was preparing for the Anglican priesthood when the war interrupted his studies at Christ College. He's a handsome, hawk-nosed British prototype, with an easy, well-bred, yet earnest manner. He is commanding East African troops for the present, but he hates his assignment and hopes for another. I don't think he's talked about this with the others, for he fell upon me like a long lost brother. I asked him why he wanted a change and he simply stared at me, too bewildered to answer. "My God!" he managed to say at last. "Do you mean to say that you can't understand?" This was the first healthy reaction I'd seen in days and it cheered me more than I was able to say. I knew at that moment that Richards and I would understand each other and perhaps be good friends.

"Why are you going into the Anglican Church?" I asked, trespassing on our immediate affinity. Richards was silent in thought for so long that I eventually began to fear that I shouldn't have asked. At last he answered in a tired voice, seeming barely to believe what he said, "Being British, I believe in Britain. I believe, that is, in what it can be. In the past our contribution was very great, greater perhaps than many realize. At that time our people had faith in themselves, in their morality and decency, as well as in their power. Perhaps the Empire, then as now, bled more from others than it was actually worth. But you see, we didn't feel that it did, and we didn't feel called upon to

justify ourselves." Here he looked directly at me, and continued without averting his gaze. "Now, I'm afraid, the situation is different. We're clinging to others and dragging them back. And we know that you can't keep a man in a ditch without being in the ditch yourself. There is where the damage is done—to the individual Briton, I mean! He's been forced into that damned Continental belief that you can't expect unselfishness from a man. Gradually, you see, we are poisoning ourselves, destroying our self-respect as a nation. We reason that empires are by nature amoral, and that this absolves any guilt that might naturally attach to the individual. We insist that we are caught in a web of circumstance, and we are, but the web is of our own making. This fatalistic line that we've adopted from Europe is the cleverest refuge of a weak society, of a society which knows what should be done, but which also knows that it will hurt to do it." I stood aghast at the frankness of the speech, conscious that I would be stoned for repeating it at home. "Great Britain must be brought back to her senses," Richards continued, "and that, I feel, is the job of the church. Her hands must be pried loose from their grip on the past, so that she will be able to do her part in the future." It has been quite a while since I have heard anything like this, and I was almost embarrassed by the idealism of it. I am afraid that Richards may already regret the candor and confidence which I so deeply appreciate. I tried to express my feelings to him, but I know that I only managed to confuse them. "I can understand and sympathize with your desire," I said. "This sort of self-scrutiny is awfully hard."

When it grew dark this evening a few of the Swahili were allowed up on C Deck to spend the night. There they stretched out on the rough wood planking in crowded rows of ten and twelve. I knew nothing about the plan till a few moments ago, when I literally stumbled upon it in the darkness, stepping on a number of hands and feet, and

probably kicking some skulls into the bargain. But by the time I realized my unfortunate position, I was virtually in the middle of the sprawling group. I stood still in horror for several minutes, having found the requisite square foot of space. Whenever I tried to work my way out, I was paralyzed by some coarse aboriginal oath. I tried to restore my failing confidence with a few sharp words of command to the tribesmen. Immediately I was struck by the shameful contrast between the sound of my voice and the hoarse, rude response. I was grateful to the men for totally ignoring me, since I could not even imagine any positive response. I remained quiet for several minutes longer, emotionally committed to waiting here for dawn. But gradually a tingling in my legs reminded me that actually this was quite impossible. So once again I began moving delicately. But delicacy in the dark is difficult to achieve, and once more I stepped incautiously. This time a hand reached out for my leg, feeling it for a moment as if in identification. My greatest fear, in that breathless moment, was that I might be taken for one of the troops, in which case I might be dragged from my feet and beaten insensible for my ambulatory indiscretions. Finally the grip was grudgingly relaxed; my leggings and boots had made an impression. I moved gingerly forward with increased confidence, till once again I encountered a "natural" barrier. This time the hand did not hesitate or feel, but struck out at my leg with a vicious swipe. Somehow I could not utter a word, and the newly acquired self-assurance dropped from me like a cloak. More than anything else in the world at that moment I wanted to be able to say in Swahili, "Please, fellows, let me out of here. All I want is to get out of your way." But instead I employed the only word I knew, "*Djombo*," meaning, prosaically enough, "Hello." Though my English commands did not establish my identity, my misuse and mispronunciation of Swahili did. With a roar of laughter, one fellow arose and led me quickly through the mob. As I got to the edge I retreated

with thanks, but my guide simply called after me, "*Djombo!*"

This is to be our last night in port, according to the latest "latrine communiqué." We've had more than our share of shipboard rumors, but somehow I feel sure that this is not another. The gun crews have been greasing and limbering their weapons, which is generally one of the final preparations, and the intraship communication system has been buzzing and crackling since early morning. Above, in the saloon, Anglican padres are intoning the usual prayers for safe passage. After two months at sea I know them by heart, so I think I'll forgo the ritual tonight.

Somehow the Swahili have sensed the truth, even in spite of their language barrier. They too have noticed the increased tempo, the running feet, and the continuous piping. They are squatted together on C Deck aft, as many as could crowd up out of the hold. They look mournfully back toward their African shore line, swaying slowly together as they chant their sorrow. The sound has grown louder by imperceptible degrees, from a steady hum to an undulating roar. The tone has been taken up from the shore, presumably as a tribal lament at parting. It has been dark for an hour, but the beach is aglow with a hundred blazing driftwood fires. The glare reflects from sweaty black bodies, glinting and dancing with their primitive rhythms. The fervor has worked its way down into the holds; the hollow sound comes echoing up. All subtlety is gone from the chant by now; it shakes the ship in monotonous vibrations.

The discipline of the men is visibly cracked, and some of the officers have come out of their midst. I ventured below a while ago, but I was drawn back by the gentle hand of Colonel Weatherbee. For a while the junior officers worked feverishly, trying to quell the primitive rebellion, barking commands and seeking leaders, threatening and striking with their swagger sticks. But the troops



looked blankly back at their lieutenants, humming through lips that were sealed and impassive. No one could possibly be singled out, and you can't discipline fifteen thousand men.

The chant at last has passed its peak; it is growing softer and more slow. Even the brush fires that were licking at overhanging branches are dying now, to glow as embers. The families that built them are leaving together, trekking homeward in silhouette, as the officers have begun filtering back among their men, conspicuously bearing loaded side arms.

I was awakened this morning at seven o'clock by a gentle but persistent rolling of the ship. As soon as I was dressed I went out on deck, hoping to catch one last look at Africa. But over the stern I saw only the whitecaps, and one of our sailors kidded me gently. "You'll have to get up much earlier than this, sir, if you want to see this ship leave port. But you didn't miss much, I can tell you that. It was still quite dark when we got under way." I protested that I did not feel cheated and that I quite understood the necessity for secrecy. But as a matter of fact, I wish I'd been awake, and I'm tempted to curse this fetish security. I have still not become accustomed to the sailing of a ship as large as this. Tied as they are to the pier for days, their departure is always inexplicably surprising. It's almost like watching the Statler break loose from the pavement and go coasting down Washington Boulevard.

The *Strathaird* is a luxury ship, built for comfort and equipped with every tourist convenience. When it was converted to military use, only the holds were materially affected. A Deck is still reminiscent of the past, with air-cooled staterooms and paneled saloons. As flagship of the Peninsular and Orient Lines, she catered to the regular commerce of the Empire, and her bars still feature the legendary "gin and lime." Goan waiters hover, at the beck and call of a clientele now dressed in khaki, and the stew-

ards are just as attentive as ever to the needs and whims of the pukah sahib. I find this attention rather embarrassing, since the tips and charges will keep me quite poor.

There is one steward in charge of bathing facilities, another in charge of the wine in the mess. Two serve as waiters, bringing the food, and the headwaiter superintends them all. Richards has offered me one of his Swahili to act as my bearer for the remainder of the trip. When he noticed my instinctive unwillingness to accept he assured me that I would be doing the native a favor, since as my bearer he would be fed and billeted better than if he remained in the hold below. I have since learned that he would sleep on the floor of my cabin, and I have refused Richards' offer, partly on this account. I have tried not to think of conditions below, and this would bring a constant reminder to my cabin.

In spite of their genuinely disdainful attitude, the officers are generally much kinder than the sergeants in their treatment of the Swahili soldiers and bearers. Though they don't take them seriously or treat them as individuals, they are more often amused than angered with the troops. They joke like a patronizing plantation owner, to be sure, but they joke more often than they strike the men. But with most of the tommies, all this is different. They are brutal to a purpose, intentionally, sadistically. I often suspect some sexual motive, a sublimation in cruelty and violence. Gelston and his fellows have been out here too long, some of them as long as fifteen years. Their normal channels of social expression have been denied and stifled till they have been replaced by others. Every last one of them is a case for psychiatry, and in a way their officers fill the bill.

Williams everlastingly talks about the tommy as if he were a race apart from his officers. He discusses the "psychology of the ranks" unblushingly, delving into the causes and explanations. He is like a scientist discussing the behavior of white rats, trying to catalogue their instincts by observation. At first I thought this was just a prejudice, a

form of snobbishness and class rationalization. But I must confess that his morbid and unpleasant approach checks far better with the facts than my unbridled idealism. Williams can predict, with amazing accuracy, the reactions, attitudes, and wants of his men, often before the tommies themselves. He understands their biases, the blind spots in their thinking: he knows when to expect the unexpected. Without knowing much about Adler or Freud, Williams has learned to deal with mass neurosis. He has learned to cope with frustration and bitterness, to expect and understand them in the make-up of his men.

"The psychology of the ranks," he is quick to announce, "is quite unlike anything else in the world. If you take a fishmonger from London or Liverpool and dress him in the uniform of the Coldstream Guards, you've got a greatly changed individual. From nowhere he acquires self-respect and identity as a part of something quite glorious. He changes from a snotty-nosed little beggar boy to a dependable cog in this great machine. But don't be fooled for a minute by that. As an individual he's no better than he was. He's different in only one respect: in that the principles and standards of the group replace his own. He's more dependable, but also more dangerous, because he almost ceases to think as a person. Honor is what the group respects, and Right is the command of the next highest rank. Tommy Atkins is a real personality, not a useful generalization. There is something of him in each one of the sergeants, some of his perversity, some of his fear.

"Your 'GI Joe' is a cartoonists' creation, an amusing but arbitrary stereotype symbol. America has no 'military type,' because she has no empire dependent on her army. Britain is built around Tommy Atkins' personality; it is a necessary stone in the foundation of the Empire. Tommy knows that his welfare as an Englishman depends on his acceptance of the present society, without exception, without reservation, without the slightest hope of a change. He's not aware of the economic arguments, but he in-

instinctively senses his relative well-being, and he's not going to tamper with a social order that has brought his country wealth and glory."

Richards had entered the room during this speech and he bounded at once into the conversation. "And that is precisely his greatest folly, his refusal to make demands on his government. Do you think that because Britain doesn't believe in progress, the stream of history will halt in its flow? My God, man! That's like sticking your head in the sand in hopes of escaping notice by doing it."

"But you misunderstand me," Williams replied. "I quite agree that it's only a stopgap. Yet you know yourself that maintenance of the Empire is synonymous with welfare of the British Isles. The social structure and the imperial system are inseparably linked together, I'm afraid. As long as the present social system prevails, Britain will be able to defend what she has. And as long as the colonial system remains, the ranks will be afraid to rock the boat."

"India has a far more important function than feeding the mills of Manchester and Paisley. It is the primary tool of the upper class in keeping the worker from going radical. As long as Tommy can be made to believe that his welfare depends on the traditional system, the squires and their country estates are safe, and the Welsh coal miner will stay in his hole."

"Yes, the squires and their estates are safe, all right, as safe as the idiot who sits on a safety valve." With this remark Richards left the room, an excellent stroke of rhetoric and timing. Williams continued for another hour, mouthing rather circular platitudes. But the remark which has stuck in my mind is the one with which Richards closed the real argument. Williams' soliloquy is not worth recording; it is like the pointless thrashing of a man in a strait jacket.

There are three Polish padres aboard the ship, and two of them dine at the same table as I. They are mild-man-

nered, quiet little men, only one of whom knows any amount of English. The British officers have shown them great deference, allowing them a gentle and tactful seclusion. But one of the few Americans aboard is a rather overzealous practical joker. On at least three occasions he has set upon them, insisting that the one English-speaking member convey his gibes and jokes to the others so that they too may appreciate his extraordinary humor. Fortunately, the padres are not easily shocked, and they have borne up well under the worldly taunts, better perhaps than I myself, since each of these occasions has left me exhausted. Whenever the priests see Samuels approaching, they dodge into their staterooms or a convenient lavatory. But at dinner they cannot help but face him and Samuels always makes the most of his chance. Tonight he leaned across the table and said in a stage whisper that carried the length of the room, "Say, Padre, who was that girl in your cabin last night? And don't tell me that she came in for confession. I saw her enter at seven o'clock, and she didn't come out till after ten." Richards and Pierce had dropped their forks and I stopped chewing my bite of steak. I wanted to hide underneath the table, but I kicked viciously at Samuels' leg instead. I looked at Richards and he looked at me, but I do not know who was in the greater agony. Suddenly we were startled by a raucous laugh, and I kicked Samuels under the table again. But when I looked around, he was only smiling; the padre himself was doubled with laughter. The attention of the entire room was upon him, but he continued, unabated, for almost a minute. Then catching his breath, he translated to his colleagues and joined them in another laugh. They debated in Polish as to the proper rejoinder and finally the spokesman of the group replied, "Mr. Samuels, it is our business to listen to confession and that girl insisted that she had nothing to confess. We would lose our jobs if we accepted that answer so we adopt what you Americans call the 'make work' policy." The other two priests chuckled together

through the sentence, though the words themselves meant nothing to them. Samuels had never expected such a response, and he was bested for the moment by these unworldly men. Pierce broke the awkward silence by explaining, "The priests have been with fighting men for quite a while now, Samuels!" Samuels agreed that he "could see that they have," searching the while for a more clever answer. Finally the light came back into his eye and he said, "In the labor movement, they call that feather-bedding." I stared intently at my piece of meat, suddenly very interested in its color and texture. I glanced upward just long enough to notice that Richards and the others seemed to be similarly preoccupied.

With Dante as my guide, I could go no deeper into Hell than I went this afternoon. Dr. Marlowe decided to make a tour to inspect conditions below in the hold. When he asked me if I cared to go along, I agreed, probably out of morbid curiosity. But I have wished ever since that I had not gone; even my vivid imagination did little to prepare me for what I have seen. I suppose that I must get used to this sort of thing if I am to serve with the Indian Army, but I'd like to postpone that adjustment a while and perhaps work into it more gradually. I think that Marlowe was as shocked as I, and I hope that he'll try to do something about it. But he seemed rather cynical, and he muttered something to the effect that "it's useless to complain to their officers."

As Marlowe strode carelessly through the nightmare on D Deck, the black men squirmed quickly out of his way. But after he passed, they seemed to close together like water in the wake of a ship. I picked my way, with no help from them, through the tangle of bodies sprawled across the deck. Some were sleeping and others talked, but every waking eye was following us. Marlowe kept up a patter in Swahili, joking with the troops and patting their shoulders. One fellow had a nasty sore on his leg that seemed to be

irritated and festering. He pulled at my trouser leg when I passed along, apparently convinced that I was a doctor. But I shouted to Marlowe for help in turn, and he looked at the scab without bending down. He raised the toe of his boot to touch it, testing the patient for his reaction. The Swahili winced and withdrew the leg, but it was obvious that the sore was not too tender. Marlowe prodded it again with his foot, making a face as pus oozed out. Then he stooped and removed the dirty scab, washing the sore with alcohol. The patient was properly appreciative, and Marlowe promised to see him tomorrow. I asked how many doctors were aboard and Marlowe answered that there were quite a few. "But there is no provision for regular inspection and the troops quite often must have some special attention." I asked how many doctors were detailed to the troops and learned that none worked with them directly. "Do you mean to say that you're the only one assigned to come down here among the men?"

Marlowe answered, "Oh, I'm not assigned to them. I just come down to be a good fellow. I can't do much, for I haven't the equipment, but I like to help wherever I can."

Some of the men had already begun to cook their squash over bonfires on the deck. Rags and splinters had been scraped together, and crude little pots were trying to boil. The smoke had filled three enormous rooms. The air was choking three feet off the ground, and the men lay down where the breathing was clearer. But to my mind the acrid smoke was better than the animal smell of the lower levels. I clung to Marlowe's loose shirt tail, afraid of losing him somewhere in the fog. I was getting quite dizzy when we finally emerged into a patch of fresh air below the after-hatch. There the column of smoke rose up, clearing the deck immediately beneath it. The footing had seemed particularly slippery, and now I noticed human waste on my shoes. I scraped it off as best I could, but I picked up more just a moment later. There were half-hearted attempts at sanitation; empty fruit cans once lined the walls. But most

of them had been filled many hours ago, and the men had to defecate where they ate and slept. They try to avoid rolling in their own piles of dirt, but many of them seem to have been unsuccessful. They toss and thrash about in their sleep, encrusting their bodies and their clothes. I have noticed that few of them carry any life belts, macabre testimony to their realistic outlook. I hate to imagine a sinking of the ship. These poor beasts would be literally locked below.

Yesterday something happened to me which meant very little then but which now, in the light of what I have seen today, assumes a much greater significance. One of the girls, a WATS officer, was berating her bearer for his slovenly appearance. The native accepted her abuse without blinking, but the girl became more and more righteously indignant. She found soot on his back and fleas in his hair, both of which offended her feminine delicacy. Finally she spied a dry piece of dung which had apparently dropped off of the foot of the native. At this she pushed him rudely with her foot, so that he fell from the squatting position he had taken. She ordered him out of her cabin at once, and stood in the doorway with an exasperated air. "You can take an ape out of the jungle," she said, "and you can dress him up like a human being. You can teach him to shine shoes and even carry a gun, but you've still got just an animal on your hands. What good has civilization done them? Has he accepted any of our European standards? He's as filthy now as he was in the jungle, and what's more, he brings that filth to us." I felt that these words were indefensibly harsh, but I too was disgusted by the filth of her bearer. Then, as I turned to leave, the girl threw out an idea, obviously to see how I reacted to it. "I used to criticize Americans," she said, "for the way they treated their own Negroes. But I can see from this experience that they're quite impossible, and that sympathy is simply wasted on them." I stopped in my tracks and turned abruptly, wanting to take her by the shoulders and shake



her. "You know nothing about it," I said instead, controlling myself as best I could. "Until you have a better basis for your opinions, Miss Chalmers, I think you'd better just keep them to yourself. We've enough prejudice and bigotry in America as it is. We needn't import any more from abroad. Our whole racial problem results from just such ignorance, and adding your bit to the pile won't help." Miss Chalmers recoiled as if I had slapped her face, and she was still a bit frightened that I might actually do it. Though an officer, Chalmers is from the lower classes, so she murmured an apology through force of habit. I felt rather sorry for the girl herself, but I have no sympathy for what she represents. I almost apologized, but then I thought better of it and left the room without a reply.

When I look at my souvenirs from Kenya colony I can't help comparing them with the American counterparts, with the burned leather sentimentalities with which every five-and-ten abounds. These carvings from Mombasa are particularly striking, highly stylized, yet thoroughly individual. Best of all, they bear no gaudy "Made in Africa" label upon them. There need be none to repeat that phrase which is implicit in every line of the work. Every curve of the ebony faces and every mass of the animal forms proclaim them to be something genuinely primitive. The letter openers sell for a shilling apiece, and they're hawked from every East African corner. The artists who make them are at work while they sell, bargaining and collecting without dropping their tools. Unfortunately there is no real art in my collection, not in the usual intellectualized sense. But the line of demarcation between artist and craftsman is less obvious in Africa than it would be in America. Here indigenous art seems to flourish as prolifically, as irrepressibly, and as naturally as the foliage. Every youngster has a sense of proportion, and if he does not proclaim it, it is only because he lacks a jackknife. Though some are better craftsmen than others, they all seem to

have the fundamental appreciation, and creative expression is a mass phenomenon.

These people are living close to the soil; their hands and feet are honestly caked with it. Their intimate knowledge of the natural forms is clear in this feeling for line and mass. The artist knows his subject so well that simple representation does not fully satisfy him. His interplay of surfaces and his balance of form would rival the sophistication of our modernist sculptors. And yet this is all so thoroughly intelligible, so naïve and genuine in conception and approach—a far cry from the intellectual enigmas laboriously created by Europeans in purple smocks. Here is the combination which the aesthete seeks, but which is always so basic that it eludes his self-conscious search. Here is the union of sensation and intuition that guided the hands of Myron and Praxiteles. I glory in the mediocrity of my pieces, in their unpretentious commonness. They tell the story of the Mombasa street corner, not the biography of a famous creator. They do not simply demonstrate what one man can do and outline the terms in which he thinks. They demonstrate rather what a whole culture produces, and they deal with democratic common denominators. In my masks and knives and letter openers I have the objectified introspection of the primitive African. Motion rides the haunches of his deer and creeps through the crouching lines of a lion. It thrusts upward in the tilt of this neck and curves back down through that paw in the dust. It courses actively through restless forms, depicting the bushman and the country in which he lives. This is the feeling and vital energy which the sophisticate completely lacks. This is the real artistic motivation which the homosexual dilettante can scarcely imagine.

Why can America produce nothing like this, except in scattered and isolated cases? True, there is an occasional Barthe or Benton, but these men are mutations rather than representatives of their age. They are artists in spite of the fact that they are American, not because of or through that

fact. All American art seems caught on the horns of a serious dilemma which we ourselves have created. There is the heavy hand of the sensuous middle class with its maudlin, voluptuous sentimentality. On the other hand, there is the nauseating reaction against it, our sterile cults of unintelligibility. The antagonism which has resulted from their clash has leveled the productive ground between. It has made it a no man's land where none may venture without braving the crossfire which is doubly dangerous. There are a few brave men like Robert Frost who refuse to take sides in the esoteric discussions, and who refuse to shape their work to a pattern in order that the critics may automatically appraise it. But the New York art groups are as religiously biased as the various early Protestant reforms. They are as factioned and cross-factioned as the Communist party and every bit as zealous in purging their heretics. Culturally, this phenomenon is the perfect counterpart of Thurber's clever war between the "plains" and the "freckled." The issues at dispute are as arbitrary and illogical, and the destruction to everyone will be quite as complete. Time and time again I have seen the neophyte pause before a canvas in the Metropolitan, consulting his pocket guide, then crossing himself if he has felt something other than the prescribed reaction. He, of course, is just one step lower than the passer-by who vaguely supposes that the building contains either a collection of fish or the historic relics of Sherman's march to the sea.

What accounts for our disrespect for art? How can our vulgar taste be explained? I suspect that it results from the materialism which characterizes our whole society. The photograph is our natural medium, for we see only what can be measured with calipers or micrometer. Fineness and subtlety we partially respect, but only when concerned with engineering tolerances. The ultraphysical truths are beyond us, the meanings are lost in our race for efficiency. What a dismal future Americans have planned, to be the most efficiently vulgar nation in the world. I am almost

ashamed that I was born in Detroit, that mecca of the religion of Practicality, that home of race riots and the River Rouge Plant, that inner sanctum of our cultural sadism. I suppose Carl Sandburg could see something beautiful in it. But then, Carl Sandburg did not have to grow up there.

Even our religion is brutally physical, "literal" in the approved terminology. It has all been reduced to a contract with God in which Providence becomes the party of the first part. I am not simply bitter because I have no artistic talents, but because, lacking them, I have been refused a good substitute. I am bitter because I have been raised in a peculiar society which respects a whore more than an artist or a professor. Which came first, the neurotic art or the disrespect for sensitivity? Which came first, the purple smock or the belief that sculptors must inevitably be homosexual? It is another of those chicken-and-egg propositions, so we must accept the cubist and the fairy with the omelet!

A notice has been posted on the bulletin board, announcing the inevitable "ship's boxing tournament." The officers are mildly disturbed by this news, but the tommies are already preparing for the event. I am surprised to learn that A Deck will participate; I had supposed that this would be considered bad taste. Usually the activities of the troops and their officers are religiously segregated one from the other. Of course, each group will be matched within itself, but even so the thing amazes me. Richards tells me that there is a tradition behind this, a custom that the juniors exercise with their men. Supposedly it demonstrates their physical prowess, but from the looks of some, I suspect it might backfire.

I have been matched with a middle-weight captain, formerly a "Cambridge blue-ribbon boxer." He looks alarmingly capable, and I wish now that I had kept my experiences to myself. The committee was determined to match him with someone, in spite of his prominent amateur stand-

ing. So when I admitted that I had done some fighting in college, they went into a huddle and emerged with a leer. I suppose I'll have my head knocked off, but the matter is entirely out of my hands. The others have all accepted their fate gracefully, so I must "carry on" in the best British tradition.

These officers have reasonably healthy bodies and are generally almost a head taller than their men. Perhaps the tradition of interclass marriage has culminated in the development of two distinct strains. The tommies seem underfed and ill proportioned, particularly by my biased American standards. I'm not surprised that Britain was alarmed when she first took stock of her national health.

In any group of American men my five foot six leaves much to be desired, but when I stroll along C Deck, surrounded by the ranks, I find that I can look down on a majority of the fellows. Their teeth are rotten and they appear underfed; their ribs stick out and their legs are bowed. But they are certainly scrappers, one and all. What they lack in physique they make up in heart. They fight till they haven't an ounce of strength left; they seem to have no less than mayhem as their goal. They'll take a beating and come back for more just in hopes of learning from the experience. They're flailing away below right now, and the blood is flowing from noses and mouths. They swear as they belt each other around and I expect to see one kick at any time. But when the fights are over, contestants walk off with their arms around their opponents' shoulders. They're apparently very quick to anger, but equally quick in cooling off.

Pierce has come up on deck just now, little the worse for our party last night. We invited the enlisted WATS above for dinner and we scraped together a four-piece orchestra that shouldn't have happened to a bawdyhouse. I danced with only one of the girls, and just long enough to learn she could barely two-step. When I complained to Williams he looked surprised and answered, "Why, Muehl, she's the

best damned dancer on the boat." The rest of the evening I spent with Pierce, shepherding and trying to sober him up. He had managed to get quite drunk in his room, "so that I wouldn't notice how ugly these girls are." Actually, he was more entertaining than bothersome, for he unfolded an amazing collection of songs, almost as clever and funny as filthy. The worst of them he chanted loudly from our corner, but the following he insisted on singing from the bandstand:

"Tiddlywinks, young fellow, get a woman if you can!  
If you can't get a woman, get a clean old man!"

The climax of the evening, from my own point of view, came later, when a young girl came over to talk with us. She engaged in the usual conversational banter, leading nowhere, but pleasant enough. Finally she asked Pierce that standard question which everyone asks a kilted Scotsman. "Lieutenant Pierce," she began coyly, "if it isn't too personal, just what do you wear beneath those kilts?"

Now, Pierce had been bored with the lady's company and seized this chance to rid himself of her. "Why, just lift them up and see," he answered, managing to retain his innocent expression.

The young lady hesitated and murmured suspiciously, "Are you sure it's all right? Shall I really do it?"

Pierce gaily replied, "Of course it's all right. I'm hardly as immodest as you seem to suspect." The rest of the incident can only be appreciated by someone aware of Celtic tradition. It is an inviolable rule in the Scottish Guards that nothing is worn beneath the kilt.

My bout is over and I've emerged triumphant, having scored, it seems, a double victory. My opponent was large, but ponderous and slow, so that I had my own way through most of the fight. I could have won a more dramatic victory if I had pressed my advantage of the final rounds. But Arnold bore up in such a sporting manner that I was too

softhearted to move in for a kill. I began by feeling the fellow out, learning that I could hit him almost at will. His guard was low and ineffective and my left jab kept him quite thoroughly confused. Then I began putting weight in my blows, destroying what poise he previously had. By the end of round one he was unnerved and jittery, possessing no semblance of effective defense. I shifted to his stomach to test its strength, but I decided that the captain's body was strong. I concentrated again on the face, cutting it up through the course of the fight.

In the final round my opponent rose and came to the center badly discolored. I suddenly felt quite ashamed of myself and I wished that I had not agreed to fight. I was especially bothered by the captain's air, by his friendly smile of resignation. It was almost as though he were trying to apologize for his inability to fight back more skillfully. As we circled in the ring I realized that I could easily win the fight on a technical knockout. The referee was hovering near, awaiting a few more blows to the face. But I quickly put this thought from my mind and resolved to "carry" the captain to the end. I began backpedaling, not too obviously, trying to appear a little tired. The captain moved in, encouraged by this, throwing wild lefts and rights. I circled away, punching out occasionally, only to keep him from rushing in too fast. I was stung by two or three rather lucky punches, one that chipped two of my lower teeth. I cursed to myself at the irony of it, that I should receive the only permanent mark. When the battle had ended, I stayed in the ring just long enough to take a bow on the decision. I realized, from the undue applause which I received, that the audience understood and appreciated my actions. The captain added his congratulations, saying that he suspected that I had been "kind" to him. Later in the day I received more compliments, most of them for "sportsmanship" rather than for fighting. Far from being annoyed with this, I appreciated it very much. In college I was chided on the identical count, that I did

not adequately pursue an advantage. I suppose neither attitude is objectively "correct," but I certainly prefer the British outlook.

I have just come in from the eyes of the ship, where I've been watching our prow slide through the black water. It's dark outside, but down below the white bow wave is barely visible. I've watched it turn back when I could see it better, like a blanket turned back on a waiting bed. The sea opens so smoothly and folds over so neatly that I would suspect it was about the consistency of molasses. The most interesting thing about the ocean at night is the multitude of luminescent beings. As the ship passes by, its sides reflect the multiple glow of little bodies. Once in a while we pass a jellyfish, lighting up like a neon sign. At first it's a rather eerie sensation to watch these sparks from a blacked-out ship.

My favorite view, though, is back toward the midships, where only the dim outlines are visible. Silent and ghostly against the sky, the great black hulk slides over the water. It sways softly and secretly in the dead of night, rhythmically shutting out the stars. The throb of the engines is muffled beneath me, like the reluctant breathing of a hidden animal. At all other times I can forget the danger, the waiting submarines, the streaking torpedo. Even when the alarm rings I feel no fright, only a sort of tingling thrill. But there at night I feel death at hand, riding the shrouded midships house. There at night fear takes possession of me and I wait, I pray to see Ceylon.



# III

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WE SIGHTED land this afternoon and put into Colombo early this evening. We're lying now in a row of ships off to the side of the main harbor channel. We are partially blacked out, but a while ago the Swahili built a tribal fire on deck. We'd been promised by their officers that they would demonstrate some of their traditional ceremonial dances. A group of the men, hand-picked by their juniors, built the bonfire on a sheet of metal. Even the lighting was a serious incident, being done, of a necessity, with certain flourishes. Finally, when the logs began to blaze, the tribesmen dropped back and started a chant. A crude sort of improvised drum was brought out, an empty oil barrel covered with cowhide.

At first the rhythms seemed awfully common, and I suspected the dance would be a disappointment. But the longer I listened (or the longer they played), the more delicate the shadings and nuances I noticed. Many of the most complex modern orchestrations appeared in precise and conscious form. There were delicate statements of theme, reiteration, development, and finally inversion; all this on a single ridiculous instrument with little, if any, adjustment of tone. The beat was impelling, and the dancers began by swaying and tapping their feet where they sat. They closed their eyes and moaned together, not unlike some modern jazz addicts. There was something clearly sexual about the tempo, a reluctant, hesitating coquetry. Finally the men had arisen to their feet and were following the subtle insinuations. They moved with nervous though sinewy steps, faster and faster as the dance progressed. When the tempo increased their fervor heightened, till finally they whirled and shrieked in excitement. Then the dance was ended. They dropped to the deck, dissolving in

sweat and prostrate with fatigue. They rolled about and panted together like a pack of hounds at the end of a hunt. One young lady who was standing immediately to my right was staring at the fire as though she were in a trance. I spoke to her but she did not answer me; suddenly she shivered and broke out crying. Later I heard her say to a friend, "I can't understand why it affected me so."

I have been asked to speak to a troop officers' assembly, discussing America's social problems. The subject is alarmingly broad in scope, and I don't know exactly where to begin. But there is nothing that I would rather discuss, in spite of the delicacy which this demands, for the British know very little about America aside from what they have learned from the Hollywood facsimiles. This, of course, is less than nothing, for it is the sheerest fantasy accepted for fact. Most of my companions are beyond seeing America as a vast plain populated by cowboys and Indians, but they are much closer to that ludicrous misconception than I would ever have dared imagine possible. Some have confided to me, with obvious pride, that they appreciate my country's civilized condition, but they have done it with such relished self-satisfaction that I suspect their discovery was fairly recent.

I was rather proud of my speech last evening, but the meeting as a whole was a bitter disappointment. I had assumed, from the topic which I had been given, that a candid and critical talk was in order. I had counted on frankness and genuine humility to win the approval of my British audience. But I early realized that my complete sincerity was only leading to general embarrassment. The "social problems" which the officers had in mind concerned table setting and conversational localism.

My listeners were amused by the "cut and switch" system, but the term "Jim Crow" seemed to make them uncomfortable. They sat through my speech as an unwitting

neighbor might sit through an impromptu family brawl, trying hard to seem undismayed, yet obviously convinced that they intruded upon my privacy. I realized as I brought the talk to a close that all would breathe easier when I was through, when I ceased dragging out these family skeletons which they felt should be guarded from public scrutiny. I concluded as quickly as I reasonably could, with a minimum of reiteration and summary. Though a question period had been previously planned, the chairman of the meeting was bent on ignoring it.

I was just angry enough to resent his attempt and to insist gently on the original schedule. Finally, after a meaningful glance at his watch, he mumbled a general solicitation, inviting "all those who care to remain" to gather for a few more minutes. Oblivious to the chairman's offered reprieve, the officers remained, with Etonian deference. A major sitting in the rear of the room raised his hand and was quickly recognized. He wondered, apologetically, if the expression "good show" was used in America. I assured him that this was a peculiarly English usage, but I added with more than a hint of sarcasm, "I really can't answer as an authority on the subject, since I lost track of slang since leaving my adolescence." The questions continued for half an hour, varying around that depressing level. Finally Richards came to my rescue, rising to speak without recognition. "Mr. Muehl," he said, "your speech was excellent, though I'm afraid that some of us missed its meaning. I'd like to impose on your generous frankness by returning to your own more serious theme." I never learned what the question was to be, for Richards was interrupted by his brigadier. "I say," he broke in, without deigning to rise, "I'm sure that Muehl is tired of all that. I suggest that all questions that are put to the speaker be in the same good taste as those that have preceded." I was placed in an awkward and embarrassing position, for I felt that I must come to Richards' defense. "In that case," I said, "I may as well sit down, since there is no use continu-

ing on the present level. The answers to all those questions which have been asked till now could be found in any *World Almanac*. I had hoped to cover a significant topic. If I cannot do that, then I think I must retire. Thank you, gentlemen, for your courteous attention. Richards, I hope to see you later."

I had begun to worry about the wisdom of my action, and particularly about its effect on Richards' position. I am not personally worried about the Brigadier, but Richards, on the other hand, cannot help but be concerned. However, I now have it on the best authority that the Brigadier considers us "intense young fools," which, according to my translators of his terminology, is a rather more fond than angry denomination.

I cannot get used to the nationalized terms in which these fellows habitually think. To argue politics with anyone is automatically to indulge in personalities. To look with disfavor upon the imperial system is to condemn every English man, woman, and child. A disagreement with anything British amounts to a large-scale assault against England. When I argue with them it is like the circling of two planets in the farthest reaches of outer space; we move and turn in traditional patterns, and a collision would be as rare and as terrible. Most of them begin with the unfaltering belief that they have no principles in common with a foreigner. The whole point of view is adequately expressed in Williams' exasperating offhand statement, "Well, you're American and I am British, so it's quite natural that we cannot agree." Damn it, I'm primarily a human being, and I do Williams the honor of considering him the same. If morality and intelligence are relative to nationality, then how can we object to the Nazi doctrine?

I tried to involve the Brigadier in a serious discussion of international affairs, but as I had expected he slipped away like a well-greased pig. As a social experiment, I repeated the bid with a resolution that showed my determination. The Brigadier hesitated for only a moment, then moved

around for a flanking maneuver. "You know," he said with a mischievous smile, "America must plead guilty to crimes of her own. I'm really not anxious to dwell on the embarrassing, but take your racial problem as an example. While you criticize our treatment of African colonials, you treat birthright citizens almost as badly."

I questioned the Brigadier's terminology, asking, "Whom do you mean by 'you'?"

He answered, "Why, I mean America, of course. I assume that's where you originate." I agreed that I did "originate" in America, but I insisted that I was primarily an individual. "I'm not the personification of any nation, nor even the complete defender of my own. I can see her faults as clearly as you, and I only hope that I can bring them to attention. I don't criticise England out of self-satisfaction or in the belief that America is unassailable. I'm interested in defending justice where I find it, not in comparing any two nations. The fact that my country is as guilty as another has little bearing on the question as I see it. That doesn't change the nature of justice, nor force me to condone injustice in others."

The Brigadier replied, "That's all quite true, but you can never expect a nation to be moral. So I insist that we must accept the evils which are always a necessary part of national identity."

The Brigadier's line of argument was shifting and I wheeled to meet his attempted escape. "Accept them is just what we cannot do. We may recognize and expect them, but never accept! It is true that a nation is never moral, for it is simply not a thinking creature. Neither is an automobile ever moral; still a certain morality governs its use. Injustice of the state is injustice of its citizens, not a mysterious self-generated evil. And it is the duty of a people to act as vigilantes, keeping the error of their country at a minimum. The greatest sin of the German people is that they 'accepted' the ruthless behavior of their leaders. Most of them never participated in the horrors, but they share

the guilt because of their acceptance. In the case of the Englishman, as in the case of the American, the same is true in lesser degree. We accept the profits of imperial systems and thereby take our share of the blame. A lynch mob merely accepts a lynching, the great majority of the people, that is. And yet every person stands condemned, simply because he accepted injustice!"

The Brigadier replied, "You play havoc with a word, but you still don't understand my point. When you're older you'll realize that nations aren't concerned with the rigorous dialectic of ethical argument. They are concerned primarily with their own well-being, with their own military power and general security. Whatever we may decide about right and wrong, imperialism will remain as long as it is profitable. I'm deliberately side-stepping the moral issue; I'm scratching it off as unimportant."

I remember what Richards had to say about his countrymen, about the subtle intellectual erosion at work. I recall particularly one of his statements concerning the danger of an imperial psychology. "Gradually, you see, we are poisoning ourselves, destroying our self-respect as a nation." The Brigadier has demonstrated this moral suicide, the adoption of Richards' "damned Continental attitude." At first the Brigadier was anxious to maintain some semblance of a belief in international justice. But in the end he was driven, by his own dialectic, to the sorry extreme of a fascist psychology.

The closer we get to India, the less subterfuge I find in the men around me. There are very few imperialist apologists aboard, fewer, it seems to me, than when we mounted the gangplank. There is hardly any reason for apologetics; we are now on the brink of the concrete reality. And I am too preoccupied with the anticipation of India itself to argue in terms of the isolated theory.

The first few hours ashore in Ceylon were disappointing after the more colorful Mombasa. The place is neither

clean nor dirty, advanced nor backward, in dramatic proportions. It hasn't the exotic charm of Africa or the practical advantage of an American city, and with several others I sat for hours on one of the piers, pouting over its mediocrity. We had expected to be met and driven to our billet, and disappointment mingled with disenchantment. But gradually we ceased feeling sorry for ourselves and began shuffling off our provincial attitude. Just when we decided to see the city, a sergeant major strutted up to us. He came to attention and saluted smartly. We identified ourselves and returned the salute. He clicked his heels and picked up our bags, asking us to follow to his waiting lorry. We wheeled recklessly through the streets of a deserted city, plunging up and down unlighted alleys. The lorry was almost completely blacked out, but the driver assured me that he could see his way and that he was quite accustomed to driving at night. I answered that I could not see my way and I was sure that I would never become accustomed to this. But at length we stopped before a well-kept building, set comfortably back from the street and walk. The sergeant climbed down and took my luggage around and in through a side entrance. As I entered, I was welcomed by an effusive major who immediately stuck a glass in my hand. "We've expected you, and if you've just disembarked your tongue's hanging out for a gin and lime."

I wondered what I'd say if I weren't whom he expected or if my tongue weren't hanging out for the proffered drink. I dismissed the speculation on the very sound grounds that in both cases the questions were academic. "You're right," I agreed, "on both of those counts. Here is my hand, and here my tongue." The major laughed and slapped my back, asking me to follow him into the bar.

As I passed through the door I suddenly realized that I had walked into the middle of a passage from Kipling. Handsome young officers lounged about the room, with sun helmets dangling from their relaxed fingers. The men wore a great variety of dress, from Highland tartans to

tropical shorts. An occasional dress saber was sported from a belt; silver spurs were much in evidence. Most of them had conventional headdress, but there were two or three regimental turbans. A majority of the officers were obviously tipsy but carried their drunkenness aristocratically. Even their violence was of "genteel" nature, a breaking of glasses, an abusing of servants. Again I felt they were playing a part; again I think that they probably were.

A barefooted Indian padded up to us, touching his prayer-clasped hands to his forehead. He mumbled something to "major sahib" and the major answered in facile dialect. Presently the boy appeared again, bearing a tempting tray of food. The sandwiches were cut into minute pieces, so I helped myself to three of them. When the major sensed my ravenous hunger he shoveled a dozen more onto my lap. My glass had been emptied and refilled by now, and Colombo began to look more attractive. The scene was dramatic and the food was good. The whole imperial system seemed pleasant!

After endless drinks and endless food, I was led to my quarters by another Indian boy. He was clean and pleasant, studiously respectful, yet clearly endowed with individuality. I instinctively felt his capabilities, his worth as a servant and also as a person. This lad was to be my bearer while I remained; he would make my bed and tend my clothes. We walked down one of the garden paths that led to a cement-floored grass-thatch hut. A kerosene lantern burned beside the bed, which was draped with a filmy mosquito net. My bearer turned back the covers for me and hung my uniform over his arm. He blew out the lantern when I had retired, and left, taking with him my shoes and clothing. A very light rain began to patter, but my hut remained quite comfortably dry. I dozed away in luxurious comfort, well attended and well installed.

I was awakened in the morning by a pleasant sound which I first mistook for a leaking of the roof. As I opened



my eyes I saw that my bearer was pouring hot tea into a delicate china cup. As soon as he was sure that I had awakened, he padded away as quietly as he had come. I sampled the tea and found it delicious. I peeled a banana which was there on the tray. This, I have learned, is *chota hazri*, a little breakfast before the main meal. When I finished I found that my mouth tasted quite fresh and I vowed to continue this institution.

I have just finished breakfast with the other officers, but most of them were too tired to be pleasant. It appears they were up till a few hours ago, continuing the party long after I retired.

I spent a part of the day in the city, shopping around for a good star sapphire. I had been warned not to buy without expert advice, since the amateur judge can be easily cheated. Every shop in the commercial district advertises its own distinctive line. But more often than not the stars are blurred and, what's more, the prices are surprisingly high. I soon decided that, as I am an amateur, any purchase I would make would amount to sheer gambling. Hence I avoided the well-known firms and scoured the shady side-street shops. I wanted to buy a cheaper stone from one of the less reliable houses, hoping through bluff and sheer dumb luck to get a real bargain that way. If I were fleeced, I knew I could console myself with the thought that I had lost less money, anyway. I finally engaged a native lad to lead me back to the "wholesale" districts. It seemed reasonable to believe that the original miners might avoid the raucous, hawked-out sections. A number of boys volunteered to guide me, all with tales of fabulous shops where rubies and sapphires glistened in piles and the best of the lots could be had for a song. Though I didn't believe the stories for a moment, the romance of them intrigued me at once. I felt that though I might be robbed, the trip itself would be well worth my loss. My guide and I set out for the back streets, still surrounded by disgruntled competi-

tors. "Sahib, this boy doesn't know where he is going"; "Sahib, he is a thief," they cried after me.

Finally my guide stopped and drew my attention to a mud hut standing near the street. He went to the door and drew back a burlap curtain, shouting in his language to the people inside. A dark-skinned giant appeared, rubbing his palms together and bowing. "Sir, come in!" he said with sweetness, looking for all the world like a Shylock. I stepped inside, into an ugly room furnished only with simple fiber floor mats. I squatted in the dirt at my host's suggestion, watching him unwrap two cases of gems. "You're a miner, I understand," I ventured absently, fingering the sapphires in the box before me. "Huh, sahib," he replied with a nod of assent which I took to imply that "Huh" meant yes. "I own a very large and important mine. Here, I have a picture of it." He produced a clipping from *Time* magazine, trimmed and framed to look like a photograph. It showed an Alaskan placer mine, complete with rubber hoses and derrick. "You own these bulldozers and all that equipment?" I asked, trying hard to keep a straight face. "No bullock cart, sahib," my host returned. "All modern machinery; very large mine."

I had previously decided not to buy at once, but to play the first merchants for information. After I had talked with a few, I fondly rationalized, I would know enough to bluff the others. I did acquire some terminology and, more important, considerable self-confidence. I acted on the advice of my fellow officers, deprecating most of what I saw. But in one of the shops the proprietor asked me if he was correct in assuming that I was American. I admitted reluctantly that his guess was correct, his guess or interpretation of my accent.

"Young man," he said kindly, after showing his stock, "forget what your companions have told you. We argue over price in India, that is true. But it is not necessary that we insult each other." I was embarrassed and dumfounded by the directness of the man; I protested that I was saying

only what I thought. "No, you do yourself an injustice. You are new to this country and acting on bad counsel."

I realized that my devices had got me nowhere so I let my guard completely down. "I guess I must be a very bad actor. It's true, I'm a stranger, and following instructions. I've been warned that I must deprecate your wares in order to obtain a reasonable price. How shall I bargain, if not in that way? I shall turn my embarrassment into a lesson."

He answered, "There is no reason for embarrassment. Your only error was in believing untruths. It is only natural that, being a stranger, you should rely on the counsel of the men around you. Still, many of them know less than you, for they are convinced there is nothing to learn. If you will listen to me, I will try to tell you a little about the customs of trading in India."

"A little about the customs of trading in India" turned out to be almost a two-hour lecture. Though it was growing late, I was completely fascinated, much too interested to leave in the middle. The merchant talked of many things, of religion, philosophy, and anthropology. It was obvious that he possessed no formal schooling, but in spite of that he was genuinely educated. Most surprising of all were the terms in which he spoke, strange terms for a businessman in any land. His grasp of values was profound and amazing; I marveled that he managed to succeed in commerce. At the end of our talk he said to me, "But you came for a sapphire in the first place, I believe."

I answered, "Yes, that was my purpose, but I think that this visit is already justified. I doubt if I could haggle with you now, even in the polite way that you advise. I've always hated doing business with friends, and it seems I've come to consider you one."

I would have been embarrassed had I made this speech to anyone else under different circumstances. But somehow this occasion seemed to demand it, and it came out quite easily in the face of such kindness. "We will not argue over prices," said my host. "I will give you your stone for what-

ever I paid for it. Select what you wish from the cases before you. I promise that I will make no profit." I protested that this was really unnecessary, that I would take his word for the reasonable price. But in the end I chose a smoky blue stone, weighing roughly thirty carats. It was wrapped in a receipt for one hundred rupees; I paid with thirty American dollars.

When I returned with my stone to the officers' mess, I told the major about the episode. He laughed and said that I had obviously been swindled, asking to see my sapphire at once. The others crowded around the major, waiting for him to open the package. But when the wrapping came off and the stone lay revealed, the expressions gradually changed to astonishment.

"Why, I've never seen such a stone," one said. "Where did you say you got the thing?"

I replied in vague and general terms, anxious to keep the location a secret. "How much is it worth?" I asked the major, who was well acquainted with Indian gems.

"I really can't say about the American market, but in Australia it would bring fifty pounds," he answered.

I have learned at least one thing from the incident; I cannot rely on the judgment of others. I have got to avoid their prejudged stereotypes; I've got to look for the answers myself. Strangely enough, the men who have remained in India longest seem to know the least. Their prejudice has got hold of their minds and most of them are thoroughly blind. The major is busy rationalizing the apparent generosity of my Indian merchant. He insists that the stone was probably stolen. "That beggar sold it just to be rid of it!" He looked at my sapphire again just now, muttering, "You can never be sure of these things. Why, some of these bastards have ways of concealing even the largest and most serious flaws." All the others have been busy warning me not to "generalize from this exceptional case." They are obviously trying to justify their own notions; secretly I am enjoying their discomfort.

This officers' mess is a well-kept building, surrounded by breath-taking tropical gardens. The estate was once an expensive girls' school, and its atmosphere and beauty have been maintained. Its trees are grown to enormous size, shading almost every square foot of ground. The flowers are even more surprising in size, some of them being two feet across. The grass is closely mowed and trimmed, giving the impression of a well-kept golf green. The edges have been meticulously clipped to form clean crisp lines at the edge of the walk.

I shall really be sorry to leave this place; supper tonight will be my last meal here. I must arise in the morning and catch a train that will take me north on my trip to India proper. I am sure that this was a lull before the storm, this pleasant interval in such lovely surroundings. The officers speak of the Indian peninsula as if it were a sort of annex to Hell. They talk of beggars and the filth of the place, and they offer their sympathy when I say I must go there. But actually I suppose that it's all for the best; I would not want to remain in Ceylon indefinitely. This part of my life is dedicated to experience—time enough for creature comforts later.

Supper tonight was a wild affair with most of the officers turning up drunk. They had all been swimming and sunning at the beach, soaking up more alcohol than vitamin D. At least five dishes were smashed on the floor and an equal number turned over on the table. The servants came in for all the abuse whenever they were close enough to be blamed for the accidents. One captain poured soup down the front of his tunic when he failed to aim accurately for his mouth. A waiter happened to be close at hand so the officer turned and shouted that he had been bumped. The Indian servant wisely apologized, realizing that the captain simply wanted a scapegoat. But the other officers kidded their fellow till he grew angry and lashed out at the native's stomach. The Indian doubled up and ran from the

room while the assembled company simply laughed at the scene. The captain swung back around toward the table at a sharp word of command from the major. He pouted in his cups for the rest of the evening, in spite of the solicitousness of his companions.

As the night wore on, the table remained crowded, though the food gave way to wine and whisky. I was toasted roundly, as were all the others who were scheduled to leave on the morning train. I drank a little and pretended a lot, unloading my alcohol on those seated around me. Around twelve o'clock I decided to turn in, so that I might be fresh for my journey tomorrow. As I rose to leave, my eyes were caught by the words of a grace embossed on the wall above the table. It was clearly a hangover from previous days, inscribed, perhaps, when this was a girls' school:

Lord Jesus, be our heavenly guest,  
Our morning joy, our evening rest.  
And with each daily meal impart  
Thy love and peace to every heart.

I suspect that "Lord Jesus" has long since been driven out by such spectacles as tonight's debauchery, that is, assuming that he obliged in the first place and agreed to become "our heavenly guest." That is just as well, for if he'd been here, he'd more likely have hurled lightning than imparted love and peace!

I was driven to the station to catch my train by the same sergeant major who met me at the pier. It was just about light when we left the mess, so I was spared the wild blind ride this time. The daylight sobered my driver up, for it showed the variety of things we might hit. In addition, he was conscious of my critical attitude regarding our previous dance with death.

I'm traveling north with four other Americans, on a stubby little wood-burning train. The coaches are arranged on the European style, with a complete compartment run-

ning the width. For lunch we had to run to the diner during a very brief stop where they watered the engine. Once aboard it, we were stranded until the next long stop, when we could make our way back to our own compartment. It's strictly a matter of guessing correctly; an error may cost your lunch or your train. I pity the unfortunates who postponed their meal till we stopped for the second time. We've been riding now for about half a day, and we're soon to detrain to cross the straits. Lacking a bridge or a railroad barge, they unload our cars and reload in India. The northern tip of this island is filthy, not nearly so pleasant as Colombo and its surroundings. Dirty black crows perch on every upright, picking alike at the animate and inanimate.

The water buffalo doesn't seem to mind them; he permits them to rest on his bony back. The bird and beast understand each other, or perhaps they have a contract relating to fleas. As I passed the last station I saw a bird trying hard to swallow a clot of sputum. It was stringy and thick and came up in gobs, but the crow tried hard to down the stuff. I turned away as my stomach revolted, but I couldn't help thinking about the ominous implications. If a crow can find no other food, the land must be wretchedly, unbelievably poor. If this free wild thing is so close to starvation, just how far from it can the people be?

Our train has come to the end of the line, and a ferry is waiting to transport us to India. Even before our wheels stopped rolling, swarms of coolies invaded the coaches. One entered our compartment and stood in the doorway, smiling for a moment in obvious triumph. Others behind him looked enviously in, offering to help him carry the load. But he refused to share our baggage with anyone, though I would have sworn that no human being could carry it all. He knelt for a moment and motioned for us to pile the load on top of his head. A dirty turban unwound on his shoulders, revealing a shaven, misshapen skull. His

legs were no bigger than my forearm, I'm sure, but somehow he managed to stagger from the car.

Some of these coolies are very old, but you have to look closely to see any difference between them. All have the same grotesque little bodies, bulging in the bellies and curving through the spine. Their bare feet are split and cracked from the pavement; stones and slivers grind into the flesh. But no one worries about the pain of a moment. A greater agony hurries them on. Their motions are jerky and visibly forced; the matchstick limbs seem ready to collapse. The faces are set in the painful determination that I have seen before in photo finishes.

I have watched men working on the Ohio River, fighting to hold back the high waters of spring. I have seen rescue parties in the Kentucky coal fields, clawing their way through fallen tunnels. But I have never before seen life and death so plainly written on anyone's face. I have never before seen the expression of frantic hurry that is written across the coolie's bitter features. Every second seems to be an emergency, a new necessity to fight for life. Every breath seems to be a victory, an unexpected triumph in the battle for existence. Every load must be carried quickly, so that the fee will pay for the moment of its earning.

"Just one more step, and then I'll lie down and rest for a while," they seem to be saying. They seem to believe "Just one more trunk," and yet they come back again and again. They seem to be hoping, "Tonight I may die." But I know they will be here tomorrow and the next day. They will be here for infinite time in the future, just as they have been here for ages in the past. There is no summer or winter in India. There is no starting or finishing for these men. Their tragedy is as old as man himself, and their agony will endure throughout all time.

We entered India through the long sand spit that sweeps out in the direction of the island of Ceylon. Our ferry docked at a rickety pier where little native children were



diving for coins. I threw an anna to one little girl, but a bigger child managed to beat her to it. I felt sorry for her, for she seemed to get little, so I beckoned her down to a deserted stretch. I threw two annas into the water; the little girl dove, but came up empty-handed. I threw another, closer to shore, but still she could not reach it at the bottom. I threw my last coin far in toward shore, but the girl surfaced empty-handed. As I turned to leave, she smiled very broadly and swam out where I had thrown the first two annas. She flipped up her feet and went straight to the bottom, cruising around till she found them both. In quick succession she found the others, exhibiting a new-found swimming ability. Then she waved her skinny little hand in the air, and beckoned to the boy who had robbed her before. The two sat down on the hard-packed beach and began sorting out the money they'd retrieved. The total was divided carefully and evenly, each of the children taking one pile. I was more amused than angry at this strategy, but I wished they had waited till I turned my back.

As I got off the ship a boy accosted me, reaching out to take my hand. An Indian Army officer struck out with his swagger stick, raising a welt across the boy's forearm. "You've got to be careful," he explained to me. "These beggars are hopping with all sorts of diseases." The boy had run with a cry of pain, and I wondered audibly if there weren't a more humane way of being careful.

The lieutenant disappeared in the direction of the train, so I followed after the lad he had struck, and when I rounded the corner of a near-by freight station I found him standing there, confidently expecting me. I asked him what he wanted and he grinned insinuating that I must know. "Ten anna, sahib," he screamed at last, without offering any explanation. I turned to leave, rather angry by then, but the lad ran after me and tugged at my shirt. "Five anna, sahib," he screamed in despair, and at this I turned to face him again.

"Just what in the hell have you got to sell that you're asking five or ten annas for?"

He shuffled for a moment, kicking up the dust, and fixing his gaze down upon the ground. Finally he looked up at me, smiling too sweetly; he reached out a hand to touch my leg. I realized belatedly what he had "to sell." I was disgusted and embarrassed as I strode back to the train. "Three anna, sahib," the boy called after me. "Two anna, sahib. One anna, sahib."

The lieutenant who had struck the lad was waiting beside his coach, laughing uproariously as I approached. "So you insisted on ignoring my good advice," he said, managing to control himself for a moment. "I knew what that fellow was up to right along, but I didn't want to explain it there on the docks. Oh, well, you learned a good lesson, anyway; I hope you gave the beggar a thrashing." I agreed that I had learned a very good lesson, but I was too upset to laugh about the thing. I climbed into the car assigned to me, and washed my hands twice in succession.

At supper I met the lieutenant again, and he insisted on reopening the same nasty subject. He used it as a starting point for a general lecture on the inadequacies of the Indian people. The thesis was that they were all no more than animals and that one had to get used to treating them as such. I refused to argue with such an obvious fool, but I sat uneasily through his long soliloquy. Finally he sensed my antagonism and began, rather subtly, to abuse me for it. When I would not fight back, he grew more angry and began heaping one insult upon the other. But I must say one thing for the man, at least: he insulted in a completely offhand manner. He threw his remarks out so casually that I was almost ready to agree with them.

"You Americans" was his most oft-labored phrase; never did he become entirely personal. Still he managed to get my goat in the end, and I waited for a chance to silence the man. "These Indians don't know the meaning of morality. Their civilization is perverted throughout. Why, look at

the absolute innocence and freedom with which this boy approached you this afternoon."

I replied, "They may be full of such tricks, but I wonder who put them on a commercial basis. It's significant that those whom he approaches with such 'freedom and innocence' are not his own people, but the sahibs, lieutenant!"

We are passing through a desolate stretch of country, over hot gray sands, almost naked of grass. The surface of the earth has been parched and wrinkled, blown away to reveal bedrock. Long, deep gulleys slant out from the rising tracks, eroded away by the monsoon rains. There are no respectable trees in sight, only a few scrubby bushes trying hard to stand upright. The wind has cut in around their roots, shriveling the leaves and bending them down.

The morning sun has just come up, flooding the sky with color and heat. Even in the reflected glow of the sky, this burned-out land can offer nothing. It is simply a study in dead monotony, a promise of abject and utter failure. This land seems nothing but the useless scraps that God threw away when he made other continents. I would swear that no living thing could stay here, living among the dunes and dry wild grasses. But people appear to greet the train, arising, apparently, out of the earth. They come, like prairie dogs out of their holes, curious and staring as the train goes by. They stand there blinking, chattering together, pointing at the engine and at the people in compartments. When I open the window to hear the voices, a raucous, singsong flood wells in. It sounds almost more like the braying of cattle than like any human sound I have heard before. The heat waves rise and shimmer between us; the people seem to float in a dream of Hell. Sweat runs down into their eyes and mouths. They blink and lick at it, too tired to wipe their faces.

When the train slows down whole families appear, crawling out of their clumps of thatch. Almost every third person is crippled or blind, hobbling along or led by others.

As the train rushes past the crowds scream wildly, pointing to the most sickening and hideously deformed. But far from resenting the attention of others, these unfortunates dramatize and exploit their conditions. I watched one fellow with a withered arm who was popping it into and out of joint. A child with cataracts over both his eyes was throwing sand across their filmy, blind surfaces. A woman pointed to her ulcerated breasts, flapping them and groveling in pretended agony. And the "less fortunate" people, those who are physically sound, practice any number of self-abuses. Occasionally a coin is thrown from the train, raising a speck of dust where it hits. The crowds rush in like swarms of black ants, clawing and digging in the soft dry sand. The crippled and blind are invariably deserted in the frantic search for the trampled coin. They crawl or stumble vaguely about, jostled and ignored by the excited mob.

Our train has stopped for some unimaginable reason, out here in the middle of an utter wilderness. There is no station or other installation which would seem to account for our strange delay. The others insist that I'll get used to this; they say that the engineer most probably is snoozing. Apparently these trains stop for anything and nothing, in completely unpredictable and unexplainable places. We've pulled down the shades to discourage the natives from poking their hands through the widely barred windows. For the whole population of this Godforsaken area seems to consist of beggars alone. While our shades were up they crowded close to the car, pushing and jostling each other about. Hands and arms were thrust up from the crowd, stretching and writhing like snakes, trying to enter. They were actually lined up three deep by the windows, thirty or forty on either side. The smell of their bodies poured into the compartment like an avalanche of rotting cheese. They pushed their faces up to the bars, slobbering the beggar's singsong endlessly. I avoided the windows and tried to ignore them, but they seemed to know and enjoy my

discomfort. The monotonous chant is still continuing as they move back and forth beside the train. I'm sure that the wail of lost souls in Hell could not be more horrible than this mournful dirge.

A leper woman came out of the crowd; the others gave way to clear a broad path. She approached the track like a beast on all fours, like a sick beast too weak to raise its head. Her hand and one arm had been eaten away, so she crawled on the putrid stumps of her elbows. Her head hung low, and when the sand was soft her face actually dragged in the dust and gravel. I wondered at first why she did not walk; then she turned far enough so that I could see what was left of her legs. Where the feet should have been, scabby flesh sloughed off, ending a mass of dead, damp rot. Her hair was matted with filth and leaves, falling indiscriminately to cover her face. But something could be seen when she raised her head to utter her ugly, guttural cry. The eyes were sunken into bony sockets; they were black and excited, feverishly alight. Saliva drooled down her lips, out through teeth that were black and decayed. The hair on my arms began to stand erect, as if I had touched a beetle or June bug.

A moment ago the stump of an arm was poked through the window and laid on my shoulder. I screamed an oath and struck at the limb with a rolled-up newspaper that lay in my lap. When I looked around, I saw a young man squeezing his arm and feigning great pain. I jerked down the shade and jumped from my seat, standing for a moment in the middle of the coach. Now that the shades have all been drawn, we can hear occasional scratchings outside. What I feel is not simply fear, it is a disgust, a revulsion as at a rat or a fat grub worm.

We are moving again, thank God. The beggars can only scream from the distance. It is growing dark, but in the western sky is the most gorgeous sunset I have ever seen. It's one of those sights that cannot be described, full of un-

imaginable peach and greens. If I had ever seen a painting of it, I would have accused the painter of gross romanticism. While I was watching the shifting clouds I was rudely awakened from my pleasant reverie. A stream of betel juice hit my elbow, spattering across the front of my tunic. Betel juice is the revolting crimson saliva of one who has been chewing the betel nut. This nut is the Indian equivalent of chewing gum, or perhaps I should say of chewing tobacco, since it is about as sanitary and aesthetically pleasing! The stain of the stuff is over everything, sidewalks, buildings, and even monuments. I suppose that the stream which hit my arm was spewed from one of the third-class compartments. After I wiped it from my coat sleeve, I stuck out my head to try to locate the offending party. But I withdrew again, much more angry than ever, with another red fleck across my forehead. When I told one of the British captains about this, he laughed and told me to make this note: "Keep hands and body well inside all Indian trains while they are in motion."

The coach pitches about in an alarming fashion, threatening to overturn on every sharp curve. The gauge appears ridiculously narrow, something around thirty-six inches, I would say. I've been told that this line was dynamited last month by a group of Indian nationalist terrorists. But when I expressed surprise and natural uneasiness, I was told that "this is no longer August." I couldn't derive much comfort from the fact till someone explained that August is "riot month." I am told that most of the violence and plotting usually occurs in that month, for some reason.

We have just pulled into the station in Madras, the one real city in southern India. It is crawling with life, both insect and human, so I am waiting till the rush subsides before leaving. I never thought a flea-ridden, hot little coach could ever become an ivory tower, but it is with the profoundest misgivings that I contemplate leaving. I find that I've come to consider the compartment a sanctuary from

the agonies of Indian life. But sooner or later I must step out into the streets, to face, for better or for worse, what is there. A mangy dog is skirting the platform, nosing at orange peels and dodging people's feet. His skin is open in several places, angry and red and covered with mucus. Flies swarm heavily on these festering patches, buzzing and biting, caught in the stickiness. Occasionally the dog jumps and yelps with pain, rolling over to rid himself of the tormentors. I suppose my adjustment has already begun; I would be hurt and worried about this dog at home. But somehow I can watch him with very little interest, after seeing human beings as badly off. He reminds me vaguely of the leper woman and the trail of matter which she left in the sand.

The captain assures me that I'll get used to all this. "Just kick them aside and forget about them." But even if I manage to "kick them aside," I'm sure that I'll never be able to forget them. I wonder if I'll ever really get used to it. I wonder if I actually want to get used to it.

A boy just came into the compartment to sweep it, and he was startled to see me sitting here alone. He bent over to brush the dirt out the door, and I noticed that he was naturally hunched from his job. When he finished, he turned and held out his hand, smiling at me and expecting a tip.

"Go away," I told him. "The railroad pays you. You're not going to get any more from me."

He wailed, "Sahib, baksheesh," in answer, still standing before me with his palm outstretched. He guessed, I suppose, that I wished to be alone, and he knew I would be willing to pay to get rid of him.

Somehow, I feel more guilty now than before, when I gave no alms to the beggars. Then I could pretend that I stood outside all this, but now I have admitted my involvement in it. I suppose that I might as well leave the car; I wish it were night so I could slip out unnoticed, but the

hot, bright sun is beating down like a spotlight played on me for my entrance.

I am waiting for the train to leave the station after spending a terrible night in Madras. We slept at the local Y.M.C.A. without blankets, sheets, or mosquito netting. The blankets and the sheets were easily dispensed with, but mosquito netting might have spared us much agony. I managed to drop off after an awful battle, worn out from slapping and waving at the insects. When I awoke this morning I could not open my eyes till I reduced the swelling with cold compresses. My lips and cheeks are puffed and painful, and I attract the attention of every passer-by. The rope beds were full of bedbugs too, which left their marks on my body and legs. But their effect was really more mental than physical, since they bit me only in five or six places.

The dog I saw yesterday was run over this morning, just as I entered the station to wait. He was lying on the tracks too weak to move, barely able to lift his head. Flies were settling on his tender parts, unwilling to wait till death rendered them insensible. They swarmed across his moist black lips, crawling even up into his mouth. He blinked his eyes repeatedly, but the insects covered their glassy surfaces. The train moved slowly and heavily down on him, but he could not drag himself out of the way. People ran back and forth before me, but no one tried to save him from the train. At first I was enraged by this apparent callousness, and I stepped out to remove him from the tracks myself. But as I bent down to do so, I hesitated, seeing what terrible agony he was in. A bearer ran up and tugged at my sleeve. "No, sahib," he said very simply to me. I turned to see that the crowd was watching. "No, sahib," a few of them echoed. I suddenly realized that they were not cruel, but rather quite intelligently kind. I left the dog on



the tracks where he lay; a few moments later he was out of his pain.

Some American soldiers have entered the station, carrying their luggage on their heads, like the bearers. One is carrying a little native boy, who is obviously pleased with the attention he is getting. The Indians seem to enjoy the show; they are having as much fun as the GI's themselves. They are laughing and kidding the soldiers as they walk on, and the Americans are ribbing the crowds in return. The humor of the two groups seems to meet head on, unlike the Anglo-American exchanges. One soldier has cried, "What's the matter, folks? Do you have to have a union card to work in this joint?" Another GI stepped out into the crowd, extending his hand and wailing, "Bak-sheesh!" An Indian, dressed in European clothes, flipped an anna piece into his palm.

But a British officer has interrupted the show, demanding that the Americans "behave like gentlemen." One GI has respectfully asked if that wouldn't constitute "misrepresenting myself as an officer." The others are obeying, but with obvious disgust, while the Indians talk "together" in loud tones. A soldier named Tex (says the legend on his hat) has handed the little native boy to his bearer. "Here, Mahatma, this's part of mah luggage, and this captain sahib says that you fellows should be carryin' it."

A little native girl slipped in between the trains that are standing here by the loading platform. I suppose she was seven or eight years old; yet she offered to do a strip-tease for us. I felt so very sorry for the child that I gave her six annas, telling her to forget the *quid pro quo*. But I noticed that she was up by another coach, going through the same suggestive motions. She was trying very hard to interest the tommies by pulling her dirty skirt aside. What was revealed beneath could only excite pity, the swollen stomach and the spindly little legs. Some of the tommies threw money out, as a joking gesture, I thought at the time. But

the little girl pulled off her blouse standing nude to the waist, completely undeveloped. The tommies seemed to enjoy the show and I began to realize that she actually intrigued them. Another anna was thrown from the coach, and another anna after that one. Finally the child stood completely naked, a study in malnutrition and shame. She was obviously embarrassed and her head hung down, but she remained to fulfill her part of the bargain. One fellow beckoned suggestively from the car, and I realized, then, the extent of his perversion. I have been in India for only three days, yet I have seen a terrible amount of this. Apparently these tommies, in the words of Pierce, have "been out here just a bit too long."

A third-class coach is standing next to us, headed south on the opposite track. It's a rickety collection of nails and boards, barely able to hold together. I have never seen so many people jammed together in such little space. I would swear there are three hundred people in the coach, impossible as that looks in black and white. Humanity projects through every crack, like a load of hay from an overstuffed wagon. It oozes out through the windows and doors, through breaks and cracks in the battered framework. The car is rocking about on the rails by virtue of the sheer weight and motion within, and the springs and shock absorbers creak a dull accompaniment to the laughter and singing of the people above. This all reminds me of a church picnic at home, though I'm sure that no church function ever drew such numbers. Women carry lunch baskets and mind their children, while the men trail along, glowering from under their turbans, feeling quite obviously overworked and put upon by the simple necessity of following through the crowds. As the vendors walk by the loaded car, annas and pice shower out on the ground. The vendors distribute their wares among all the claimants, apparently quite satisfied with their absolute honesty.

I have just bought some tea from the "cha wallah" who passes; it comes in a disposable baked clay cup. It tastes

very strongly of his copper urn, but it's hot and I'll drink it for that. The track and platform are littered with clay pieces, presumably from the cha wallah's sanitary vessels. Now the shrill little whistle has blown, so I suppose we will get under way very shortly.

I was almost stranded at the last stopover, when the train got under way while I was eating. I had expected a twenty- or thirty-minute wait, but the engineer apparently had not read his timetable. I just glanced up as the coaches began to move; otherwise, I might still be back in the station. I ran for my car, but it was well down the track and I decided that I had better settle for any. I jumped up and into a second-class compartment which, at a first and fevered glance, seemed empty. When I got in, I found an Indian soldier stretched out for an afternoon nap on the seats. He opened one eye with an angry growl, then jumped to his feet and saluted in surprise. "I beg your pardon," I said, rather embarrassed, "but I had to get on wherever I could. This damned train almost got away from me, and there was no time to look for my own compartment."

The soldier laughed a little self-consciously and agreed. "Yes, I know how easily that can happen." Then he added, "Sit down, please. It will probably be quite a while before you'll get a chance to find your own coach."

I was silent for a while, so that the soldier might sleep, but in the end my curiosity got the better of me. I learned that my companion was a *habeldar*, a viceroy-commissioned officer of some sort. I was surprised that he spoke such excellent English, but he explained that he had attended a Methodist mission school. He was quite pleasant and friendly, which is more than I would have been had he burst into my car while I was sleeping. With a minimum of subtlety and a maximum of nerve, I directed the conversation toward politics. At first the Habeldar was rather

unwilling to speak; then suddenly an important truth seemed to dawn on him.

"I say, you're American, aren't you?" he asked.

I admitted the truth of the conjecture, eagerly. "I'm simply attached to the Indian Army. My soul and my politics are entirely my own."

He caught the meaning of that last remark and he laughed as he extended his hand to me. "My God, that's different! Now, what were you asking about the British a few moments ago?"

I was amused and pleased by the Habeldar's frankness, but I was genuinely surprised that he was so outspoken. After all, he had only my word that I was sympathetic; in his position I should have wanted more definite proof.

When we stopped again I did not get off, but I bought two bottles of pop from a vendor. The Habeldar, "Jam" to his friends, he said, insisted on opening them both with his teeth. We talked for most of the afternoon, about his people, my people, and the British raj.

"Why did you join the army, Jam, to support the British in India?" My initial question was something like this; it was answered at once with a bitter laugh. "I joined the army because I had to, because there was no other way to feed my family. I joined for twenty rupees a month, subsistence for myself and an allotment for my wife. In other words, sir, I joined the army for exactly the same reason as all the others." I had expected this answer, so it did not surprise me, but I pressed my new friend for further details. "Then you didn't join because you wanted to fight for Britain in her war against the Axis?"

The Habeldar avoided the quick, direct answer, but he made his position clear enough. "India wants to fight with Britain in her war for freedom against the Axis. But sharing the fight, it is only natural that we should want to share the victory as well. If we fight against oppression, we want to be rid of it. If we fight against tyranny, we want to de-

stroy it. If we fight for the 'self-determination of peoples,' we want to determine our own people's government."

I agreed that this was reasonable enough. "But you overstate your case," I said. "I'm sure that if it were just as simple as that, Britain would give you your independence."

Jam was rather disgusted by this last, and he made little effort to conceal his feelings. "My God, man," he said, "do you really believe that? Do you think that Britain would give up so easily? One out of every five Englishmen is dependent on India for his livelihood. Churchill himself has made it clear that he would not liquidate the British Empire. Mind you, he didn't say that he couldn't do it; he simply insisted that he would not consider it."

I readily agreed that Britain didn't rule India from any altruistic or charitable motives. "But at the same time, some benefit probably accrues to a nation as backward as India seems to be. Certainly it is to the benefit of both India and Britain that the former progress as rapidly as possible. Britain has innumerable technical advantages which she will gradually pass along to India."

My friend fairly screamed. "That is not true! Britain is afraid of progress in India! Two hundred years ago we had many industries, some of them known all over the world. But when Britain took over, all this disappeared, until now there is almost no industry left. India has been systematically reduced to a plantation that simply provides labor and offers a market. Her whole economic value to the British Empire would be destroyed by a development of manufactures at home. No, Britain doesn't want to see progress in India; she wants that colony to remain just as she is. The entire logic of the imperial relationship depends on our depressed condition. The best proof of this is the simple fact that the indigenous industries were destroyed by the raj. As a matter of fact, our whole standard of living is lower now than when Britain appeared."

I could not easily think of an answer for this, for I knew the Habeldar's facts were correct. Still, I could not believe

that it was all so simple, so I shifted my attack to another side. "Is India ready for independence?" I asked, rather ashamed of the trite phraseology.

"What do you mean by 'ready for independence'?" the Habeldar asked, after a moment's hesitation.

"Why, I wonder if India is sufficiently developed to settle her problems without outside help."

My friend shook his head and smiled sadly. "You Americans think in peculiar terms! What bearing does a country's technical development have on her readiness to rule herself? Why, India was ancient when your country was discovered, and she had ruled herself without technology. What do you think we did in Asia before the white man appeared to 'bear our burden'? We really managed for quite a while, better, by far, than we're managing right now."

"I realize that," I admitted uncomfortably. "But India was hardly a nation then. She was simply a collection of native states, a mere geographic aggregation."

The Habeldar brushed aside my criticism. "Collection of states or nation, no matter. The fact is we lived freely and prosperously together, without all the dire results you'd predict. China is not a nation, properly speaking; she is 'a mere geographic aggregation.' Still, I hear no one advocating her annexation until she learns to rule herself. What is the difference whether we are one nation or many? The point is we can manage very well by ourselves."

I asked, "But what of the religious friction? India is a hodgepodge of conflicting groups."

Jam corrected me. "Differing, not conflicting. We can manage together quite peacefully. This 'friction' arises only in those cases where British pressure is brought to bear, in the Punjab, for instance, where criminal punishments vary depending on whether you're a Moslem or a Sikh. Naturally this sort of thing causes trouble; that is exactly what it's designed to do. I hope you'll pardon me

when I say that you're very naïve to believe that such things require your help.

"Try to look at the issue in perspective, in terms of history, European if not Asiatic. Problems much more serious than this have been settled by relatively simple methods. And suppose it actually comes to war; suppose that the Hindus attack the minorities. Even that proves very little; your own country had its civil war. You see, we've got to settle this for ourselves. We appreciate your interest, but it is a problem for us. You know, sometimes I want to pat you fellows on the head and say, 'Take it easy, little man. It isn't all as new as you think. Such things as this have been solved before. How do you think we've survived so long?' "

I was altogether pleased with this vigorous speech, though Jam seemed to suspect that I might not be. I knew, at the time, that I was losing the argument, but I also knew how much I was learning.

"There is no substitute for experience," Jam continued. "You cannot learn self-government from a correspondence school. You've got to try, and you've got to make errors. As you westerners say, 'It just takes nine months.' "

## IV

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I HAVE just arrived at my destination, but I haven't had time to see the city. My billet is fairly cool and comfortable, though completely lacking in any privacy. I'm stationed here at the general hospital in Poona for a training period of several months. My bed is out in a general ward that has been turned over to this new group of trainees. Fortunately I have this little room where I can write and keep a few of the books I am reading. I'm anxious to get into Poona cantonment, for I understand it is a relatively nice place.

We have just been having "caste" trouble here, and though I call it trouble, it was really quite funny. A cow wandered into the barracks this afternoon when none of the men were here to see it. Our bearers refused to touch the beast or to agitate it in any way. As they were Hindus, it was quite unthinkable to shoo the animal or drive it out. As one would expect, the cow presently vacated, leaving behind a small remembrance. When we returned we were disgusted to find this material, if not concrete, proof of her presence. We called at once for the "dry sweeper" and asked him to remove the mess from the floor. He hemmed and hawed for a moment or two, then wailed, "No, sahib, I cannot do it."

Now this fellow was generally quite accommodating, so we were all surprised at the sudden reversal. "Just why can't you do it?" one of us asked. "You're getting paid for such work."

The sweeper repeated, "No, sahib, I cannot. I am a dry sweeper and this is wet." We were all quite amused by his subtle distinction, but we demanded that the sweeper get to work at once. "I cannot, sahibs," he wailed again, wring-



ing his hands and contorting his face. "I am a dry sweeper, like my father before me. This is wet, and I cannot sweep it."

Finally we yielded to the servant's protests, and we sent him out to find the wet sweeper. But after he had been gone for half an hour, a few of the men went out to help him. Finally they managed to corner their man and explain the situation to him. Reluctantly and sadly he followed behind, back to the barracks and into our room. "There is the mess. Clean it up," said one of our fellows, with admirable simplicity.

The wet sweeper circled the mess on the floor, squinting at it and then at us. Finally he went over to get his broom, bringing a pan of water back with him. But just as he was about to begin the job, he backed away and shook his head. "No, sahib, this is dry and I am wet sweeper. Cannot sweep, sahib. I am wet sweeper." We looked in astonishment around at each other and then at the sweeper, who was waiting still. Right enough, the dung seemed quite dry; it had taken us too long to find our man. Someone suggested that we get the dry sweeper again, but in the end we drew straws to see who would clean up.

The "fruit wallah" has just finished making his rounds, and I am munching on tomatoes and onions that he brought. He shows an amazing sense of balance, running about with his basket on his head. Even when he jumps off of the three-foot porch he doesn't bother to steady the thing; he simply bounds off with his hands at his sides, quite gracefully and with apparent ease.

I have begun to worry about the possibility of catching some disease from unwashed fruit. This afternoon, in my best "sweeper Urdu," I asked the fellow what precautions he took. He seemed not to understand me at first; my command of his language is notoriously bad. "You wash fruit?" I repeated several times, pantomiming the washing of an orange.

"*Nay mallum, sahib*" (I don't understand), the fruit wallah answered, smiling at my motions. After many more tries, I gave up and called a British soldier who was near at hand. He asked the Indian, in flawless English, whether he had taken "the prescribed sanitary precautions." Understanding my question at last, the fruit wallah answered it quite as glibly in perfect English. "Oh, yes, sahib. You see, I have here a bucket of potassium permanganate solution into which I dip every piece of fruit." I was tempted to exclaim, "Dr. Pasteur, I presume," but I retired to the building feeling quite abashed.

I have noticed that whenever the fruit wallah enters, he stops at the door to take off his shoes. Once or twice he has forgotten to do this, and in each case he's been very severely reprimanded. I asked one of the tommies about this yesterday and the reason he gave is rather idiotic. It seems that Queen Victoria is responsible, having issued an order in a fit of temper. When visiting Agra, the story goes, that great lady entered the Taj Mahal. She was stopped by one of the faithful worshipers and was asked to leave her shoes outside. Now anyone who enters a Mohammedan mosque is requested to show the same simple courtesy, but Victoria considered it unbridled insolence and refused to submit to such an indignity. Gently but firmly the priests insisted, till at last her courtiers persuaded the Queen to yield. She allowed her shoes to be removed, but she vowed that she would have her revenge. Leaving the Taj, the Queen proclaimed that every Indian must do as she did. Whenever one entered a British-owned building, he would be expected to remove his shoes. In most parts of India the order has been forgotten, but occasionally a garrison still takes it seriously. Apparently the officers who are stationed here enjoy this little vindictiveness.

Our training has proceeded at such a rapid pace that I haven't had time for any sight-seeing. I'm very anxious to get away, since there are some very fine Hindu temples in this district. I passed near one of the better ones yesterday,

while out on a scheme with a map-reading class. We weren't allowed to stop and explore it, though we wasted time in a dozen different ways. The temple was set in a broad declivity, overlooking the spread of its widening valley. It was built during the time of the great Maharati Empire and it stands near the ruins of their ancient city. That city itself is not deserted; and though I know this fact, I can hardly believe it. As an empire, it has completely returned to the dust; its inhabitants are like rats in the ruins of a house. The walls are crumbling and broken away, revealing elaborate and beautiful interiors. But wind and rain have spoiled these too, chipping and cracking the ornate wall carvings. As we neared the city I was sure it was dead, but when we passed close by I could see its people. They crawled out, like bugs from under the walls, staring and blinking as we drove by. Then I could see the bitter contrast between the grandeur of the past and the degeneracy of the present. Tiny thatch dwellings had been thrown together in the shadow of the ancient and classic walls. Huts of clay were plastered about, littering the broad, majestic wreckage. This is truly an exotic enigma. Whatever has happened to those builders of the past? It hardly seems possible that these are their children, these dirty-faced people who climb through the ashes. What buildings are left are extremely beautiful, decorated with the most intricate workmanship. Gargoyles and gods peer down from the cornices, brooding on the silent wreckage below. There is much grandeur rising out of the filth; an art of the past surveying the present. It stands like a dark and ominous specter, passing a cruel judgment on the people below.

Two children approached me just a moment ago, each one trying to hide behind the other. The little girl was about four or five, while her brother seemed just a year or two older. At first they were both too bashful to speak to me, so they whispered together, eying me with fright. I

called, "Hello, there," to put them at ease, and the older finally managed to say a few words. His English was surprisingly good for his age, but he mumbled so that I could hardly understand him. "Speak up," I said. "I'm not going to hurt you. Do you and your sister want something of me?"

My voice seemed only to frighten him again, and he edged toward the door, where he was stopped by the little girl. She remonstrated with him severely in her native tongue, then boldly approached me to speak for herself. "Sahib," she said, "we want to be your bearers. We both work for you . . . same price as one. Make your bed, shine your shoes, tend your mosquito net for ten chips a month." Her courage was exhausted by this extended speech, and she immediately ran back to her brother's side. At first I could hardly believe she was serious; these children were too young to be hiring out!

"Why, you chotah wallahs," I cried, "you're much too little, and besides, what in the world would I want with two bearers?"

The boy answered both of my questions at once, shouting, "Two little fellow as good as one big fellow, sahib."

I was impressed by this logical line of argument, but I began to laugh at the lad's phraseology. I caught myself quickly when it became apparent that the children were hurt by my lighthearted reaction. "Look here," I pleaded, trying to make amends, "I really wasn't laughing at you." But already the little girl was ready to cry, while the boy simply glared at me with a cold, controlled fury. "Come back here," I shouted, running out to the steps. "I'll hire you if you really want to work for me."

I was issued a motorcycle this afternoon, which should increase the range of my explorations considerably. I have been trying to get one for quite a while in order to travel about the countryside. I was just about ready to concede defeat when this gift from the gods at last descended. I still

cannot understand the reason for my good fortune; a cycle is about as necessary to my work as an eleventh finger. But I will certainly put it to my own good uses, provided we are granted enough spare time. The training program keeps us all quite busy, but it should be possible to find a few free days.

The farther I get from Poona cantonment, the more beautiful and natural the scenery becomes. Just a few miles from here it is completely unspoiled, with never a signpost or a sight of the sahib. There's an old fortress city somewhere up in the hills, an outpost of the vanished Maharati Empire. It is miles away from the nearest trail, but I hope it may be reached by some overland route. There are only a few gravel roads leading out of Poona, chiefly those leading to Bombay and Scholapur. The majority of others are bare mud trails, plunging through streams and ascending steep slopes. It is virtually impossible to learn where they lead, since everyone seems to have a different idea. The natives probably know more about them than the British, since most of the tracks are age-old folk paths. There's a narrow pass in the ghats to the east, and Sasvad lies somewhere in that general direction. I was given a compass reading by an old lance corporal, but I'm afraid to trust his indefinite ideas. I've five different sets of directions from the Indians, all supposed to lead to this selfsame village. But I suspect that all of them are in conscious error, since I was wearing my uniform when I talked with them.

This was quite a day! I was out in the hills from dawn to sundown, searching for Sasvad. I found a million potholes and gulleys, unnumbered blind alleys and wandering trails. But I have come to the conclusion that this bush-whacking is useless. My only chance lies in getting a map. Perhaps one of the bearers can give me some help. Perhaps I can buy off one of the hillmen. The cycle and I absorbed a terrible punishment as we labored through rocky ravines and passes. The temperature was well over a hundred de-

gress and my hands almost fused on the bucking handle grips. I thought I was lost any number of times, but somehow I eventually made my way home. I am not especially proud of myself, since most often I found that I was going in circles.

As on the train that brought me here, I again had the feeling that I was traveling through a land deserted of people. There were enormous valleys stretching out before me, countless slopes, but nowhere a building. Generally, when I managed to get deeper into the countryside, I found the areas actually teeming with life. But the people were living in tiny grass dwellings that could scarcely be seen from a hundred yards. The landscape was completely primitive and wild; man had adapted to its natural forms. It had yielded nothing, suffered nothing except fences and houses of its own straw and mud.

Just ten miles out of Poona cantonment the "great city" is almost a fairy tale. For the hill people, the world is their peak and its valley; they know very little of what lies beyond. But at that they know their country much better than the Briton, to whom all local geography is a sheer enigma. I cannot understand such a state of affairs, an empire operating in such impersonal terms.

The children were terrified by the presence of a white man, and they ran to call their mothers and fathers. Animals and people were equally afraid of my motorcycle and the roaring noise it made. I couldn't stop near any of the farms without explaining my presence to the elder males. They would approach me suspiciously, but with a perfunctory courtesy, asking me, in Urdu, to state my business. This last rather pleased me for some strange reason, probably because in the city Urdu is so seldom used. An Indian, to communicate with his white master or patron, must learn to speak the sahib's foreign language. This conversation in the hills was more as it should be, I think; I was the intruder and the one to explain. What is more, I am here

in India, and I am expected to speak the country's language.

"Farm" is a peculiar word to choose in describing these washed-out, ramshackle plots. Most of them are barely an acre or less, an acre of bedrock loosely sprinkled with dust. The families scratch and hoe at this surface, working over every square inch of the ground. Even in the valleys, where the soil is better, hand labor and poor tools bring a miserable return. There is no irrigation where it really counts, though a storage of water could quadruple the yield. Individual farmers have deep little wells, but they cannot fight the tropical weather with their hands.

I must confess that I often get terribly disgusted with the attitude of the Indian bearers and servants. It is almost easier to do things for myself than to try to explain to them just what I want. Their command of English varies from day to day, depending chiefly on what is being said; they are supremely capable of understanding when told that the sahib is to be away for a few days. Yesterday I tried to explain to our cook that I wanted two eggs prepared for my supper. He protested, at first, that this was not on the menu, but after some discussion he agreed to oblige.

"Sahib," he said, "the fires have gone out and will not be lit again till five o'clock."

I replied, "But supper isn't till six o'clock and that leaves you a full hour to cook my eggs."

At this the cook, unhappily named Shankar, nodded agreeably so that I assumed he understood. When I went to the kitchen at six, however, I found that no eggs awaited me there. "Cooky," I groaned, "where are my eggs?"

The cook looked bewildered and scratched his head for a moment. "Sahib wanted the eggs tonight?" he asked, wincing a little at his own temerity.

I exploded, "Of course I wanted the eggs for supper! I told you to have them ready at six o'clock."

Shankar began searching for an explanation but he an-

swered before he had found a good one. "But sahib did not say on which day," he wailed. "I did not know that it was tonight!"

This is typical of a constant frustration we meet in dealing with most of the Indian servants. They seem lazy and opposed to efficiency by principle, contrary and unwilling to do more than they must. And yet this is only an immediate reaction. Having noted it, I should note some sounder reflections as well. I have noticed that the bearers respond to good treatment, that their efficiency triples when they are working for Americans. It is only when in contact with "His Majesty's representatives" that they seem so completely and hopelessly incompetent. I am not surprised that they react as they do to serving the men whose presence they hate. I can think of no more natural, justifiable reaction than this mass "slowdown strike" that is practiced throughout India. It is a source of the most genuine amazement to me that the colonial administrators so seldom see through it, that they take this intentional bungling for granted. But perhaps in the end it is just as well, since it saves the bearers from many possible reprisals.

My two little bearers returned this evening, though I'd have sworn I had seen the last of them Tuesday. When I awoke at seven they were crouched by my bedside, eyes bulging out like two little crickets. Almost as soon as my lashes first fluttered they were both in a state of absolute frenzy. Apparently they had been here for quite a while, eager to anticipate my very awakening. I wanted very much to roll over once more, but I decided that the children would burst if I did. The boy was extending my bathrobe from a distance, evidently expecting me to leap into it from the bed.

The girl was even more excited as she offered me a cup of steaming tea. I quickly cautioned her to keep her distance, paled by the prospect of a momentary shower. But when I began crawling from under my mosquito net, both



children decided that it should have been raised. They made a simultaneous dash for it, pushing me back into bed in their enthusiasm.

"Now take it easy, both of you," I cried. "You're sure to kill me with kindness at this rate. I'm paying you by the month, you know, and you'll scarcely last a week if this continues."

The youngest beamed up at me and clasped her hands, touching them to her forehead with a little nod. "Good morning, sahib," she murmured quietly, her brother joining in the last two syllables.

"Good morning, bearers," I said with a laugh as they looked at each other in obvious pride.

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Babu, the proprietor of our unit canteen, has just got out of the hospital. I've noticed his absence from the Café la Trine, but only today did I learn the reason. Last week, it seems, he had rented a tonga and was riding through the European section of Poona. A British soldier stepped out to the curb and hailed the driver, demanding a ride. The driver apologized and explained to the tommy that his wagon was already occupied. But the soldier persisted, drunken and surly. "Then where is your fare, you lying wog?"

The driver repeated, "Already taken. Another tonga across the street, sahib."

At this point another soldier joined the first one, adding his voice to the angry protests. "Say, tonga wallah, you heard this sahib! We don't see no passenger there in your tonga. Only this little raghead friend of yours; get him out of that seat in a hurry."

At this the driver motioned Babu down, but Babu refused to yield his place. "Gentlemen," he tried to reason with the two, "there is another tonga right across the street. I think you've had a bit too much to drink, and you're just in a rather angry mood. I paid this driver and I must be on my way. That driver over there will be glad to carry you."

At this one of the soldiers pulled Babu from the tonga, while the other began taking off his belt. The first one swung hard, knocking Babu to the ground; then he kicked at him viciously till he was almost unconscious. But to judge from the looks of Babu's face, the beating did not stop for quite a while. The belt buckle left deep lacerations in his flesh, and one eye was nearly torn from its socket.

I talked with Babu early this morning and I was surprised that he felt so little bitterness. I was furious when he told me that the military police had virtually refused to locate his assailants. But Babu himself was very philosophical, and he stopped me when I referred rather heatedly to "those swine." He said, "It is not any one man's fault. These two were drunk and didn't know what they were doing. They've all been away from their homes too long, away from their friends and their sweethearts and their country. They're angry now with the entire world and that has a bad effect on men."

I admitted, "Yes, I suppose it does, but that certainly does not justify their behavior toward you."

Babu replied, "Oh, it's much too simple to blame the individual soldiers for it. How can these tommies understand my people when even your scholars find it hard to do so? It's really a clash of outlooks, of peoples; the British and the Indians are strange to each other."

I answered, "All right, but strange or not, they have no right to do this sort of thing! They have no right to treat you as dirt beneath their feet, to violate your person without the slightest provocation."

Babu sighed. "No, my boy, they have no right. But it is inevitable under the circumstances."

I'm beginning to understand what Babu meant, now that I consider his argument objectively. His beating was not just a personal thing, to be considered apart from the general problem. The indignities, disgrace, and the suffering of this people are inseparably linked with foreign rule. They are not regrettable breaches of its discipline, but in-

herent axioms in its very philosophy. It isn't a question of personalities, or a question of Babu and two drunken tom-mies. The punishment of these two would be less than justice; it would only be a second injustice related to the first. Hatred and friction and occasional beatings are a part and parcel of the colonial system. Fists and oaths and flying belt buckles are necessary tools of any imperialism.

Babu's case is typical, I'm afraid. I've learned that from talking with other officers. A major whom I met in the canteen last week was bragging about just such an incident as this. We were talking, originally, about the war inflation and I was bemoaning the increasing cost of living. But the major insisted that in spite of the rise he refused as a matter of principle to pay more than previously. "They'll ask you for twice as much," he agreed, "but there's no reason why they should grow rich off this war. I pay them what is right for whatever I want, then I pick it up and carry it off."

I was rather surprised at the major's blithe methods and I asked, "But don't the merchants object?"

The major laughed. "Oh, occasionally they do, in which case I just belt them aside with my swagger stick. I remember the time when I was up in the Punjab; I thrashed one fellow soundly for arguing with me. He insisted that I give him eight annas, if you please, for a tonga ride which was worth only three. I finally just walked away from the beggar, ignoring his jabbering and his arguments. But he had the infernal nerve to chase after me, shouting as I climbed the steps of my billet. I turned around and told him to leave. When he stood his ground, I took his whip from him. I gave him one hell of a good beating with it and got back my three annas for the lesson I'd taught him. Oh, I tell you, young fellow, they're a sneaky lot and you've got to be careful or they'll rob you blind." The major leaned back and beamed with pride, musing, "But after twenty years, you'll know how to handle them."

I remarked that I already knew "how to handle them," sneering a little at the major's bigotry.

"Well, good for you," he babbled without thinking, then suddenly my intent began to sink in.

These oldsters place a premium on such cruelty; it proves that they are genuine "pukah sahibs." Often they will berate a servant quite needlessly, just to impress some younger officer. They enjoy relating incidents like the one above. Sometimes they actually compete in it. They suppress any feelings of justice or mercy as something unbecoming a colonial officer.

# V

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I AM learning quite a bit about Hinduism, and the more I learn, the more intelligible it becomes. Now that I see it from the inside out, it seems much less exotic and bizarre than it did. There are many taboos and theological principles which still are quite incomprehensible to me, but then, I have never heard a Christian minister make very good sense of the doctrine of the Trinity. On the surface, many features seem barbaric and crude, sociologically quite untenable. But the more I talk with my Indian friends, the fewer and fewer these features become. For example, the myriad number of gods, each holding sway in different districts or castes; these, I have learned, are simply manifestations of a very few religious figures. In various places they are pictured differently, and called perhaps by different names. But in a country of as many languages as India, that is scarcely perplexing or hard to explain.

Many of the so-called "special gods" that particular religions adopt as their own are no more than the saints which we enlightened Christians choose as our individual and collective patrons. Essentially, Hinduism is monotheistic, holding to one God who is manifested variously. There is a beautiful passage in the *Bhagavad-Gita* which expresses this idea clearly and vigorously. Still, it seems strange that the Hindu icons demonstrate such impossible natural forms. Seven-headed cobras and twelve-armed gods are rather primitive theology, it would seem. The Hindu can admit this without losing much ground, taking refuge in a further plausible argument. He can point out to the Christian the cherubim and angels, which, though immediately irrational, possess mythological significance. But easier

still, the enlightened Hindu can trace the origin of his exotically formed deities.

It is almost impossible to mold in bronze the figure of a supremely powerful being. However muscular and wise he may look, he will still partake of our human limitations. But sociologists will tell us that this mere difficulty will not result in the abstraction of the deity. Somehow, with the tools and insight at its command, a society will symbolize its good through the arts. The simplest expedient for a primitive people is to express this power and wisdom quantitatively. Seven heads would be better than one, and twelve arms are a clear demonstration of strength. Of course the Hindu knows well what this means; he does not expect to see such creatures. But still the symbolism is suggestive to him and he appreciates the icon for its aesthetic validity.

I was down in the city this afternoon, looking for some good native handmade textiles. I have developed a rather expensive taste for Benares silks and Kashmir peshmina wool. The proprietor of the Kashmir Art Emporium is a man of better than average tastes. His store contains some wonderful handmade shawls, embroidered tapestries, and bordered saris. He apparently approves my taste in materials, since he has saved some pieces of unusual value for me. Though his prices were really quite high at first, they have become more reasonable with each successive purchase.

I have been interested to notice the unusual attitude displayed by most of the Poona shopkeepers. They will actually reduce the price of their wares to sell them to someone who will particularly appreciate them. This afternoon I bought a jade brooch that was marked, in a showcase, for one hundred rupees. When I admired it, identifying its type and origin, the proprietor seemed anxious for me to have it. But since I had heard him refuse an offer of eighty chips, I protested that I was in no position to buy it. "How

much?" he asked, ignoring my words. "I will sell it to you for less than that."

I replied, "But I have only thirty rupees with me and five or ten more back at camp, at most."

He removed the brooch from its box in the showcase and began wrapping it up in heavy brown paper. "Pay me thirty rupees then," he said. "Or pay me later, whichever you'd rather."

I stammered, "But I cannot accept it for that. At thirty rupees it is practically a gift. You previously refused an offer of eighty. Why should you give it to me for less?"

The shopkeeper explained, "You are a man of good judgment; I know that from the dealings we have had before. When you go back to America you must take good things with you because you really appreciate their worth. I am not a poor man. I can afford to help you. I want to see this brooch in the right person's hands. To that woman the jade didn't mean a thing; she would only have bought it if it seemed like a bargain. Many hours of work went into this carving and a great deal of skill, too much to waste. Take it, I insist, for whatever you like." He handed me the package after a last fond pat.

Last week I had a similar experience with Raman, owner of the Poona Arts Depot. I priced a lapis lazuli carving and was astounded to hear that it was only twenty-five rupees. Since Raman himself was not in the store, I insisted that his helper read the tag again. "Twenty-five rupees, sahib," he repeated, "and a very good bargain at such a sum."

I agreed, "A very good bargain indeed," as I drew the requisite bills from my pocket. "I still have a feeling that you've made a mistake, but if you're sure that's the price, I'll take it immediately."

At this point Raman himself appeared from the street and greeted me with a friendly smile. "I think I'm getting the best of you," I laughed, showing the carving which I had just acquired.

"Getting the best of me?" Raman asked. "Well, just how much did you pay for that?"

I answered airily, "Why, twenty-five rupees, the very first price your man here asked."

Raman seemed rather puzzled by my answer, then he spoke to his assistant in Gujarati. "I believe you did get the best of me," he said. "The price was supposed to be two hundred fifty."

I could not conceal my disappointment as I sighed, "Well, in that case, I'm afraid I can't keep it."

But Raman replied, "It is already yours and there is nothing that I can do about it now."

I laughed. "But Raman, I refuse to hold you to this sale. I realize that it was simply a silly mistake."

Raman shook his head and refused my offer, saying, "A bargain is a bargain and the carving is yours."

As I look back over my earlier entries, I can hardly believe that I wrote some of them. Impressions of filth and apparent degeneracy have by now given way to a deeper understanding. When I first came in contact with the people of India, I was struck by their terrible poverty. I judged them harshly in terms of it and I did not look beyond these immediate appearances. But now I must confess that I am ashamed of these judgments and of the materialistic outlook that was responsible for them. To be truthful, I seldom have the temerity now to talk blithely of what these people must do or learn. They are far from the ignorant children I thought them; it is I who feel like a schoolboy in their presence. For they are wise in the most important respects, in terms of morality and human values. They are not exotic abstractionists, as I thought, who sit in silence, contemplating their navels. They are rather a very direct and friendly people whose wisdom is simple, like the wisdom of a child. The Indians have a pitiful lot to learn, but not in the realm of the humanities. Their in-



sight and sincerity are profound and amazing; their personal integrity is almost unquestionable.

How ironic that we should send missionaries out here to convert the "heathen" to our way of thinking! How much like sending a salesman to Alaska to distribute refrigerators to the Eskimos! I am not reflecting on the Christian religion or comparing it unfavorably with Hinduism. I am talking rather about the results of each on the lives of the people who profess their beliefs. We send very little material help to this country, but we send an abundance of earnest young clerics. I think we might better reverse the process, since the Indian's belly is more lacking than his soul. I suggest that we exchange a few bulldozers for Hindus to teach Americans morality and courtesy. To paraphrase an age-old axiom, with their principles and our technical knowledge the whole world could really go places.

I spent the morning out on the drill field, watching the men rehearse for parade. I have seen them in close-order formations before, but I had never really learned the formal movements. The whole procedure seems awkward to me, terribly exaggerated and overly severe. The men are admonished by their sergeant major to "Stomp 'em down so they loosen your teeth." A march at attention looks much like the goose step, since the hands of the soldiers must be swung "shoulder high." "To the rear march" is an even more silly spectacle, being executed to a count of four. The men revolve in a tight little circle, bringing their knees up under their chins. Even "at ease" the men are rigid, jaws thrust out and stomachs pulled in.

Whenever a soldier makes a sloppy motion, he is called out of line by the drillmaster in charge. He holds out his hands like an errant schoolboy while the sergeant raps his knuckles with a swagger stick. The pain cannot really be very great, but the humiliation can hardly be borne.

Grown men appear on the verge of tears when told, "You're a sloppy soldier, Smith."

Once in a while a unit will rebel when a very unpopular drillmaster leads them. Men in the ranks will call out commands and the others obey, confused and misled. I saw one group put on such a show, to the utter consternation of the fellow in charge. He was a newly promoted unit corporal and the men resented his inferior status. Finally he placed one of the men in charge, sure that this would stop the insurrection. "Stonewall," he cried, "take over the men. I shall hold you responsible for their absolute obedience."

Stonewall came out to the front of the line and was greeted by a flurry of wild laughs. "Fall out and dismissed," he shouted loudly. The unit obeyed without hesitation.

How I wish I could record the conversations which I have with the high ranking officers here! It seems I am accepted as a member of the raj, for the pretense at sincerity itself is dropped. I have tried to argue seriously with some of them, but they don't seem concerned with the vital issues. They begin their reasoning from the unfaltering assumption that since Britain benefits from India, her presence here is justified. I should think they would at least pretend a concern with the welfare of the Indian people. But so far everyone has been completely candid, quite willing to admit his profound disinterest. I can retain my composure in the face of anything—anything, that is, short of blatant selfishness. But yesterday afternoon while I was talking with a colonel I almost completely lost my temper.

"Don't tell me," he remarked with genuine boredom, "that you're concerned with the welfare of the wogs hereabouts. Well, no matter, you'll get over that in a hurry—that is, if you know what's best for yourself."

I ignored the obvious warning in his words and snapped back a rather peevish answer. "I was brought to India

under false pretenses, Colonel, under a pretense that Britain is interested in these people. In America we are told that your country controls India at least partially for the good of the Indians themselves. We are told that the rule is kind and humane, designed to prepare these people for self-government."

The Colonel could hardly believe his ears; he spun around toward me and threw down his swagger stick. "Well, now you know better, don't you?" he shouted, striding out to end the discussion.

This isn't the first time I've been ridiculed for believing what I've read in Information Service releases. Time and again I have been brusquely told to forget these imperial apologetics. Just a week ago I was arguing with another fellow, this time a major in Field Security. We were talking about the terrible famine in Calcutta and what seemed to me a needless loss of life. "I can't understand it," I repeated over and over, trying to make sense of a senseless thing.

"Of course you can't," my host snapped back. "You're eating up our own propaganda. Don't be so damned naïve, young fellow. The Empire isn't a charitable institution. As long as the natives get along, that's fine. When they don't, it's hardly our responsibility. The Army isn't out here to feed this country or wipe the noses of these dirty beggars. We're out here to see that British interests are protected, and believe me, that's a big enough job in itself."

I protested, "But even assuming what you say, surely you'd benefit from building this place up. My God, in its present run-down condition India can't begin to produce to capacity."

The Major smiled for a moment at my naïveté, rose to leave, then turned in the doorway. "Here's a rule of thumb to follow: Britain wants India, but she doesn't want the Indians."

Britain wants India, but she doesn't want the Indians;

that is indeed our slogan out here. I am sick of searching for justifications of the unconcern and brutality toward the natives. Of what importance are the academic arguments for and against this country's independence? Only a fool, after seeing this from the inside, could ever believe Britain was even sincere. Why should we consider what the raj could do, when it is so sickeningly apparent just what she is doing? Why should I engage in esoteric discussions when the men of the raj itself are so candid? I am through making an absolute ass of myself by trying to tell these men their own rotten business. I'm through assuming a basic justice, a fundamental interest in the welfare of the Indians. I've never yet been taken seriously by the very men who should want most to agree with me. I've been patted on the head and treated like a child who is only slowly learning the facts of life.

In the past few months I've learned a lot about human nature, imperialism, and power politics. But most of all, I am learning against my will that the raj is a fraud on a national scale. Its storied benevolence is a shabby pretense, laughed at by the people who are supposed to practice it. Its concern for the native is absolute fiction; he is nothing more than a slave to us. How can this monstrous evil persist? Why have we never learned the truth? Hitler was right; if a lie is great enough, people are all the more apt to believe it!

This afternoon on my way back from town I happened to cross the regimental drill grounds. I noticed some sort of activity at one end, but I assumed it was just some informal maneuver. When I had got just about halfway across I was stopped in my tracks by a ground-shaking squeal. As I turned, what I saw sent a chill through my spine and a thrill through the entire length of my body. The disorganized groups I had seen before were marching in a solid, compact formation. They were bearing directly down on me as if their marker used me for his sight. The

flashing tartan of the Scottish Guards was whipping to the rhythm of the pounding feet, and as the men swung along they kept briskly in time with the monotonous skirl of the regimental bagpipes. I stood blinking for almost a minute and a half, fascinated by the approaching columns of men. Finally a corporal tapped me gently on the arm and said, "Beg pardon, sir, but they're headin' dead for us." I retired, at his suggestion, to the end of the field, but I stayed to watch till the show was through. In just a few moments we were surrounded by natives who were apparently overawed by the spectacle, as we were. The guardsmen seemed completely unaware of our presence, unaware of everything but the commands of their sergeants. At times they would march directly toward the crowds, which would melt from beneath their very feet. I wondered at the time what would have happened if the spectators hadn't moved quite fast enough. From the set of the jaws of the sweating troops, I decided we would all be ground down as by a juggernaut.

I must confess that while I was watching the parade I was taken in like any of the natives. I stood on my tiptoes and stared through the crowds, like a young farm hand at the county fair. But as the men left the fields a couple of their officers passed near by on their way back into Poona. A captain sauntered over and observed with a smile, "I guess that will hold them for another week."

I snapped to my senses just quickly enough to agree, "It certainly seemed to impress the natives."

The Captain laughed. "Well, that's what's intended, but you know, I get a thrill from it myself. I've been in the Guards for nearly five years, but the sound of the pipes does something to me yet."

I agreed, "That's easy enough to believe. I have the same reaction myself."

The Captain was beaming, as were his fellows, who had just turned friendly eyes toward me. "Really?" one said.

"Come along with us. We're bound for the Poona Club to celebrate this campaign."

I protested, "But I'll have to change from my shorts. The M.P.'s will take a dim view of this costume. Suppose I slip into long sleeves and trousers and join you there in half an hour?"

Bailis (I later found out his name) agreed that this sounded like the wisest course. "We'll see you there at half six, then." I promised to meet them in the center lounge.

When I stopped in the barracks Byron was waiting, and he urged me to go into town with him. When I explained that I was bound for the Poona Club, he finally agreed to compromise on that. I had never been to the club before, and I was a little uneasy on several scores. Chiefly, I recalled the occasion on which another of our unit was refused admittance. Like the rest of us, he wore no sign of rank, and a bearer assumed that he was an enlisted man. When he tried to explain his special status, he was met with a stony, unyielding stare.

"Byron," I ventured, "do you think we'll have trouble? Having no sign of our rank, I mean."

Byron returned, "That depends on our methods, upon the air we assume, that is. When we enter the place, remember this: These pukah sahibs will accept you at your own valuation. If you enter timidly, hat in hand, you'll probably wind up on the steps outside. So charge right in as if you owned the place and push anyone aside who seems to object. If you're stared at by any of the dismal old officers, why, stare right back and breathe fire in their faces. That's the thing that's really important in establishing your status here in India. If you're rude to a person, everyone assumes that your social position is better than his. In conversation, be blunt to unpleasantness, and don't be afraid to step on people's toes. If someone asks for a duel of wits, give him just what he is asking for. Don't hold back for politeness' sake; it will be taken as a sign

that you fear the man." I wasn't too sure about this advice of Byron's, but I resolved to put it to the test at any rate.

As we entered the Poona Club several old colonels began wondering who and what I was. While Byron was checking his cap and mine they stared in shifts at my bare epaulets. I tried to ignore them for a moment or two, but finally the suspense got the better of me. I glanced at them with what I had intended to be a look of haughty, self-assured indifference. Apparently it miscarried, for they grew more suspicious and finally began working their way toward me. At last one was just a few feet away, and we glared toward each other at a very close range.

Byron appeared at this opportune moment and immediately took command of the situation. He strode up to me in mild curiosity and said, "Muehl, if you know this joker, why, say hello to him."

I replied, "But I have never seen him before. I can't understand his curiosity."

Byron laughed. "Oh, he's probably a bit tight. Come along, we mustn't keep Bailis waiting."

At this the colonel turned rather regretfully toward me, while I held my breath expecting a shout. "I'm terribly sorry," he apologized stiffly. "I didn't realize you were an American. I thought . . . Damn! Never mind what I thought. I beg your pardon for my inexcusable rudeness."

I walked away, trying hard to look stern while Byron made that increasingly difficult. "You see," he kept muttering. "It's as easy as that. Don't even answer him. Cut him dead."

Actually, Bailis had yet to arrive, so we adjourned for a few moments to one of the bars. Two women, apparently of good social standing, greeted us unexpectedly as we sat drinking at our table. They were very plain and unattractive, but they were passably interesting by virtue of their preoccupation with sex.

"I see you're an American," one said to me. "You men have quite a reputation, you know."

"Really?" I parried. "What kind of reputation? If you'll tell me I promise I'll try to live up to it."

We played cat and mouse for about fifteen minutes, in spite of any number of proximate eavesdroppers. I was a bit uncomfortable about this for a while, but I relaxed when I saw that the women did not mind. Byron finally became bored with the proceedings and casually announced that Bailis was waiting. I excused myself with a little difficulty, rather glad of a chance to break away.

As we approached his table Bailis observed, "So you've already made a conquest, have you?"

I replied, "A conquest? Well, hardly that. I barely said hello to the girl."

Bailis laughed. "Then I see you don't know her. Hello to her is tantamount to a proposition."

I admitted, "Well, that makes her a bit more interesting, but still, she doesn't seem to be my type. Just who is she, and why is she here? Have I ruined my good name by talking with her?"

At this all the officers reared back in their chairs and roared at some humor that completely escaped me. "Well, she's not a bim," Bailis finally answered. "On the contrary, she's the wife of our most promising civil service officer!"

I cried in amazement, "The wife of a civil service officer? You're joking! You can't be serious."

Bailis insisted, "I was never more serious. She's an acceptable matron. She only acts like a prostitute." I lowered myself into one of the chairs, wagging my head in disbelief, as Bailis gently patted my shoulder saying, "You've a lot to learn about Poona society."

Yesterday morning a group of the officers asked me if I would teach them how to play baseball. Soccer, they said, was "a bit too rough" and hockey required "too much constant practice." I suspected that they underestimated baseball if they felt it was less demanding in either respect,



but after a very few moments of futile argument I agreed to teach them the fundamentals.

Most of the men were dressed in full uniform, but they laughed when I suggested that they change to something else. "We've always managed to play cricket this way," one said, "and I understand that baseball is very much like it."

I protested that though I knew nothing about cricket, I could guarantee that baseball was a strenuous game. "If you try to slide in those shorts," I said, "I'm afraid you'll be skinned from hipbone to heel."

One or two of the fellows mumbled something to the effect that they did not intend to "go sliding about." Then the Major called cheerily, "Well, come now. Let's get on," so I decided to let them all learn from experience.

I led the men out to a soccer pitch and began laying out a regulation diamond. There were a few crisp comments on the length of the base lines, but I reminded the officers, "But we must obey the rules." This was met with such immediate agreement and enthusiasm that I suspected I had acquired a useful technique. Then suddenly I turned and began counting noses, only to find that we were several men short. "Well, this won't do," I said to the fellows. "We've got to get a few more men. We'll need someone to bat the ball around." A few of the lieutenants took exception to my statement, suggesting that we play a few innings "shorthanded." I gasped, "In contravention of the rules?" and won the immediate repentance of the offenders.

"But most of the others are busy," said one captain. "I doubt if we can find another soul."

For a moment the problem seemed insurmountable; then suddenly I hit upon a possible solution. I held my breath, but tried to sound casual as I suggested, "Well, how about a few enlisted men?"

The Major muttered, "Enlisted men? Well! To tell the truth, I hadn't thought of that." It was quite apparent that

he not only hadn't, but that he didn't intend to, seriously, now.

"Lieutenant," I cried in synthetic enthusiasm, "get a few of your men out here."

The Major began stammering, "I'm not quite sure . . ." but his indecision was buried in the excitement of the rest.

When Lieutenant Audley returned to the field, he was leading two bedraggled, unhappy-looking tommies. It was apparent that while this might be a game to the rest of us, it was just an unpleasant assignment to them.

"What ho, men! Join in the fun," one of the captains cried in a forced camaraderie.

"Beg pardon, sir?" said one of the tommies, coming to attention and banging his heels.

"Stand easy, men," the Captain replied. "We want you to join in the game with us."

The little fellow replied, "Yes, sir, we know. What would you like us to do first, sir?"

I broke into the dialogue at this tragic point, exhorting all the men to fan out across the field. The tommies hung together around second base, eying each other with a pitiful uneasiness. "You two, spread out," I called to them. "Don't crowd together behind the pitcher."

As they began to separate, the Major cried sharply, "Here, you! Not so damned close to the shortstop!" At this the fellows scrambled back together like an isolated pair of lonesome sheep. I decided to leave them where they were for a while, since this burlesque of theirs could have gone on all morning.

For a time the game progressed quite satisfactorily, with much fumbling and wild throwing, but in general good spirits. Then suddenly I hit a fly to the infield which the enlisted men allowed to drop between them. This annoyed the Colonel quite beyond all reason; he felt that such stupidity could not be allowed. "See here, you clowns there on second base," he called, "I want to see you go after that ball. You've been brooding out there like two sullen owls

and it's just about time you changed your attitude. The rest of us are enjoying the game and I expect to see you enjoy it as well."

The tommies listened at respectful attention, but their enjoyment did not at once visibly increase. Instead, they became more uncomfortable than ever, so I tried to avoid hitting the ball into their territory.

"Hit the ball over there," cried the Major, pointing in the direction of the unfortunate pair. "And you two, I want to see you catch this. There is no earthly reason for your failure to do so."

I popped up a very easy fly just beyond the second base line. But the tommies ran into each other trying to field it, and the ball dropped safely beyond them. At this the Major became apoplectic, and he berated the men for several minutes. They stood unflinching, at attention again, murmuring an occasional "Yes, sir" or "No, sir." Finally the Major had exhausted his rage and he came in to take the bat from my hands. He looked toward second base and choked, out of breath, "Catch this, now. Catch it! That is an order."

The army dhobi has just brought our laundry; what is left, that is, of my socks, shirts, and pants. I'm amazed that, without any chemical bleaches, he manages to soak the color out of things so quickly. Most of these pieces have been washed only four or five times, but already they are bedraggled and streaked with white. Considering the methods the dhobi uses, I suppose I am lucky there is anything left. Yesterday, on my way to the Royal Connaught Boat Club, I stopped on the bank of the river. Beneath me, far down on the rocky bottom, the laundrymen of Poona were hard at work. Till then I had not known what methods they used; perhaps it were better if I had not learned. Soaps and solutions were unheard of here. Plain river water was the dhobi's only helper. The men would swing the clothes above their heads, then dash them down

across protruding stone surfaces. They would draw the clothes across the rock face to loosen the dirt which clung to the fabric. After this the piece would be swished back and forth in the water of the swiftly running channel. What few worn threads survived all these tests would be laid on the clean white banks to dry. From a distance the scene was really quite beautiful; the shores of the river were splotted with color. Blue and yellow saris lay there, stirring in the gentle summer winds. Red and purple turban bands fluttered and dried in the hot morning sun. The sky, as always, was a cobalt blue, reflected in the narrow wisp of water. As the dhobis worked, a spray flew up and the droplets formed tiny rainbow arcs. The brown bodies bent and swayed in rhythm; I could barely hear a chanting tune.

It would be easy to conclude this story here, where any well-timed travelogue would end. But for the sake of truth, if at the expense of beauty, I must relate the rest of this pastoral scene. Intrigued by what I had seen from a distance, I refused to let well enough alone. I rode down a little winding path and stopped within a few yards of the river. I leaned across the handle bars of my cycle, nodding in time with the song of the dhobi. I must have remained there for several minutes, almost enchanted by the scene before me. Suddenly I began listening to the words of the chant, and I realized with a start that they were not Urdu, but English. What had seemed like a gentle, happy work tune suddenly became a bitter lament. "Brown man good man," the dhobi would sing, raising the washing above his head. "Brown man good man, white man bastard!" The clothes would crash down across the rocks. Each time the washermen repeated their motions, they repeated the angry words of their chant. "Brown man good man, white man bastard" thundered in time with the vigorous pounding. I flushed and felt rather out of place, though none of the dhobis seemed aware of my presence. I turned and rode

back up the hill, strangely but genuinely perplexed and sad.

I sometimes feel like a man without a country, for I am not at ease with the British or the Indians. I cannot accept the first group as my own and the latter would probably never accept me. I am becoming ashamed of the uniform I wear, for in it I stand for something I hate. Whenever I near a group of Indians, they become stiff and formal, courteous but unfriendly. I've tried very hard to break down this reaction, but the majority cannot help resenting me a little. And yet in spite of the gulf between us, I have more in common with them than with the men close around me.

I went to the cinema this afternoon at the suggestion of Bisbee and some of his friends. Though the feature was old, the advertisements were worth a great deal more than the price of admission. As in any American vaudeville house, the curtain bore a number of lettered signs. But those merchants who were willing to pay a little more displayed their advertisements on slides instead. I recall one slide in particular now, bearing the hand-lettered name of Cheap John. "Old Brass and Gems at Rockbottom-Cutrate Prices. Come and see me, Joe, don't be cheated." The hand of some GI was discernible in this, his hand and perhaps his sense of humor.

Another slide that caught my attention warned patrons of the dangers and evils of smoking. It was probably inserted by some Moslem philanthropist who was anxious to sell his ideas and his talents.

### SMOKING

*It soils your fingers, stains your clothes,  
And makes a chimney of your nose,  
So for the delicate ladies refrain  
From doing this habit ever again.  
(And also for innocent kiddies)*

I have been upset by several other advertisements that have been appearing regularly in the Indian papers. They indicate a dangerous patent medicine racket that is bent on milking the most ignorant natives. "A Lady in Worry Must Use — Tablets, for — is sure and safe. Dependable. Quick and easy to use. All experienced doctors recommend their use. Delay due to any reason can be definitely put right within the space of 24 hours. Note: These tablets, being marvelous in effect, should not be used in pregnancy." This last, of course, is a rather broad wink, designed to protect the manufacturer and distributor. How many Indians have been taken in by this obvious and yet very vicious hoax?

A similar advertisement pictures a woman in the company of an extremely dejected gentleman. To judge from the diaphanous drapery of the girl, the man is not worrying about his losses in the stock market. "Take —," this advertisement advises, "which regulates your period within 24 to 48 hours . . . contains 10,000 units of the costly hormone Estrin and that's why it never fails." Again there is the warning, printed in small type, halfheartedly warning against use in pregnancy. But this product, just as clearly as the other, is aimed at the poverty-ridden, overly fertile masses.

Finally, there is a picture of an African chieftain, showing him with his many wives and children. "Zooloo," the picture is captioned boldly, "a medicine used by the Zulus for increasing VIGOUR and VITALITY." Below, another streamer mysteriously announces, "A secret zealously guarded by the witch doctors." Then, "Thanks to the enterprise and years of labour and perseverance on the part of the Africa Corporation in securing the secret from the witch doctors, we are today in the proud position of placing Zooloo before the Indian public to the great relief of many unhappy men. . . . Unlike so many drugs which claim to cure debility by making men take tablets or liquids by mouth, the Zooloo oil is a local tonic. It has a

most pleasant smell and works like magic." Finally, the ad promised to send on request a booklet entitled "The Magic of Simba."

I was discouraged to think that such promotions could go on under the very eye of the British "protector." But I was even more discouraged to think that the Indians were turning thus on their own countrymen. In a nation where ignorance is as widespread as here, to spread more intentionally seemed almost like treason. It would retard development when quick development was the goal of all. I don't know whether I felt better or worse when I noticed the legend "Made in England" in one ad. But I do know that I became very angry indeed when I found that the vendors of all three were British.

## VI

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I VISITED the local hotel several days ago, and I met a completely new crowd of people. Yet all of them fit so readily into the stereotyped patterns, I have difficulty realizing that I scarcely know most of them. I can anticipate precisely what they are going to say, even before they open their mouths to say it. I am tempted to stop going to the hotel for conversation; I could imagine the whole evening without leaving the quarters. There is the drunken major who regales all present with his never-ending tales of frontier service. There is the rookie from England who chodes on his chota peg, but manages to down it with a mustered swagger. There is the respectful ranker who is afraid to say "boo" in the presence of his vaunted and alleged "betters." And as always in Poona, there are the foot-loose women, who are dying of boredom and living for sex.

Mrs. Aldrich is typical of the whole ugly pattern. She is old and obese, but thoroughly sensual. Yet she does not stand out in this Poona society, for so many of the women are exactly the same. I am apparently not alone in my views. For there was one at the hotel who, strange as it seemed, was quite ready to agree with my bitter opinion. Mrs. Bannefield is the survivor of a retired colonel who had spent the greater share of his life in this country. She has been out here for so long herself that she won't consider returning to Britain at this point. "Besides," she observed to me the other day, "there wouldn't be so much to see in Blighty." I followed her gaze across the room to the place where Kelly and Mrs. Aldrich were talking.

"You know, this place is going to hell," Mrs. Bannefield observed to my mild surprise. "A certain amount of promiscuity is one thing. A constant dwelling on sex is an-



other. When I was a girl I traveled around through India wherever my husband went. But most of these youngsters," she waved her hand spacioously, "just stay in the most pleasant place they can find. And then when the man's busy running about, why they run about in a different way. They sleep with every guardsman and fusilier that so much as buys them a couple of drinks." I threw back my head and laughed at this, but Mrs. Bannefield seemed very serious. "I mean it," she said. "It isn't good. It completely destroys their sense of values. It's natural enough in a way, I suppose, for this is a terrible place for a woman to live. Her friends are few and her amusements fewer. But don't judge English women by this, my lad. It is the scum of the country that comes out here. The scum of the country, with scummy ideas."

"I'm glad to hear you say this," I replied, "for I certainly hope that England isn't like this. I've never seen such a sordid society, if I may take the liberty of perfect frankness. These women are naturally terribly frustrated with their husbands absent for years at a time. But that frustration comes out in many ways, none of them very pleasant or healthy. They're unspeakably bad to their servants, I've noticed, much worse than any of the men. They abuse their bearers physically and otherwise in a manner that can only be traced to real sadism. Another more obvious, direct manifestation is their constant preoccupation with sex. They dwell on it so heavily and with such unabating fury that it becomes vulgar and dirty instead of interesting."

Mrs. Bannefield exclaimed, "That's exactly what I mean. You understand me perfectly. It's a terribly warped, distorted society, dominated by largely erotic forces."

Just then Mrs. Aldrich called to an Indian musician who was busily setting up his drums and his music. "Director," she said in an angry voice, "you've got to use a different drum. The one that you have sounds like an African tomtom. It simply won't do. *Nay thic hai*, you *malum*?"

The musician stared at her blankly for a moment, shuf-

fling uneasily and looking downward. "*Nay malum*, mem-sahib."

Then he lapsed into Urdu, but Mrs. Aldrich cut him short, saying, "Stop jabbering, do you hear? You've got to get a different drum. Another drum. New drum, do you hear?"

At last the Indian understood what she meant, but he apologized, "No other drum, memsahib. Only drum. No other drum."

Mrs. Aldrich replied, "All right, no other drum. But you've got to play this one differently then. Don't just beat it as if it were a tom-tom. Play it differently, softly, *malum?*"

Again the director was puzzled for a while, but the mem-sahib refused to clarify her statement. Finally, in desperation, the musician repeated, "No other drum, memsahib. Only drum."

At this Mrs. Aldrich almost broke into tears. "Get out of this room, you damned ignorant beast. Get out. Get out of this room, do you hear?" Then suddenly she regained her self-control and turned to one of the men behind her. "Phillip," she said sweetly, "read that last poem again. I love the way you speak those passionate lines. Oh, God, I'm bored. Go over it again. I love the way you read the lines!"

Mrs. Bannefield tugged vigorously at the sleeve of my tunic, whispering hoarsely, "Isn't that what we mean?" I looked down to see her smiling broadly.

I said, "Yes, Mrs. Bannefield, that's just what we mean."

I have never really seen this society before; I have never understood just what it was. These people are not the brave, determined imperialists that Kipling immortalized in his *Barrack-Room Ballads*! These are individuals living, living individual lives; they are not concerned with God and country. They are concerned primarily with making their living, a better living than they would make at home. What do they care for the Indian people? What do they

know of justice and equality? They have nothing in common with Whitehall and Parliament. They have no conception of imperial responsibilities.

Now that I think of it, I have always imagined the representatives of the King in white tie and tails, carefully balancing the interests of the raj, cajoling here, coercing there. But His Majesty's representatives are not polished diplomats who will do all for India that can practically be done. They are little people, living little lives, prejudiced and variable, emotional and personal. The raj is the little man dressed in white who comes trooping out of the consular office, mopping his brow, looking discouraged, saying, "In the name of Christ, it's hot today." The raj is the colonel whose wife is unfaithful; the raj is his wife, who screams, "Get out! Get out!" This government is not run by rational policies, by weighty decisions made in London or Delhi. It is government by reaction, government by prejudice, government by snap judgment, personality, and bias.

When we Americans think of exploitation, we think of a ruthless but an efficient process. We think of selfishness, right enough, but we think of shrewdness, a calculating science. We think of cracked skulls and famine dead, but we think of these in line with some system, in line with some policy that is primarily logical, in line with some plan that is essentially rational. But the British raj is far from logical; it is hardly rational in most respects. If it were either, then Britain could live off India without nearly as much pain and bloodshed as this. But the raj is a self-directing thing, a thing that rules England more than England rules it. It is a cancer on the British body politic that is growing beyond all reasonable size. About half the energy and bulk of the raj is spent in performing its primary functions. But the other half, the inflamed and diseased half, simply preens and pets its own egoistic self. It flatters memsahibs, it assuages old men, it serves to check the decline of "King Arthur's court." It serves a

thousand personal uses for the weak, frustrated souls who supposedly serve it.

I have known there was some slip twixt the cup and the lip, twixt "imperial policy" and this rotten actuality. But I only now discovered what it was; I've only now seen the ideology drip out. The slip is here, in the persons of these people, in the clay foundation for the great ivory tower. It is here in the lying, the frustration and graft that refuse to conform to any grand formula. It is here in Mrs. Bannfield, in Bailis and myself, in the human frailty which haunts any bureaucracy. It is here in the fact of mere personalities in jobs that were designed for not less than gods. In spite of what Amery and Cripps have to say, these people will always be responsible for British policy. Through them the raj is told about India, and through them Britain must dictate her grandest plans. But their behavior is not shaped by edicts or acts of Parliament. Their attitudes cannot be subjected to pronouncements. Their lives and the lives of the nation they control are shaped by imperfections, by frail emotions. "In the name of Christ, it's hot today." "Get out! Get out!" "I love the way you speak those lines." This is the British raj at work, shaping lives, controlling a people's destiny.

Today is a Hindu holiday and the bullocks and cows are all gaily painted. The shoemaker who works on the porch of the barracks has closed his shop to celebrate the occasion. The men are all wearing paper garlands and the women have real flowers in their hair. Most noticeable of all are the red handprints, stamped on animals and buildings and sidewalks. My bearers have tried to explain this sign, saying that the handprint is a religious symbol. It seems that when Krishna disappeared into the clouds, the last thing to be seen was his outstretched hand. The abstract idea is quite appealing and beautiful, but the painted representation is usually rather garish.

The pariah women are still at work, fighting with the

dung beetles for the manure in the streets. They are all dressed a little more gaily than usual, but their nasty job cannot wait till tomorrow. They follow the bullock carts that rumble back and forth carrying the city's produce over these roads. They pick up the fresh manure that drops, patting it into cakes and laying it in their baskets. These cakes are spread on the riverbank to dry in the parching noonday sun. Yes, even these women are in a holiday spirit, chattering with each other and calling back and forth.

An unhappy bull just passed the barracks, wearing a pair of ornamental horns. They were gilded at the ends and painted gaily, stretching a good two feet in the air. The beast did not know what to make of them as he glanced up coyly from under his corded fly-chaser. The weaving of his head could be interpreted as disgust, and I almost thought that I heard him sigh. But I noticed the strangest sight of all after the bull had passed the building. At first I could not believe my eyes when I saw that its testicles were painted a bright red. But surely enough, this was the case, impossible though it seemed at first. I suppose that it is some manner of fertility symbolism, probably connected with the particular holiday.

Some of the bearers have come to work, out of consideration for their helpless sahibs. But they sing as they go about their jobs, in their own little chanting, monotonous way. These Indian tunes sounded discordant at first, unpleasing to my occidental ear. But I'm beginning to find them very interesting, now that I've stopped looking for rhythm and phrase. Most of them are folk songs, I'm told, particularly dealing with religious epic histories. I have asked my bahisti, who seems especially literate, to translate a few for me.

I saw the beginnings of an incipient rebellion last night while I was down in Poona City. I had gone there originally over the warning of my officers, since the native districts are being decimated by the plague. It was a rather

strange and creepy sensation to watch the rats scurry back and forth, knowing that in their fleas, from the filth that bred them, these vermin carried history's most horrible death. But the menace which I saw later was far more violent if considerably less deadly than the bubonic plague. It was a rising of the people in protest against one of the opium shops which the British maintain. The men of the district had gathered in anger, hoping to storm and destroy the place. But somehow the authorities got wind of their plans and had a squad of soldiers to guard the shop.

I tried to remain outside of the group, but my curiosity drew me closer, then into it. If I had been thinking rationally, or thinking at all, I would have realized that by color and uniform I was an enemy. The natives were carrying clubs and brickbats; for the first time I saw them angry and excited. Their quiet joviality had given way to a hatred which, if just as quiet, was terrible to behold. I hurried along from corner to corner, wondering how this ominous march would end. Women were following on the heels of the men, occasionally hanging on them, begging them to halt. Children brought up the rear of the parade, not understanding, but enjoying the spectacle. Then suddenly the front ranks stopped dead in their tracks, and we all piled up like waves on a beach. Across a square, dimly lit by torches, the people glared sullenly at His Majesty's troops. I was tempted to seek refuge by running to the shop, then I counted the tommies and decided to stay. For several hours both groups remained, afraid of a fight, yet prepared to face it. After this war of nerves had weakened the natives' leadership, the forces of the raj played their ace in the hole. Stepping boldly out in front of his ranks, an officer blew several short blasts on a whistle. A rumble began echoing down one of the side streets and in a moment two Bren-gun carriers appeared. They came together in the middle of the square, then they smartly spun around toward the mob. Slowly, but irresistibly, they ground down upon us, careful not to provoke the people

into action. The natives held their line for several seconds, then they wavered and broke before the threat. I am sure that if the carriers had appeared an hour sooner, they would have been stormed and turned over in the street. But they did not appear an hour sooner; the timing of the raj was perfect, as usual.

As the people broke and ran from the guns, I was caught in their sudden panicky rush. I was awfully afraid that when they found me alone they might swarm over me and kill me in passing, out of frustration. Several times I thought this would happen as some Indian would see my uniform and shout. But on each occasion, though a knot would form, it would disperse with a few gestures or grumbling words. I tried, for the first time, to conform to the pattern of the cruel and insensitive pukah sahib. I knew that if I tried to pacify the people, they would rush upon me before I could explain. I stood my ground through every encounter, refusing even to look at the mobs. Though I was terrified, I puffed slowly and deliberately at my pipe, blowing the smoke into the men's very faces. Once I even dared turn my back, again I folded my arms and closed my eyes. But I knew that if I spoke so much as one word this howling mob would beat me down. At last the gun carriers rolled up and passed me. One stopped and a sergeant major hopped out. "Are you all right, sir?" he shouted in a welcome cockney. "Yes," I answered, "but I almost wasn't."

I have not been able to get the story behind this rioting, though my bearers have given me the native version. They say that a missionary somewhere near here had been preaching to the people on the evils of opium. Now he never anticipated such a reaction as this, and most likely under other circumstances he would not have got it. But just a few weeks ago a young boy died after procuring and consuming an overdose of the drug. When the people realized the cause of his death, they were bitter enough to resort to violence. I wonder what would have happened

if this boy had been British and his death had occurred in London!

The caste system within the British Army is quite as rigid as the Hindus' own. I have been amazed to learn that no two ranks are ever encouraged to mix together. Even the enlisted man must choose his friends according to the number of stripes on their arms. Though no army order specifically demands this, consistent violation is "prejudicial to discipline." I noticed when I first arrived in Poona that in the cafés the various ranks sat separately. Sergeants were seated with other sergeants and corporals were seated with other corporals. Until now I had imagined that this was just chance or due at most to the custom of ranked billets. But recently I have learned that it is not simply chance, but a time-honored and strictly obeyed tradition. A sergeant who insists on associating with inferiors may suddenly be demoted to the rank of his friends. A lance corporal who eats with downright privates is apt to be classed with them in official terms.

Frequently there is a number of separate messes, one for each of the ranks and subranks. Here at Poona there are only two, one for the sergeants and another for those below. But sometimes there are four, five, or even six, depending on the size of the regular garrison. The sergeants will then be divided into subclasses, sergeant majors and color sergeants in a place apart. The fact that corporals eat with lance corporals is a sign of Poona's amazing broad-mindedness. And the fact that both mess with the lowly private almost makes news throughout British India.

Even among the officers themselves, the same ridiculous distinctions are made. Though a lieutenant can be seen in the company of a captain, the senior officers are not nearly so lax. Seldom will a major and a lieutenant get together for anything but the most coldly official purposes. Colonels and all those creatures above live in a veritable military limbo. It is rumored that they, like the Cabots and the



Lowells, speak only to each other and, on occasion, to God. At any rate, it is a matter of official fact that they are as unapproachable as a Himalayan peak.

Most unjust of all, from my point of view, is the habit of segregating the officers "up from the ranks" and making them conscious of their inferior position. These fellows, above everyone else in the Army, have distinguished themselves by sheer native ability. Still, the fact that they did not attend a university is a blot on their record that no merit can wipe off. They are given to realize that they may be officers, but they can never aspire to becoming officers and gentlemen.

While I was out on convoy some time ago I met a very interesting sublieutenant. We talked together for most of a morning, till our convoy stopped to "brew up" for tea. There were three little tents by the side of the road, two for our seven officers and one for twenty enlisted men. I followed the majority of the other officers who were heading for the tent that was farthest from our truck. My friend seemed to be a bit embarrassed, and he darted into the closer tent. "Not here," I called to him, unaware of fine distinctions. "Everyone else is headed for this other tent." An awkward silence followed this remark and I began to realize I had said something wrong. "Come along, Muehl," said one of the *Herrenvolk* lieutenants as my friend returned to the ranker's tent.

More recently I was sitting in the Medical Office, waiting for the officer of the day to appear. My chair was turned around away from the window and two lance corporals outside seemed to think they were alone.

"None of this spit and polish for me," said one. "I'm as much of a man as 'e is, ain't I?"

The other agreed, "You're right there, Alf. To see some of 'em jump, you'd think an officer was a bloomin' god. Well, you don't see me bein' so respectful and all. They's only human like we is, ain't they?"

I couldn't resist the temptation to rise and see what

reaction I would get from these men. I suspected that their talk was simply bravado, but I wanted to make sure they were just like the others. "Well," I coughed. "That's pretty wild talk. Are you sure you men mean every word of it?"

The men spun around and turned white at these words; neither could answer my question for a moment. "No, sir," said one. "We was only talkin'. We didn't mean a thing by it."

The other whined, "'At's right, we didn't mean nought. Alf and me was jist talkin', 'at's all."

I couldn't keep up the pretense much longer for I felt awfully sorry for these two frightened men. "Get on your way," I said to them. "I won't repeat a word that I heard." At this they began falling over each other, trying to continue their apologies as they ran. "Look where you're going," I cried after them as one barely missed a concrete post.

This fear of superiors is bred into the tommy long before he enters the service. He is taught to consider himself in reference to his class and to offer due homage to those above. Here in the Army that process is completed systematically, consciously, and efficiently. The haircut of the soldier is specifically designed to make him look and feel ridiculous. To begin with, it has to be terribly short, about half the length of his officer's. But in addition to that it must be shaved up the side, creating the impression that a bowl has been used. If anyone departs from this strict regulation, he is ridiculed and humiliated in front of his fellows. He is asked whether he expects a job in Hollywood; then he is ordered to get the prescribed bowl shave. It is not just a matter of cleanliness and uniformity; Bailis and Bisbee have admitted that openly. It is simply another of the Army techniques to widen the gulf between officer and ranks.

No attempt is ever made to clothe the tommy attractively. He is put into pants that could fit no live animal, baggy in the crotch and tight at the waist. His shirts are

tailored in the fashion of tents and his underclothes (how well I know) are painful to wear. It is hardly possible that this is intentional, but quite obviously it is the result of a supreme lack of care. The tommy's feelings count for nothing; he is a piece of machinery to be operated as cheaply as possible. It is terrible to see him systematically conditioned, consciously prodded into a regulation neurosis.

Last night two soldiers jumped into my victoria, asking if they might ride down to Poona with me. When I answered they noticed that something was amiss, for I did not have the proper accent for a private. Both of them froze in their seats immediately; then one cast a questioning look at the other. His comrade finally asked me, almost in a whisper, "Were we mistaken in thinking you a private . . . sir?" I didn't know exactly what to say so I decided to fall back on technicality. "Well, actually, I'm a civilian," I replied quite casually. "I'm just attached to the Indian Army." This hardly seemed to relieve the two, for it still left my position uncomfortably vague. Both of them began to apologize, insisting they would leave the coach at once. I told them that this not necessary, but the more I talked the more worried they seemed. Finally I realized that they were so uncomfortable that it would be a kindness to let them get out and walk.

I have been in Poona nearly five months now, but so far my training has been very general. I learned a smattering of military courtesy and had the usual indoctrination. Finally today, with the arrival of our vehicles, I was assigned c/o water supply. My duties, though not yet officially outlined, will be the testing, purification, and approving of drinking water. I was rather dissatisfied with the assignment at first, since it seemed like a rather ignominious routine, but now that I think about it, it's rather important and involves quite a bit of technical knowledge. I am going to have to cram a bit since my grasp of chem-

istry is as yet rather slim. Since most of our water will be drawn from ponds and streams, a constant check for disease or poison is imperative.

I have been given a bewildering assortment of chemicals, as strange to the quartermaster as they are to me. I am amazed at the simple faith of these men that I will not absent-mindedly poison them all. I am really quite on my own, it seems, for the Horax tests are nowhere outlined. I've tried to chase down a fat sergeant major who is rumored to have heard of them at one time or another. I am frankly disappointed at having come all this distance to measure out chlorine and pour it in a water tank. But then I understand that some men spend years in college to learn no less prosaic and mundane skills.

I'm to be issued a truck and several Indians. That is the way the quartermaster puts it. The truck carries a three-hundred-gallon tank and the sepoy's carry the truck, I suppose, in emergencies. Actually, these natives will do most of the pumping, an arrangement to which I am definitely partial. My time will be consumed by the arduous business of gazing at test tubes and comparing their colors. Since I alone will understand this business (or dare to pretend that I understand it), I shall be able to set my own hours of work, a situation which has virtually undreamed-of potentialities. One good thing about this job, at least, is that I will always have plenty of water for myself. The usual allotment being one quart per day, I might otherwise have trouble maintaining my daintiness!

## VII

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WELL, I managed to find Sasvad the other day, but not without gashing my tires to pieces. I've just limped in on a balky cycle after spending two days and three nights in the hills. It was a good half day's ride from Poona cantonment when the cycle suddenly bounded out of control. I skittered off the edge of a little ledge and crashed headlong into a sharp projection. The front tire exploded and one handle bar folded back; it was impossible to ride the bike as it was. Though I had got a few minor bruises and scrapes, my position was far more alarming than my condition. By the time I resigned myself to walking, the sun was already beginning to set. I was terrified at the idea of spending the night on the mountain, especially since I had previously flushed two large snakes.

Immobilizing the bike as best I could, I struck out in the direction of the nearest road. It was almost dark when I came upon it, spying the torch of a passing farmer. I hailed the man in the eerie twilight, and explained my predicament to him in sign language. He motioned me back along the path, in the opposite direction from Poona, I was sure. I hoped against hope that there might be a garrison, but I suspected that I would spend the night with some villager. Several processions of pilgrims passed me and a band of gypsies who watched suspiciously. I noticed, to my considerable discomfort, that everyone else seemed to carry a torch, probably to frighten animals and snakes. Finally, not without the profoundest joy, I spied the flickering lights of Sasvad.

The fringe of the village was dark and quiet; children watched me pass from between mud houses. As I moved along I wondered where I was bound, where I should go to request hospitality. In the middle of the village there

was much activity, so I steered, without reason, to the market square. As I continued my walk the road became lighter and the corners more frequently knotted with people. When at last I reached the center of town I was sure that this was a carnival night. Singers were crying and beating their accompaniment; dancers stomped and whirled in the streets. Everyone was laughing and running about, jostling his neighbors and shouting back and forth. Children were playing games on the walk and all of the shops seemed open for business. Only once before have I seen anything like this, and that the phenomenon of Harlem at three A.M. Nobody seemed to know it was night; the town was wide open and doing business.

Gradually I began to realize that the villagers were taking me quite in unbroken stride. A few turned questioning eyes upon me, but generally I was ignored or taken for granted. At first I was rather glad this was so, for I felt less out of place that way. But later I began hoping for more attention, for someone to sense my awkward position. I accosted one fellow whom I met in a shop, assuming from his dress that he was a Pathan. Traditionally these people are moneylenders and therefore rather inclined to sophistication. Fortunately he spoke a little English, so I described the situation to him. At first he was quite disinterested and abrupt, but I finally offered to pay for his help. At this his countenance brightened perceptibly and he drew a map, locating a hotel. I thanked him for this and paid two rupees, rushing out to follow the directions.

At the end of an alley that was jammed with people I came to the "Lucky Hindu Hotel." It was a crude mud hut without door or windows, and a torch was blazing in its single room. In one corner a fellow was playing his flute; in another a man was singing to himself. In the center of the floor two men were arguing over the prostrate body of a third, who was snoring. All in all, the place looked like Bedlam itself in the flickering glare of the single light. Lining the wall the clientele was spread out, face down on

a number of thin cloth mats. The racket within was augmented on occasion by enthusiastic shouting from the street outside. But these tenants were slumbering blissfully on as if the noise were their very lullaby. But none of the people were sleeping too soundly; they would speak occasionally or get up to eat. Frequently someone would jump to his feet to shake the bedbugs out of his clothes. Without bothering to brush them off his bed, he would then lie down to sleep again. In a few more moments someone else would rise and repeat the process in a sleepy manner. I decided that I might better have stayed in the hills than try to sleep in this dirt-floored flophouse. As I left I looked back at the name of the place, "The Lucky Hindu Hotel," in gold letters. Very aptly named, I thought. Very aptly named, indeed. It's surely a very lucky Hindu who manages to get out of that place alive.

Once I was out in the street again, I realized that I was no better off than before. I was still without a place to sleep, and I was still a stranger to this village and its people. But somehow I felt considerably better, knowing that my situation could be even worse. Instead of being here on the street, I thought, I could be chasing bedbugs in the Lucky Hindu Hotel. At last to my great relief and aid I met an Indian who spoke fluent English. He told me that he attended a mission school, and he promised to find me a place to stay. "If the resident commissioner were here," he said, "I know you'd be able to stay with him. But he's been away for about a week and his house is closed and locked, I believe." It was nearly four o'clock in the morning now, and I told my friend that I would sleep anywhere. After racking his brain for some suitable suggestion, he offered to let me stay with him. At first I declined his hospitality, sure that it would be an imposition to accept. But when Das assumed I was refusing out of pride, I agreed to go home with him to spike that notion.

Das lived out on the edge of the village, about a half mile or more from the market square. It was beginning to

get light as we approached the place, a solid mud building with a well-thatched roof. It was built of the usual native materials, but decidedly superior to the houses around it. It was as clean as a home could possibly be without a wood floor and with baked clay walls. There was a flimsy partition dividing the hut, a woven straw matting that hung from the roof. Das directed me to a charpoy in one corner, a fiber hammock strung from a wood frame.

I must have slept till noon or after, for I was awakened by the sun streaming down in my eyes. It had found its way through a crack in the roof and had crawled along the floor to where I lay. As I opened my eyes I was startled, then amused by a curious little face staring down at me. I yielded to a temptation to growl and bark, which seemed to be just what the child expected. I was surprised to hear his mother laugh, for I had supposed that I would not be allowed to see her. Das, I assumed, was a Hindu name, and if so, his wife should be kept to herself. I made my peace with her frightened child and he was sitting on my bed when Das's wife brought me tea. "Good morning," I said as cheerfully as I could, but neither mother nor son could understand me. "Salaam," I said, adapting to the occasion. The two of them laughed and returned, "Salaam." They sat watching me intently as I sipped at the brew, then finally Das himself appeared in the doorway.

"Look here, why don't you stay for a while?" These were Das's first words to me.

"Well, I wasn't planning to rush past you out of the house, but I really must get back to Poona," I answered.

"How did you get yourself lost out here, if you're stationed all the way down in Poona?"

I replied, "That is a long and painful story centering around an accident on my motorcycle." I asked for directions to the nearest military highway, expecting that I was within a few miles of one. But I learned, to my sorrow, that it was twenty miles to the closest regularly traveled route. "How in God's name can I get my cycle back with-



out letting my unit know I'm here?" I wondered. I found my answer when Das offered to relay a message via bullock cart and bearer to Captain Bisbee at the Poona Club. Bisbee, I reasoned, could send a truck out with several men to bring in the cycle. He could probably even get it repaired for me so that I wouldn't have to report my accident to the unit. But this would mean that I'd be stuck in the hills for two or three more days, at best. I resigned myself to that interesting fate and gave Das a message to send to Bisbee.

The next day I awoke at the crack of dawn, having gone to bed at eight o'clock. Das and his family were up and about, cooking some sort of stew for breakfast. It tasted like seaweed boiled in vinegar, but I didn't ask for the recipe. I choked as much of it down as I could, and assuaged my hunger on chapatty and rice.

Das was bound for the fields, I learned, where he was busy irrigating a section of land. I asked if I might go along. Das replied that he would be pleased to have me. When we got to the well, in the middle of a terrace, I was impressed by the peculiar shape of the thing. It was formed quite carefully of rock and mud, looking in outline like a giant keyhole. Das insisted the design was functional, but I suspect there was Freudian symbolism involved. When I asked if there was any reason for the shape, Das acknowledged that it conformed to a religious pattern. Beyond this he was reluctant to explain the form, but he implied that the well was a fertility charm.

Das began walking along a chain of buckets; the chain creaked suddenly and began to move. I saw that by climbing this endless ladder he was able to bring up the water to the fields. It began to flow along a sluice and out across the parched red ground. But almost as fast as it ran out of the trough it soaked into the earth and disappeared. As I stood there watching I forgot the time, and the sun grew hotter by imperceptible degrees. Suddenly I realized that my knees were buckling, and I could only call weakly,

"Das, come here!" I was prostrate on the ground when Das got to me, but he realized what was wrong and dragged me to the well. I lay there in the shade of the cool stones that were moist and fresh with the water that he pumped. I looked at the birds circling lazily above and listened to the creaking of the wooden axles. Every sound that was born in the valley was echoed and amplified by the mountain rim. Every farmer calling to his cattle could be heard; every dog that barked from across the plain, every sound of animal or man was softened but carried across the blue atmosphere.

That evening the family had come together for supper, the children from the village, Das and I from the fields. Just as we were enjoying a delicious curry two neighbors rushed in, wringing their hands and wailing. "Good Lord, what's the matter, Das?" I asked when they had finally departed unhappily. Das was obviously agitated, and he took his time about answering the question. At length he said that one of his neighbors was in childbirth, unattended in the absence of the resident commissioner. Normally that official would deputize some local midwife, coming himself if there was anything unusual. But this neighbor's wife was having trouble; I gathered she had been in labor for about twenty-four hours. I knew very little of the science of obstetrics, but I did know that this was abnormally long.

Suddenly Das's face was glowing with delight, as he turned toward me and pointed a finger. "But didn't you say that you were with the Medical Corps?"

I felt the bottom of my stomach drop away. "Yes," I said with some reluctance, "but not in a capacity that prepares me for this. My business is testing water for disease and poison; if you have any to test I can oblige you there. But childbirth—well, that's something entirely different. I know less than you; I'm not even married."

Das's enthusiasm was undampened by my speech and he cried, "But you must spend much time with doctors."

I said, "Yes, but watching them play a hand of bridge

doesn't teach me much about midwifery. Now before this argument goes any further, I've simply got to put my foot down. No! I can't think of attending this woman. It would be sheer murder if I agreed to do so."

Das was dejected at this positive refusal, but he sat in silence for several moments. Then suddenly a man ran into our hut and began addressing me in his native Urdu. Das explained that he was the husband of the mother and that he was sure the sahib could do something for his wife. She was slowly bleeding to death, he explained.

I was terrified, so frightened I could barely breathe. "Good Lord, what does he think the sahib can do? Tell him I know absolutely nothing about this. Can't you get word to a near-by hospital, to the resident commissioner wherever he is?"

Das shook his head. "There is no hospital. The resident commissioner is in Kashmir now. You must take a look at the woman, at least to satisfy the husband if for no other reason."

I sighed. "All right, to satisfy the husband, to satisfy you all that I know nothing about it." Das leaped up and we dashed outside, into the darkness of the deserted street.

The hut was only a few doors from Das's and we came upon it all too quickly. I would have been genuinely tempted, if the walk had been farther, to run away, out into the night. But as we entered the house I was relieved to find that it was divided, unlike ours, into two separate rooms. I decided to conceal my ignorance and fear by insisting on seeing the woman alone. As I passed through one room where the family was gathered, a number of faces were turned toward me. Mumbling prayers were awkwardly broken off and there was an uneasy silence for several seconds. I walked resolutely to a draped archway, then turned rather shakily to speak to Das. "Put some water over the fire," I said. With those words I exhausted my knowledge of obstetrics.

The room was lit by one flickering taper, and I could

not see my way around at first. I stood for several seconds by the doorway, wondering if the woman was able to see me. Finally, when my eyes became accustomed to the darkness, I dimly discerned the outline of a bed. Lying on it, twisted in rag covers, was a girl whose head hung over the edge. She seemed barely alive, but she would groan occasionally, whether meaningfully and to me I didn't know. I began moving slowly across the room, then I noticed an ugly spot on the bedclothes. It was a patch of fresh blood about two feet square. In the light of the candle it was shining and wet. I felt sweat breaking out on my hands and my forehead. I stopped ten or fifteen feet from the bed. I must have stood there for twenty minutes, unable to go closer or retreat from the woman. At length I noticed that her groaning stopped, and I actually prayed she was already dead. Whether she was or not I shall never know. I turned and rushed to the other room. "Das, I've done all I can," I lied. "I couldn't do much, but what I could I did." Then I faltered. "Das, I think she's dead."

Someone asked Das a question in Urdu, and he bitterly translated the words for me. "Does sahib want the water?" he asked.

I hesitated a moment. "No, I guess I don't," I said.

I can still see the woman writhing on the charpoy; I can still see the spreading spot of blood. I can hear the groaning and the rustling of her sheets, and Das saying bitterly, "Does sahib want the water?" I have talked to one or two of the medical officers, but none of them seem to understand how I feel. Death to them is an everyday occurrence, and they have learned not to feel responsible for it. I knew, intellectually, that the woman was doomed, that she was nearly dead when I entered the room. I know, objectively, that neither I nor an obstetrician could have done much after she had lost so much blood. But still, I should at least have tried. I should have had the courage to look at the woman. And yet there is no use castigating myself for her death; I could not bring myself to act differently now.

I didn't sleep much that second night; in the end I got up and pulled on my boots. Das was staring into the fire and he didn't seem to notice when I sat down beside him. "I'm sorry I couldn't have been more help, but I just didn't know what to do," I said. Das didn't answer, but I had the feeling he was less angry with me than with his Hindu god.

In the morning the woman's funeral was held, though everyone was surprised that it took place so soon. As many mourners as could be gathered together bore the body, in a coffin, to the burning ghats. On the side of a mountain the procession halted and I withdrew from the group as Das had suggested. From a distance I could see a wisp of smoke bearing, it is said, the soul of the departed. When the mourners began to depart from the ghats, I went back to the village without waiting for Das. I found a surprise waiting for me at the house: the resident commissioner, in starched white clothes.

"I was told that someone was marooned in the village. I hope it hasn't been too bad," he said. "I've been away on a week's vacation; otherwise I'd have got here to rescue you sooner."

I was annoyed beyond reason with this little man, breaking in so airily upon a solemn mood. "It hasn't been bad at all," I said. "I can't think of a better way to see this country." I meant the words in the most literal sense, but the commissioner thought I was being sarcastic.

"Well, come along to my bungalow," he said. "You can take a bath and I'll lend you some clothes." The commissioner was trying his level best to be friendly, but I was not in a mood to appreciate his efforts.

"Couldn't you have got here last night?" I asked, catching him just a bit off balance.

"Why, I suppose I could if it had proven necessary," he said more charitably than I had a right to expect.

I snapped very angrily, "It did prove necessary. A woman

died in the village in childbirth. There was nobody here to look after her. I wasn't able to do a thing myself."

The commissioner was peeved. "Look here!" he said. "Delivering babies isn't among my duties. It's only out of kindness that I help at all. Don't be so quick with your criticism of my methods." I began to realize that I was being unreasonable, so I apologized and explained my feelings to the commissioner. He sympathized. "My God, what a frightful night! I'll give you a stiff drink when we get to the house. I've learned to take these things in stride, but I can understand how you must have felt through it all."

I answered, "I'm grateful for your offer, and I thank you, but I think I shall stay in the village where I am."

The commissioner laughed. "But you can't be serious. Why, man, you're living in a terrible pesthole."

I answered, suddenly angry at the man again, "If it's a pesthole, then why don't you do something about it?"

The commissioner queried, "Well, what can I do, go around with a cricket bat killing the vermin? It's really a larger job than you suspect, just keeping track of the most serious things. If you're wise, you'll go back to my bungalow with me. These people will get along without our help."

I thanked the commissioner for his offer again, but repeated my intention of staying with Das. "I'm sorry I seem so disagreeable," I said. "I guess my nerves are all on edge."

The resident laughed. "Oh, I understand. If you're leaving tomorrow there's no sense in moving. Just be careful of what you eat and drink and you shouldn't come down with anything serious."

I could not tell the commissioner why I refused his hospitality, and I am still not convinced to my entire satisfaction. But having got involved in the life of the village, I felt as though I could not run away. Part of the explanation is emotional; I wanted to vent my anger on someone. But aside from that there was something else, a certain

identification with Das and his friends. I had really become a part of the village, a part of its life and a part of its death. The greatest emotions had passed between us, forging a bond of mutual sympathy. When I told Das I planned to remain at his house, he expressed satisfaction but he asked no questions. I am sure he understood how I felt, for in two days we had almost grown to be friends.

I cannot forget my conversation with the resident commissioner in the village that morning. I cannot forget his "Well, what can I do, go around with a cricket bat killing the vermin?" Yes, what can the resident commissioner do? Is he twelve-armed and seven-headed like the Hindu gods? Or is he rather a pathetic little man in short pants whose job is completely out of proportion to his capacity? What can all England do for India? What did it do for the woman who died? Did it do all it could? (Then, how little that was!) Or did it do less than it could? (Then, how terribly cruel!)

Why doesn't England put up or shut up; help these people or admit she cannot? What has she done in two hundred years but build highways and railroads from the mines to the seaports? The British Information Service notwithstanding, these people are worse off than when the English came to India. The average yearly wage is lower and the death rate is the highest in India's history. But worse than that, or rather responsible for it, the country's economy is in a terrible maladjustment. Here is the one place where Britain could help; it is also the one place where she refuses to try. In the words of one prominent economist, India has become a "plantation" for British industry. Indian manufactures have been ruthlessly destroyed and we have turned our back on India's real needs.

Nothing can be done by patch and repair, by a highway here and a free clinic there. There are four hundred million people in India and nobody can minister to their needs individually. The resident commissioner was perfectly right, he cannot eliminate the vermin by chasing

them with a ball bat. Neither can he save needless deaths in his village by sacrificing his yearly vacation. But carry the logic a little bit further. Apply it, if you will, to the raj itself. Britain cannot bring progress to India by throttling her economy and distributing small favors.



## VIII

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I REPORTED to a Bombay hospital this morning, complaining of recurrent abdominal cramps. Last night I spent in the unit latrines trying hard to get rid of what I hadn't eaten. I expected to be given a pill or a tonic and told to go on about my business. But instead I was referred to this hospital, where I rest, none too comfortably, at this very moment. At first I was placed in a barnlike room that housed about sixty-five beds in all. I was sure that any number of my roommates might be dead and as yet undiscovered in its endless spaces. Finally a doctor got around to see me, but only after I had been here for three or four hours. He glanced at me perfunctorily and was about to pass on when I reminded him that I had just reported this morning. "Oh, yes," he recalled, "you're a new patient here. I assume your case has been diagnosed?"

I replied, "Why, I reported four hours ago but so far I've seen only two orderlies and a janitor."

The doctor was quite surprised to hear this and he demanded to see my chart at once. When I replied that no chart had as yet been made out, he gasped, "Why, then you're not officially registered. What are you doing in this bed, my man? Who gave you permission to come in here like this?"

I answered hotly, "Why, I came in an ambulance and the nurse insisted that I go to bed. But since I'm feeling quite well now, by the grace of God, I'll be only too happy to return to my unit."

The doctor mumbled, "But you can't do that. If you reported as sick, we must find out what is wrong." I rolled over in bed and closed my eyes, disgusted with this typical Indian Army "efficiency."

In a few moments Captain Balfour was back by my bed,

this time with an admission blank in his hand. I was very sleepy and I tried to ignore him but he cleared his throat loudly several times. Finally, in obvious desperation, he stamped his foot and called, "Attention!" He was embarrassed when I slowly opened one eye and disgustedly groaned, "Oh, it's you again." This was certainly not the reaction he expected and he realized that everyone in the room was watching. Pleadingly, and with a hint of a question in his voice, Captain Balfour repeated softly, "Attention?" I sat up in the bed and pulled on my robe, saying, "All right, damn it. Attention, then. Have you and the Royal Army Medical Corps debated my case and decided to accept it?"

Captain Balfour was naturally a red-faced man, but his face flushed redder as he sat down on my bed. "Now let's have the symptoms first of all. Have you ever had this trouble before?"

I answered, "Yes, I first had trouble in my undergraduate years at the university."

Balfour just sat there, staring at me, apparently fascinated by something I had said. "Where . . . where did you say you first had the trouble?" he finally managed to stammer out.

"Why, as an undergraduate in the university," I repeated, amused by his strange expression. Unexplainably, Balfour got up from the bed and stormed out of the ward without saying a word.

While I was still puzzling over his strange behavior, another medical officer appeared in the doorway with two men. In silence the privates approached my bed and in silence they picked it bodily up. In silence we lumbered out of the large ward room, while I tried to make some sense of it all. Then my bed was finally brought to rest in a small private room adjoining the ward.

"Say, what in the hell goes on here?" I asked as the officer and a nurse came into the room.

"I'm terribly sorry this happened," he said, apologizing for some mysterious unfelt slight.

"I'm terribly sorry it happened too. I'm sorry I got into this hospital. Of all the damned nonsense I've ever seen, this morning's bungling surely gets the prize. I reported sick at eight o'clock. I saw a doctor at half past eleven. And then he debates the legality of my presence and finishes by having me carried about on a litter. Captain, does the Medical Corps practice black magic? Is this ritual some sort of spiritual cure? Or are you simply so preoccupied with rules and regulations that you don't have time to diagnose or treat patients?" What was left of my pains of the earlier hours was dispelled with this letting of angry bad blood.

Balfour and his nurse stood abashed through it all; then finally the latter said, "It was all my fault."

I answered, carried away by the power of my sarcasm, "No, surely one small girl could not have precipitated all this disturbance."

But she insisted. "I assumed that you were an enlisted man because you were wearing no insignia of rank."

The doctor broke in, "Yes, we're both very sorry. I knew there was a mistake when you mentioned your university. We've checked the records and we realize that you should have been placed in an officer's ward."

Understanding at last, I confessed, "Well, I'd just as soon have stayed where I was. If an O.R. receives so much bungling attention, I refuse to think what would happen to an officer."

Johnny Brennan was moved into the bed on my left, suffering from a nasty attack of jaundice. His skin is the color of a lemon rind and his eyeballs look like a pair of yellow agates. The doctors haven't made a diagnosis yet. "They are waiting," says Johnny, "for my hair to turn yellow." I don't blame Brennan for being disgusted; he's a very uncomfortable lad at the moment. He is usually quite pleasant and cheerful, but considering his mood I don't

even dare talk to him. When he gets better I'm sure he will enjoy watching the strange attention that I am getting.

Between my pointed comments on the day of my arrival and Johnny's blast at the efficiency of the staff, this room is rapidly coming to be considered the headquarters for "His Majesty's Opposition." Yesterday when Johnny saw his chart for the first time he asked Balfour what the N.Y.D. stood for. "Why, that means Not Yet Diagnosed," the doctor announced in a cheerful voice.

"Not Yet Diagnosed! How interesting," Brennan said with a certain air of ill-concealed sarcasm. "And all this time I've been under the impression that it stood instead for New Yankee Disease."

Since Brennan was admitted quite late last night, he decided to sleep through inspection this morning. But the ambulatory cases, of which he is one, are expected to stand at attention for the Brigadier. I poked Johnny once or twice through the mosquito net, suggesting that he get up and make his bed. "The hell with that," he growled out sleepily. "I'm supposed to be in a hospital and I'll stay where I am." When the Brigadier came through the ward toward our room I snapped to attention by the side of my bed. My net was rolled and the sheets folded back, all in the prescribed regulation manner. Johnny's trousers hung awkwardly from a chair and his foot projected from under the covers. The Brigadier started, then averted his eyes; it seemed he was going to pretend not to notice. "How are you?" he said quite cheerfully to me. I answered that I was feeling much better than when I came. "Good!" He nodded after some contemplation; then he turned on his heel to leave the room. But just as he got to the door of the ward, Brennan was beginning to come to life. He poked his head out from under the covers and shouted, "Say, bud! What time is it?"

There is an unbridgeable gulf between the Briton and the Indian, the inevitable gulf between the master and

slave. The sahib can never understand the people of this country, for he has come to consider them simply as his tools. If they are relatively efficient in achieving his ends, then they have attained all the value which they can ever possess. If they are sloppy, grumbling, or inefficient, they have failed to fulfill their purpose in the universe. How often do we think of our servants as people with homes, with wives and children awaiting them? How often do we consider that the bearer must live his entire life while the master sleeps?

I used the words master and slave inadvertently, for neither term really applies in spirit. I'm sure I would be wont to respect a master and despise a slave, unjust though it sounds. But actually I feel that in most daily contact the Indian gets a little the better of us. His subtle "war of nerves" is masterfully fought and we can't often match his self-control. I saw an example of this some time ago before I began my "period of confinement." I had wandered down to the Poona Club to meet Turner's major, who had recently returned from the front.

Major Baker was just what I had expected, a portly man with a walrus mustache. His hair was graying and his face was florid so that he looked for all the world like Colonel Blimp. I found him decidedly unpleasant from the outset, a reaction which I apparently shared with the majority. When the Major left, some acquaintance explained that they feared he was getting just "a little bit jungly." He went far out of his way to have trouble with the servants, protesting from his chair that they were less than useless. But in the end, as is so often the case, he managed only to make a fool of himself.

A bearer brought a cold drink to the Major, handing him a glass that was frosted and moist. Without thinking Baker set the glass on his knee, spotting his trousers with the harmless water. "Bearer," he cried, grimacing at the boy, "haven't you the sense to dry off a glass?" The bearer explained, though none too clearly, that the glass had been

dry when it was brought to the Major. He wiped it over with a cloth he carried and gave it back to the pakah sahib. Pouting a little, Baker accepted it, resuming his conversation after a few more grunts. Suddenly he stared at his trousers again and cried, "Bearer, you didn't dry off this glass!" I wondered if the Major was actually so foolish that he didn't realize that his glass would "sweat."

"I'm sorry, sahib," the bearer said. "Glass was dry when I gave it to you."

Baker mimicked, "Oh, glass was dry, eh? Well, I suppose this water came out of the air."

I could not help laughing and observing to the company, "Perhaps Major Baker is warmer than he thinks."

I believe Baker came to his senses at this point, but he could not admit his fault to a native. He turned on the boy with a new ferocity, demanding an explanation from him. "Water always on the outside of glass," the bearer explained after several seconds.

"Water always on the outside of glass? Typical Indian reasoning," Baker sneered. "Well, water isn't always on the outside of glass. Not when the glass is mine, do you hear?"

I interjected at this point. "Well, now I've seen everything—a bearer who's held responsible for the laws of physics." Everyone laughed but the Major himself, and my humor seemed only to anger him more.

I was not surprised when he launched into a tirade which I would rather not recall. Applied to a native, any language is acceptable, nay unnoticed, even by the women present. Baker was suffering from the censure of the group and he was determined to humiliate the native boy. But the boy remained respectfully silent, speaking only in answer to direct questions. To them he would answer as Baker desired, anxious to end the scene as soon as possible. He happily agreed when the Major called him stupid, and he said, "Yes, sahib," when asked if he weren't ashamed. By rights this would have been a brutal spectacle, the

misused, fearful, and groveling boy. But rather it was funny, for by the minute the bearer was making a fool of Baker. His expression was one of genuine disinterest, passive in the face of the Major's rage. The "Yes, sahib," "No, sahib" were polite but detached, as if the bearer were discussing the weather. I began to realize that the boy was really trying quite earnestly to look penitent and abashed. He was not intentionally angering Baker, but he could not prevent his feelings from showing. He cared not a whit for our judgment of him; he knew that we were prejudiced and reacting emotionally. He would let this "child's tantrum" simply run its course. By the way, had he shut the screen door in the kitchen?

Baker sensed the fellow's preoccupation, and sensed, as well, its genuineness. This only served to infuriate him more, that this native should so easily dismiss his wrath. Finally he had spent his vitriol and his verbiage, and he stood shaking like a child before a locked door. His frustration found an outlet in motion, and he threw his drink into the bearer's face. The boy's expression did not perceptibly change, but he reached out obligingly to take the Major's glass. Baker sank into his chair and groaned as the bearer said, "If sahib is through I will return to the kitchen."

This is not a technique for tormenting the sahib, but a simple expression of the Indian mind. It stems from the fact that through two centuries of subjection, the Indian has never accepted his conqueror. He has had to put up with his presence in the land, because he has never mustered the energy to defeat him. But he is simply tolerated as a foreign body, just another annoyance that must be borne with patience. This bearer knew well what was right and wrong, and he had faith that his Indian god would judge him. But the censure of any lesser being, of a sahib, was of little fundamental importance.

Johnny's jaundice has finally been diagnosed, and I've

promised to have a party to celebrate. "I finally managed to convince them," Brennan says, "that I didn't fall into a tub of yellow paint."

This morning the Major came into the room to see how the two of us were getting along. He asked if there was anything he could do for us and Johnny replied, "You can call me a doctor."

The Major, being unaccustomed to Yankee sarcasm, said, "But Captain Balfour is a doctor."

Brennan returned, "Then why the masquerade? Tell him to come in and go to work."

After a brief exchange of unpleasantries the Major diagnosed Johnny's case himself. "Now when does the treatment begin?" Brennan asked, naturally anxious to get out of the hospital.

"Oh, there is no treatment for jaundice," replied the Major. "We just have to let it run its course."

I blurted out, "Just let it run its course? Well, what about insulin and diathermy, Major?"

The Major was surprised that I knew the terms, but he brushed aside the suggestions I made. "There is no treatment for jaundice," he repeated, looking significantly in my direction.

An orderly came in this afternoon to take a sample of my blood for analysis. "Beg your pardon, sir," he began apologetically, "I wonder if we might have a little blood from you?"

I replied, "Well, that depends on why you want it. Will you file it away or do something with it?"

The orderly replied, "Oh, we want to test it," oblivious to the intended sarcasm of my question. "We want to test it for malaria," he enlarged as he jabbed his needle into my finger.

I jumped, considerably more surprised than hurt, and exclaimed, "You want to test it for malaria?"



Wiping my finger the orderly said, "Yes, sir. Your temperature was two degrees high last night."

Johnny was already rolling with laughter, enjoying my annoyance with this new development.

"Can you imagine that?" I said to him. "They want to test my blood for malaria. Nobody gives a damn about my stomach cramps, but they're going to test me for malaria."

Brennan replied, "Listen, you're lucky, pal. They at least seem to be taking an interest in you. If you're smart you'll play up this malaria scare, then try to work them around to your stomach gradually. If you let them down too suddenly they'll all be disillusioned with you. Don't do that. Wean 'em from it slowly."

I laughed and agreed, "I guess you're right," almost believing in the wisdom of Johnny's words.

The orderlies are preparing for another inspection; they are sweeping the floors and aligning the beds. Johnny has been riding the boys pretty hard, asking them if they couldn't spend their time more profitably. "Why, I've been here for almost two weeks, and you fellows have never done anything for me. I've wondered what you did with all your time. Now I see. You spend it on this spit and polish." There's really some logic in Brennan's words, unaccustomed though I am to taking him seriously. The only energy expended in this hospital seems to be in the pursuance of formal regulations. The comfort of the patient is of no importance, his very health is secondary.

One of the orderlies finally exploded and objected to Brennan's derogatory remarks. "This 'ere ain't spit and polish, if you please. It's an important sanitary precaution," he said.

"What's a sanitary precaution?" I asked.

The fellow replied, "This 'ere moving of beds."

Johnny and I looked blankly at each other, trying to understand what the orderly meant. Seeing our bewilder-

ment, the corporal elaborated. "Specifically, this 'ere is for isolation purposes."

This clarification only confused me more, and I asked, "Well, what has this to do with isolation?"

The orderly replied, in obvious triumph, "Oh, you mean you don't know why this is necessary?"

Johnny, imitating the fellow's accent, growled, "No, we don't know why this is necessary."

The corporal replied, "Well, you see, it's like this. These beds is not allowed to touch the walls. For if the end of the sheet were against the stone, then the germs could crawl from one bed to the other. They could make their way right off of this 'ere bed" (his fingers mimicked germs walking off this 'ere bed) "and they could run along the wall to infect someone else." The orderly turned to his alignment of beds with one last glance of magnificent condescension.

I've got to know one of our nurses quite well, a pleasant little girl who insists she's not English. "The English and the Welsh are a different people, and I'll thank you to remember that when referring to me."

Audrey presented me with a bouquet this morning which, she confided, the head matron had given to her. "It was supposed to be placed out in the ward room, I guess, but I'll give them to you," she said quite simply. I thanked Audrey for her consideration and I put the flowers in a vase by my bed. Seeing that Brennan had fallen asleep and being terribly bored, I yielded to an impulse. I dropped the mosquito nets over both of our beds and stuck the flower stems through the mesh. I expected that Brennan would wake up quite soon and be amused by the peculiar decorations. But Brennan slept on till about ten o'clock, when Audrey came into the room again. She stared at the nettings, garlanded with flowers, then she flushed and murmured, "What's this all about?"

I poked my head from under my mosquito net, waving a

blossom beneath my nose. "Audrey, my dear," I said with a drawl, "I wanted to surround myself with this beauty." Suddenly I realized that Audrey was not alone; there was someone else directly behind her. As she stepped aside I was quite embarrassed to recognize the head matron's shocked face.

I've been in the hospital for over three weeks now and my stomach cramps (long since vanished) are undiagnosed. I have tried in vain to get my release; the doctors consider me a challenge, I suppose.

In the twenty-six days of my confinement to date, I have enjoyed, or rather eaten, just two green vegetables. When I complained of this to Captain Balfour yesterday he said, "Why, Muehl, aren't you getting enough to eat?"

I answered, "It isn't a question of amount. I'd just like to see some vegetables occasionally."

Balfour laughed. "Well, you're pretty particular. This isn't your Waldorf-Astoria, you know."

I agreed that this wasn't the Waldorf-Astoria, but I insisted that there was real cause for complaint. "As a doctor," I said, "you must know yourself how important the vitamins and minerals in vegetables are."

Balfour answered, with obvious amusement, "Oh, you Americans overestimate the significance of those things. I wouldn't worry about your vitamins and minerals. We'll give you good food that sticks to your ribs."

I could hear a groan from Johnny's direction, but I tried to pretend that I didn't notice it.

For the record, our daily menu is quite regular; fish for lunch and liver for supper. In the three weeks I've spent so far in this place that routine has been varied only once. On that day I thought the heavens would fall. We had liver for lunch and fish for supper.

I have been impressed by at least one quality of the colonial officer: his forthright, if avowedly amoral, attitude.

If I have ever been unsure of anyone's opinions it has been only because he was rather close-mouthed. True, there are subjects which these fellows avoid, and some important topics fall into that category. Still, asked point-blank about any issue, they will invariably give a direct and honest answer. They are different from so many of my friends in this respect, different at least from the average middle-class American. I was taught by that group that frankness was bad manners and that "intellectual adaptability" was a primary virtue.

To engage the average American in discussion is to tilt, not at windmills, but at the wind itself. For just when you have sized up your opposition it vanishes into a puff of thin hot air. When someone says, "Muehl, don't you agree with me?" I know what I am expected to answer. If I dare say, "No, I certainly don't," I am not only expressing disagreement but boorishness. Time and again I have taken issue with friends on matters that seemed of the greatest importance, sure, on the basis of their previous remarks, that a clash of basic values was involved. But confronted with any opposed proposition my friend would invariably yield his ground, not retreating to a stronger defense but fleeing from the awful possibility of a clash. The "yes man" is a typically American institution, symbolic of the dangers inherent in our attitude. The "higher-up" is always right and he is not expected to argue his position.

This makes the job of the liberal very hard, for he is never able to launch a frontal assault. Like Napoleon being drawn across the Russian wastes, he spends his energy "sword-slashing a pond." He storms the citadels of reaction in rage, but is mocked by their smoldering deserted ashes. He exhausts himself in lunging blows at a phantom horde that retreats, but never yields. At last he is engulfed and overrun; his cannon are spiked and left to rust. Phrases like "the equality of men" are twisted wrecks against a landscape of intolerance.

It is pleasant to find men who differ from the pattern,

who will stand quietly and firmly by some final position. Right or wrong, the average Briton will state his assumption and defend his conclusions. I am terribly critical of the imperial policies, but I admire the spirit that proclaims them candidly. In spite of the hatred which I feel for brutality, I think better of the man who admits than cloaks it. I wish Britain would practice this virtue nationally and would be as frank in high places as she is in low. I'm sure that if she would, Britain would surely become as fine a nation as she is a people.

Once again the irrepressible Johnny Brennan has asserted himself in the face of authority. Once again he has proven the master of all he surveys and of numerous indistinct appurtenances. On the Brigadier's regular inspection of our barracks, the irascible Brennan was, as usual, abed. Though he is technically ambulatory, in the official parlance, he insists that if he must stay here he will enjoy complete leisure. This time the Brigadier was prepared for emergencies by the attendance of several officious sergeant majors. One of these terriers wandered into our room to make sure that both of us would be forewarned and prepared. His anger, I suspect, was greater than his surprise when he found Brennan sprawled comfortably like Cleopatra on her barge. "Beg pardon," he growled, "but today is Wednesday." Brennan allowed that the man was excused. "But the Brigadier is making the rounds on inspection and you'll have to be dressed and at attention to see him." Johnny replied sweetly that if that were the case he guessed we must forego the pleasure of his company. "But, sir, you have no choice in the matter. The Brigadier will be furious if he finds you like this."

Brennan drew himself angrily up on one elbow. "Say, listen!" he cried, furiously lighting his pipe. "I'm supposed to be in a hospital. Right? The hell with this 'up at attention' business. If I'm sick I'm going to take it easy."

The sergeant major paled visibly. "But, sir, you're ambulatory according to the chart."

"Ambulatory, nuts!" was Brennan's reply. "I'm not interested in your fine distinctions." By now the sergeant was wringing his hands, protesting that we would all be broken for this. "Well, I don't know about you," Johnny laughed, "but Muehl and I are safe enough. Tell your admiral that there was a terrible struggle and that you were overwhelmed by superior forces."

By now the Brigadier had entered the ward and was bearing down toward the door of our room. "Stand at attention!" the sergeant shouted, jumping aside to admit the Brigadier. His expression was one of supreme unhappiness as he surveyed the disordered state of our room. "Stand at attention!" he shouted again, hoping against hope that Johnny would respond. Brennan and I simply glanced at each other, enjoying the sergeant's futility. "Lie at attention!" he finally shouted, hoping to get somewhere by compromise. The Brigadier came stomping into the room to be met by gales of roaring laughter.

At first Brigadier Hoales drew himself up to full height, then he collapsed from within like a deflated balloon. "Well," he observed with a sad little grin, "always glad to see patients so happy." Suddenly he noticed the sergeant major and for the sake of discipline he regained his dignity. "Tell me, is everything going all right?" he asked in a more becoming manner.

"I guess it's going as well as we can expect," answered Brennan, blithely adding insult to injury.

"Then you don't think much of our hospital, I take it?" asked the Brigadier, vowing to have done with the nonsense.

"Well, I really had better not say," Johnny answered, affecting an air of unfelt modesty. "No, we've caused you enough trouble already, Brigadier," he continued with unheard-of self-restraint.

The Brigadier rose to the bait like a starving trout, be-

lieving at last that he was on the offensive. "I'm asking you because I want to know," he said sternly, pointing a finger at Brennan.

"Well, in that case" (Johnny savored every word), "to be perfectly frank, I think this place stinks."

Captain Balfour has taken an interest in my stomach, now that the malaria scare is over. In spite of a number of careful tests my blood remains adamantly and uncompromisingly negative. The Major pouted over this for days, but I think he has reconciled himself to it at last. At any rate he gave Balfour his written permission to undertake the diagnosis of my stomach cramps. Balfour is showing unusual genius; he has hit upon a sound line of questioning, at last. He suspects, though I dare not anticipate him openly, that my trouble may originate in a nervous reaction. This explanation is conceivably accurate, since it agrees with a number of previous findings. Balfour will call in a psychiatrist eventually, though I don't think he actually knows that yet. Well, anything will be better than this endless waiting for instinct and intuition to combine into hunch. Perhaps if I'm transferred to the care of a psychiatrist I'll be able to break out of this barless jail. I hope that Balfour doesn't start reading his medical journal again or we're apt to get sidetracked on Asiatic cholera. And once the merry-go-round is set in motion there's no getting off till the tune is over.

I knew that I should have knocked on wood when I was concluding my last entry referring to Balfour! This morning he came in with that eager smile that indicates he's off on a tangent again. "We're going to take a little blood this morning," he greeted me, much more anxious than professional. "I want to check it just to make sure that you don't have a touch of inactive cholera." I managed to swallow my disappointment, for I didn't want to stifle Balfour's picnic-day glee, particularly when he held a long sterile needle

which he had every intention of inserting in my arm. I naturally tend to nervousness when confronted with the penetration of my epidermis. But I was particularly worried this morning because I just previously talked with the nurse about Balfour. "He's being sent back to England," she said, "because, they say, of professional incompetence." I was reflecting upon this when my reverie was disturbed by Balfour's soothing "Now, this won't hurt a bit."

To put it bluntly but truthfully, Balfour was a liar. His incision or incisions hurt more than a bit. Most disturbing of all were his facial expressions, which quite candidly conveyed his own uncertainty. Time and again he would insert the needle only to drive it through the vein. He would pull on the plunger of his hand syringe and wiggle the needle in pointless explorations. After several vague sallies into either arm, Balfour finally took his syringe apart. He blew through the needle and shook the components like a schoolboy exploring a carpenter's kit. Finally he resumed his practical quest into arms already black and blue from abuse. He had exhausted almost all of the primary vessels and he was working on the tiniest auxiliaries now. The nurse came into the room to watch and she was horrified to see the captain surrounded by his damage. Grown almost accustomed to the pain by now I said, "Well, did you come in to watch the mumbley-peg game?"

Suddenly the Captain made a lucky penetration and was rewarded with a welcome spurt of blood. Hastily he began reassembling his syringe, the needle to which he left in my arm. The blood was flowing out and over the sheets as Balfour tried vainly to couple his apparatus. His attempts were faintly reminiscent of my father in his classic role, connecting a hose to a running faucet. At this point Johnny came into the room, returning from the latrine, where he had been until now. As he entered he was greeted by the gruesome sight of my bloody sheets and the spurting needle. "My God!" he cried in mock amazement. "Has someone been slaughtering a pig in here?"



There is one fellow in the ward who has been terribly banged up; his face is in bandages and one arm is in a sling. Two teeth have been knocked out and another one is chipped and the bone in his nose has been partially removed. I suspected, when I heard him recounting his injuries, that he had collided head-on with the Frontier Mail; either that or he had tried to drive across one of those imaginary bridges the Information Service builds for the Indian people. But I learned that he was injured in a field punishment center, a disciplinary jail for disobedient troops. He had argued with his jailers and finally struck at one, whereupon he was beaten by seven or eight. I have heard of these atrocities in vague terms before, but I never really believed that they happened till now. As soon as this tommy gets out of the hospital he's scheduled to go back to the center for a month. At present he's under the closest guard, since in cases like this men often resort to suicide. And considering what this fellow has to face, I'm not surprised that he promises to do so.

Corporal punishment is quite openly accepted as a vital part of Indian Army discipline. No secret is made of the punishment centers or of the fact that their guards are hand-picked sadists. It is the design of the officer of each of these camps to make it as intolerable as it can possibly be. He exhorts his guards to constant violence and to the most ruthless treatment of rebellious prisoners. Beatings, floggings, and cold-water treatments are a regular part of the camp routines, not as necessary occasional extremes, but as a matter of brutally regular policy. Benedict, this fellow in the ward next to us, may well be exaggerating some of his stories. But he insists that the guards at the punishment centers judge the effectiveness of their methods by the number of attempted suicides. Whether or not that much is true, this I have heard from reliable sources: No prisoner in any of the centers is ever allowed a belt, a tie, or a straight razor.

Before a soldier is committed to a field punishment

center, he is given a thorough physical examination. The Army is quite aware of what he will undergo and it screens out the men who are too weak to stand it. At the center itself he is attended by doctors who prevent accidental deaths from mounting too high. After a particularly brutal session with the guards a medical officer may attend the man in his cell. But until his very life is endangered he must stay to serve out his entire sentence. No consideration of comfort or health is allowed to cut one day from the prisoner's term.

In the morning the inmates are usually awakened by a bucket of cold water that is flung in their faces. But the usual routine is always open to unpleasant innovations which a guard may conceive. Razors are distributed without soap or warm water, and the men are given sixty seconds to shave. At the end of that time the razors are collected and woe to the man who is not clean-shaven. Calisthenics are next on the program, often involving a three-mile run. Once again the guards are ever on the alert for the unfortunate who should stumble or drop behind the rest. Breakfast consists of dry oatmeal eaten with the hands or dog style from the plate. After breakfast the soldiers are separated into groups for assignment to the really arduous and exhausting day's work.

The job which Benedict was given most often was burying and then excavating a handful of matches. He would be driven for ten hours at a frantic pace, covering them and uncovering them as fast as he could. At the end of the day the matches would be counted and the number tallied against the amount which he had been given. If one of the matches was lost in the dirt he would be sent out again to dig till he located it. Sometimes he said he would dig all night unable to find the missing match. In that case he would begin the next day's work without even a rest or a chance to lie down. It is no wonder that Benedict cracked under this, this and the humiliation he was forced to endure. He had been made to crawl on all fours for

days at a stretch as a punishment for having failed to locate his matches.

"Finally," he told me, "I could stand no more and I struck at a guard who had stepped on my fingers. I was dragged to my feet by him and a lot of others and slapped until I was almost unconscious. Then I was taken back to my cell and left without food and water for more than twelve hours, though I was already weak. Finally the guards came into my compartment and dragged me out to the work yard near by. Some of the men had sticks in their hands, but I thought that they brought them only to frighten me. But when I got outside they all began hitting me with their fists or with sticks until I went down. I've been sentenced by court-martial to another twenty-eight days for striking another soldier 'without provocation.' But mind you, sir, I'm not going back if I get a chance to end it before then."

Joe Russel was in to see me today, having just been released from the hospital himself. He tells a story which seems to be typical of the attitude of our higher officers. "I went into the office of the Brigadier on the morning of my expected discharge from this place, only to learn upon reporting to his clerk that I was supposed to be dressed in the hospital clothes. I was naturally very embarrassed to learn this, having changed already into my regular uniform. But decided to carry on as I was without bothering to go back for my little blue suit. When I was ushered into the Brigadier's office he naturally seemed rather surprised by my attire. Without waiting for him to question me about it, I explained that I had misunderstood the orders. The Brigadier's expression was unaccountably grave and I began to wish I had run back to change. 'Well, I don't mind,' he finally said, 'but I'm afraid the sergeant major will be furious!'"

# IX

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THIS morning I returned to the Poona bookstore where I had previously got quantities of nationalist literature. Impressed with the pamphlets on the Punjab massacres, I hoped that I might find some other banned matter that was as interesting and enlightening. When I entered the place I was met with coldness, not by the owner but by his wife, whom I knew. I asked if I could speak to the woman's husband, but she simply stared at me, refusing to answer. I began to think that she had forgotten my face or perhaps remembered it in some false connection. Whatever the explanation, it was quite apparent that I was *persona non grata* from her point of view. "Don't you recall, I've been here often. Your husband has given me some excellent pamphlets." I began with a forced enthusiasm but I could not sustain it through the entire speech. "What is wrong?" I asked directly. "Why don't you tell me where your husband is?" I was growing more uncomfortable with every passing moment, as if there were something between us which I did not know.

I began browsing around the stacks of the room trying to hide my embarrassment, trying also to puzzle out the reason for the uncharitable reception I got. Wherever I went the woman followed, never allowing me more than a few yards' leeway. I decided that I might better leave the shop and search for my answers somewhere else. I picked up one volume, almost at random, and turned to ask how much it was. For the first time since I had entered the bookstore I got an answer, a loud unsteady "Take it, sahib!"

I said, "Yes, that's what I intend to do, but I want to know the price of the book."

The woman repeated, "Take it, sahib," offering no further explanation.

"Now just a moment," I cried in anger, "I want to know what is going on here. You treat me as if I were carrying the plague and now you refuse to let me buy a book."

The woman smiled, but not in a friendly manner. Then she simply turned her back on me. I slammed the book back down on the counter and walked out of the shop completely bewildered.

As I was making my way down the narrow street, a military policeman called to me. He ran up from the corner where he was apparently stationed and said, "Beg pardon sir, but didn't you just come out of this bookstore?"

I answered, "Why, yes. Why do you ask?" Then I turned to notice a large sign on the door: "Out of Bounds to Military Personnel." I began to understand my strange treatment. "Why, I've never noticed that sign before. I've been in that bookstore any number of times."

The M.P. said, "Well, I'm not surprised. The sign was just put up last week. They hustled the old man off to jail on Monday for dealing in books and pamphlets which were banned. I suggest that you find another shop, sir. We have strict orders to see that nobody enters this one."

I lost my cycle while I was in the hospital, but my water truck is due to arrive any day. It has actually been delivered to Koragoan Lines, but it must be painted dark drab before I receive it. I have learned that we must drive across India in our vehicles and I am already tormented by the prospect of that. My truck, I understand, is stripped down for combat use and is therefore denuded of windshield and roof. It is approximately two thousand miles to Calcutta and we are allowing ten days to complete the trip. In ten days, without windshield or roof to protect me, I should be as seamed and darkened as any Indian. There is at least one consolation, however; I will be accepted henceforth as a pukah sahib. At present I am a sort of pink-

knead apprentice, denied a great many of the "honors thereto pertaining."

Our Indian service troops have reported for duty so I assume that we will get under way in the very near future. A surprisingly strict security ban obscures the date of our actual departure. But if this movement is anything like the last one from Poona, the populace will be able to tell us when we leave. I understand that the shopkeepers clamped down on credit exactly three days before the men knew they were moving. The last few days in a city are the hardest, for one realizes there is so much that he has not seen. I am sorry now that I postponed my visits to so many of the near-by temples and shrines. But actually I suppose I would never be satisfied; there would always be more that I was anxious to see. Every mountain crest invites one beyond, yet no one could walk the length and breadth of this country.

This morning, as the mists were rising from the road, our convoy began roaring out of Poona. The start-up signal had been given around five and a few minutes later we were rolling across India. Our bearers, from whom this movement was to be secret, were nearly all present to bid us good-by. They waved their hands and tried to shout above the whining of motors and the clashing of gears. There was something genuinely thrilling about our departure, a contagion of energy from the massed power it bespoke. Dispatch riders added to the sense of excitement as they dashed back and forth on their motorcycles. They would nip at us here and bark at us there, like well-trained farm dogs on the heels of cattle. The enormous brute lorries would cough and rebel, then their engines would race and they would nose into line. Ponderously, and with a certain reluctance, they would turn from our driveway out onto the road. There they would pick up the proper spacings, drawing gradually into a rough uniformity. The

morning sun was just breaking through when the last of the lorries was getting under way. We lumbered into motion like an elephant caravan, each goggled mahout well up in his cab-over-engine.

The road out of Poona was deceptively good, a single dirt track but fairly well graded. Through most of the morning our spirits were high as we wound back into the heart of India. A brilliant sun was shining down, but it only served to cheer us along. We were still about two thousand feet above sea level and the breeze was cool in spite of its rays. But this afternoon we reached the edge of the great plateau on which Poona is situated. Stretching below us, shimmering in the heat, the great central plains lay bleached and dry. We halted for a moment before beginning the descent, more in sheer wonder than with any clear purpose. There was time for an exchange of worried looks, then we began rolling down into the mouth of a blast furnace. The kite hawks circled higher and higher above us, then they dropped behind with shrill warning cries. About halfway down we passed between two rock pinnacles which some tommy had aptly but grimly labled "Abandon all hope, all ye who enter here."

The breeze flowed off the edge of the plateau but it soon disappeared like a stream in the sand. Even the road refused to follow us; it equivocated, then begged off into wandering potholed trails. The jolting of the trucks made our bodies ache and our fingers grew stiff around the steering wheels. My arms began to sting from a heavy sweat as the sun burned its salt back into the flesh. We are taking the long way around to Calcutta because, I am told, it is easier driving. What the direct route must hold in the way of obstacles I hardly dare imagine after this back-breaking day. I thought I was joking when I ventured the suggestion that the sepoy might carry this water truck in emergencies. As a matter of fact they were spared that today only because the rivers were low. We have already forded two unbridged streams which would be completely impassable

at any other time of year. It seems impossible that there should be no better road between Bombay and Delhi, the most important two cities in all of India.

We have already lost one driver and his vehicle in an accident that is still almost unexplainable. One ambulance was simply seen to turn from the road and veer twenty feet to the side, where it crashed into a ravine. I suspect that the driver was probably dazed from the constant pounding he had received through the day. I have frequently felt a little punch-drunk myself from the bucking and jolting of this rough terrain. But the thing that bothers me more than this is the terrible cloud of dust which we raise. Quite often it is impossible to see ten feet ahead, so we just have to drive by guess and by golly. I have tried tying handkerchiefs around my face but the dust still gets into my nose and throat. It mixes with the streaming perspiration to form an uncomfortable crackling mask.

The dispatch riders have the hardest job of all; I know that from my own experiences on a cycle. Traveling over ground as rough as this is dangerous even when no speed is set. But when the convoy is traveling thirty miles per hour and is strung out for more than a mile and a half, it doesn't take much of a lightning calculator to add that up to a total of suicide. I watched one fellow pass me this afternoon, skidding and bounding in the gravel and dirt. I tried not to think what would happen to him if he spilled in the path of one of our trucks.

We arrived in Nasik as it was growing dark; there is barely enough light now to see this page. I must force myself to stay awake for supper though my body is sore and crying for sleep. I already had a cup of delicious hot tea and my stomach rebels at the thought of much more. But I know that I will be ravenous by tomorrow noon if I don't manage to choke down a little bully beef.

Today what I've been dreading has finally happened; I have been forced to take to a motorcycle myself. Since I



had more experience than most of the fellows, I was the natural fill-in when one dispatch rider was hurt. I don't have all the facts of his accident but he is said to have crashed into a bullock cart. The yoke of the bullock lifted him off his seat and broke a couple of ribs in the process. As I buckled into my crash helmet and skid boots, a strange feeling of resignation came over me. I was nervous when I kicked over the starter of my bike, but its responsive roar sent a tingle through me. As I pulled down my goggles I tried to stop thinking and become just a functioning part of the mechanism. My narrow escapes, which I soon stopped counting, made me only more angry, not frightened by my job. For nearly five hours I rode herd on the line, shouting and swearing the trucks into order. My memory of that time is an indistinct blur, a flashing of wheels and a stream of invective.

I soon discovered that it was quite impossible to exercise any caution while "riding" the convoy. Turns must be made with a blast of the throttle, in fast broadsides to keep the road clear. In addition, the greater chances I took, the more instant obedience I got from my drivers. They realized, I suppose, that the job was dangerous and nobody wanted to feel responsible for my suicide. By the end of the day I was getting a bit cocky, and I resolved to finish with a fitting flourish. I raced out ahead of the convoy toward Dhulia, to see if the petrol point was ready for our trucks. The road was much smoother than it had previously been and in the distance I could see a stretch of tarmac. I opened the throttle wider and wider, exhilarated by the rushing and the sting of the air. I didn't realize until it was too late that there was a nasty bump where the dirt met pavement. When I hit it I was traveling about sixty miles per hour and I took off in a sickening three-foot leap. As I landed my front wheel was jarred out of line and I careened off the road, trying hard to stay upright. I crashed head down through a barbed-wire fence, breaking the strands most happily with my helmet. After

jumping a ditch and grazing a tree I managed to bring the cycle under some sort of control. A number of natives were shaking their heads, quite convinced of the madness of this machine-age civilization. I stopped for a moment to steady my hand, filling my pipe and puffing for a while. I avoided the glances of the people who gathered; then I finished my run at fifteen miles per hour.

As we move farther north the days grow more comfortable, but the nights in turn become colder and colder. Though we do most of our driving in issue coveralls, when the sun goes down they feel flimsy and insufficient. I brought three blankets from Poona when we left; I've begun to wish I'd brought four or five. When the dampness settles on our open stretchers a chill runs through my very marrow. Our working day begins most dismally when we crawl from our sacks many hours before sunup. There is no warm bathroom or dressing closet to qualify the pain of that initial necessity. We slip into clothes that drip with the dew and scratch as only wet wool can scratch. Finally we draw our cup of tea, simply holding it in our hands for warmth at first. Our cocky sergeant makes the rounds, bawling the traditional reveille cry. "Rise and shine! Rise and shine! You've had your rest and I've had mine! The sun's burnin' your bloomin' eyes out. Rise and shine! Rise and shine!"

It is a sad crew of men who climb into their cabs, rubbing their eyes and munching on soya link. It is a sleepy procession that winds from the car park, wincing and coughing in the sharp morning air. As we get under way I make a vow, as regular, no, more regular than my morning ablutions. I swear that I'll find someone else to drive so that I can curl up behind and sleep. Gradually the sun begins to break through, flirting with the fringe of near-by mountains. As we wind up and down over the hilly land we feel it, then lose it innumerable times. In every declivity it is bitterly cold, just as it was when we rolled from

our beds. But on every hill it is instantly warmer. We doff and don our mittens and coats.

We have passed beyond the central plains, or perhaps it is more accurate to say that we skirted them. After only a few days of hot, flat sands we began winding up into these scrubby mountains. There are no real trees or vegetation here, but dwarfed, twisted bushes pretend to maturity. In the distance we can see more impressive ranges covered with the beginnings of a promising forest.

Wherever these winding roads have taken us, no matter how primitive the country has seemed, there have always been numerous religious symbols by the wayside, minor shrines and miscellaneous Hindu masonry. Some of this art is of recent origin, but the majority of it dates back many hundreds of years. Occasionally we have come upon outstanding relics that count their age in the tens of centuries. There is a strange omnipresence of all ages in this civilization, a physical lesson in eschatology. There is, to the outsider, the uncomfortable feeling that the ancestors of the present are standing at his elbow. It is hard for me to adjust to this, native of a country so new and unencumbered. But it is all the easier for me to sense the dead weight of an infinite past bearing down on the present. Sociologists claim that the American people have very little sense of historical perspective. I can easily believe this, for our own traditions are relatively new and shallow-rooted. From our point of view the peoples of Asia are enigmatic and slow to move. Wearing as we do the winged shoes of reason, it is to be expected that our reactions are mercurial.

I cannot help speculating upon the potentialities of the Christian missions in this land of the past. On first thought, it seems that their task is impossible since they are throwing their weight against an awful inertia. But gradual development is only one form of change, reaction is another and more immediate one. When a philosophy and an outlook lag too far behind, the smallest of forces can

take up the slack. Witness the Russian Revolution when a handful of Communists anticipated history. Remember the fall of the house of Bourbon, when a chicken peck collapsed its eggshell walls. A wave of new life is rising in India, borne on the restless tides of dissatisfaction. It may weaken the foundations of Hinduism in the process of destroying the institutional props of the raj. There are six million Christians in India today, a bountiful harvest for so short a sowing. But who are the Christians in India and what is the church to which they belong?

Before I left Poona I visited a missionary, one of the men who must hurl the spear and the challenge. He was a dumpy little man already tired out from endless haranguing on theology and doctrine. The purpose of his evangelism was to save people's souls; "I am not concerned with politics," said he. The weapon I had imagined aloft in his hand became a bean shooter and his warrior helmet crumpled to a dunce cap.

What do the Christian missions offer India? Do they even recognize the people's needs? No, they deal in a drug on the market. They sell "other worldly" philosophies to an overdosed populace. Why don't we meet the people on common ground and offer them a dynamic social gospel? Why don't we rouse them out of their lethargy rather than telling them to "puff on my pipe a while." Because, I suppose, we don't dare to; we cannot begin to apply Christianity. Our missionaries remain by sufferance of the raj and their tenure is more important than their God. I should like to bring my Poona missionary out here and show him these great stone rivals of his. I should like to ask him, "And now, little man, do you propose to move them with your own two hands?" I am sure that he would draw himself up to full height and announce with an impressive and stentorian tone, "Young man, my strength is as the strength of ten because my heart is pure." But the fact of the matter is that he could not move them except with the help of great social change. And he not

alone fails to work for that change; he even denies that it is possible or desirable. "But where is your Galilean Radical?" I would ask him. "That man could help you move these stone rivals." But alas, the good doctor is back in Poona, probably expounding on the doctrine of atonement.

In the front row sit the young Hindu boy and his Moslem wife, outcastes from their own religions. Next to them sits the little Anglo-Indian girl who is bitterly, pitifully trying to be English. Somewhere in the congregation is the neurotic schoolteacher, out of place, misfit, going anywhere for friendship. These are the castoffs of India's religions; the great stone shrines do not miss their presence.

Day by day the food has got worse, particularly the noon meal which we take on the move. The bully-beef cans have swollen from the heat and many have burst or strained their seams. For my last two meals the meat has been rotten, but I've had to eat it because I was hungry. The stuff is greasy and tasteless to begin with; now it is becoming unbearably rank. The fruit bar fares little better in this climate; most of our supply is crawling with maggots. At one time the very thought would have sickened me, but now I brush off the majority and eat the rest. Maggots have almost no taste to speak of, and they don't noticeably alter the consistency of the fruit bar. Once you have learned not to dwell on their presence you are able to down them without much trouble. But yesterday I bit into something much worse, a bar shot through with maggot eggs. I thought at first that I was chewing on sawdust, but when I realized what it was I lost my lunch.

I tried to "buzz" a Brahman bull yesterday and almost wound up on the point of his horns. Undaunted by the monstrous size of the beast, I assumed he would react like any other bull. Normally, I have only to ride in their

direction and race my motor to clear the road. But this time the bull had a similar idea, and came closer to achieving his aim than I did. He lowered his head and charged at my cycle, bellowing much louder than I could accelerate. I swerved aside and around his horns, missing my fate by a matter of inches. I assumed that he would be satisfied with this clear triumph, that he would refuse to press my ignominy any further. But with a thoroughly unsportsmanlike air, I felt, he turned in his length and was back upon me. I was last seen roaring down the roadway, casting terrified looks back over my shoulder. "The Time Muehl Was Buzzed by a Brahman Bull" may well become a part of Indian Army legend.

I am glad to be back on the water truck again, measuring out chemicals rather than pacing the convoy. But I had forgotten, for a while, the numerous difficulties attendant on even this simpler job. In addition to thwarting the forces of nature and their blind intention to disease us all, I must now contend with a newer menace, a more crafty, conscious, and clever force. The native children are growing very bold and they plague me with a constant, if minor, sabotage. They sneak up at night while I am asleep and turn on the taps at the rear of my water truck. Twice already I've been awakened mockingly by the drizzling swan song of my precious supply. And each time I have arisen only just in time to save the last few drops in the tank. Fortunately, I have been able to replenish the supply at any of the cities along the route. But I hope I can devise some means of protection before we encounter the drier sections.

Yesterday, with an audacity uncommon even to them, these urchins turned on my taps in the morning. I discovered this fact in the late afternoon after laying the dust between Shivpuri and Jhansi. The tank had been full when I got under way, but it was completely empty when I came to a halt. I finally understood the peculiar gestures

the dispatch rider had been making through most of the day.

One of the chief annoyances we encounter en route are the kite hawks which circle endlessly above us. There is, in India, no other creature that less respects the dignity of the sahib. These birds swoop down toward our plates at mealtime, stealing the choicest pieces from our forks. Occasionally they will dispute the possession of bread that is being incautiously held in our very hands. I know of any number of cases wherein a fellow has had a finger laid wide open. The hawk has a set of razor-sharp talons which he uses on man and animal alike. But aside from this primary nuisance value, the attitude of the kite hawk is quite indefensible. He adds insult to injury by sailing overhead, returning our grudging offerings in digested form.

I tell their story with my tongue in my cheek, but some flaring hatreds have centered on these birds. Their casual flippancy is more than enough to send many soldiers into fits of rage. The favorite method of retaliation is to insert old razor blades in chunks of food. These are thrown into the air for the circling hawks, which usually manage to catch them in their mouths. The desired effect is instantaneous; the bird simply crumples and spins to the ground.

Less sadistic and more humorous is the tale of one man who resolved to hit one of the hawks with an ax handle. He secreted himself between two ambulances, having thrown a bully-beef bait by the side. The bait was stolen several times by the shifty, swift-flying, brazen birds. But at last one timed its pickup poorly and met the descending weapon, full tilt. A shower of feathers went in every direction and a cry of triumph broke from our driver. He repeats his performance regularly now, varying his technique with the use of a shovel.

I have discovered at last the magic word that settles all

of my water problems. On arriving in each new village, I simply proclaim to the people, "American sahib." Instead of draining, the children fill my truck, fighting for turns at the pumping apparatus. The parents, rather than misdirecting me as before, climb on my fenders and lead me to the water points. This fondness of the Indians for the American sahib does not really come as a surprise to me. I have long since realized their profound admiration for everyone and everything American. But I was still not prepared for such a display of good will as I have received in the last few outlying towns. The larger cities, where I have spent most of my time, being more sophisticated, conceal their feelings. But here it is as if the circus had come to town; the cries precede me down the streets. Old Indian soldiers in tattered khaki come to a bent attention and salute when I pass.

The Indian has a stereotyped picture of my countrymen; we are magnanimous, gentle, but a little crazy. If I dare depart from this preconceived notion I am immediately suspected of being an impostor. But once I slap the men on the back and whistle at the women I am met with smiles. The people scream, "American sahib!" and accord me all privileges of that exalted position.

Today is December the twenty-fifth, but somehow I feel that today is not Christmas. Christmas is a day when there is snow on the ground, when you can see your breath, and when mittens feel good. Christmas is the time when you are secure at home, wrapping presents and choosing cards. Christmas is the time when you are foolishly happy, when even the irreverent become sentimental about their religion. On Christmas you visit your widespread families, and the ties of blood seem most important. In Michigan the snow creaks underfoot and coats your hair and your overcoat with white. Christmas is home and church and friends; Christmas is tinsel and snow and affection.

December 25 is the day you drive more than four hun-



dred miles over hard-baked roads. It is the day when you sit in the shade of your lorry and make sentimental entries in your journal. You think about your friends and family, and you try to imagine just what they are doing; seven o'clock here, that's eight-thirty in the morning. Just about time to open the presents!

The garrison here in Jhansi did its level best to make this day seem a little bit cheerful. Just as we were opening our bully-beef tins a dispatch rider came out from a near-by hospital. He approached us rather timidly at first, qualifying his invitation before he made it. "We really haven't got much," he said, "but it might be a little better than bully-beef. The fellows heard you was stuck out 'ere and they sent me to ask if you'd share our supper. We haven't been able to draw special rations, but our cook can do wonders with soya link."

We jammed all our men into two or three lorries and ferried them into town to eat. At first our presence seemed to embarrass the regulars, but after more apologies they took us to supper. The dispatch rider was right; this meal was no banquet; but I think we all appreciated the gesture. These tommies had asked us out of sheer good will, and that in itself served to cheer us up. I ate two dishes of soya and tomato, better indeed than bully beef. After dinner a basket of nuts was passed, decorated pitifully with cigarette wrappers.

We arrived in Cawnpore in the late afternoon, and this gave me all evening to see the city. I had especially hoped for some free time here, since there is someone I am very anxious to see. He is an agitator for Indian independence, a spokesman for the textile workers chiefly. I had carried a letter from a friend in Poona who insisted that I talk with him if I could find the chance. I started along before supper was ready, fortifying myself with a cup of tea. Then I hit out through the center of town in spite of the fact

that it is "out of bounds." On my way through the city I crossed one square that was peculiarly quieter than the streets around it. It almost seemed as if the people were shunning it, so my curiosity naturally was aroused. It was growing dark, but as I started across I noticed a scaffolding off to one side. It was braced and unpainted, obviously built in haste and designed for some temporary use. My imagination was quick to suggest any number of purposes which such a structure might serve. I didn't rein it in immediately since I had been conditioned to the truth of many ghastly imaginings. I went over to inspect the scaffold in spite of myself; my original impulse was to run away. The closer I got the more frightened I became, for more and more grisly signs were appearing.

I climbed a steep and shaky ladder, supporting my weight on the steadier hand rails. But I never got to the top; I saw all I wanted from a lower step. A rope was dangling from an overhead beam; I wondered whether the hanging were over or coming. Then I noticed a line of congealed blood which did not quite jibe with the idea of a hanging. Suddenly I became aware of a chilly breeze which began to blow as the sun went down. I climbed back down to the ground in a hurry and wrapped my tunic close about my neck. It was almost dark when I found the street and number designated on the letter I carried.

The man I sought was not at home when I called, but his bearer asked me if I would care to wait. I retired to a small thatch shelter in the yard and read from the volume I had thought to bring with me. After twenty or thirty minutes I arose, hearing the sound of voices inside. My host came out, rather curious at first, but when he read my introduction his greeting was warm. We talked for a while of many things, each trying to feel the other out. Gradually we built up a mutual confidence, and I broached the subject which was burning in my brain. "I noticed a scaffold in the center of the city, located just off of one of the street squares. It was rigged rather as though for a hanging, but

I noticed what looked like a stain of blood. What on earth has the thing been used for? I sense a real drama in that."

My host could not answer my question at once, but after thinking a moment he felt he could explain. "It was probably a public execution. They're not too uncommon here in the North. If you say you saw blood, then almost without doubt a number of men were put to death there. Frequently, in the case of a serious crime, the culprits are made to choose their end. They draw from a box a sign which tells whether they will be hung, shot, or flogged to death." I winced as he reeled off these "choices," particularly when he mentioned the final one. I have heard of this method of execution before, but I had put it out of mind and tried to forget it.

I can hardly believe such barbarism is practiced in the middle of the twentieth century. Though flogging as such is permitted by the raj, I suspect that it is discouraged as a means of killing. But I know enough about the laxity of policy to discount that suspicion as a disproof of the fact. Any number of atrocities are practiced which are never officially reported to the Delhi palaces. Still, I can hardly bring myself to believe this awful tale of terror and pain. I pray that my host was mistaken or that he was simply trying to aid his own cause.

I have discovered that the tommy has an amazing sense of humor which he stifles except when alone with his fellows. His specialty is a parody on his own behavior, a subtle satire on his place in society. The officer seldom sees his men except when they are rigid and at attention. An advantage of my anomalous position is that I can frequently depart from this beaten track. Last night several of our warrant officers were talking over events of the day. I joined the group as casually as I could and the conversation proceeded without interruption.

"Well, Jocko comes in wif a terrific bun, and I see he's not fit for night guard," one said. "So I 'ustle 'im off to

bed, figurin' to clock in both 'is time and mine. Well, blimey, I run my bleedin' feet off, up to 'is barracks and then to ours. I 'ole my breaf and come to attention and throw the officer a pukah salute. Then I wheel aroun' and run out . . . and this goes on for three hours, see? Well, by the end of that time I'm an 'oly wreck and I can jis' about lif' one boot after the other. Finally I'm runnin' about ten minutes late and 'eavin like a bloomin' cavalry 'orse when I report. The Lieutenant notices that there is somethin' peculiar and 'e stops me just as I'm about to bounce out.

" 'I say, sergeant,' 'e says to me, ' 'ow is it that you're reportin' late? The other guards usually manage to come on time, but you seem winded when you eventually get here, and that is usually way overtime.'

"Well, I figures, gorme, the jig is up. This bloke will certainly turn me in. And I knows that while I'm standin' 'ere talkin' to 'im, I'm losin' even more time, by the by. But I says, 'Oh, I'm just anxious to do a good job, sir, I'm guardin' this place like as never before. An' you know, sir, I've noticed any number of prowlers. I've been chasin' 'em off for 'alf of the night.'

"Well, at this the Lieutenant takes out after me, proposin' to see these prowlers for 'isself. So we're duckin' in and around the buildings, while I'm wonderin' 'ow to report for Jocko. Suddenly a terrific idea comes to me and I say, ' 'Ere goes one, take after 'im, sir. I'll go around the other side of the buildin 'and we'll trap 'im around between the latrines.'

"At this the Lieutenant lets out a yell and says, 'All right, my man, I think I see 'is shadow.'

"I disappears like a streak of lightnin' only to be detained by the other officer. Finally I pulls the same stunt on 'im so that both of these lads is chasin' around buildings. ' 'Ere goes one,' I cry occasionally, just to keep 'em out of each other's way. Well, finally it's time for the next guard to come on, and I figures I'm jist about safe at last. But gorme, if they both don't get the idea of doublin' the

guard for the rest of the night. I was lucky, though, 'cause I talked one into lettin' just the regular guard report. But I tell you blokes, by the end of that stretch I was jist about ready for an 'ospital bed."

The tommy had pantomined the entire story, coming to exaggerated attention and saluting. When he was mimicking the officer he picked up a branch and swung it about like the regulation swagger stick. His fellows joined in the fun themselves, acting the "stooge" to his major roles. All in all the thing assumed more the proportions of a play than a speech.

Wasid Ali, the oldest of our Indians, has been riding in the cab of the water truck with me. Though neither of us understands the language of the other, we are developing a strong if silent friendship. Ali is a veteran of many years' soldiery and he wears the medals of overseas campaigning. Though he is now disarmed and attached to the service troops, he still considers himself a fighting man. Every evening he shares his supper with me, or in any case he offers to share it. The rations he draws are inferior to mine, but his imagination and seasonings more than make up for that. The usual cuisine is curry with chapatty, a tasteless bread made from flour and water. The combination is unbearably hot, but it almost obscures the rottenness of our meat.

I normally draw my rations from the mess sergeant, then squat by the fire that Ali has built. I sniff at the stuff lying cold in my place, grimacing and shaking my head in despair. At no point in the proceedings do I ever dare show that I am expecting a handout from Ali's pan. I simply display the deepest dejection; I sit there registering revulsion at my own. Without a word, my friend spreads a chapatty with a thick brown layer of his native concoction. Then he hands it to me, looking quite pleased with himself and for all the world as if he had never done this before. I take the chapatty with a show of surprise,

and I push the bully beef ceremoniously to one side. We both make running comments on the curry's perfection by smiling and grunting our visceral approval. Finally we draw two cups of tea and bring them back to the dying coals. Ali and I sit staring into them, thinking our own thoughts, speculating on each other's.

Three of our service troops are Hindus, I'm told, and all the rest are Mohammedan. But to judge from the general good will among them, I would never have realized any difference existed. They all eat together from the same utensils; there are no obvious factions or persistent cliques. Though arguments arise, they are usually short-lived, and the men take sides irrespective of their faith. When I asked Peermohammed who the Hindus were, he had to count noses before he could answer. It was obvious that the distinction was unimportant to him, so unimportant that it was far from immediate. Several days ago a situation arose which I expected to result in serious disagreement. The mess sergeant had drawn beef for the Indian troops, which the Hindus might be expected to resent. There was some heated argument among the men, between two factions of Moslems, I learned later. Finally their spokesman declined the beef, out of deference to the three Hindus with whom they were traveling.

In my conversation with Poona shopkeepers I often tried to draw them out on this subject. I was anxious to sound the depths of their tolerance, Hindu for Moslem and Moslem for Hindu. I would recite the failings of each group to the other, hoping to get their candid reactions. In each case, my friends would begin by cautioning me against any facile generalization. The Indians are aware that their diversity of religions is a catch phrase and an argument for the defense of the raj. Because of that, they are doubly anxious to prove that there are no fundamental antagonisms. I could not fail to be impressed by the earnestness with which they would destroy the straw men I set

up. Time and again they would pound their counters and insist, "Hindu, Moslem, both of them Indians, sahib!"

As we pass along through the countryside I almost weep at the sight of these cattle. The stock is so underfed and so hopelessly degenerate that it bears little resemblance to the American herds. The backbones and ribs protrude through a skin which is usually covered with some scrofulous infection. The round, swollen bellies sag down beneath as if the flesh were tearing loose from the skeleton. The eyes of the animals are ringed with mucus and the mouths drool lazily on a frothy saliva. The udders are ridiculously, pitifully small, and the beasts have hardly the energy to graze.

There is almost no selective breeding in India, certainly none out here in the hinterlands. The immediate needs of the people are so great that any and all mating in the herds must be encouraged. Hence one single strain has developed in place of the many that should have been kept separate. The Indian bullock must work in the fields while the female counterpart is expected to give milk. In addition, both are occasionally slaughtered for the meat which neither produces in quantity. No enlightened farmer would ever choose to raise one strain of cattle for all of these purposes.

The fact that there is a herd at all is traceable to the Hindu worship of cows. I suspect the taboo was originally begun to serve the purpose which it still serves well. If the Indians killed their herds for food during famines, they would provide only scanty and temporary benefit. But as it is, they are permitted to live, producing the milk which is more constantly needed.

The problem of the herd is typical, almost symbolic of the general problems of Indian progress. The dilemma between the needs of the moment and long-range policy are as clear and cruel. A people who may starve if their stock diminishes are in no position to practice selective

breeding. And people whose poverty of the moment is so grinding find it hard to set aside much money for investment. The gaunt forms of bastard-bred, ill-begotten cattle bear ugly witness to the truth of the first maxim. And the bony hand that grasps the anna is as painful a proof of the more important second.

I had a strange experience this afternoon, but I barely missed a tragic one. I was riding a cycle and I had dropped behind to minister to the needs of a burned-out lorry. Another dispatch rider was with me at the time, but I soon sent him on to report to the convoy. A few minutes later, after fruitless first aid, the truck made clear its intention to remain, and I, hoping to retract my first statement, roared after the other dispatch rider who carried it. It was growing dark and the road was rough, but I was very anxious to stop the fellow. Forgetting my previous experience on the bike, I cleared the holes in fast running jumps. Suddenly my carburetor began to suck air and I switched from the right to the left-hand gas tank. But before the engine could draw up the petrol I had rolled to a sputtering, cursing stop. I bent down to make some adjustments in the lines, and when I straightened I was startled by a beggar at my elbow. He had emerged, I assumed, from behind one lone tree that stood near by on a landscape that was otherwise desolate. His face was streaked and white with ashes and I could not help but recoil at the sight. He extended a gaunt hand and muttered, "Bak-sheesh," but I could see that this was no ordinary beggar. His garb and his ceremonial make-up denominated him a Hindu holy man. I was so angry and ashamed of having been frightened that I dismissed him with a few ill-chosen phrases. He backed away with a singsong muttering; I somehow understood that this was a curse.

It was darker now, and though the incantation didn't frighten me, it left me with a certain irrational uneasiness. The appearance of the beggar, his sudden presence, and



his chanting all served to jangle my nerves. When I got under way I proceeded slowly, having lost all my taste for speed and thrills. Around each bend I imagined monsters, waiting for despoilers of the faith to appear. Each dip and hollow made me feel more uncomfortable, till I reduced my speed to a virtual walk. When I began climbing one irrigation ditch, a most impossible fear took hold of me. What if the bridge were washed out? I thought. I shifted into first gear in spite of myself. But just as I neared the crest of the hill my confidence seemed to return to me. I opened the throttle and began shooting forward, when suddenly I found broad water below me. I spun the cycle as quickly as I could; it tore at the bank and plunged into the ditch. I sprawled in the sand, clawing for a hold, and managed to avoid following the vehicle. What if I had hit that washout full tilt? What if I had hurtled into it with the cycle? I might well have been knocked out or dragged down by the bike, cut up and burned by the white-hot cylinder.

When I caught up with the convoy, long since at rest, I told the tale of my curse and my crash. Brennan, the driver of the regular staff car, seemed to find the episode most mysterious. "Good Lord," he said, "that's really remarkable. Have you heard what happened to the other D.R.?" I confessed that I hadn't and I couldn't help wondering what bearing that had on what I was telling. "Tom met the same holy beggar as you, but he gave him four annas and received a blessing. About two hours ago he went into that ditch and was almost killed when his cycle fell on him."

# X

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WE DREW into Calcutta this afternoon, whence we shall be taken to the front by train. Fortunately we have a two-day stopover, long enough to warrant a room in the hotel, a hot bath, and a night between sheets. The town has been virtually appropriated by GI's, the first American troops I've seen in quantity. The city has adapted very quickly to their tastes. The teashops have been replaced by ice-cream bars. Most important of all, though, is the casual way the troops here treat their officers. They are respectful and disciplined, but in an easy-going way. Sergeants and lieutenants compete for the girls. There are just a few places that are out of bounds to all enlisted personnel. In most of the hotels, cafés, and restaurants you can find every insignia between a stripe and an eagle. At first this surprised me very much, as it is so different from the behavior of the British troops. But now I am getting used to it and I cannot see that it is harmful to morale.

I went into an American hospital yesterday, to see the surgeon general of the Indian theater. I had expected the usual battle with red tape, and I had supposed that it would take at least an hour to get to him. But to my surprise I stated my business and was ushered into his office with no delay. Still blinking from this unaccustomed efficiency, I was further staggered by the officer's informality. He waved aside the salute I began and produced a pack of cigarettes from his pocket. "Here," he said, "take it easy. Now tell me what I can do for you, young fellow."

I stated my business as briefly as possible, still surprised by the officer's attitude. The surgeon general stopped me at one point to check an answer to one question in his files. "Jim," he called, addressing his sergeant, "bring in the records of X-ray screening."

Within ten seconds he was scanning the sheets which the sergeant had produced from a cabinet by the door. Good Lord, I thought. If this had been our outfit that order would have taken five minutes to accomplish. Ten seconds to go through the essential motions. Four minutes and fifty more to click heels and exchange salutes.

This mania for efficiency has taken root in Calcutta; it is everywhere in spirit if not in effect. Even the ricksha boys are following the trends, providing express service with two men to the carriage. I doubt if the speeds achieved are much greater, and I doubt, in addition, if the American sahib cares. He is rich by our standards and prepared to pay just for the pretense of superservice. The merchants of Calcutta are racking their brains, devising ways to harvest American money. The bazaars are bulging with elephantine merchandise, tribute to the "bigger the better" philosophy. In the abstract I am against this supermaterialism, but in India—well, it is all for the best. It is a welcome relief from the semiascetic attitude which is partly responsible for the country's physical backwardness.

This enthusiasm over things American is not a pose, but a genuine reaction. The natives' preoccupation with efficiency and speed is not adaptation, but acceptance of a philosophy. I have seen bearers here taking pride in their jobs, striving for the American sahib's generous praise. I have seen them working at fantastic speeds, getting things done as never for us. And most of all, I have seen the GI manner and attitude that is responsible for this, in the jovial blustering caricatures of themselves who manage to pretend that work is fun.

As I entered the hotel two American soldiers were riding down Chowringhee Road in rickshas. The coolies who pulled them were old and tired out, and the soldiers chided them gently about their slowness. Finally one fellow hopped out of his seat and demanded that the coolie climb in his place. After several minutes of explanation and arguing, both of the GI's were between the bars. There was a

clatter and shriek as they came down the street, running as fast as their boots would allow. The last I saw, one fellow was gaining on the other, yelling, "I'll beat you yet, you long-legged bastard."

The window of my room opens out on a court where, down below, some people are dancing. The music has been unbearably bad until recently and I've just discovered the reason for its improvement. The regular paid orchestra is composed of five Indians who have no real feeling for American jazz. They tootle away at syncopated rhythms as if they were charming cobras from a basket. But a moment ago five Negro GI's approached the bandstand and spoke to the director. After some consultation and wagging of heads, it was agreed that these impromptus might try their skill. They slipped into place with a becoming modesty, but it was apparent that they had played together before. The music was folded and put away; trousers were pulled slack over the knees. The drums established a lazy tempo, then the horns came in on a minor key. Fingers stiff from heaving boxes were limbering to long-lost, much-missed skills. The fellows loafed through a moody, blue chorus, just casually trying notes on for size. Then their touch came back and stiff lips loosened; the music took a more confident, rocking turn. The Indian musicians tried to return to the stand, but the dancers swarmed in to protest the attempt. At length it was apparent, if never agreed, that the GI's would play for the rest of the evening. The music has got better by the note; it is symphonic to the ear of homesick Americans. And I suspect that even in objective terms it is jazz of a rare authenticity and appeal. The musicians have lost a measure of their technique, but they have gained a directness and sincerity of statement. They cannot establish speed or fingering or arrangement, they can only blow clear unadulterated feeling.

We are waiting in the Calcutta railroad yards, loaded

and ready for the trip to Assam. All of our vehicles have been driven aboard flatcars and chocked preparatory to getting under way. We are on a meter gauge at the moment, but we'll have to detrain and reload several times. Somehow the engineers of the raj have never got around to standardizing track. We are expected to sleep out here with our lorries, and for most of the men that will not be too bad. They can simply curl up in the backs of their ambulances and sleep on the stretchers as they have always done. But I am separate from the rest of the convoy, isolated here on a flatcar all my own. I've begun to pitch camp underneath the water truck, hanging my mosquito net and spreading some blankets. The cook truck is located just a little way forward, but the mess sergeant has distributed emergency rations. If we stop for long enough, he will cook up some food, but otherwise we'll just have to gnaw at cold bully beef. I laid in a supply of bananas and oranges with a half dozen coconuts thrown in for good measure. I expect that between this stock and our issue, I will be able to sustain life on my little island. I don't expect to get much sleep, however, perched as I am over the wheels of this car. The springing is rusty and bad to begin with, while the grading of the roadway seems terribly bumpy. When I lie down to rest my ears are, by accurate measure, just three feet and a half from the axle. And it will probably groan a duet with the sprung connection between the cars.

When I awoke this morning we were standing on a siding and I immediately assumed that we were still in Calcutta. I had slept through the night with an amazing soundness, even more amazing than I first suspected. When I poked my head from under the netting I looked out upon a foreign scene. We had apparently traveled for most of the night while I lay here quietly in a state of short death. I jumped from the blankets and dressed in a hurry, hoping to get some tea from the cook truck. But just as I

began making my way up toward it the train started moving, and I had to hurry back. Some of the men have bought eggs from the farmers who are occasionally standing beside the tracks. They have soft-boiled them in the steam from the engine; all this, of course, while I was dressing.

The farther north we go in Bengal, the more oriental the scenery becomes. Long, low plains and dry, baked land give way to rolling pasture and trees. Farmers are working, knee-deep in rice fields, cultivating and digging in the criss-cross paddies. They wear round, slanted hats, volcanic in shape, and reminiscent of "mission-pamphlet" Chinese. I was amused to see one fellow wading in the muck, drawing what seemed to be a net behind him. But I was far more surprised than amused when, at last, he raised the net with several fish.

I finally managed to get my breakfast by climbing from one car to another while we moved. At first I was rather afraid to try this, but everyone else seemed to be undertaking it. I have lately learned of one near accident which occurred as we were pulling out of the last siding. One of our men was jarred off balance so that he fell between the cars as they started rolling. Fortunately, though he struck his head on the rail, he was barely able to roll out of the way. Another fellow flagged down the train so that we could take the unconscious man aboard. I'm glad I had my breakfast before hearing of this, for I am sure it would have discouraged me from getting it. I've been glued to my seat for the last two hours, afraid even to get out of the truck.

We have just retrained on a wider track, an operation that took six or seven hours. As if it weren't bad enough to make these transfers, everything must be unloaded and replaced by hand labor. Just a few good cranes could complete the process in a quarter of the time it takes this way. But the coolies run back and forth over the siding, balancing freight on their turbaned heads. There was one string

of cars ahead of us when we arrived, and another waiting just behind. The last train in line will probably be delayed two or three days by this silly inefficiency.

I talked to one of the stationmasters here, trying to convince him that this was bad economy. But he answered, "Son, you'll soon find out that labor is the cheapest commodity out here."

I protested, "Yes, perhaps labor is, but time is expensive here as elsewhere. You are tying up rolling stock for days at a time, just to save a few thousand dollars' outlay." But this is the way they did it for Queen Victoria and this is the way they will continue to do it. The raj is as suspicious of change and progress as the most ignorant, superstitious native village.

I am told that when the American Army wanted airports in India, they asked the British if they would be able to build them. "Yes," answered the raj, "but it will take a long time. Probably eight or ten months at least. And the cost will be high, extremely so. Well up in the tens of millions of dollars." The American Army declined politely and said that it would build the airports itself. The fields were finished in record time, many months less than half the British estimates. The cost was high, as the raj had predicted, but just about two-thirds the price it had set. This "miracle of modern engineering" was simply the application of twentieth-century methods. Bulldozers took the place of women with baskets, and dynamite was employed rather than children with grub hoes.

We have finally come to the end of the line; we rolled off our flatcars late last night. We arrived in the station around one o'clock, so we were routed from our blankets to detrain and make camp. Most of us managed only three hours' sleep, but I haven't heard anyone complain too bitterly. From this point forward our fortunes are the fortunes of war, and we might just as well begin getting used to them. I am grateful that we've been quartered com-

fortably for so long and I suppose that in the future we may lose more than sleep. In any event, we have one consolation: the food cannot get much worse than it is now.

It is a thousand miles from here to Imphal, our original base and present destination; a thousand miles over rugged Chin ridges, two days' travel if luck and lorries hold out. We have already begun to see signs of the enemy, harmless Japanese reconnaissance planes circling overhead. They are barely specks on a broad horizon; I hope we maintain this distant association.

This morning we crossed the Brahmaputra River and one of my secret suspicions was destroyed. I had always believed that it existed only in geography books, but there it was, broad and wet! Our lorries were ferried across on barges, rickety things listing low in the water. I was almost afraid to drive aboard, but after watching some others I edged on slowly. The vehicles were jammed in close-packed rows, bumper to bumper and wheel to wheel. Just to be on the safe side I elected to ride on a little tow tug, rickety as it was.

The "head" on this tug, or lavatory if you will, was hung out over the starboard railing. It was held in place by strap-metal fasteners, but it shook and sagged with the engine's vibrations. The little closet was about four feet square, probably a ship's locker adapted to the need. I could too easily imagine the thing breaking loose and carrying some unfortunate occupant to the bottom. I had bought some bananas from a fruit wallah on shore and I expected to eat them as a breakfast snack. Byron Kelly couldn't understand my generosity when I gave the entire lot to him.

I am disappointed to find the roads up here little better than those in India. On the central plains bumps and wash-outs mean only inconvenience; here they are a tactical disadvantage. This battle, they say, is a battle of communications in which strong supply lines are the first pre-



requisite. Speed of transport is so vital and imperative that stalled lorries are sometimes pushed off narrow ledges. And yet the grading and bridges are so bad that literally hundreds of cars go over the edge. Unbanked hairpin turns and unattended washouts slow down speeds and take their toll in lives and cargo.

It is not as if there were nothing to be done, as if we could move in no grading machinery. But it is the infuriating inertia of this great bureaucracy that not even a war can prod into action. The men who are building the Ledo Road have brought bulldozers, rock-crushers, and steam shovels in here to do a job which we called impossible. But true to tradition, the raj refuses to learn, refuses to admit its most obvious errors. There is an old adage which warns against the practice of sending a boy to do a man's job. How much worse to send women and girls to do the work of steam engines and gasoline!

We arrived in Demipur this afternoon, the northern terminus of the Manipur Road. Early tomorrow we will get under way on the final leg of our three-week journey. This road winds uphill from here to Kohima, then it gradually drops to the Imphal plain. Our convoys will operate between there and the front, evacuating battle casualties from Tiddim and Tamu. "Front" is an inappropriate term to use in describing jungle warfare. It is better to talk of the strong points and "boxes" and of the no man's land that lies beyond them. Out in the jungle patrols interweave, constantly prodding and contacting the enemy. And even a half mile beyond our bases the incautious may walk into a well-laid ambush.

There is no rear area here on the road; we could meet a barrage around any turn. For weeks at a time the routes are blocked, cut and held by Japanese patrols. This is a continual source of discomfort for our drivers. Every delay is a cause for anxiety. Shouting or rifle fire, low-flying Spitfires make us stiffen and involuntarily slow down. Actually

we enjoy a certain immunity, since all of our lorries are marked with red crosses. I have been told, by officers in the Medical Corps, that this sign is generally respected by the enemy.

Once again I have a place to lay my head (even if it is just a stretcher cot) and a shelf on which to place my books (a wooden plank beneath the cot). I suppose I could add that I am finally at rest, if I wanted to stretch the terminology. Actually I feel as if I were still on the move, though that might be simply wishful thinking. On the road I could always sleep in one of the ambulances, consoling myself with the idea that the inconvenience was temporary. But now all the drivers have set up housekeeping, having folded and hidden their extra stretchers. In addition to this, I have been advised to dig a slit trench somewhere near my cozy basha. Perhaps if I throw myself into the digging I'll wind up with something more comfortable than the hut.

Each of the bashas is raised from the ground on a little dirt platform about two feet high. I understand that the purpose of this architecture is to provide protection against the monsoon rains. The roofs are thatched and apparently well tenanted with vermin and insects of every description. I'm told that during the rainy season these beasties move in to the shelter of our rooms. It becomes quite an involved question of disputed occupancy, with reptiles, animals, and bugs claiming squatter's rights. I think when this happens I'll relinquish all ownership, moving to one of the near-by trees.

I bought a machete in the bazaar this morning, determined to set up housekeeping in earnest. I've already cut half an acre of bamboo, trying to find material to make a bed. The natives are able to work miracles with the stuff, twisting and tying it into any known shape. But unless the pieces I selected were especially perverse, there is some

sort of esoteric skill connected with their achievements. I thought at one point that I had succeeded grandly; my stretcher was well slung across a rough lashed frame. But when I threw my machete down on the "bed," it collapsed with an almost malicious suddenness. Now I have settled for a simpler arrangement. My cot is supported on two piles of wood. This not only provides a safer roost, but gives me the perfect alibi for having cut so much bamboo.

Next door to our hut is a native brothel; "Laundry," says their sign, but they won't wash clothes. The girls lean over the fence between us, laughing among themselves and making suggestive motions. All of our fellows have been warned against them, or more particularly, against their husbands. These Manipur women are a passionate lot, but not half so passionate as their well-armed husbands. The men go away for weeks at a time, up into the hills to work on the road. They return on the most unexpected days; "We lose more darned men that way," cracks one of our soldiers.

Our shower is placed in back of one basha, just a few yards from the aforementioned fence. It is a simple petrol tin mounted, bell-like, on an axis so that the water can be dumped at the pull of a cord. At first we were all too self-conscious to use it, since the women came running whenever we tried. But by the afternoon we had grown more reckless and we did need baths after a week's dirty driving. "Cleanliness is next to godliness," yelled one driver, vigorously peeling off his shirt. "That's what they say," agreed another. Here he hesitated before dropping his trousers. "I wonder how God's going to feel about this."

I expected that it would probably be quite a while before we received our "baptism by fire." But Bartley has had his already, though from his story it seems to have been less than total immersion. He was out on the road between here and Tiddim, waiting to clear with a dressing station. A roar of machine guns could be heard in the distance and

Bartley became more nervous by the minute. A Ghurka sentry was walking his post, apparently oblivious to the muffled shooting, and Bartley, hoping for some consolation, tried to strike up a conversation. But the sentry apparently spoke no English and even Urdu was relatively useless. "Still," says Bartley, "I assumed that this fellow would know enough to look frightened if we were in danger."

The gunfire began to draw closer and closer; this war was becoming much too much of a reality. Our driver arose from the rock where he was sitting and approached the Ghurka for another try. This time he resorted to the use of pantomime and managed to solicit a little comfort. The sentry made a number of expansive gestures, intimating that he by himself could stem a large-scale assault. "But even so," Bartley tells us, "I didn't like the looks of things. The sounds were getting closer all the time and there was I, armed only with my Geneva card."

Finally, the most ominous sign of all, a bullet whined close above Bartley's head. At this he turned again to the sentry. But the sentry was no longer walking his post; he was flat on his back with his eyes wide open, blood spouting out of a hole in his forehead. Bartley, amazing in his professional zeal, rushed to the fellow to give first aid. But by the time his hair had been cut away, the Ghurka was quite beyond all help.

As I came out of my basha this afternoon one of our drivers was standing by the steps. He was slapping his hip as if drawing a gun, and I thought at first that he must be playing cowboy. But he repeated the performance again and again till I felt that it must be a serious undertaking, so I stopped in the doorway to watch for a moment, hoping to discern some method in this madness. The longer I watched the more mystified I became, which reaction seemed to be rather general. As time went by a number of us gathered, staring alternately at the performer and at

each other. "What's he doing?" someone would ask. A hoarse whisper would answer, "Damned if I know." Finally one of us hit on the obvious and yelled, "Say, what in the hell is this?" The slapping went on and the slapper was silent. The thing was getting to be interesting.

Some of our fellows were greasing their lorries; they appeared in the square with grease guns in their hands. One or two of the Indian service troops stood in the doorway of the kitchen, watching. At length I broke the silence again, shouting, "Perkins, what do you think you're doing?"

Perkins wheeled around and pointed his finger at me. A silly grin came over his face. "I'm practicing my draw, that's what I'm doing. We're pretty close to the front now, so I'm practicing my draw."

Someone yelled, "Perkins, don't be so stupid. You know that we aren't allowed to carry guns."

Perkins turned around to view the offender with an expression of studied and cruel disdain. "I'm not practicing to draw a gun. I'm practicing to draw my Geneva card in a hurry."

Imphal has been very boring to date; it is hard to believe it is close to the front. Most of our ambulances are just where we parked them on the day we rolled in from Demipur. One of our sections is rather active, running regularly and carrying casualties. But some of our group have been assigned to hospitals where they are working on a sort of detached service program. I've been forward of here only two or three times and then in anything but an official capacity. If I die in this war it will probably be from an attack of malignant ennui.

Apparently things aren't always so quiet. Imphal itself has been bombed to dust. I wandered back into the native sections, but there was little to see but craters and debris. The whole population has moved, bag and baggage, back up into the hilly land. What few are left are nominally attached to one or another army group. The cultivated fields

have gone to seed and the bamboo is already encroaching upon them. Unless the tenants return very shortly, there will be nothing left of the farms they owned.

It is a pathetic sight to see all this land untilled and yet fertile enough to grow by itself. What the skinny peasants of the central plains would give for just half an acre of it! Farming up here is careless and haphazard, chary of labor but costly in land. Yet, rooted by ignorance to the dry lands below, the plainsmen sweat their lives out for lack of such soil.

# XI

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I WAS sent to an Indian-British general hospital about fifteen miles forward of Imphal today. Though my duties are supposedly diminished now, I am finding much more to keep me busy and interested. A convoy is running twice a day, bringing the wounded back here from the front. I have decided to make the run myself, provided Colonel Briggs has no objections. I hope I can get to know the Colonel, for he seems to be an awfully decent fellow. I would guess his age between thirty-five and forty, phenomenally young for the rank he holds. I was impressed, from the moment of our first meeting, by his air of real professional competence. He is the first surgeon I have seen out here whom I would trust with a dull boy-scout knife in his hands.

It seems to be the policy of the Indian Army to send its best doctors to the forward area. I suppose we proceed on the very sound premise that their skill will count for the most up here. As long as there must be incompetents like Balfour, it is just as well to keep them in Poona. Their bungling is serious even there, but not half so serious as it would be in Tiddim.

The ride between here and Tiddim was pleasant. The ride between Tiddim and here was hell. On the way up I rode in the back of a staff car, talking to the driver and viewing the scenery. The time was passed very quickly and pleasantly; I was almost sorry when the trip was over. But I thought our return would take forever; it was the most terrible day I have ever spent.

I rode in the back of one of our ambulances, holding a tommy's intestines in place. There was a large lateral tear below the umbilicus, bandaged poorly and unsupported.

Every time we hit a bump the soldier screamed and his wound would open. Gradually, in spite of all my efforts, it was spreading and tearing across the abdomen. By rights, this fellow should have been unconscious if not dead, and through most of the journey he seemed delirious. But in sensible moments he apologized to me for all the trouble he felt he was causing. Again and again he would fumble for his pocket, trying to locate his paybook for me. "It must be here someplace," he repeated in spite of my assurances that I already had it.

At every turn his body would roll and his intestines would ooze out into my naked hands. I had washed them previously in turpentine, the only antiseptic I could find. But gradually Tommy slipped into a coma; before dropping off he asked me to sing to him. I tried to oblige, but my voice was shaky and all I could do was hum and whistle. As the sun went down the temperature dropped and the sweat on his body began to steam. I pulled the blankets away from his wound and found Tommy's stomach all over the stretcher.

I just learned that the Colonel has malaria which he hasn't reported to the hospital staff. I caught him sneaking an ounce of quinine from the medicine cabinet in his office yesterday. He insists that he "hasn't time to be sick," but I told him he didn't have time to be dead either. He took my advice in a friendly manner, but I'm sure it will have no result in action.

He explained the morbid anatomy of the disease and even showed me some slides of the parasite. But apparently the bug doesn't always show up under a regular routine check of the blood. Malaria isn't really serious when it is caught and dosed with quinine repeatedly. But undiagnosed it can lead to death of a most rapid or again of a most painful sort.

There is a patient in one of our malaria wards who went



into the jungle with Wingate's Raiders. He was separated and lost in the hills for eight months, but he survived through the charity of the Naga tribes. He was fed and cared for, then delivered to us, sick from every known tropical disease. By some good fortune he has lived until now and has only a case of "B.T." left to lick.

When I was talking to him earlier this afternoon I asked him what he thought of Wingate. At first he politely refused to answer, but I could see that he felt little love for the Brigadier. "Tell me, Corporal, what do you think of him? I'm only asking out of curiosity," I prodded.

The corporal leaned forward and stamped out his cigarette. Suddenly he yelled, "I'll tell you, right enough!" This was the beginning of a long tirade that gradually grew from the excited to the hysterical. "I'll tell you what I think of him," he would pant, drawing breath between bursts of bitter invective. I tried to quiet him by persuasion and force; I warned of his health and I ordered him to lie down. But the corporal seemed not even to hear my words. He was talking to himself, not to me.

When I left the room I called the orderly, explaining that I was to blame for the trouble and that if I had not aroused him the corporal would never have lost his head. The orderly replied, "I understand, sir. But in any case I wouldn't have reported this. All of the men have exactly the same feelings, and right or wrong, I don't blame them much."

He averted his eyes while talking to me and tried to leave as soon as he finished, but I was rather surprised by this bitter agreement and I gasped without thinking, "You, too, Private?"

The orderly refused to answer directly, but he suggested, "Why don't you talk with some more of the Wingate crowd?"

I asked, "You mean there are more in this hospital? Why, Wingate came out over a year ago!"

The private replied, "Yes, sir, Wingate came out, but a

lot of his men are still in the jungles. Every few days some starving brute shows up on the edge of the outlying camps."

I demanded, "Private, where are these others? Apparently there is more than meets the eye!"

The private agreed. "There certainly is if you've believed the slop you read in the papers."

I can hardly believe everything I have heard, and yet in spite of myself I suspect that much of it is true! I have just come away from the hospital canteen where four men gathered to tell me their stories. Three were extraordinarily bitter and I was almost willing to discount their tales as raving. But the fourth, though a youngster in terms of years, was a quiet old man in appearance and personality.

"What these fellows have said is true," he agreed. "I really can't add much or dispute with them. As far as I'm concerned, this Wingate expedition was one of the dirtiest atrocities of the entire war. I got married just a week before we shipped out of Blighty; I've a wife and a kiddie waiting for me now. I volunteered for the Wingate expedition because I was promised immediate repatriation when we returned. Yes, that was the promise that got us all, all of us who volunteered, that is. In a lot of cases, we were volunteered for; whole units were committed by their officers. Wingate wanted married men to begin with. He thought they'd have more of a will to return. Out there in the jungle that's awfully important, for sometimes you'd as soon lie down and die. Well, Wingate got his married men, and he led them out to a nasty job. But the tommy doesn't mind a nasty job, so long as he knows what he's doing, that is. A lot of our fellows dropped out by the wayside; they were left to die or they were shot by their friends. Even that was no more than we bargained for; the officers were with us and they shared our brew. But finally, when we had paved the jungle with bodies and were hacking our way back out to our lines, the Brigadier says, 'Fellows,

home is that way,' then he climbs into a transport plane that has landed in a clearing.

"Well, all of the officers go out with Wingate, except a few sublieutenants and lieutenants. When the Nippos hit us, we're torn apart and every man lights out for himself. Finally I get back to this hospital bed and I figure, Lumme, I'll be home in a few weeks. That was just about ten months ago, and like all of the rest, I'm still rotting here."

I interrupted, saying, "But you're a sick man. They couldn't move you until you're well. I'm sure that once your condition has improved the authorities will keep their promise to you."

All of the men broke into a laugh. Another pounded the table with a fist. "Listen," he said, "we'll not get home until the war is over and done with. We're not sick. We're as well as you are." (To be truthful, he looked a little bit better.) "We'll stay out here so that we can't talk about the rotten mess Wingate made."

Right or wrong, this attitude is unanimous; every tommy will argue the position. More than once I have heard men say, "Just let me follow him into the jungle again!"

For supper tonight we had roast wild pig, the first real meat I've eaten for months, but I suspect that the energy I expended in killing the animal was greater than that which I derived from its flesh. Captain Raoul and I borrowed a gun from a sweeper; it was a rusty and treacherous flintlock muzzle-loader. All of the natives seem to carry the things, though I understand now why they seldom shoot them. Since neither of us is allowed a gun, we couldn't draw pistols from the unit stores. After much cogitation, Raoul came up with the idea of using one of these ancient pieces.

The sweeper supplied some powder and shot and showed us how to ram it home. But when he heard that we were out for wild boar, he suggested railroad spikes instead of the pellets.

"Railroad spikes? Why, you must be crazy!" Raoul and I screamed with our hands to our heads.

"No, sahib, railroad spike best load to use against dangerous game," was the sweeper's answer.

In the end we compromised on several links of chain, just narrow enough to fit into the barrel. At the insistence of the servant, I stuffed my pockets with a few of his well-chosen railroad spikes.

"Now, I understand that these things are dangerous," Raoul whispered when we were quite a way from the hospital. "We'd better climb up into a tree or on a rock and wait for a boar to come along."

I protested, "But you don't just wait for the things. You've got to do something to bring them to you. What kind of noise does a wild boar make? I'll try to imitate it and perhaps one will come."

Raoul replied, "But you shouldn't make the noise of the boar. You should make the noise of the female pig."

Side-stepping any clash with this Freudian approach, I said, "Well, they probably make the same basic sound anyway."

Raoul was adamant. "No, the female is higher."

So we both began impersonating female pigs. Every few moments we would look at each other and ruin the whole thing by our raucous laughter. Finally, to put an end to the merriment, we decided to face in opposite directions. In addition we stuffed our fingers in our ears so that the sound would not carry from one to the other. By this device we were able to insure against levity and settle down to the serious business. For several moments we both "oinked" loudly, then suddenly I saw the bushes part. I was reluctant to turn my head too fast, for I feared to frighten away the boar. Gradually, however, I looked to the side, to find two startled natives staring at us. I quickly drew my fingers from my ears and ceased the animal sounds I was making. But it was several seconds before Raoul saw the pair, then he too stopped with a sheepish grin. We

tried to pretend a conversation, as if we were just passing the time of day. But our previous performance, plus the fact that we were in a tree, belied our very casual air.

One of the natives approached us timidly, addressing us in the Naga language. Fortunately Raoul knew enough to answer and to tell the fellow that we were hunting boar. There followed a long soliloquy which I took to mean that we were going at the thing incorrectly. This idea was confirmed when Raoul climbed down. Lowering the gun and following after, I broke through the bush where all three disappeared.

At last we came to what Raoul called a pig run, what looked like a well-beaten human trail. The two Naga tribesmen disappeared into the undergrowth and Raoul explained that they would flush a boar. We waited for what seemed like the better part of an hour, then suddenly there was a snorting and crackling of bush. A skinny little pig charged out of the jungle and down the path by which we were stationed. I knelt squarely in his onward course, leveling the gun with more than a tremor. The boar seemed not even to notice me; he tried to charge up the barrel of my weapon. I pulled the trigger and there was a deafening roar. The pig and I flew in opposite directions. It was hard to say who was hurt the more, but Raoul revived me and killed the pig.

For all the just criticism that can be leveled against them, British officers are seldom cowards. "In order to keep the upper classes alive," said one, "it is essential that as individuals we know how to die." Many of them, even in this forward area, go about armed only with their swagger sticks. It is not an act of sheer bravado, but an example of courage that strikes home to their men. Additionally, it makes the officer stand out as a leader, one apart from his troops. The swagger stick is the symbol of command and authority. It is to the officer as a rifle to his men. Traditionally, the officer spearheads an advance; he shouts com-

mands to those behind him. He will stride into sure death in a withering cross fire, waving his troops on with the baton he carries. It is a costly way to fight a war, for it skims off the cream of a nation's gentility. But who can criticize the individual who demonstrates this remarkable loyalty to his group?

This courage is not confined to one class; it spills out through all of the ranks of the British. I long ago became quite convinced that the tommy was the world's greatest defensive fighter. Through hopeless odds he will cling to a post, fighting rear guard while others escape. He will never question the judgment of his officer, even when that judgment is his sentence of death. Through the retreat from Burma, Malaya, and Singapore, there was never an example of undisciplined rout. There were crowning stupidity and blundering officership, but never a cracking of tommy's morale. I think it is all the more of a tribute that he is able to fight valiantly under these conditions, that he is able to obey the commands he is given, even when he knows they may well be wrong. The Asia command has faltered badly. It has relied on strategy that is ten years outdated. It has tolerated officers who, since the Boer war, have sat in swivel chairs and relived their campaigns.

While the high command lounges around in Ceylon, enjoying the facilities for bathing at Kandy, the troops up here make up for their stupidity, so much bloodshed for so much swimming. This seems to be a forgotten front; someone said, "Oh, you there! Hold that line like a good fellow." Then he proceeded to ignore our existence. It would serve them all right if we were hurled back out. Only one thing has saved the British from humiliation, from abject assininity in this eastern campaign, and that is the nerve of the common soldiers. That is the downright guts of the tommy.

Britain, in some ways, is more like a corporation than a country; it is an unbalanced whole, internally complementary. Its business is the running of the world's largest em-

pire, and toward that end all labor and skill is specialized. As in Plato's republic, there is a warrior class, self-effacing, standardized, relying on orders. And again as in the Platonic concept, there are the "men of gold," bred and educated to give those orders. The individual Englishman is unbalanced by my standards, like the Western farmers with their enormous right shoulders. When they stand in twos, officer and tommy, this specialization is of mutual advantage. But once in a while they do not stand in twos, and then their separate weaknesses show, for the tommy has all of the humility and the officer all of the education.

I was talking with some of our Sikh drivers this morning, with one in particular who has been up here for two years. He took part in both of the retreats from Burma and was disarmed because of his battle wounds. Somehow our discussion got around to propaganda and from there to the related topic of atrocities. Singh related a few common tales of Japanese mistreatment of captured tommies.

"But you know," said Singh at one point in the discussion, "not only Japanese atrocities, sahib. American, British, and Indian troops sometimes treat their prisoners just as brutally."

I was quite to the point of accepting this, for I had already seen cases to bear it out. "Are you thinking of anything in particular, Singh?" I asked, anxious for a more concrete discussion.

"Many things, sahib. Japanese prisoners are chained to trees outside our camps. Tommies laugh at them and call them their pets, but they do not give them water and pets die of thirst."

This practice was nothing of a shock to me, since I had seen some prisoners who had been treated thus. I asked, "What do you think accounts for this, Singh? Why are the tommies capable of such behavior?"

Singh replied, "Anyone is capable of it, sahib, when he has lived like an animal for too long a time. Whenever we

are forced to live like animals, we soon begin to think and act like them."

Some of the tommies on this Chindwin front have been stationed here for as long as four years. They have slept and eaten in holes in the ground, living, thinking, acting indeed like animals. What Singh has to say bears a good deal of scrutiny. Men rather than policies are responsible for bestiality. I have seen examples of the most outrageous barbarism and of the most benign gentility exhibited by both armies. It is not unusual for an ambulance convoy to be permitted to run, unmolested, around a Japanese road block. Neither is it unusual for the wounded to be bayoneted. Everything depends on whom you meet.

Singh tells me that several months ago he was evacuating casualties to the regimental aid post, working under the very nose of the enemy, who had ceased firing to allow him to proceed in safety. He made about half a dozen trip to an outlying British pillbox-fort. Again and again all firing would cease whenever he drove between the lines. Suddenly, one of the British officers decided to capitalize on the enemy's "softheadedness." Piling the ambulance with ammunition, he ordered Singh to deliver it to the isolated post. Furious, but not daring to argue with a superior, Singh delivered the ammunition. When the Japanese saw how they had been tricked, they opened fire and demolished the ambulance. Fortunately for Singh, the post was relieved by a strong, narrow counterthrust. But to this day all Japanese troops in that area refuse to respect the British Red Cross. I am not sentimental enough to conclude from this episode that the Japanese are justified in their frequent barbarisms. But I am realistic enough to understand that there are good and bad Japanese, as Americans and British.

I have talked with gleeful Marines and soldiers who report burying Japanese alive on New Guinea. I have talked with a captain in the American Army who tells of bayoneting wounded in their hospital beds. Of course this



never appears in the papers, just as the enemy's atrocities are ignored by Domei. But wherever Allied soldiers are gathered together, you can always find someone who will brag of his butcherings. Gasoline down the mouths of caves, lighted matches and screaming Japs; it sickens me as it sickens most others, but there are always a few sadists who are willing to try it. Atrocities are the work of an exceptional few. I have learned that from even this early contact with the war. For every plane that will bomb our ambulances, there are five that will circle and fly away. For every one soldier who will carve up the wounded, there are twenty who will offer their cigarettes. And yet atrocities are inseparable from war; they cannot be legislated or communicated away. As long as a hundred people will gather together to watch a lynching in our Southern towns, as long as they will enjoy their victim's suffering, munching on popcorn and carrying basket lunches, as long as they will scream their approval when the blowtorch is played on a human being's body, just so long must we be willing to accept the stories of American atrocities, committed against an infinitely less known people. I am not defending the barbarism of our enemy or saying that our own is as great as theirs. I am only lamenting the sad, sad truth that in every race, one out of every hundred people is a son-of-a-bitch.

We have three or four Ghurkas attached to the hospital and while they are friendly toward us, they chafe at the yoke. The Ghurkas are traditionally the fiercest of all Indians and are probably the best soldiers in the whole British Empire. But like so many fighting men, they refuse to work—at anything other than sheer slaughter, that is. Cutting wood and building fires is the greatest ignominy to those who are here. The weapon which they use is a masterpiece of cutlery, the heavy, curved kukri that is swung like an ax. Its edge is as sharp as a well-honed razor and the inward sweep gives a slicing action.

One of our Ghurkas has been home on leave and he returned this morning, long overdue. While the Ghurka is traditionally independent and cocky, he returned like a Greek or a pack mule, bearing gifts. I was really staggered by "Johnny's" generosity, for he gave me a kukri that was made by his father. My initials were carved in a sandalwood handle and Johnny assured me that it was a "pukah kukri." It was forged, he bragged, over an open fire and was wrought from the spring of an abandoned Dodge truck. I was forced to listen to a long speech in Ghurkali before I could lay an anxious hand on the weapon. Finally Johnny laid two anna pieces on a plank and cut them in two with a vicious swipe. He ran a moistened finger across the blade, then handed it to me for inspection and approval. I was amazed to find no nick in the edge, no tiny mark to tell where it bit through the metal.

Anxious to try my kukri out, I carried it into a grove of bamboo. The growth was fresh and green and brittle, so I swung on one trunk with all of my strength. I almost severed my opposite arm when the blade swung through, hardly slowed by the stalk. I slipped the weapon back into its case more gently than if I were handling a gun.

The Ghurka troops are organized on tribal lines, not in the usual War Establishment Table manner. Their regular chieftains are left in charge, official rank being added to their sufficient social status. The Ghurka boy is trained for war and is taught that all else is women's work. From the day of his birth he is surrounded by trophies, by the relics of his father's successful campaigns. Finally, when he is about to be accepted as a man and allowed to test his kukri against an enemy, the Ghurka youth must prove his strength and his ability to handle the tribal weapon. A bullock is staked in a public ground; relatives and friends are on hand to watch. With one blow from his kukri, the boy must sever the head of the bullock from its standing body. This accomplished, the boy becomes a man. Failing, he must remain at home another year. Normally

the Ghurka is thirteen or fourteen when he succeeds in severing the neck of the animal.

In battle the Ghurkas are hard to handle. They abound in courage but are lacking in discretion. Frequently they throw their rifles away as soon as they face the enemy in a charge. Enormous fines are imposed upon them to force them to keep their rifles in hand. But no discipline or order seems sufficient to overcome their love of hand-to-hand fighting.

Frequently the enemy will break at the sight of them, turn tail and run before the Ghurka's knife. And even when he remains, he is soon overcome if the kukri ever comes within swinging distance. I recently read of a Ghurka V.C. who attacked a machine-gun nest on the Arakan front. With several bullets lodged deep in his chest, Johnny Ghurka decapitated some four or five men. Then rallying his fellows to another fresh charge, he repeated the performance on a second pillbox. I think he finally gave up the ghost when a Bren gun hit him full in the face.

Our convoy brought in a Ghurka today, the victim of an argument with one of his buddies. This fellow is one of the few living proofs that you should never dispute with a determined Ghurka. It seems the two were rivals for the affection of some little Naga who had been dividing her favors. To the consternation of all save one, the loser was blown up in the middle of the night. Investigation by suspicious officers, who were unaccustomed to explosions in the barracks, revealed that a hand grenade had somehow been slipped beneath the fellow's pillow while he was asleep. The pin was removed and the lever held down by the simple weight of the head above. The assassin was safely back in his bed by the time his victim decided to roll over. Fortunately, the pillow was stuffed with sawdust, and immediate death was thereby prevented. But from the looks of Johnny Ghurka's splattered countenance, he won't be competing with his rival for a while.

A number of stories are told about these fighters, most of them bespeaking great admiration. The average tommy is quite willing to say of them, "They're poor benighted heathen, but first-class fighting men." One story in particular sticks in my mind; I heard it first from a broad-burred Scotsman. The effect was heightened by his attempts at dialect, which I could never reproduce in black and white.

The Ghurka battalion was lined up on the airstrip, ready for an air transport mission in Burma. Their officer, prior to issuing parachutes, felt called upon to prepare his men for their first jump. "Now, men," he addressed them in serious tones, "you've never jumped from a plane before. But I know that the Ghurka is a man of courage and that none of you will have the slightest fear." A few of the troops began to fidget as their subedar translated the words for them. But the officer continued without hesitation. "Now, we are going to jump from two thousand feet . . ." Here he was met by a roar of protest. "Why, men," he gasped, "I have never seen a Ghurka show fear at something that a sahib would do."

The subedar advanced and clicked his heels. He was recognized at once by the British officer. "Sahib, my men insist that they will not jump unless you fly at one thousand feet."

The officer replied, "But look here, my man. The higher the jump the safer it is." After another few minutes of double translation the subedar still shook his head and said that his men objected. "Now, listen, Subedar," the Britisher shouted, "I myself have jumped from ten thousand feet."

The subedar translated, then returned to the lieutenant and said, pointing, "Yes, but sahib has a parachute!"

There is an airfield just a few miles north of here—or, more accurately described, a fighter strip. There hasn't been much activity lately, but the Hurricanes go up for

occasional routine sweeps. I've got to know a few of the pilots and I spent last evening in their unit canteen. I think that of all the troops I've met so far, I like this bunch the best of all. Most RAF pilots are "officers and gentlemen," but lately a few sergeants have had to be trained. Apparently we have all but run out of gentlemen and of course we will make officers of no one else. These flying WO's are a selected group; they would have to be to handle their planes. They have a better background than most enlisted men and their education has been good so far as it went. They are the first good compromise between whining dependence and delusions of grandeur that I've seen in quantity in the Indian Army. As a matter of fact, they are an excellent combination of the virtues that, dispersed, made England great.

These men are really in an excellent position to discuss and criticize British politics, since they are representative of the scarce middle class. With vested interests and yet room for improvement, they are in love with neither the past nor the future. Fortunately, too, they are willing to talk, anxious to exchange views with an American like myself. They are polite and sensitive, hard to anger, yet frank and critical of social injustice. I believe that I have learned much about my country and theirs from the talks we've had in odd off hours. I feel that I have something in common with these men, in outlook, in attitude, in approach, and in certain objectives.

Even these stable, sensible fellows bitterly resent the caste system of the Army. I was glad to learn that they feel as they do, since it bolsters my own convictions on the subject. But their resentment is really double-edged, cutting at the injustice both forward and backward. As tom-mies they hate it on personal grounds; as members of the middle class they fear its results. As one of them told me the other evening, "If Rommel had been British, he'd have remained an enlisted man. He was just a guttersnipe with

a genius for strategy, but that genius would never have been recognized by our army."

"And the tommy is getting sick of this," added another, "treating blundering fools as if they were tin gods. He's beginning to demand a little efficiency as well as blue blood in the veins of his officers."

In other areas the situation is better, but in India the old guard is still in the saddle. A wellborn incompetent is invariably given preference over an earnest and capable man from the ranks. And my friend was right when he voiced the belief that the tommy is getting tired of this. Witness the criticism of Wingate by his men, criticism so general and strong that it broaches on mutiny. Witness again, as I only recently have, the dissension surrounding the retreat through Burma. Right or wrong, almost everyone believes that it was a needless slaughter permitted by senile leadership. And here again I am forcefully struck by the unreliability of news dispatches.

"It was a bloody rout," said one of the sergeants, talking about that "prepared withdrawal." "There was no blamed reason for losing the ground except that our officers didn't know what they were doing." Once again the tommy was apparently called upon to cover up for high-echelon blunders. And once again he did it admirably, but he made a mental note at the time. I know for a fact that officers were shot by their own subordinates during the retreat. I know for a fact that the great majority took off their "pips" and stuffed them in their pockets. If ever the Indian armies came near a revolt, it was during that bloody second retreat. Native troops deserted and joined with the enemy and Englishmen proclaimed states of battalion anarchy. I am not just speculating or relying on rumors. I am not trusting the veracity of one or two men. All of these facts are common knowledge to the fellows here, who fought their way out.

But I am not concerned with the isolated facts, with their total, partial, or questionable truth. I am rather con-

cerned with the implication of their ready acceptance by the men who are in a position to know. If the retreat from Burma was not avoidable, if it was not the result of stupidity and senility, at least it was coupled with a general policy of choosing officers which is open to question. Perhaps the retreat was not inefficient, perhaps it was truly a "prepared withdrawal." Even so, morale was seriously lowered by the obvious practice of tolerating inefficiency.

The revolt in Burma is painfully suggestive of a revolt that might have, and still could, become general. That is another unsettling fact which worries the warrant officers here. I talked with a corporal just the other day who was embittered to the point of incipient psychosis. He had just received a letter from home and he allowed me to read and quote one page. "Dear Ian," it began, "I don't know how to say it so I guess I will just say it now straight out. I just got word from the government that Phillip has been killed when his plane crashed. Dear boy, it must hurt you as much as me, for you and your brother were always so close. I can't say much now for I am very, very sad, as I know you will be when you read what I wrote." Below, penned probably in wonder and shock, was a postscript that told an amazing story. "Ian," it said, "in this very same post, I received a billing against Phillip's outstanding pay, covering the cost of his burial blanket." Yes, tommy is getting sick of this sort of thing. I wonder why?

There is a rumor going the rounds that we are due for an attack to be launched by the Japanese within the next few weeks. The latrine strategists have even plotted the course that this supposed thrust into Assam will take. I have become quite immune to these unofficial communiqués, but this one differs from the usual pattern. In the first place, everyone agrees on the time, the route, the force, and the disposition of our enemy. The Japs, says the silverware that is pushed around at lunch, will come up the bed of this river valley. They will move between

this fork and spoon, cutting straight through the jungles with pack elephants. The main force will by-pass Imphal for Kohima, whence they will fight northward to cut the railway. Tiddim and Tamu will be isolated from the outset and the forces there will be cut to ribbons. But if only our officers were aware of this step, we could circle and flank the moving enemy. I have suggested, with just a touch of sarcasm, that my informant take these plans to the General Staff.

I suppose that the front will remain inactive, for all our deployments are based on that assumption. We are woefully unprepared for any sudden thrust, and I doubt that the tommies know more than their brigadiers. And yet there is always a kernel of doubt, for the tommies are in actual contact with the enemy. The officers, drinking afternoon tea in their bashas, are quite capable of isolating themselves from firsthand knowledge. Some of our patrol leaders are veteran jungle fighters, and they can normally tell an attacking line from a defensive. Hence I am not as sure as I might be that there may not be some truth to this persistent rumor.

Yesterday one of our drivers brought in a mortar casualty who was suffering from severe wounds of the chest and head. By rights, he should never have been carried so far before his wounds had been dressed and attended. But with only a preliminary first-aid attention, he was brought all the way back to this advance base hospital. He has lost a dangerous amount of blood and I doubt that he will live through another day. The Colonel, noting an irregularity, called in the fellow who had driven him here. He reported while I was in the Medical Office and I freely confess eavesdropping on the conversation.

"Private," said the Colonel, "this man is badly hurt. Why was he not left at the forward post? You are aware, I'm sure, that in a case such as this, the element of time is extremely important."



The private agreed that he was aware of this, but added, "Sir, I could get no action at a forward post."

The Colonel asked, "What do you mean, you could get no action? I'm sure that no doctor would let this man travel."

The driver replied, "Well, sir, the lieutenant at Tiddim insisted that he had no chance of survival. He was busy giving typhoid boosters to the officers, and after just a glance he told me to drive on."

The Colonel was furious, but he dismissed the driver; then he noticed for the first time that I was in the room. He started to walk past me, out of the office, but he stopped and clamped one hand to his forehead. "Booster shots to the officers," he groaned. "Of course that couldn't wait for an hour or two." I suspected that I had better hold my tongue, for the Colonel was letting his hair down more than he should have. "Booster shots for the officers," he repeated in a tone of genuine growing disbelief. "All right; suppose this fellow didn't have a chance. Why in God's name didn't they keep him there anyway? It would be different if they were glutted with other casualties that demanded the immediate attention of the staff. But booster shots for the officers—well, really . . ." He broke off with an angry wave of the hand.

"Of course you know that this sort of thing is general practice," I said, yielding to an irresponsible impulse of the moment. The Colonel looked at me, apparently undecided whether to be angry or surprised by what I had said. "Yes," I went on, "I've seen this before and I've heard the tommies talking about it. I really have quite an advantage over you when it comes to associating with the men in the ranks." The Colonel was still a bit suspicious, but he waved me on with the stem of his pipe. I continued, "You're an exception from the general rule, and I suspect that you tend to judge others by yourself. But there is nothing especially unusual about this case. I've known of a lot more unfortunate incidents. I've seen men lying un-

attended in their stretchers while a doctor was having his afternoon tea."

I was reluctant to add that I had seen it here, but the fact of the matter is that such was the case. "I'll be right along," had been the doctor's answer, but it was twenty minutes before he appeared. In the meantime a tommy was writhing on his blanket, biting on his fingers, looking scared and white. If a brigadier were suffering from an ingrown toenail, there would be no such delay, no "I'll be right along."

It is a general practice of the ambulance drivers to "lose" the paybooks of the seriously injured. Unidentified, their rank cannot be determined and they will be quickly treated, just in case! But it is literally true that officers come first, regardless of the relative seriousness of their injuries. Often a lieutenant will step aside for the stretcher cases, but if he does not, they will simply wait their "turns."

I have resolved not to dwell on the subject of atrocities, but there is one which I must record before trying to forget it. Four Japanese were brought into this hospital, skinned alive by a British patrol. They had been suspended by their wrists from overhanging limbs and peeled, from their arms down across the chests. They couldn't lie down and they couldn't remain conscious. I tried to pick the dirt and lint out of their flesh.

It seems as if every Chin and Naga in the area is somehow in the pay of the British government. The men are sent forward for the heavier work while the women and children are busy on the road. Their progress is so slow as to be hardly discernible, and its cost in man hours is more than staggering. They run back and forth like black ants building a hill, but with considerably less success than the insect. The most tragic and at the same time the most ludicrous sight of all are the fellows who break rocks to

form gravel for the road. They actually sit down with metal hammers and beat feebly on the monstrous boulders before them. After twenty minutes or so the things may crack, then they alternately work on the resulting halves. These in turn are reduced to quarters, and the boulders eventually by this process to fine, even gravel. At the end of each day a checker comes around to measure the amount that each has broken. I should judge that spread evenly over the surface of the road, a day's work would constitute about three square feet. I am glad that I wasn't forced to repeat my thesis; the Colonel paraphrased it satisfactorily. "You know, Muehl," he said, "if this army were more efficient, it would bring in a rock-crusher or a few sticks of dynamite."

We have in the hospital a powerful radio which will pick up the Japanese propaganda broadcasts. The programs are beamed to Burma and India and are addressed primarily to the natives of these countries. Occasionally some remarks are made for our benefit, but they are sandwiched in with the regular patter. The chief desire of the enemy now is to foment native trouble in the British-held areas. I am usually amused by the line they take, for most often they are based on the most monstrous lies. But the enemy is just clever enough to prepare the way with stories of injustices which we know exist.

"Men of the Indian Army," they will say, "why are you fighting for the white oppressor? He has beaten you and exploited you, jailed your leaders, denied you the liberties which he claims to defend. Where is liberty of the press in India? And where is your vaunted freedom of speech? Where the self-determination of peoples and where the economic opportunity? This is primarily a racial war. Japan is speaking for the dark races in Asia. We are your friends, not the British. What have you gained in two hundred years under them? What do the next two hundred hold? They say that you are not ready for independence.

But it is they who are unready for your independence, they and their system that thrives on your blood. You are ready enough to fight their wars, ready enough to grow their cotton, ready enough to feed their people, but they say you are not ready to support yourselves. Do not be blind. Lay down your arms. Desert to our forces as did the Burmese Rifles. Already a third of our troops are Indians and they are fighting against you for their independence. Stop killing men of your own color and continent. Stop defending the strange masters of your land. Stop killing your friends, your sons and brothers. Fight with us for a free and united Asia."

For all the lies apparent in this plea, there are a few embarrassing and seductive truths. It would be all too easy for the Indian masses to miss the former in the glitter of the last. We have denied liberty of speech and press, we have throttled economic opportunity. We have jailed the leaders of the Indian people and we have refused self-determination. Thank God, the soldiers of the Indian Army are aware of the injustices that the enemy has committed. Thank God that they are aware that things could be worse, unsatisfactory as they are today. But how long will this perspective of theirs remain? How long will they be sensible and conscious of half truths? How long will they resist the pleas of an aggressor that is more brutal, but less a stranger than the master they now have? I pray that their patience will not be exhausted before the end of this terrible war. And then I pray that things will change here! No prayer could make them remain loyal forever.

I recall a conversation I had with a major in the Chinese army in Bombay. Something which he said seemed strange to me at the time, but now it fits into this general picture. We had all been drinking, perhaps more than we should; everyone was talking very loosely for some reason. By chance we were left alone for a few minutes and, even in my cups, I reverted to politics.

"You know," said the major, "it is with mixed emotions that I watch the retreat of the British armies. I know that they are my allies and that they are defending my country, but my memory is just a little too good. I can remember the days when they abused my people, when they exercised an absentee ownership in China. I can remember their exclusive clubs in Shanghai and Hong Kong, and the signs saying, 'Chinamen and dogs not allowed.' Is it strange that I get a certain thrill out of seeing the little 'yellow men' rising from their inferiority? Is it strange that I should enjoy the spectacle of the British being beaten at their own nasty game? Perhaps it is treason to speak as I do, but I enjoy seeing them knocked from their lofty perch."

These were not the words of a Japanese prisoner, an officer in the imperial guard or the army. These were the words of a Chinese, an ally of mine, but an ally with a memory "just a little too good."

Several of our orderlies have been stricken blind after drinking homemade native whisky. They were out on a binge in one of the bazaars and either bought in the wrong place or drank too much. These Naga spirits are a potent concoction, quite useful, they say, in burning carbon out of a motor. But however many safe uses the stuff has, consumption as a beverage is surely not one of them. There are two chief brands that vie for the trade, Bull-Fighter brand and Fighter-Plane brand. We choose between the two according to whether we want to be gored in the belly or thrown into a tailspin.

The whisky comes in an amazing assortment of bottles, ranging from milk to perfume castoffs. As often as not the bottles are not corked but are sealed with a twist of straw in the neck. I have always avoided direct contact with the stuff, but I have often observed its effects on others. Even the natives, with their amazing digestive tracts, get far more sick than they ever get drunk. Selling for five or six

dollars a bottle is a more gentle if considerably less palatable liquor. It is a wine imported from Yün-nan, China, brewed from the juices of a little green lizard. In order to prove that the wine is genuine, the lizard is often left in the bottle. The producers might well advertise their product as providing "a portable case of d.t.'s with every bottle."

We had a bit of excitement this afternoon when a convoy was caught in a well-laid ambush. Our ambulances and lorries were behind the line of fire, but our drivers rushed forward to give first aid to the wounded. I had tagged along, against the Colonel's advice (advice being the name of an unpleasant order), and though for awhile I was wishing I had stayed at the hospital, I wouldn't have missed the activity for anything. Several ammunition trucks were hit and exploded and a bridge was dynamited out of existence. The road was only held for two or three hours, but the debris and repairing delayed us two more.

Three British officers were among the first hit, since they were riding cycles abreast at the head of the column. Another was blown into scattered pieces when a hand grenade exploded prematurely in his belt. But the two who were leading were only wounded, though they might better have been killed painlessly and alone in the beginning. As it was, a dozen Indian lives were spent in mad attempts to retrieve their bodies.

A Ghurka subedar was the first to dash into the face of a withering point-blank cross fire. Another, then a third crawled to the edge of the road, only to be hit before rising to their feet. Finally, and now at a pistol-point command, a Punjabi charged out to the same futile death. Then the men were ordered out in twos, only to be cut down with double rapidity. Before the hopeless plan was abandoned, Indian soldiers were crawling from body to body, advancing the line of protecting dead men as the line is

advanced in Chinese checkers. Finally, with what seemed to be a mercy trust, the Japanese machine guns were trained on the officers. Their bodies twitched, then rolled backward, and many Indians were spared a senseless death. Otherwise, how long would the slaughter have continued? How many Indians equal one British officer? I wonder if there is any official ratio or whether it depends on the officers and men involved.

The tommies were right; an attack is being launched. Even the officers admit that now. Colonel Briggs recommends that I return to South India and offers to send me there unless I oblige. All chronic cases are being sent out of the area to clear the hospitals for the battle casualties. Already our forward positions are being flanked and the patrols have a turnover of about 90 per cent. The very plan that our men have predicted is being put into effect, and we are unprepared for it. The Japanese are marching up the bed of the river and are crashing through roadless jungles with elephants.

We are hopelessly unprepared to cope with the attack, although we have more than sufficient forces in the area. They are poorly deployed and insufficiently provisioned to withstand a flanking, besieging action. "The whole thing is due to poor liaison," Colonel Briggs agreed in my last talk with him. "If there had been adequate contact anywhere along the line, we would have been amply prepared for this." Certainly we would have been prepared for it if there had been adequate contact between men and officers, for every private and every corporal seemed to know a great deal that the brigadiers did not. Briggs himself was aware of the plan, and should have communicated his knowledge to the H.Q. But since he is in the Medical Corps and is not in a strategic position, he would never have been allowed to suggest the danger.

The full weight of the attack will not fall for weeks, so we should have sufficient time for some defense. But I'm

just as glad that I'm leaving now. My faith in this command has been considerably shaken.

Our plane has just landed at an emergency field about a third of the way from Imphal to Calcutta. This is our second stop and probably the last, so I'm anxious to get out and limber my legs. The flight so far has been exciting for me, though I suppose it is routine from the standpoint of the pilots. We took off originally so overloaded that we have barely been getting off the shortened runways. Till now all my flying has been done in the States, where everything was calculated to put me at ease. But the fellows who traverse this route twice a day are only concerned with the mechanics of their job.

At Imphal the plane was held back by a cable while the motor was opened almost to full throttle. When the plane was about ready to tear itself apart, the cable was cut and our plane lurched forward. For a moment we all thought it was going to nose over, but it skidded, then careened down the narrow strip. As the wheels rose slowly off the ground, the end of the runway, with its deep bumps and ruts, flashed under us. We skimmed at ground level for several miles before the pilots could ease up the nose. Landing has been almost as tricky and dangerous and we've avoided ground-looping by an uncomfortable margin.

The air has been full of pockets and crosscurrents and sometimes the plane has behaved like an elevator. The ground beneath us is folded and wrinkled like a parlor rug that has been bunched together. Both of our landings have agitated me, since the fields were so well camouflaged I could hardly see them. I would have sworn that we were circling for a landing over endless stretches of unbroken rice paddies.

For some strange reason, prior to each of our descents, the starboard engine has been cut and feathered. This



didn't add to my sense of security as I watched the ground lying ridged and waiting. By now I've resigned myself to what fate awaits and my soul is in the hands of the RAF. Johnny Brennan, my old hospital mate, is aboard the ship and he seems to be very used to this.

## XII

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IT WAS nearly dark when our DC-3 circled for a landing at the Calcutta airport. Scarcely three full hours have elapsed since we took off from the fighter strip at Imphal with a full load of disease and battle casualties from the Chindwin sector of the Burma front. We have crossed the saw-toothed ridges of the Chin Hills, by-passed the more treacherous Himalayan peaks, and followed down the thin thread of the Ganges where it winds through the Bengali plains. At a sign from the control tower we leveled off to land, but as our great moment approached there were few of us well enough to know and enjoy it. There were not the cries of jubilation and excitement that I had anticipated, only hoarse grunts of pain as the wheels hit the runway with a skittish bounce. As the plane rolled to a stop I sighed involuntarily to myself. We had "come out" at last.

Vaguely I am aware that civilization implies something more than running water and seven-course dinners, but during these first twelve hours in Calcutta I have never been able to recall just what it is. I am tired of the Burma dust and of the sticky jungle trails, and I am sick to death of rotten bully beef and maggot-covered fruit bars. I deliberated almost an hour between a dinner or a bath, and when I finally chose the bath my roommate, Brennan, had beaten me to it. I chewed at my fingernails and listened, fascinated, to the swishing sound of his soapy washcloth.

During this first evening in Calcutta the city has seemed unbelievable in its expansive luxuries and creature comfort. For the pukah sahibs there are Firpo's, the Golden Dragon, the American Kitchen, and the Grand Hotel, each with its special assortment of steaks and chops, pastries and

ice cream. For the tired Burma soldier, Chowringee Road is all he has dreamed of, with its innumerable little shops catering to every whim and several appetites. But deeper within the heart of the city, behind these streets of pleasure and plenty, Calcutta is also a city of hunger and starvation, of scurvy, rickets, malnutrition, and death. None of these horrors are alien to all India, but they are especially present in this famine-ridden city. For those who live in the sprawling native sections, for the beggars and untouchables who walk the streets endlessly, there is no meat, no crumbs of rice. For them there is only the bare sidewalk where they beg for food till they are too weary and sick, where they rub their swollen bellies and crawl after the affluent sahibs, where at last they lie, less painfully dead, waiting patiently for the lorries that will cart them away to the burning yards. Calcutta is a famine city, but that is not the whole story. Calcutta is a place where the dying agonies of the beggar in the street exist side by side with cocktail parties, hors d'oeuvres, seven-course dinners, and pad-locked garbage cans.

No one will ever really know how many have died in this Bengal famine. Calcutta is its center, but it is not the entirety. All over the province rice is dear and life infinitely cheaper. There is never a count, seldom even an estimate of the numbers that are burned in the city alone. Yet even this figure, if it could be somehow determined, would reflect but a part of the grisly total. Many bodies are burned individually while some, even within the city itself, are simply left to disintegrate on the streets.

This evening as I walked from the Grand Hotel the worst of the misery was blotted out by the darkness. But as my boot treads echoed on the quiet walk I could hear the continual stirrings around me. An occasional hand would grasp at my passing leg; a voice would whisper, "Sahib! Sahib!" But as I approached the entrance to Firpo's Restaurant, it was then that the famine first struck home to me. Lying in the doorway, two nude bodies were glistening

in the sweat of an agony just past. They were spread-eagled there in the semicircle of light, one face upward, mouth and eyes open. I tried to avoid them as I mounted the steps, but a young captain behind me was more considerate. Excusing himself from the girl he escorted, he rolled them out into the darkness of the street, continuing his conversation without interruption.

It was not just the anxiety of a hungry man that made tonight's dinner seem like a banquet to me; Firpo's has a reputation for the best food in Calcutta. There were soups and cocktails, salted nuts and fruit, rolls and relishes, savory, desserts, and an almost unlimited choice of entrees. For a moment I was revolted by the thoughts of what I had seen outside and I stared rather blankly at the food placed before me. But I succumbed very quickly to the sight and the smell and I must confess that in the end I gorged myself. And yet, the moment I arose to leave, my uneasiness returned and I began to be nervous. As I stepped out into the street again, the food became like lead in my stomach. Laboring his way out of the shadows, a man crawled toward me, turban askew above a death's-head face. His head was drooping and an arm was outstretched; it swayed as he moved in painful jerks. We two were alone in the arc of light, yet I felt as if hundreds of people were watching. I stood for a moment, in fear and confusion, till he was almost close enough to touch my leg. Then I suddenly ran blindly out into the darkness, back in the direction of the Grand Hotel. As I walked, my fear gradually turned to sickness and before I could reach my room I had thrown up.

For the dogs of Calcutta this is not a famine but a time of feasting. They roam the streets glassy-eyed and bloated, picking at human flesh and carrying human bones. They fall upon the bodies most freshly dead, attacking them as soon as resistance ceases. Occasionally a family sits crowded together, guarding its own and beating off the scavengers.

Today I saw a dog fighting with a hysterical woman for possession of a dead husband's body.

Though the dead are burned in great rotten heaps, the fires can never consume them quite fast enough. Though the air of the city is white and acrid, the native streets are clogged with the dead and the dying lying overlapped and sprawled indiscriminately together on the streets and on the walk. Yet there is seldom a death on Chowringhee Road, for when a beggar seems weak or dangerously emaciated he is driven back into the native section, denied his last recourse of begging, to die out of the sight and the smell of the sahib.

I learned this morning that the railroads are crowded and that I cannot leave Calcutta for about a week. But at breakfast I met a young lieutenant who suggests that I spend some time with him, promising that it will be "well spent if a bit unpleasant." He is working, on leave, with the government of Bengal, evacuating bodies from the streets of Calcutta. When I told him that I could ride a motorcycle, he assured me that I would be of special value, dispatch riders being at a premium and particularly necessary in the work that he is doing.

"Spend the day getting used to the city," Crawford advised me, only half in fun. "You'll need a strong stomach if you're to come with me."

Instead I spent the day at the Calcutta Boat Club, rowing a little and talking a lot. My roommate carries a letter of introduction, and though its intended recipient was absent today, the chitty provided a general entree. While most of the men were out on the lagoons, I retired to a sitting room where the women were talking. Seizing the conversation when I had the chance, I directed it to the subject of my most immediate interest, the famine and its effects in the city of Calcutta. I questioned the women about the general conditions and, more tactfully I thought, about their own reactions. But I advanced a step too far

in that direction and a charter member of the circle exploded in my face.

"Look here, young man," she said to me, "this famine is causing enough inconvenience already. On the streets we're clawed at and jabbered to, and in our own homes we're virtually besieged. My garbage cans have been rifled twice within a week, in spite of the chain and padlock I've used. Why, only last week the club discovered that nearly half the ducks have been stolen right off the lagoons here. You are apparently a stranger to the city, so we can forgive you for not realizing it, but the subject is very tiring and unwelcome to all of us."

The other women nodded their calm approval and the speaker continued in a quieter, more friendly tone. "These Indians have been having their famines since the beginning of time. If they're not dying of starvation or malnutrition, why, they're just killing each other off or dying of horrid Asiatic diseases. There have always been too many of them in this country anyway. A few million less is neither your loss nor mine."

I opened my mouth to speak, but another woman patted me on the shoulder and cautioned, "Please. I'm sure that you understand how we feel!"

If I had not understood how they felt at that moment, I would shortly have learned. About an hour after lunch there was an outbreak of laughter from the group that was seated outside on the lawn. When the merriment continued for a matter of some minutes, I went outside to discover the cause. On the grass near the lagoon an emaciated little Indian girl was chasing a crow with a broken wing. She had apparently hit it with a well-aimed rock, but had failed to kill it then and there. Though the crow could not fly, it had managed to escape by fluttering and hopping across the grass. The girl was aware that she was trespassing on sahib's property, but the crow was food and food was life. Alternately pursuing and hesitating, she looked to her audience for encouragement or disapproval.

Though signs of both were quite apparent, they were bewilderingly contradictory and deliberately meant to torment and confuse. The struggle within the child between hunger and fear was being goaded to the utmost and laughed at uproariously. But the show ended somewhat prematurely with the capture of the crow. The little girl was exultant with the catch and she killed it immediately with a twist of the neck. But this last brought a groan from the women of the audience, who seemed to find this an ill-fitting conclusion to so humorous an incident.

I could never attempt a panorama of the famine conditions here in Calcutta. The impact and the horror are far beyond verbalizing, and perhaps in the end that is just as well. The mind can contain only so much emotion and to force more upon it scales down the entirety. If I could convey, with no loss of power, all of my experiences here in the city, I would convey along with them my hardening outlook, my own unconcern arising from necessity. As I reflect upon it now, the famine still seems terrible, but only in a vague and intellectual way. There is none of that stifling physical nausea in which I passed the first two days. The mass is already beginning to blur and the particulars already are losing their shape. I must force myself to record the details.

The human mind can adjust to almost anything; I learned that by rote in my undergraduate years. But I never realized the significance of that axiom till today, when I found myself eating a candy bar, disinterestedly watching a woman die. The telltale marks of chronic famine are plain to be seen throughout Calcutta. The beggars and untouchables have been stunted and withered, and half the population seems crippled or diseased. But the well-fed sahib bears the worst scar of all in his brutalized outlook, in his bitter inhumanity. The cost of this famine, like the cost of a war, is even greater than the lives that are lost. There is something which happens to all who

live through it that leaves a mark on the body and mind. Surely this is one of the dangers of imperialism, this subtle poison that eats away whatever it touches. Surely it has left us all just a little less human.

I arose this morning several hours before dawn and drove to the burning yards in Crawford's station wagon. When I approached the gate it was still very dark so that I could not see, though I smelled the horror within. The air was choking with dust and smoke, smelling of kerosene and burning flesh. As I drove to the office shack at the rear of the yard I steered between piles of the waiting dead, joggling unpleasantly over projecting arms and legs. Since Crawford did not arrive for another hour, I spent the interim watching the sunrise. But as the sky grew light the vultures appeared and soon were perched and picking on the dead within the yard. This grisly plot, when seen by daylight, seemed to extend for hundreds of feet in every direction. From boundary to boundary it was crammed with flesh, most of it too decomposed ever to denominate human bodies. Enormous rats dragged bony remains that as often as not fell apart at the touch. Snakes and dung beetles crawled back and forth, fighting with each other and tearing at loose members. Though the bodies were dead, they quivered with life.

A load of logs was brought in by bullock cart and was spread on the ground in parallel patterns. The coolies arose from mats where they slept, strangely intermingled with the thousands of corpses. They began loading bodies on top of the logs, spreading them carelessly across the pile. The process was repeated again and again till the alternating layers stood shoulder high. Then kerosene was poured liberally over the whole, precipitating a nauseating and unbelievable exodus of the insects and vermin which infested the bodies. Blowtorches were applied at the bottoms of the piles and the coolies moved along to other pyres. Crawford apologized for arriving late and suggested



that I ride with him today. I accepted gladly, happy for his company on my initial tour of native Calcutta.

A dispatch rider went out ahead of our truck to determine the sections that most needed evacuation and to report what streets would afford the "best pickings." When he returned he had, in addition to that information, a sheaf of complaints from prominent citizens whose yards and driveways had not been cleared. In Calcutta the surest sign of influence is property free from the remains of the dead. Among the complaints was one from a Christian mission, promising "court action" if its grounds were not cleared. The one which interested me most, however, read, "I have lived in Calcutta through several famines when the bodies were removed with commendable expedition. The inefficiency of the present administration taxes my faith in existing instrumentalities."

I've just read an editorial in an Indian newspaper, explaining that the Calcutta famine is chiefly the result of the people's refusal to eat certain foods. Now of all the asinine theories I have heard yet, this one certainly wins the prize. The most maddening thing of all, however, is the fact that this same story, printed in a British or American newspaper, would be quite credibly accepted by our gullible people, who "never could quite understand those foreigners, anyway." The editorial continues with the explanation that because of rigid religious taboos, the Bengali will simply die in their tracks rather than accept any proscribed food. I have seen these Bengali rooting in garbage pails, just as I would do if I were in their position. I have seen the Hindus devouring meat, yes, even beef that was given to them. As the troop trains pass through the outskirts of the city, the people line the tracks and wail for food. Frequently some kindhearted cook or tommy will throw a can of bully beef to them. But I have never seen anyone refuse the gift or give it away because he was a Hindu. No, starving people forget their taboos when pre-

sented with food that will save their lives. I suppose there are a few fanatics in Hinduism, even as in our own medieval monasteries. But the famine cannot be explained as a result of their behavior; the causes are more serious and far less whimsical.

This morning I watched a group of soldiers teasing a little Indian boy. I suppose they didn't realize that he was on the verge of starvation, for I cannot believe they could be so consciously cruel. It began as two sun-tanned American MP's were walking down Chowringhee Road. They had torn open a package of K ration and were sharing it as they continued on their way. They passed by any number of reaching women, screeching old men, and wailing babies. But this did not register; we have all become immune to the raucous appeals of the unimaginative beggars. As they turned a corner the two GI's were met by one fellow with more color if less pride. He was squatted down like a begging dog, making whimpering sounds to the passers-by. His hands were drawn up below his chin, and he would bark occasionally to attract attention. Any number of people had stopped to laugh, and the boy had collected many scraps of food. Strangely I felt little pity for this beggar; I more nearly shared the hatred that showed in the eyes of the other untouchables who passed by and saw.

One of the two MP's broke off a piece of chocolate and held it out for the boy to eat. But when the beggar reached with one of his hands, the chocolate was quickly drawn out of his reach. At a sign from the GI the fellow barked, obeying a hilarious command of "Beg for it." The piece of chocolate was tossed in the air and the boy attempted to catch it in his mouth.

Today, as I drove up before a famine relief station, a bag of rice was being distributed to the lucky few who stood nearest the shelter. The queue pushed forward, those

at the head anxious to get their share before the supply was exhausted. But the majority of the line moved slowly and skeptically, obviously aware of the tragic limitations of a single bag of rice among hundreds of people. While the living were fed in front of the basha, the dead were being counted in a yard to the rear. Our business of the moment was with the latter; time enough to meet the others in a few more days. Every time we visit these stations I get a report on the numbers that are dying, a tabulation of the bodies awaiting removal, and an estimate of the deaths which will occur throughout the day. When I compared these figures with the official statistics (which I understand show ten thousand deaths a month), Crawford remarked with a typical grin, "Then we're apparently carting them back and forth."

This evening Crawford introduced me to his major and I asked him about these famine relief stations. I was anxious to know just what they were doing and how many lives they were able to save. My questions were direct and the answers were frank. "You can't stop this famine with an occasional bag of rice, and you can't save many lives with what little we have. But the famine relief stations serve a double purpose; otherwise they'd hardly be worth maintaining. Just the chance of a handful of rice will attract those who are closest to collapse, and even if we're then unable to feed them, it makes the bodies much easier to collect."

The worst job of all in this evacuation is taking dead mothers away from their children. Often we find them with tiny babies still suckling at their cold breasts. Yesterday I encountered a case like this. I was terrified and I didn't know what to do. But before I could interfere, two coolies took the body and threw it up into a waiting lorry. As they began driving off I turned to Crawford and exclaimed in horror, "My God, is the child to be left here?" Crawford pretended a cold indifference but I could see that he was

troubled as much as I. "What will they do with the child?" I prodded, knowing full well what they were already doing.

"They'll remember where they left it and come back tomorrow. There's nothing else to be done, old man."

Pitiful as these younger children can be, the older are frequently harder to ignore. The first day I was out we loaded the body of a woman whose child, about ten, refused to let us take it. She spat at us and screamed, scratched one coolie with her nails, but at last the body was in the truck. As we rolled down the road the little one followed, clinging to one leg that projected from the tarpaulin. "Stay there," I shouted. "Let go of that leg." But the youngster's screams were louder than mine. Finally the driver accelerated and the child was thrown on her face in the street.

It was with considerable bitterness that I read, this morning, a monograph distributed by the British Information Service. I must admit, to begin with, that I was not in a receptive mood, having so lately been busy with Calcutta's dead. It was the usual inflated, pompous nonsense, ignoring all basic issues and dwelling on microscopic kindnesses. I often suspect that we have resurrected Voltaire's Dr. Pangloss to prepare this "hear-no-evil-speak-no-evil" tommyrot. Like that gentleman, we ignore all the obvious facts or bury them beneath long and involved rational arguments which prove conclusively that in this "best of all possible colonies" there could be no such thing as a Calcutta famine.

Maybe I have imagined the bodies in the street. Perhaps the burning yard was no more than a nightmare. It is quite possible that the wailing and crying of the beggars is just "a bit of undigested cheese." Or perhaps on the other hand I overestimate the honesty of the raj. Perhaps this pamphlet is a conscious deceit. Certainly one or the other is true, for the facts simply do not jibe with the arguments.

That is the trouble with all this propaganda; it does not

prove too little, it proves too much. It proves that, ever since the British arrived, this country has been progressing by leaps and bounds. "Ignorance and illiteracy have been dealt harsh blows. Industries have been encouraged and railroads have been built. Co-operatives have been fostered and dams have been erected. England and India march together up the road of progress."

But please, then why are the people so poor and why is the country so dependent on agriculture? Why are millions of people allowed to die when there are tons of rice right here in Calcutta? Why does everyone east of Suez misunderstand the altruism of England? Why, when I say, "Nay British sahib; American sahib," do the people turn from hatred to enthusiasm and friendliness? All I know is what I see in the streets. (I don't bother reading the newspapers any more.) And what I see is quite impossible. This little green pamphlet makes that all quite clear.

Whatever the cause of this Calcutta famine (Amery says the people have been eating too much), it is not explainable in the obvious way, by a total lack of food in the city. Often as I drive through the streets and alleys, I pass large warehouses that are loaded with grain. Wherever I go, there is plenty available to the pukah sahibs, at black-market prices. I suppose that there is some sophisticated explanation; in cases like this there usually is. But what explanation could possibly justify the death of so many for want of rice that is here?

There has been no violence during my stay in Calcutta. There was little in the past; there will be less in the future. Small knots of people will occasionally form, but they always melt away before the police. Occasionally a group will gather outside a warehouse that they know contains rice or grain. They may chant or wail to the watchman within, but in the end they disperse with a sigh of futility. Here, as everywhere else in Bengal, the people are dying in sullen but silent protest against the tyrannies of alien

nature and alien men. Some are residents of the city itself, others are immigrants from the droughted farms. Some are workers and men of caste. Some are beggars from the street, untouchables. They stand together in these dusty roads, sweating out their strength in the blistering sun. Occasionally someone will drop among them, but the others continue to mill about. With maddening restraint they speak quietly together, gesturing weakly and even smiling. Another will fall, to be bewailed for a moment; then the quiet murmur begins again. Now, through the visions of hunger and horror, I see a society that is stronger than my own, a community of physical and spiritual discipline more demanding than the very will to live. The famine to most of those who have seen it must remain a symbol of man's inhumanity. Yet, somehow, to me it has become a contrast between inhumanity and humanity at its best!

I boarded the train this afternoon, bound for Poona, via Nagpur and Bombay. The accommodations were more comfortable than usual, though there was a woman in our compartment and we could not undress. Brennan and I had to share the coach with her and her husband, a lieutenant colonel. The colonel and I were discussing the famine through most of the afternoon and evening. He was particularly bitter with reference to the cause and he spoke quite openly about British bungling. Accepted long ago as a member of the raj, this frankness is nothing new to me. I am much too close now for the patent explanations and I have come to be accepted as one of the family. But I must confess that one thing the colonel said caught me a bit unprepared and more naïve than usual.

"You know," he said, "it's not just the result of a drought. In part, at least, it's a man-made famine." At this last I sat bolt upright in my seat. I had suspected as much but had feared to believe it. "The British Army has encouraged and subsidized a local black market by buying its food rather than shipping it in. It's more expensive to pay

profiteer's prices, but it's not hard to outbid the natives of Calcutta. It is costly and brutal, but we continue to do it because it saves our valuable shipping space."

I thought I saw a flaw in this logic and I argued to draw the colonel out. I asked why the British, if they needed the material, did not simply seize it at a reasonable price.

The colonel smiled and hesitated a moment. Then he said, "Now, you don't look that naïve. If we seized it, we would have to provide for the natives or accept the blame for the famine that has resulted. No, it's cheaper in terms of prestige at least to pay the price and disclaim responsibility."

I insisted that a drought was at least partially responsible, and the colonel admitted that this was true. "But the whole situation would be immeasurably better if we would ship in the food that our troops must have."

I do not want to believe in the truth of this account, but I cannot refute it or advance a better one. Indeed, I remember the warehouses full of food and the hungry mobs turned away from their gates.

## XIII

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I'LL be settled in Poona for several months, awaiting a ship that is bound for America. There are many officers stationed here who have been "standing in line" for as long as six months. I hope that in my case there is no such delay, for though I have grown fond of India, I am tired of Poona. Relieved of all duty, I would be able to travel, but my income imposes a considerable limitation.

I do not expect to be terribly bored, for several odd jobs have come up already. A number of students at Wadia College have urged me to offer a seminar in economics. I expect that I would learn considerably more than they, but perhaps I will accept for that very reason. As soon as the group can convince the authorities, I think that I will begin my "Asiatic Economics."

These students themselves are an interesting bunch, a far cry from the conservative older generation. Every time I see them I am more impressed by their similarity to the American temperament. Their sense of humor is quick and boisterous and they make friends with an amazing ease and rapidity. They are much less self-conscious than I had always imagined and, though sensitive, they are slow to take offense. One of the fellows is a Sikh, for example, and everyone kids him about his beard and turban. He in turn insists that we're all just jealous, never taking offense at our frequent sarcasms.

The first night I spent at the dormitories we were busy exchanging Indian folk songs for American. No one was too stiff or embarrassed to participate and we immediately achieved a complete informality. This makes me feel very much at home, for it is reminiscent of the spontaneous joviality of my American countrymen. And the frequency and energy with which these fellows pound tables is also



comforting to a nostalgic American. I've been spending an average of two evenings a week at the college with Syed, Rajam, and Shermohammed. And no matter where the conversation begins, it always works around to Indian nationalism.

We finally obtained permission for my seminar and it began in a college classroom last night. I have no desk or bookcase there, but the fellows have offered to take care of my materials. We have got off to a flying start, but I'm thinking about changing the name for my course. I have calling it "Asiatic Economic Problems" but "Nationalism 31" would be a more accurate title. Last night when I broached the subject of exports a general riot almost ensued. Everyone wanted to talk at once, and even that way we continued more than an hour. It seems that the students are better prepared than I had ever expected that they would be. Most of them can quote tables and appendices from memory, particularly when they bear upon the political situation. I more than commend the students' enthusiasm; it aids their study by giving it some practical meaning. But it makes my lecturing a bit unnerving. I never know when I will touch off a firecracker.

There are just about seven or eight men in the seminar, a sufficient and at the same time a wieldy number. But the ones who attended seemed rather embarrassed and insisted, over my protests, that they would solicit some others.

A little booklet has come into my hands, suggestively entitled *Uncle Sham*. It is an Indian-written polemic against America, understandable only in the light of its flyleaf. There an agent for the author explains that it is an intended parody on *Mother India*. And it succeeds, almost as well as the latter, in piecing isolated truths together to form a false whole. According to *Uncle Sham*, the American prostitute has been driven out of business by the ado-

lescent schoolgirl. Frequent quotations from American notables almost make this thesis acceptable. But the fact worth noting is that in no major respect is the book in real, outspoken error. A totally false picture is presented, but by the use of insinuation and suggestion.

This is not a parody in the usual sense of the word, for too many people have been taken in by it. Though the author was writing with his tongue in his cheek, there are far too many who have failed to discern that. "Are the American women as immoral as they say?" a number of my more naïve students have asked me. When pressed for elaboration, it always becomes apparent that "they" refers to *Uncle Sham*. This book enjoys dangerously large circulation and wields far more influence than it ever deserved. But the real danger is that more such may follow; *Uncle Sham* is no mutation but a natural growth.

It is becoming more evident every day that American prestige in India is dwindling. Out in the hinterlands it is as strong as ever, but here in the cities people are losing faith. I once believed that the city dwellers were just more sophisticated than their outlying cousins. But it is ever more obvious that their sophistication consists not in simple reserve, but in a consciousness of disappointing current trends. The informed Indian is growing disillusioned with the word-of-mouth democracy of our country. He had hoped that America would seek freedom for all peoples, but he is beginning to assume that we talk for effect. He does not concern himself with OWI posters; he judges on the basis of the apparent facts. And the apparent facts, from his point of view, are slaughters in which GI's participate. We have been dangerously lax in our Asiatic policy, if indeed we can be said to have one apart from Britain. We have slid and side-winded into a defense of the old order without ever deciding whether we wanted to defend it. Britain has made the most of this, just as she made the most of the massacres. She has bent every effort (and a few facts, for that matter) to convince the Indians

that we support her empire. Unfortunately, of course, that is almost true, when this thing is looked at from the practical standpoint. We have quelled uprisings, curtailed discussion among our soldiers, even isolated them from the Indians when the raj requested it. But who decided on this course of action? Does it reflect the judgment of the American people? Or does it rather reflect our political ineptitude, the tendency of our statesmen to play Alice to Britain's March Hare?

Several days ago, after one of our seminars, I was talking with the students about the Indian caste system. I had noticed that none of the men wore their marks and I was anxious to know the reason for this.

One fellow laughed, "Well, the majority of us disapprove of them, but occasionally we have trouble with the incoming freshmen."

The others grinned and winked at each other and I sensed that there was some sort of joke involved.

"What do you mean by having trouble with them?" I asked. "Do you take it upon yourselves to enlighten them?"

Rajam answered, "Oh, we don't just enlighten them. We throw them in the river and wash off the caste marks."

A number of others broke in at this point, anxious to describe their own initiations. Some admitted resenting the treatment, but they as eagerly admit perpetrating it on other freshmen later. It is not that the caste system is falling in ruin; it still holds sway among the masses. But almost all of the leaders, intellectual and political, have turned their backs on this concept of status. Gandhi once threatened to divorce his wife unless she ceased wearing the mark of the Brahman. Nehru and the others are quite as adamant in their refusal to sanction religious inequalities. And here in Poona the college students, predominantly Brahmans, but earnest young liberals, prove that they too refuse the old order and the unjust discrimination which it bred and thrived upon.

This afternoon I had tea with Dr. Wadia, one of the benefactors of Wadia College. He is a Parsi scholar of diversified accomplishments, religion being the realm of his greatest endeavor. I noticed a number of books which he had written, all concerned with the oriental faiths. But I was especially interested in one on Christianity in which Wadia quite unconsciously out-Niebuhr Reinhold. Far less than an outline of neo-orthodoxy, the primary thesis nevertheless inclined toward it. It was Wadia's contention that the Western mind is ill fitted in its literalism to grasp poetic truths.

In discussing the book Wadia elaborated this plausible thesis, reminding me that Jesus was an Oriental and a mystic. "The Bible," he said, "was written by the same people who created the poetic tales in the *Arabian Nights*. And yet so many of your Western scholars hang on each parable as if it were a clause in a contract. They are so busy grubbing for a mundane significance that the transcendent truths escape their notice. The Bible is a masterpiece of allegorical literature, and studied in broad terms it yields much wisdom. But studied as it is, it is contradictory and confusing. Why, you can't tell the Holy Grail from Aladdin's lamp."

Our supper was served in a little pavilion located in the Wadia formal gardens. The bearers were the best I have ever seen, being a sort of cross between mind readers and acrobats. Each time I felt a desire for some dish, it would be handed to me before I could move. And yet to look at the servants' impassive faces, you would suspect that they were quite unaware of our presence.

After coffee Dr. Wadia produced an album of photographs which he had taken in his travels around the world. For artistry of conception and perfection of technique I have never seen any to quite equal these. Many of the pictures were taken in America, and yet I hardly recognized them till I had read the legends. The broad panoramas of the Royal Gorge and the Yellowstone stand-bys

were notably absent. More studied shots of rock formation, angled pictures of some lonesome tree somehow saw less, yet recorded much more than the usual greedy mountain-top sweeps.

Most impressive of all Wadia's art, however, was his collection of Balinese rough wood carvings. Heavily stylized and sophisticated in their very primitivism, the legong dancers and archers were nothing short of magnificent. There was no real attempt to represent forms, but rather a desire to capture mood and motion. Exaggerated fingers and twisted torsos practically wrenched at the polished grain of their wood. As I walked before them, from one piece to another, I involuntarily tended to simulate their positions. Wadia laughed and commented at one point that I had been behaving like a bowler whose roll was sheering off. I could easily believe him, for my muscles were tingling as if I had just finished a period of calisthenics. What a tribute to the unknown creators of the sculpture that their pieces can elicit such sheer physical empathy!

Wadia's philosophizing was rather tedious, being overladen with rationalization. Anxious to justify Parsi domination of India, he inclined toward a muddled Nietzschean outlook. "The common men are capable of no real joys. Therefore they should be subject to the wishes of a superior few." I advanced a few of Kierkegaard's arguments, matching one "existence philosopher" against another. But Wadia branched off into a romantic realm into which I felt it was useless to follow. "Look at the stars up above," he would say. "They have been there forever and they will last through eternity."

The further I go with my class at the college, the more I learn about the economics of empire. And the more I learn about the economics of empire, the more furious I become with the injustice of it all. I have long since abandoned the naïve idea that Britain is concerned with the welfare of the Indian, but I never realized the terrifying

extent to which the interests of the two are opposed. Not only in the short run does the colony suffer, from the heel and toe of a swaggering conqueror. Its very destiny is systematically warped; its future is being sold for profits of the moment.

In the words of Ranade, "This dependency has come to be regarded as a plantation, growing raw produce to be shipped by the British agents in British ships, to be worked into manufactured articles by British skill and capital and to be re-exported to this dependency by British merchants to their corresponding British firms in India and elsewhere." Ranade goes on to study the results of this policy and to conclude that as a result "the gradual ruralization of this great dependency, and the rapid decadence of native manufacturing trade become distinctly marked." And this is scarcely the work of a propagandist; it is the conclusion of a competent scholar.

## XIV

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THE date of my sailing must be drawing close, for I am moving to Bombay tomorrow morning. Johnny Brennan is moving with me, so it seems that we will sail for America together. I had hoped at one time to work my way homeward; there's a pile of money to be made in the doing. But it's just as well that I am going in comfort. The trip may take as long as thirty days.

I rather hope that we cross the Pacific, for in that case we'll probably stop off in Australia. And what is more, from my romantic point of view, I'll be able to say that I've sailed around the world.

We've just come back from Colaba Rest Camp, where it was supposed that Johnny and I would wait for our passage. But after taking one look at the accommodations, we've decided to pay for a hotel room ourselves. Neither Johnny nor I had brought a mosquito net; we had both left our blanket rolls back in Poona. And since Colaba is located on the edge of a swamp, when the sun goes down we would sorely need both. On a printed sheet which was handed us by the authorities is the following nauseating if well-advised instruction: "Throw charpoys from the roof of your barracks once or twice to dislodge the bedbugs and eggs that are in them." After a year of this life I am accustomed to "roughing it," when and if the necessity is present. But it is quite illogical, from my point of view, to sleep in the wilds one mile from Bombay. Both Johnny and I are low in funds, so we hate to spend our money on a room. Brennan suggests that we "throw the commanding officer of this place off the roof of our barracks once or twice in order to dislodge the bats in his belfry."

I visited the USO this afternoon, stalking the American in his native habitat. I have talked with so few that I am actually homesick, starved for a broad Midwestern accent. My expedition was a spectacular success, and of more than sheer philological interest. For after traveling the length and breadth of this country, I met the most charming Indian of all, here, in a prosaic American setting.

I was talking to a sergeant in the 14th Air Force when she edged between me and a near-by table, touching me lightly on the arm as she passed. I was startled by her gentle "I beg your pardon," more startled still by her cool beauty. As I moved to oblige, she smiled in thanks, then continued along in a matter-of-fact way. I tried to strike up a conversation by apologizing for blocking the path. But with a friendly dismissal of my minor offense, and a tap on the shoulder of a hulking corporal, she edged away through the parting crowd.

I saw her next involved in an argument with several of the other Red Cross hostesses. When I joined it, out of motives more social than intelligent, I learned that I was really interested in what was being discussed. The leader of the group was insisting weakly that the girls must dance with any and all soldiers, while another, a Southerner to judge from the accent, was protesting that she would never dance with a Negro. She was clearly the most articulate of the girls, and the others seemed unwilling to challenge her openly. Finally, butting into what was none of my business, I called them all to account for their apathy.

"Why are you so damned apologetic?" I asked, addressing the leader now. "If these fellows are good enough to die for their country, they are good enough to dance with anyone in it!" Here I turned to Dixie Belle herself, who was already agape at what I was saying. Her haughty manner served only to infuriate me as I thought of the number of white crosses for black men. "Why the devil did you come out here in the first place? Why didn't you sit back on your broad veranda and let the 'happy darkies' wait



on you? Big things are happening in this part of the world, bigger things than you can ever imagine. You'd better run home before you learn what this is about, these men with casts on their legs and bandages round their heads."

Our argument continued for almost an hour, though the girl who had drawn me dropped out near the beginning. When I broke away she was waiting to talk with me, anxious or distressed, I couldn't tell which. And then it happened! All at once I learned what a terrible reputation we Americans have. For Rachel could hardly believe her ears, that one of us could be concerned with racial bigotry!

I witnessed my first snake-mongoose fight this morning on the very eve of our departure. But actually, to call it a fight at all is vastly to overrate the energy of the contestants. Better, let's call it a wrestling match, in the true American sense of the term. Both serpent and rodent were too concerned with their own safety to risk antagonizing the supposed competitor.

It all began when a rickety little fakir drew a nasty, rat-like animal from a bag. There were clots of blood around the small eyes, which blinked incessantly in the unaccustomed light. As for the cobra he lay very still in a basket, apparently quite ready to lose by default, but the match-maker slapped him angrily several times, till he at last obliged with a condescending strike. His hood opened briefly, and for a moment he looked dangerous, but this business was apparently a strain on the snake. After a few grim seconds he gave up the pretense and meekly deflated while the fakir's back was turned.

Neither the cobra nor the mongoose bore the other any malice; left alone, I am sure they would have become good friends. But thrown together by the dhotied impresario, they bumped into each other apologetically. Finally the crowd began to boo and the flow of annas sharply diminished. The fakir, now the angriest of the three, began exhorting his partners to greater violence. Occasionally

one would leap at the other and all of us would surge in, expecting a kill. But the energetic one would soon relapse into indolence and become preoccupied with a twig or a near-by pebble.

In desperation, the fakir took the cobra in his hand, dangling it, stringlike, before the mongoose. Agitated thusly, the latter became interested and clawed compromisingly at the helpless snake. As a fitting climax to this ridiculous show, the cobra was inserted between his jaws. With a squeeze from the fakir, the vise clamped together; the snake thrashed a little, then bled to death.

I had supper tonight with Rachel and her father, in the garden of their home on Malabar Hill. While the food was the usual Anglo-Indian fodder, the setting and the company made it seem like a banquet. Rachel was out of her Red Cross uniform and into a low-cut white silk dress. Her black hair was swept up on top of her head; I could not take my eyes from her throughout the meal.

I was surprised to learn that Rachel is a Parsi. Her liberalism, if not her appearance, denied it. And I was more surprised, after knowing her to be one, to see how vigorously she attacked her own group. I feared to say too much myself, believing that I might rather hurt her feelings. But I was soon put at ease by her response to my timid bids, by her prior statement of my own extreme attitudes.

I am sure I've found more than a political ally. I have found someone through whose eyes I can actually know India. For Rachel is so similar to me in temperament that her opinions are mine, only strengthened by experience. She too has felt this close connection, for we question each other endlessly about our own respective continents. And the mutual exchange of knowledge and insight is a tremendous benefit to both of us!

When I think of it, I am quite as anomalous as she, pro Indian, yet dressed like the pukah sahib. No wonder her

surprise was as great as my own when I denounced this whole imperial system. "Rachel isn't interested in politics," I heard from one of the GI's at the Red Cross canteen. "She's really a swell girl, but you two won't hit it off. She'll be bored to tears with your enthusiastic idealism." I can see how he might have judged her in these terms; she's a different girl when around the canteen. But I am convinced that Rachel has a first-rate mind; so much so that I am trying to break down her prejudice against going abroad for a university degree.

The manager of our hotel has an attractive young daughter who tends to overrate her sex appeal. It has pleased her to accuse Johnny Brennan and myself of viewing her body with lascivious intent. Just how she can so well appraise a glance I cannot say (nor would I dare to speculate!). But for one reason or another she has labeled us respectively "The Dark Brown Wolf" and "The Copper-colored Wolf." It is the old phenomenon of a pretty girl who enjoys resenting masculine attention. She dresses with much care to make that inevitable, then registers shock when the inevitable happens.

Now, if only my virtue were being called into question, I would surely have let the whole thing pass. But Audrey, in her public protestations of horror, has pictured me as a calloused and insensitive brute. This I have felt compelled to argue. To be characterized thus, as "that American barbarian"! I set out last evening to demonstrate my acquaintance and proficiency with "Literature, Science, and the Arts."

I composed a parody on Alexander Pope to argue my background as well as my cause. But I fear that to Audrey it argued neither, but served only to strengthen her belief in my depravity. I deposited the work beside her plate, just before the luncheon hour. She found it at once, as she looked demurely down from what was intended as a seductive glance at me. Excusing herself from the company

at hand, she tore open the envelope in apparent glee. But as the reading progressed her expression changed from one of merriment to one of anger.

### ODE TO AUDREY

*Being a tribute to the methodological maiden, in the manner and fashion of Alexander Pope.*

Patrician grace, the carriage of her station;  
Enhanced by subtle taste for affectation;  
Through auburn locks that nature never gave her  
Sweet Audrey smiles, soliciting our favor.  
Self-consciously selecting her attire  
To accent most what virile men require,  
She plays at virtue; then, by my deduction,  
She's guilty of that subtlest sin, seduction.  
Then why, when timid lads, reciprocating,  
Unguarded eyes on Audrey's joys are sating,  
Though pure the light of virtue in her tresses,  
A baser motive even than theirs she guesses?  
Allay thy fears, sweet aphrodisiac maiden,  
Thou silver tray with nature's sweetmeats laden!  
For though one samples of the broad array,  
'Tis far from proof he means to steal the tray!

The gentleman on her right read the ode aloud when Audrey had dropped it in a flush of embarrassment. To most of the diners it was apparently amusing, for they could only protest feebly, from behind raised napkins. But Audrey, quite incapable of laughing at herself, took immediate refuge in her device of naïveté. She stamped to my table, threw down the paper, and slapped me so hard I saw stars for a moment. When I took it like the gentleman I was reputed not to be, Audrey's own dinner companions burst suddenly into laughter. And as I smiled at them I could tell from their expressions that more than a few agreed with my thesis!

Rachel does not yield her inner feelings readily. They are obscured by a considerable depth of character. But to-day the last piece has fallen in place; I feel that I understand her now. She was raised and schooled in the old traditions to which virtue and virginity, in women, are synonymous. But through sheer intelligence she has sensed other values more basic and more worthy in historical perspective. Somehow (as if intentionally to refute Marx) she has come to identify herself with the Indian mass. Through barriers of money, class, and race, she has managed to become a part of it. Yet how can she ever express her convictions, her hatred of the injustice in a system which acclaims her? How can she work for the things she believes when by making one move she will forfeit all her power?

Last night she told me, very simply and quietly, that she was going to fight "in the revolution." There was nothing of drama or bravado in the words. They were sheer communication, not said for effect. It seemed strange to hear this beautiful girl, apparently so well adjusted to her life, pronouncing a sentence which so clearly revealed a bitterness beneath the calm surface. She whispered, "I have the strength to kill them myself." There is no doubt in my mind but that she has. This girl, head in hands, is the ultimate Rachel, behind and yet above the Red Cross hostess.

## XV

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FROM where we are moored, the Gateway to India stands mirrored in the color of an Indian sunset. In the failing light it seems grand and majestic, the fitting symbol of British pomp and power. Yet like many another construction of the raj, it must be viewed from behind to be fully appreciated. For there is the aspect it presents to India. And there is the symbolism perfectly completed.

Every evening at this time, as dusk is approaching, the sailors come in on their liberty lighters. Most of them head for the bars or the brothels, but some of them loiter near the Gateway to India. There are always a few urchins anxious to earn a rupee, and poor enough to care little how they manage it. So from these water-front waifs the sailors buy their intimacies, revolting sensual, sexual attentions. Their crassness is almost beyond belief, for they seldom wait for the darkness to hide them. In clear view of front rooms in the Taj Hotel, they begin to enjoy their doubly damned pleasures. How late this continues I do not know, but I stumbled upon it at half past twelve. A drunken sailor called out a warning when I inadvertently approached his corner. "For Christ's sake!" I cried in embarrassment and disgust. The words echoed down from the mosaic vault. A hoarse drunken laugh echoed out of the corner, then a shout, "Go on, find a place of your own!"

We have left India; her poverty and her filth seem far behind. Occasionally, as I contemplate landing in America, I wonder if I have ever really been away. The purser brings us ice cream every afternoon, and we have plenty of soap and fresh water for bathing. The greatest inconvenience in

my life at this moment is the regular boat drill in the afternoon.

Andy and I make a joke of the thing, or rather re-create a joke from Thurber. As the personnel streams down the companionways we shout gaily to each other, "The dam has broken!" For some reason or other, we are both reminded of the illustrations in our Thurber anthology, showing a street choked with hurrying people, all running away from an imaginary flood.

We have steak and chicken, each once a week, and seconds on everything that is served in the wardroom. I am beginning to wonder whether the people of Calcutta are actually starving or whether that was only a bad dream. We have bade adieu to "mystic India," to the minor discomforts and the major inhumanities. But there are four hundred million people who cannot follow us. There are four hundred million who cannot bid adieu to mystic India, because they are bonded servants to its worn-out soil. No, it is not imagination or simply a bad dream; as I joke with Andy, they sweat and scratch their fleas. As I sit down in the officers' mess to a pious grace, they cry in Calcutta over their starvation dead. "We are fighting for the freedom of all peoples, everywhere." Like hell! We are fighting for our steaks and our baths!

The boat is loaded from bow to stern with praying missionaries and swearing soldiers, the mystical pedantics and the disinterested military that are America's most numerous representatives in Asia. I am comfortably berthed with the latter group, with the ranking troop officer on the boat, for a fact. There are six of us in the cabin, but it is large and pleasant, nothing like the rafter-stacked bunks below. My companions have thus far been stiff and formal, but two weeks on the equator will sweat out the starch. And then, who ever heard of six men in a cabin maintaining the rules of military procedure?

Andy is a major in the Medical Corps, and the only

leaven yet to appear in the loaf. With the realism and humor characteristic of his profession, he is utterly unmindful of the niceties of rank. He insists on calling the colonel "old sahib," a term which at first seems one of respect. But lest we cherish such a sweet delusion, he tells us that we should spell it "s.o.b."

"The old s.o.b." is partially deaf, but he refuses to admit to any infirmity. So we all have to shout at the top of our lungs lest we be hailed, "Speak up there! Stop that mumbling!" Andy is least mindful of this constant exhortation. Often he uses it as a starting point for one of his own. "Why, you deaf old bastard," he is apt to shout, "why don't you get an ear trumpet so you can hear?"

I find it hard to phrase my judgments about India, hard to state them in the quick vernacular. Oh, it is easy enough to insist that "Britain must leave India," but that is not so much a judgment as a vote. It is not that I don't have decided opinions, but that I hate to reduce them to mere theories and arguments. It is like being asked whether you approve of murder or not. The truth is so basic that to question it is an indignity.

I shan't trust myself at afternoon teas where well-fed matrons will want to discuss India. The smell of Calcutta is too strong in my nostrils, the laughter of its sahibs too loud in my ears. I shan't trust myself in argument with anyone who begins with the assumption of the raj's sincerity. I recall too well the "slogan of the Empire," "Britain wants India but she doesn't want the Indians." I shan't trust myself to deal with those people who blithely assume that India is progressing under Britain. The statistics of her decline are too easy to obtain for any such rot as this to be tolerated.

One of the missionaries who came out of Burma has shown me his collection of rubies and jade. I should assay its value at about five thousand dollars, though he prob-



ably got it for a fraction of that. When I warned him of the heavy duty he must pay, he insisted that he need not declare it to the customs. "I am not bringing these home as wealth," he said, "but only as examples of God's Great Handiwork!"

I have just been accused of a blind idealism because I argue the case for India's freedom. Idealism indeed, to insist that a nation must shape its future in its own two hands! Is it I who am the idealist, or is it those who believe that progress can be synthesized and given in transfusions? Is it I who am blind, or is it those who suppose that a nation, like a baby, matures through spoon-feeding?

Could I ever, indeed, be a blind idealist after knowing the price of life in Calcutta? Could I be an idealist, when my hands have been foul with the rotting flesh of that city's people? No, those experiences have left me the bitterest of bitter realists, and I base my conclusions upon a bitter realism. I base my conclusions upon the cold, hard fact of a poor, dirty India, full of poor, dirty people.

But what do you base your conclusions upon, you who argue for a British-ruled India? Upon the vapid nonsense that while the Indians sit back, they are absorbing modernity from England, by osmosis. No nation can avoid paying a price for freedom. No nation can ever get "something for nothing." No nation can find a short cut to the future. The correspondence school course in self-government is a fraud!

"But is India ready for independence?" The most foolish question that was ever asked! "Is India ready for independence?" Was any nation ever "ready" for independence? Our nation wasn't; that much I know. I have read it in the history of our Civil War. I have read it in the abandoned Articles of Confederacy, in the chronicles of disunity and of interstate conflicts. Was Britain "ready" for independence, when she deposed her Roman and Danish

rulers? Or was Britain just a host of warring tribes, who were sooner to shed than to fuse their blood?

"Is India ready for independence?" Is she ready for anything but independence? It is like asking a man who is about to be run down whether he is "ready" to jump out of the path of the car. What does it matter whether he is an athlete or not, whether he is properly trained in the western roll? He had just better be ready to jump out of the way. He had just better try, whether he is ready or not!

What has India to lose by trying? What could she lose that Britain guarantees? Security? Liberty? Life itself? Ask the six million people who have been lost in the last two famines!

Yes, I am the bitterest of bitter realists. I see no patent solution of India's problems. I see only the usual, long painful course of friction and dissension that leads to unity. Idealist? I believe in civil wars, when they are the only alternative to continuing factionalism. Idealist? I believe, like the American I am, that the tree of liberty must be nourished with blood. Idealist? I believe that governments are made to cope with the disputes that necessarily arise between men. Idealist? Not half so much an idealist as those who say that unity precedes self-government.

We've taken a number of troops aboard who are returning to the States from South American assignments. The war and India seem far away from them, and they frequently question us about one or the other. I've noticed that most of them have a rather narrow point of view; they lack the enforced broadening that comes from overseas service. They despise the peoples of the countries just left in the petulant, irresponsible way that connotes an inability to distinguish between the perpetrators of their exile and cosufferers in it.

Our British major is a different man now from the calloused, heavy-handed fellow who boarded. In the presence of these many "strangers to the Empire" he adopts a sick-

eningly pro-Indian guise. He deplores the starvation that he was wont to joke about when there were only "insiders" about to hear him. He "earnestly hopes for Indian freedom" where he previously cursed "those dirty black wogs." Strangest of all, he is hardly embarrassed to face the rest of us who know his game. With an ingratiating smile he regularly reminds us that "they wouldn't understand if we told them the truth."

When I have made it my business to "tell them the truth," he has generally insinuated that I am simply "anti-British." Assumptions which once passed between us without question he now denies in the most offhand and polite manner. I have come close to striking him several times when he has boldly called me a liar to my face for repeating stories which I heard from him, for quoting more candid utterances which he has made. I have always hated the subterfuge of empire, but only now have I met its full weight, only now, in this smooth, polite, unprincipled, and shameless officer who can say that black is white without losing his apparent dignity.

The rest of the men on the boat have come to hate him, even those who are not sympathetic to the Indians. As one American lieutenant colonel said within my hearing, "He just changed overnight like a damned chameleon."

What will I do when I am home at last? Everything that I left seems unimportant. And then, it will not really be returning home. Much will have changed, in me and in it.

I was ready to save the world when I left; just me and the earnest young liberals I knew. But I never fully realized how much needed saving. A glimpse has robbed me of much of my buoyancy.

"At the bottom, all our troubles are economic," we would mutter, nodding wisely over foolish words. "Give us the stimulus and the current interest rate, and we'll tell you what any human being will do." Oh, God, if we'd known the Indians then! If we'd known any people who

believed their morality. It would have saved a lot of this backtracking. But perhaps the lesson in humility is good for me.

What will I do when I am home at last? The prospect is a little less pleasing than it was. What, and with what attitude?

The atmosphere is a foggy gray, the color of our ship that passes through it. And with mist damply settled upon the hull and the handrails, we blend as a part of the whole dismal scene. In spite of the weather we are all walking the decks, straining our eyes to peer out at nothing, for we know that out of that nothing ahead the shapes of Boston Harbor will appear. Our speed has been cut to three or four knots, a maddening pace for this homesick crowd, but the blowing of tugs and the ranging pilot boats announce the end of our restless trip. All of us are clean-shaven, and our cabins are tidy; we fondly suppose that we won't have to return to them. It would be the most dangerous heresy for anyone to admit the truth, that we will probably be aboard for another night.

The Australian brides are a little timid, but anxious for a glimpse of their new homeland. The GI's from Panama are licking their chops and rubbing their palms at the thought of New York. But the rest of us, the personnel from India, are strangely in a reflective mood. For some foolish reason which I cannot articulate, my stomach is heavy when I think of walking down this ten-thousand-mile gangplank.

We are still in India, essentially. We have shipped some foreigners, but they are visitors in India. Somehow this boat seems a part of India, the water, somehow, the Arabian Sea. Yet on it we are nearing the beaches of America, the shores of a half-remembered land. On it we are riding the gentle swells that roll in to Boston, New York, Detroit. Oh, Lord, I wish we had taken a plane, so that we could see the thousands of miles pass beneath us. This travel by

boat is too brutally swift. To run down a gangplank from Asia to America.

A thick, gray fog between India and Boston, obscuring the sight of each from the other. A thick, gray fog between Asia and America, amorphous, intangible, yet heavy and uncompromising. How symbolic in its shifting, subtle presence! How suggestive in its mocking invulnerability! We pass through it, we feel it, yet we cannot quite see it. We know it only as the absence of what it obscures.

Stories can be carried, in minds, through the fog, but their characters are bleached, soaked of much of their color. The smells and the sounds that come along with them are likewise faded in their passage through the mist. Das and Raman become "The Hindu-Moslem Problem" (much cleaner and more predictable than their mortal selves). And the little girl crying over her dead, decaying mother becomes "The Calcutta Famine" (more quickly forgotten).

The moisture irritates my nose and throat. I toss my head, hoping to rid myself of it. But the mist continues to sting and burn. The fog closes in where I have walked.