# WISDOM AND WASTE

## IN THE PUNJAB VILLAGE

BY

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Come . . let us go forth into the field ; let us lodge in the villages.

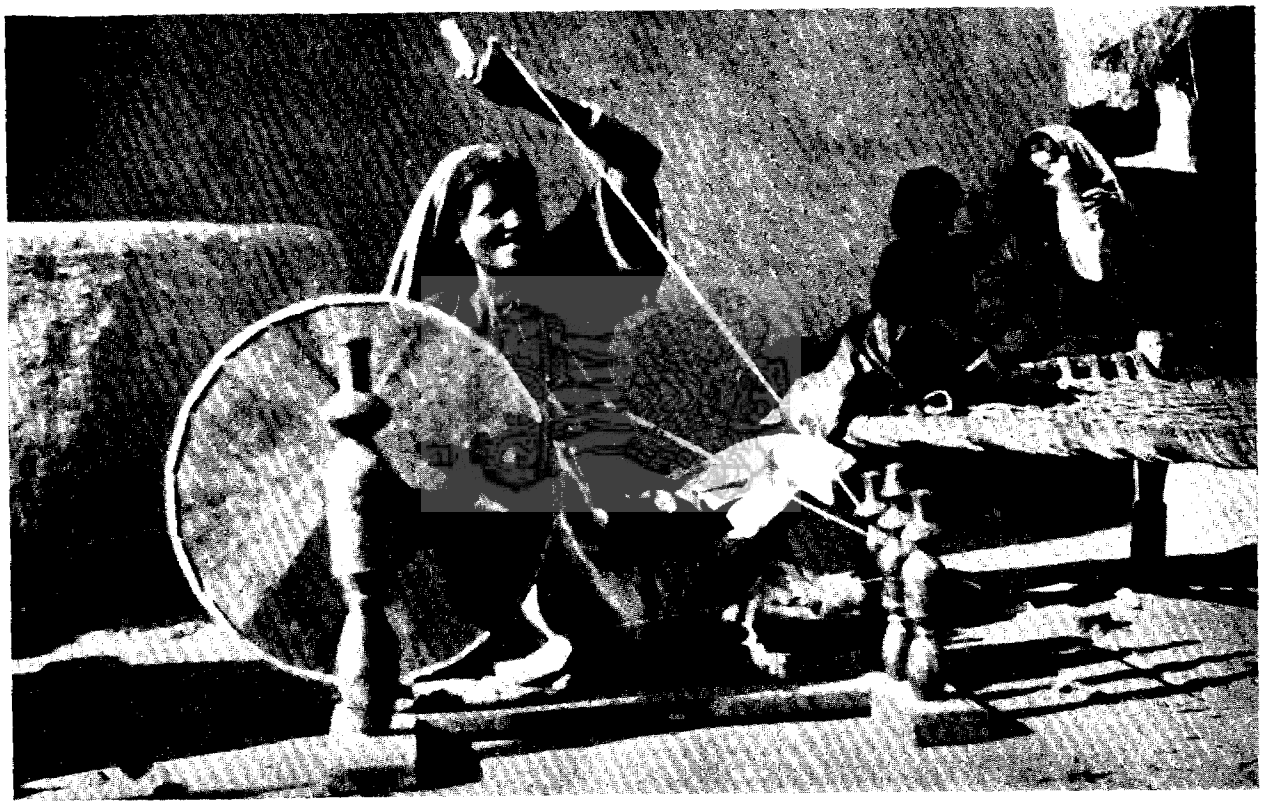
*Song of Solomon* vii, 11

HUMPHREY MILFORD

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

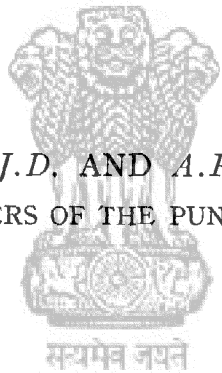
LONDON NEW YORK BOMBAY CALCUTTA MADRAS

1934



SPINNING

*Frontispiece*




TO *J.D.* AND *A.P.D.*
LOVERS OF THE PUNJAB

# PREFACE

In 1925, I published a book called *The Punjab Peasant in Prosperity and Debt*, which dealt primarily with the question of agricultural debt and also attempted to give some general idea of the Punjab peasant's economic position and outlook. This was followed in 1930 by *Rusticus Loquitur or The Old Light and the New in the Punjab Village*. This book described a long tour on horseback, the main object of which was to enquire how the peasant stood and thought in regard to other questions than debt and, wherever possible, to let him speak for himself. Hence the title. In 1930-31, I did another tour of the same character, and this time paid special attention to aspects of village life that I had not much considered before: for example, the position of the village servant, the domestic life of the village woman, the influence of the Army and the school upon the peasant, the peasant's tendency to hoard and his partiality in certain areas for feud and faction, the operations of panchayats new and old, the efforts being made at reconstruction, and perhaps most important of all, the effects of the economic depression, more especially in the canal colonies. Both tours, which together covered about 1,400 miles and embraced 22 out of the Punjab's 29 districts, were done when I was Registrar of Co-operative Societies and involved much official work, which necessarily limited the time available for enquiry and discussion; and the pressure of official duties since has made it impossible for the record of the second tour to appear before. The original record has been much abridged and has been re-arranged and clarified to make it intelligible to the reader, and, so far as possible, repetition has been avoided.

As in *Rusticus Loquitur*, I have set down the facts as faithfully as I could without embroidery or addition, except occasional comment, believing that in an objective study of this kind fidelity of narrative is essential. And this is doubly so with facts of such 'immense length and range in space and time' as are those of Indian village life. The objective character of the treatment is my excuse for a third volume of what is in effect a single study. In describing the life of a country not his own, the student whose object is truth rather than effect is forced to rely upon detailed systematic enquiry. Enquiries of this kind seem to me more than ever needed now that there is much talk of reconstructing the village, if effort

is not to be wasted upon forms of reconstruction that do not suit it. And the reformer need not regret the time spent, for if he has something to teach the village in regard to its waste, he is likely to have even more to learn from its ancient wisdom.

The diary form, used in *Rusticus Loquitur*, is repeated and whatever its drawbacks, it has one advantage: the facts recorded can be seen in their human setting, without which they are but dry bones. I have allowed myself a fuller expression of opinion than on my first tour, for, as my study proceeded, certain conclusions emerged, and I thought it right to indicate them clearly. As before, I have done my best to avoid hurting anyone's feelings, and once more I would express my appreciation of the way my enquiries were everywhere received. My acknowledgements are also due to the many members of the Co-operative Department who, after my tour, verified doubtful points and made further enquiries on my behalf. Without the devoted help of these my old colleagues, none of my three books could have been written. I am also much indebted to Sir R. P. Hadow, C.I.E., and Messrs. H. Calvert, C.S.I., C.I.E., F. B. Wace, I.C.S., and H. D. Bhanot, I.C.S., for their assistance in connexion with Chapter XII, and to Mr. Calvert further for useful advice in regard to certain statistical passages elsewhere. I owe the illustrations of the Salt Range to Mr. J. C. W. Eustace, I.C.S., and the rest to the Rev. Father Damian of the Catholic Mission, Sargodha, and I am grateful to both for letting me reproduce them. Finally, the officials of the India Office Library showed me their usual courtesy.

M.L.D.

Marseilles,

6 July 1934

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सत्यमेव जयते

# PART I: NORTHWARDS

## CHAPTER I

## RAVI TO CHENAB[1]

### THE FALL IN AGRICULTURAL PRICES—PIR AND FAKIR—WATERLOGGING

9 *December*, 1930.—*Nankána Sahib to Mananwala* (10 *miles*)

To horse again and this time northwards. Yesterday I came fifty miles from Lahore by train and saw nothing but a cinema picture of villages and fields, and fields and villages, the human element quite blotted out. To-day it was fields and villages again but alive with the immemorial drama of Indian peasant life. From the back of a horse one can speak with men, observe their ways, hear their minds, perhaps even read their hearts; and the alternate walk and jog of a good country-bred mare is quite fast enough for those who would do this in a land where camel, pony, or bullock still set the common pace. Thirty years ago the country through which we rode was waste, but now, thanks to the Lower Chenab canal, a branch of which passes this way, only the road recalls the wide-stretching bareness of the past. It was unmetalled and our horses sank to their fetlocks in gritty dust. Unhappy was the lot of those who rode behind, and after a mile not a black beard was left amongst them.

The beards were Sikh beards, for Nankána Sahib is the birthplace of the saintly Guru Nanak[2] and an important Sikh centre.

**The fall in prices**

At Mananwala, too, I was amongst Sikhs. The landlords there have built themselves lordly houses, and their whitewashed towers and gateways are bright with the crude art of the too prosperous days that followed the war.

Those days are past, and with wheat at Rs. 1-8 a maund (about 11s. 6d. a quarter) they cannot collect their rents. In the Punjab[3] rents are usually a fixed proportion of the produce, and it is the great advantage of this system that they rise or fall automatically with the price of produce. For the landlord its disadvantage is that when the harvest is gathered in, he must keep a watchful eye over

[1] Rainfall 16 to 20 inches.
[2] Founder of the Sikh religion.
[3] As in Palestine, see Bentwick, *Palestine* (1934), 171.

its division if he is to secure his fair share, and if he is an absentee this is difficult. This is the case with the family at Mananwala: hence most of their rents are in cash, and the fall in prices, which began early this year, has virtually doubled them. They think therefore of converting them into produce.

How far the fall has gone is shown by the following figures, which represent yesterday's prices in the market at Nankána :—

| | per maund (82⅔ lb.) December 1929. | December 1930. |
|---|---|---|
| | Rs. | Rs. |
| Wheat (first grade) .. .. .. | 4-4 | 1-10 |
| Rice .. .. .. .. | 2-14 | 1-5 |
| Unginned cotton (*a*) 'American' | 12 | 5-12 |
| (*b*) country .. | 8 | 4 |
| Gur (unrefined sugar) .. .. | 5-8 | 2-12 |

In the case of wheat the fall is over 60 per cent, and in the other three cases 50 per cent or more.[1]

**A field path**

In the evening, fresh from Lahore and its city ways, I watched with pleasure the passing to and fro of peasant life along a field path near the rest house. First there came a donkey loaded with a chest large enough to hold a man—a wedding gift, and the prelude to a marriage procession of Janglis, who came riding gaily by, two to each horse's back, save where the bridegroom rode all glorious by himself. Owing to the fall in prices only Rs. 200 had been spent on the marriage, but—can India be anything but poor ?—it had been borrowed at 36 per cent. Hotfoot on the procession pressed a motley crowd of gipsy Sansis[2] to beg alms, and with them went a pack of starveling dogs, kept, they said, for hunting, but fit only to scavenge, so lean and ribbed were their sides.

### 10 *December.—Mananwala to Shahkot* (12 *miles*)

Six months ago, nay only three, the Punjab was hot as hell, the air by day licking the cheeks with tongues of flame, and the body at night refusing the lightest covering. But now it is a case of

[1] On 13 March, 1934 at Lyallpur the corresponding prices were as follows :—

| | Rs. | | Rs. |
|---|---|---|---|
| Wheat (first grade) .. | 2 | Rice .. .. | 2-12 |
| 'American' cotton .. | 7 | Gur .. .. | 3 |
| Country cotton .. | 4-10 | | |

Wheat and 'American' cotton have thus risen about 23 per cent since December 1930, but they are still 53 and 42 per cent, respectively, cheaper than they were in December 1929. Country cotton has risen 15 per cent, and sugar less than 10 per cent. Only rice (not an important crop in the Punjab) has recovered at all fully.

[2] A criminal tribe.

thickest clothes and breakfast in the sun. We set out at 9.30 and, skirting the village and its landlord mansions, picked our way along a dusty road shamelessly defiled by menials too lazy to step across the road into the fields for their necessary occasions. That all five senses might be outraged, a herd of buffaloes on their way out for the day's grazing churned up filth and dust into a thick polluting cloud. It was a relief to get into the open country and inhale the acrid fragrance of the flowering mustard-coloured *toria*.[1]

**An abduction**

We stopped at a village to see a 'bank', as the co-operative thrift and credit society is called in the Punjab village. As we approached, we met a party of Sikhs on their way to the police station to lodge a complaint against a neighbour for carrying off one of their wives with all her jewellery, which they valued at Rs. 800. 'How much land has the husband?' I asked.

'Half a square.'[2]

'Is it possible that one who owns so little has spent so much on jewellery?'

'Yes, indeed: he spent Rs. 2,000 on the marriage and mortgaged his land to get the money.'

When we got to the village and were all seated, pleasantly crowded together round the well, I enquired further about the case. The girl had certainly been enticed away with her jewellery, but this, they said, was worth at most Rs. 150. The village knows well enough the facts on a point of that kind, and that the two estimates should be so different shows the importance of enquiries on the spot. It was a shock to learn that the kidnapper had once been treasurer of the bank and that he had been ejected for misappropriating its modest balance.

**Marriage and the slump**

The case led to talk about marriages and jewellery. The slump has affected both. A Sikh said that in 1919 he spent Rs. 2,500 on the marriage of his brother, but in October, when he married his son, only Rs. 350; and another, that ten years ago he married a daughter for Rs. 5,000 and last year a son for Rs. 1,000. Here is the contrary process to the steady increase in the cost of marriages which took place when prices rose.[3]

[1] *Brassica campestris*.

[2] In the Lyallpur (Lower Chenab) and Shahpur (Lower Jhelum) colonies, each village is allotted so many squares of land, each square measuring 27·8 acres.

[3] See the author's book, *The Punjab Peasant in Prosperity and Debt*, 227. (Throughout this book the reference is to the third edition published in 1932. In future the book will be referred to as *Peasant*.)

'We spend nothing now,' exclaimed a Muslim peasant, 'for we have nothing. The other day I married my child, and all I spent was five farthings (*pice*) for the reading of the marriage verse (*nikah*).'

'Did no one come with the bridegroom in the marriage procession?'

'People cannot give the wedding gift (*tambol*); for shame they stay away.'

There was doubtless some exaggeration in the five farthings, but the director of a Banking Union I saw yesterday said that this year he married his four daughters together for five rupees: there was no marriage procession, no entertaining, no jewellery, no dowry; only the fee to the mullah (which for luck must be a sum divisible by five).[1] And what is more many marriages followed on the same lines. 'Now,' said someone, 'there is no beating of drums or clashing of cymbals. Rs. 1-4 (twenty annas) is paid to the mullah and the pair become *Mian* and *Bibi*, master and mistress.'

No doubt money goes further now and less need be spent; but even before the fall in prices the more educated zemindars, especially among the Sikhs, whose minds have a Calvinistic turn, had begun to question the wisdom of spending so much upon jewellery. A Sikh tells me that, when his son was married to a girl who had been educated at the Queen Mary College in Lahore, he bought the usual amount of jewellery for her; but she declared that all she wanted was a ring, a gold wrist watch, a pendant, and a gold pin to fasten her saree: nothing else was of any use to her. He added that there had long been in his family a set of gold bracelets large enough to cover the arm from elbow to wrist. He repeatedly pointed out to his father that it was sheer waste to keep them and at last obtained a reluctant consent to their sale. He sold them for Rs. 1,800 and deposited the amount with the Union at 7 per cent. The sight of the first year's interest was sufficient to reconcile his father. A Muslim co-operator says that he sold his jewellery in 1925, and that since then many in his village have done the same. When he married his daughter, instead of ornaments he gave her Rs. 800, which she forthwith deposited with her village bank. It is significant that fourteen women, nine of them widows, have deposited Rs. 29,000 with the Union.

**Education and jewellery**

At Shahkot there is a shrine founded by a pir who came over the mountains from Bekhara in the days of Akbar. He had only four disciples, but so fruitful have they been that in Shahkot alone their descendants

**A Muslim shrine**

[1] See the author's *Rusticus Loquitur* (1930), 302. (In future this book will be referred to as *Rusticus*.)

number 120 families. They are the servitors (*mujawar*) of the shrine, and the service they severally render is every day to give a cake of bread for the entertainment of the pilgrims who come there. They have formed a thrift and credit society, and the most striking of those present at my inspection was one wearing a rosary, and with his heavy handsome features, rich mahogany skin, and drugged eyes, he suggested a Judas who had decided not to hang himself.

**Pirs and their spells**

We had some lively talk about *piri-mureedi*.[1] Of the 213 members of the society fifty practised it, and (according to the society's records) they derive Rs. 56,000 a year from it. One said that owing to the fall in prices his last expedition had yielded only Rs. 25; but others, pointing to a brown pony grazing close by, said: 'He brought that back as well.' Another, taking up the complaint of the times, observed: 'Now we get only four annas in the rupee. Before prices fell, we asked for grain and were given money: now we ask for money and are given grain. But (he added with pious satisfaction) faith is untouched and strong as ever.' This man had personality, and his gaunt commanding features suggested a realist.

'Why do people do *piri-mureedi*?' I asked.

'Those who have food don't go; only those who have none.'

'But is their going of any service to those who make them offerings?'

'None; but if we did not go to them, they would come to us.' True enough, for to avert pain, sorrow, or shame, an uneducated man turns instinctively to magic. But the remark provoked protest from one with a more romantic mind:—

'It is of advantage to the King, and it is of advantage to the poor.' Here again was truth, for, as we know, the religious healer works through faith, and faith helps both high and low. The next remark came from a pietist:—

'We do not give spells, but only offer prayers.

'Yes,' said a cynic, 'and dust is taken from here (he pointed to the ground) and given to those who are sick that they may be whole.'

'Why this long story?' enquired a querulous member of the committee; 'let us pass on.'

'No,' I said; 'for I have something to say on this matter.' Whereupon I told them what I thought of *piri-mureedi*, that it

[1] There is a class of men called *Pir*, who are popularly invested with religious sanctity, sometimes personal but generally inherited. Their followers (*mureed*) regard them with veneration and make them more or less regular offerings, and spells and charms are given in return according to need. *Piri-mureedi* is the exploiting of this relationship by the pir and is described at length in *Rusticus*, 220, 245, etc.

followed neither the old nor the new light, that I had never met an educated man who approved of it, or seen a good bank whose members practised it, and that this was no exception. Had not, for instance, the members of their committee borrowed far more than their share of the society's funds? They heard me with the courtesy and attention always accorded by the Punjab peasant to those who are disinterested and in earnest.

That there is reason to be in earnest on this difficult subject I have endeavoured to show elsewhere,[1] and that others are in earnest is clear from what an Inspector tells me.[2] His father made about Rs. 1,000 a year by *piri-mureedi*, that is to say five times as much as the ordinary small peasant proprietor makes by labouring the whole year at his fields.[3] When he died, like the exorcists of Ephesus,[4] his son burnt all his books and records that none of his children might be tempted to follow in his course, and this meant burning the family trees of 2,000 disciples for six generations. He acted thus in disgust at his father's methods, of which he gave an example. One day, desiring chicken for dinner, he told a mureed who wanted a charm that it must be written in the blood of a chicken, which of course was produced at once. The destruction of the abracadabra of his trade did not, however, release him from all temptation. Once his duties chanced to take him to a canal colony village which had been colonized by some of his family disciples. Although no member of his family had visited it for thirty years, as soon as the villagers heard of his coming, they gathered round him and pressed their offerings upon him. Nor would they take any denial, until he told them that he had come *qua* Inspector and that they should keep their offerings till he came as a pir.

**A pir who destroyed his books**

Amongst those waiting to receive me at the rest house was a small aged fakir clad in white and white-bearded. He insisted upon shaking hands with me, and in his handshake I felt the leanness of his body and the earnestness of his soul.

**A 'half-witted' fakir**

'My arms are withering,' he said. 'I am taking medicine.'

'He is half-witted,' whispered one who knew him. 'He was once in a madhouse.'

'I am no longer quite a man,' he continued, as if confirming this judgement upon him. 'Some Thing is in me and speaks by my

[1] *Rusticus*, 336.

[2] Cf. ibid., 273.

[3] See p. 268.

[4] 'Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them' (Acts xix, 19).

tongue. I know not who or what it is ; but there is light within me, and I speak accordingly. Perhaps I shall become a man again.'

He spoke gently but emphatically, leaning (like Jacob when he blessed the sons of Joseph)[1] upon the top of his staff.

11 *December.—Shahkot to Sangla* (12 *miles*)

I was breakfasting in the sun when the fakir appeared again bearing his staff. Grasping me warmly, almost affectionately, by the hand, he greeted me earnestly :—

' May God give you light.'

' And how shall I get light ? '

Fixing his wistful grey eyes upon me and possibly noticing the abundance of a western breakfast table, he replied :—

' Eat less than your wont for forty days, and sit quietly in one place, and repeat your creed (*kalma*)—Jesus is the spirit of God (*Isa ruh Ullah*). Then light may come to you.' A pause, and he added : ' But you are of advanced age (did he know that yesterday I was fifty ?) and the light will come slowly, for you did not begin like me. I started seeking for it when I was young, when I was only eighteen. For twenty-six years I did worship (*abádat*) and for seven I lived on leaves and on bhang. This was bad, and for five and a half months I was in the house of the mad. Now there is light within me and I know not what it is. It is withering my body, and the doctor has given me medicine.' As he said this, he untied the end of his puggaree and showed the medicine knotted in one of its folds. Then shaking me by the hand—a firm kindly grip—he left me, saying as he had begun—'May God give you light.' No madman this, but a seeker, and the light in his eyes suggested that he had not sought in vain. But he has had to pay the seeker's price. Though only fifty-seven he looked over seventy.

To-day we were in the heart of the Lower Chenab colony,[2] but here and there a strip of the old wilderness lurked in the young fields of cotton, sugar-cane, and wheat, as the primitive lurks in the heart of youth. The sugar-cane was the very emblem of youth, proud and spiky above, a jungle of juicy stems below, and the whole brimming with sweetness and sunshine. As we approached the little market town of Sangla, the wheat and cane gave way to fields of finely cultivated vegetables—onions, cauliflowers, and cabbages. For this a cloth dealer, a Sikh Khatri, was responsible.[3] He had obtained possession

**Agricultural wages**

[1] Hebrews xi, 21.

[2] Called in the *Peasant* the Lyallpur Colony, as most of it is in the Lyallpur district. This branch is in the Sheikhupura district.

[3] For the Khatri, see ibid., 186.

of 28 acres by a 500 rupee mortgage, and now employs three Christians and an Arain to cultivate them. The Arain, who is an expert market-gardener, is paid Rs. 30 a month plus three annas a day for food, which is the highest agricultural wage that I (and those with me) have ever come across in the Punjab, as much indeed as many clerks draw. It shows that with intensive cultivation irrigated land will give even the labourer a decent standard of living.[1]

**Communalism**

Separate co-operative societies exist here for Muslim and Hindu shopkeepers, and they are a sign of the rivalry which too often divides Hindu and Muslim in the town. It had been arranged that I should see both societies together, but unwisely in the courtyard of a Muslim, and the Hindus sent the inevitable message that they would not come there. In a colony town, separate societies for Hindu and Muslim are thought by some to be a necessity, on the ground that, when people settle there, they know only the members of their own community and never get to know those of any other, and without this knowledge they cannot combine in a co-operative society, which postulates among the members knowledge of each other's circumstances. This may be so in a colony town, but it is often assumed to be the case under more normal conditions, and until a year or two ago the Muslim societies of the neighbourhood refused to admit the Sikh societies to their Banking Union. Better counsels have since prevailed and the door is now open, to everyone's advantage. In non-colony tracts, where the two communities have lived side by side for generations, relations are usually amicable enough, as relations must be amongst neighbours who would not be for ever 'biting and devouring' each other;[2] and recently in a small town when I suggested to a society of Muslim shopkeepers that they should ask Hindus to join it, they said: 'Very gladly: there is great unity between us.' And this is only rational, considering that most Muslims are of Hindu stock. I once asked some Muslim Ranjhas[3] whether this was not so. 'Yes,' they replied; 'we are related to the Jats and Rajputs, but that was before Mahmood of Ghazni came.'[4]

'Then why this hatred between Hindu and Muslim?'

'It comes from the newspapers.'

'A true word, and it would be a good thing if they could all be stopped for a year.'

[1] The Christians were getting Rs. 15 to 16 p.m. A casual labourer was also employed on 8 annas a day; the year before he got Re. 1.

[2] Cf. *Rusticus*, 383.

[3] A tribe living mainly along the Chenab riverain.

[4] A.D. 1001.

'For ever,' said a voice from the rear, as if the Unseen itself had spoken.

*12 December.—Sangla to Sukheke (12 miles)*

If, as the Muslim proverb says, every evil finds its Moses, so does every blessing find its devil. The devil that stalks along the canal bank is water-logging. In this district nearly 70,000 acres are blighted, and one out of every four villages affected.[1] To-day we saw what this means. The outward and visible sign is salt, salt that is 'neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill';[2] and it lies on the ground like snow. Two days ago at Mananwala the water level was 50 feet down, but to-day it was only four or five, the result of two branches of the Lower Chenab Canal passing through the country only eight miles apart. A veteran co-operator with wrinkled face and red beard (and a pony that was too much for him) said that when he came to these parts in 1892 the water was 65 feet down, and ten years later when he sunk a well, it was still 51 feet. Wells are no remedy, for their water is salt and makes the fertile clay as hard as iron.

**Water-logging**

Seeing a steading by the roadside, we stopped to talk to the Jats who were at work there. 'Why have you left your village to live out here?' I asked.

'Since two or three years the water-logging has come: our cattle sink in the mud as they stand: our houses are falling, and our health is bad.'

'Then why have you not brought your wives and children?'

'There are thieves.'

'Do you not fear for your cattle?'

'We take it in turn to watch all night: there are four of us: each watches for three hours.'

The man who lives on his land can probably get 25 per cent more out of it than if he lived in the village;[3] and if many did this, agricultural progress on a large scale would follow. But 'there are thieves', and no one likes a thief. The moral is, agricultural progress demands an efficient police, but how many of those who would reduce or weaken the present force have thought of this?[4]

Although we were riding through 'the heat of the day', it was never more than warm, and a chilly wind blew from the north.

[1] 264 out of 1,107 villages (figures kindly supplied by the Deputy Commissioner).

[2] Luke xiv, 35.

[3] See *Rusticus*, 187.

[4] Cf. ibid., 188.

The country was as ever dead flat, and sparsely covered with the prickly wild caper. We rode along the railway line, and turning off where half a dozen shops and a silent ginning factory clung forlornly together in the emptiness of the plain, we rode up to a village inhabited by Balochis, men of the western Punjab. I gave the crowd that came out to meet us the usual greeting—' Is all well ? ' Usually this evokes no more response than our ' How do you do ? ', but this time it was the signal for loud lamentation. ' There is great hardship : from the salt (*reh*) and the water-logging has come ruin. Our houses have fallen, our land is marred, our health is gone. Before there was no suffering ; now fever comes : it came but now and lasted two months. Our cattle too are sick, and if they go out that way (pointing northwards), they stick fast in the mud. Let the Sirkar[1] give us fresh land, or we cannot live.' They had reason to complain : the mud walls of their houses were mirrored in two large ponds of glassy blue water—' two years ago this was dry ground '—and the salty efflorescence[2] crusted their fields like leprosy.

' Can we see one of your houses ? ' I asked.

' Undoubtedly, but we are poor men, and our houses are not the houses of kings.'[3] This was true enough, for their walls were crumbling, but any eastern potentate might have envied the cleanliness and order of their interiors. In one we found 200 vessels of earthenware and brass neatly arranged on shelves and piled five or six high, and in a dark inner room, where the family sleep when it is cold, were a number of beds loaded with quilts, thirty or forty of them ' ready for the guest who comes ', and protected from dust by homespun sheets. The house is swept every day, and in one of the rooms a small broom lay on the floor. In the courtyard a spread of chillies splashed their blood red against the smooth biscuit-coloured walls. Even the separate enclosure (*haweli*) kept for the cattle was clean. Every day the manure is removed, and the floors of the byres are sprinkled with earth. This house belonged to the most prosperous man in the village, but another we saw was just as clean and was adorned with a doorway beautifully carved in wood, most difficult of materials, by the skilled artificers of Chiniot. In the house of an ex-soldier, once in the Guides, we found an old gramophone (the first I have seen in a peasant's house), bought after the war when he was discharged with a pocketful of money, but now silent for want of needles which, with the fall in prices, he can no longer buy.

**A well-ordered house**

[1] Government.
[2] *Reh* or *shor*.
[3] Cf. ' They that wear soft clothing are in king's houses ' (Matt. xi, 8).

Hunger came, and now death,' was his music-loving comment on the fall in prices.

It was now time to see the bank, and about forty of us gathered in the open, some sitting on string beds but most on the ground, and a long-legged zaildar[1] sprawling on a bed to himself. Apart from him, only one of the forty could read and write, a dwarf, who stood a bare 4 feet in his shoes. He was a pathetic figure, with the head, features, and beard of the middle-aged man that he was, the stunted body of a child, and the withered bandy-kneed stumps of a babe that has been allowed to walk too soon. But in mocking him nature had given him one compensating gift: he was the most intelligent person there. No one could get beyond the Deputy Commissioner and Sessions Judge when I enquired what officials the province had: but he knew there was a Financial Commissioner. No one mentioned the Ministers, nor did anyone distinguish between Governor and Viceroy. Neither was even mentioned till I asked who was the Viceroy. 'The *Lat Sahib*[2] of the Punjab' said one. 'And who is the King?' I asked the dwarf. 'Emperor the fifth (*Shenshah panjjum*).'

**The administration**

Leaving the village we entered the Háfizabád tahsil of Gujranwala, and a number of horsemen met us on the border. Cantering along we overtook a large nondescript family, some on foot, some on donkeys. One of the donkeys said he could canter too, and the black-shawled woman who was on his back slid slowly to the ground. For a moment she lay a dark single mass, but as she rose a small naked babe appeared from the fold of her shawl. At the sight of a rupee her look of bewilderment gave way to a beaming smile, and she said all was well; but the poor babe restored to his mother's arms pressed his head against her shoulder and was violently sick. Such, however, is the power of a rupee in this cash-less country that the mother continued to beam. I asked her the age of her child, and when someone banteringly added—'And what is *your* age?'—she replied with ready tongue—'You must ask her who bore me.'

The rest house here is the dirtiest building I have been in for years. The durry in my bedroom was impregnated with dirty foot-marks and looked as if some babu had been amusing himself by splashing on to it with his pen a map of the larger and more confused constellations. I sighed for the cleanliness of the 'uncivilized' Janglis.

[1] The headman of a group of villages, usually from fifteen to thirty. The title should be noted as it recurs constantly.

[2] Governor.

13 *December.—Sukheke to Pindi Bhattian* (14 *miles*)

Sukheke is on the tarred road that runs from Lahore to Sargodha, and sorry I was to see its black ice-like surface. The Indian tarred road, however, is not quite so hostile to horse and rider as the English, for it is generally bordered by strips of soft dusty earth, in this case the colour of half melted London snow. The traffic up and down was full of life's motley—a long-legged man on a short-legged donkey with feet held up to avoid the ground; a cyclist in old military coat and purple socks; another with a bunch of marigolds tied on to his handlebars; small *tumtums*[1] rattling along with ladies shrouded in crumpled boorkas; vast lorries (one of them with my servants and kit and the cook's bicycle on top) hurtling by at a terrifying pace and leaving us suffocated with dust, and occasionally a flock of sheep or goats, who also stirred the dust but in a gentle leisurely cloud that shimmered in the morning sunshine. In the fields peasants were at work careless of all this trafficking life. We asked one why he was scattering earth from a basket over his field. 'The land is old and there is no strength in it. I have taken this earth from the mound yonder and am sprinkling it over the field to make the soil sweet. At present it is sour.'

**The highway**

'Have you ploughed it enough?

'I have ploughed it many times, fifteen it may be, and it is still poor.'

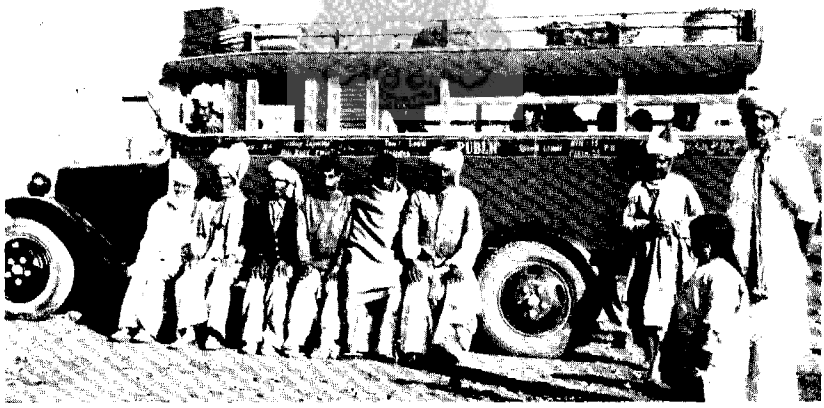
We left the colony yesterday but were still in canal-irrigated country, and along the road ran a slow stream in a channel 10 or 12 feet wide dug by Government and part of a large scheme to drain the water-logged area.[2] In time we came to the Jhang branch of the Lower Chenab Canal, the waters of which fell thundering through the arches of the bridge by which we crossed it. Beyond we entered a tract watered by wells, and we heard the creaking crooning melody of the Persian wheel. Clumps of reedy sarkhanda grass[3] spoke of a river beyond, and the gentle undulations of a world that is not always flat. As we crested one of these, the wide riverain of the Chenab, the river still unseen, spread itself out before us. The golden sarkhanda grass stretched almost to the horizon, and rising

[1] Light two-wheeled country carts.

[2] In this district (Gujranwala) water-logging is even worse than in Sheikhupura (p. 9): 188,892 acres (only 13,768 cultivated) are affected in 543 villages. So far 3,642 acres have been reclaimed and seepage drains have been dug and are proving successful in both districts, and also in Shahpur, see p. 24 (information kindly supplied by the Deputy Commissioners concerned, 1932).

[3] *Saccarum munja*.

BOAT BRIDGE ON THE CHENAB



THE NEW AGE

[ *face p.* 13

out of it like an island lay the townlet of Pindi Bhattian and its domed shrine.

This was our destination, but a few miles before we reached it we stopped to see a village bank. Of the forty-five zemindars present only one was literate, and he only by courtesy. It was not surprising therefore that, when we repeated yesterday's questions about the administration, only one could get beyond the Deputy Commissioner; and he merely knew that there was a Governor, and that the King lived in London. When asked the King's name, he answered: 'Allah knows'; and as to the Ministers, all he could say was: 'There is one at Lahore, only one.'[1] 'And what does he do?' 'No idea.' Another suggested there were four 'Council-wala',[2] and when asked what they did, he replied cautiously: 'Those who speak the truth speak it, and those who lie are liars.'

**The administration**

14 *December.—Pindi Bhattian to Kot Najha* (14 *miles*)

To-day I had the feeling of exhilaration which the approach of a great river on horseback always gives me. Earth and sky visibly embraced, and the slow melodious dirge of a Persian wheel came floating across the fields, expressing in long-drawn threnody all that peasant and bullock have endured through the ages. Our first sight of water was a side-stream crossed by a bridge of three boats. Beyond this a road of dry sarkhanda grass ran like a golden thread across the sandy waste. We cantered over the crackling stems till we came in sight of the river itself. A stormy sunset spread fire above and fire below, and the immense quiet was broken only by the swish of passing duck and the call of distant cranes—till a yellow lorry with a scarlet bonnet started crossing the bridge of boats; the new age flaunting itself upon the old. And how the twenty boats creaked in protest! At the bridge-head a group of peasants were warming themselves by a fire, which flickered faintly against the sky, and two donkeys stood in the shadow trying to catch the frail warmth as the cold night swept overhead. We were now in Shahpur.

[1] There are three.

[2] The Executive Committee consists of two 'Members' and three Ministers.

## Chapter II

# CHENAB TO JHELUM[1]

### An Old Canal Colony—Nomad and Colonist—Politics and Prices

*15 December.—Kot Najha to Laluwali* (10 *miles*)

Shahpur with its 4,800 square miles is distinguished for its landlords, its cattle-thieves, and its canal. Its landlords are mostly in debt but number some of the most influential landowners in the province. Its cattle-thieves are ubiquitous, and cattle-theft is the most popular sport of the district. 'Nearly every zemindar is more or less implicated in it,' says a recent report, and, as in Jhang next door,[2] it is only the best landlords who will have nothing to do with it. 'I make as much in a night as you do in a year,' said the owner of many acres to one of my staff. The booty is marched, or, when rivers are swollen, swum by night to some village across the borders of the district and handed over to a confederate, who the next night does the same; and so on, stage by stage, until the receiver is reached in, it may be, Gujranwala or Amritsar. Each man gets Rs. 5 for his risk and pains, and if he gets into difficulties, he counts upon the support of some influential landowner to rescue him from the clutches of the law. The sport is particularly dear to the Janglis, the semi-pastoral people who had the country to themselves when there was no canal. The canal is the Lower Jhelum and, opened in 1901, it now irrigates about 500,000 acres.[3]

**The original inhabitants**

Of the Janglis who live between the Ravi and the Chenab I have already written,[4] and those who live between the Chenab and the Jhelum, mainly Ranjhas and Gondals, are not very different. Men still hardly touched by modern ways, by nature and tradition more graziers than farmers, their cultivation is like that of all primitive folk who have an abundance of land. The colonists from Sialkot and Gujrat root themselves in the earth, but the Janglis merely scratch its

[1] Rainfall 16 inches.

[2] *Rusticus*, 228.

[3] In Shahpur about 400,000 acres are sown every year (*Punjab Colonies Rpt.*, 14).

[4] *Peasant*, 128.

surface. The ridges between their fields have sprawling lines and crumbling sides, and the soil, instead of being moulded to a fine tilth, is surfaced with large clods, which are justified by the excuse of the lazy that they preserve the moisture.[1] The rotations are of the simplest, wheat followed by wheat, cotton by cotton, with a year's rest in between. Only here and there is sugar-cane seen. A canal officer who knows the Amritsar district well says that the peasant there gets more out of five acres than the Jangli out of fifty.

But if the Jangli is not a good farmer, he is at least a good sportsman. Faction and feud are rife in his villages, and he likes to settle his quarrels in old-fashioned ways without recourse to court and police. An educated Ranjha tells me that it is still not uncommon for rival factions to meet at a fixed time and place and fight out a quarrel with bat and club. All but the old join in and set to for a brief half-hour of lusty combat. Like the tournaments of old, the meetings are subject to certain rules. No sharp weapon may be used, but only the *lathi* or Indian quarter-staff that every man carries; there must be no attack before the appointed time, and after the fight all must help those who are hurt; no report may be made to the police without informing the other side, and if they come uninvited, it is a point of honour to swear that there has been no fight. My informant says that only recently in his mother's village a fight took place in pursuance of a feud of many generations. It was a comparatively innocent affair with a dozen on one side and twenty on the other and ended in a draw with the exchange of a few knocks and bruises.[2]

**Effect of the canal**

But the canal with its more settled life is slowly changing all this. Before it came, the chief task was the herding of cattle. Now with cotton, cane, and wheat the men have something to occupy them all the year round. Prosperity has raised their standard of living, and contact with men from more developed districts has given them some desire for education. Once there was hardly a zaildar who was not in the cattle-thieving business, and even now it would be difficult to find anyone of any prominence who had not a relative or two connected with it. But it is not quite so popular a pastime as it was, and in time no doubt the feeling of shame that already touches the colonist will spread to the Jangli. A less satisfactory effect of the canal is the lowering of the age of marriage. In old days, as

[1] Cf. Russia: 'Few would ever break up the lumps of earth in their fields and prepare a proper seed-bed' (Maurice Hindus, *The Great Offensive* (1933), 97).

[2] In Palestine, too, fights of this kind appear to be not uncommon amongst the Arabs (Bentwick, op. cit., 175).

amongst the Janglis of Lyallpur, girls were not married till 20 or even 25, but now that there is much more to eat they are married at 14 or 15.[1] This perhaps explains in part the complaint that physique is deteriorating. Whether this is so or not, there is no doubt that the old spare diet of milk, butter, and millet (*bajra*) with the dry clean atmosphere of the Bár produced a fine stock, and the longest-lived men in the province are still those who live in the desert Thal between the Jhelum and the Indus. The worst effect of the canal has been the sudden inflow of money upon a people to whom every rupee was once as precious as a half-crown to a child. Faction has increased, since money opens the way to the courts, and debt has risen phenomenally, as it always does when ignorance and prosperity go hand in hand. The consequences of this were illustrated by a small bank I inspected during the day.

**A money-lender who went too far**

The bank had been severely shaken by a murder case, and sitting on the ground in front of me were the two alleged murderers. Condemned to death by the Sessions Judge in July, they were acquitted by the High Court in November. One of them, plump and middle-aged, not inappropriately wore a black puggaree: the other, a mere stripling, was in white. And the story they told was this. A money-lender in the next village lent the stripling's father a sum of money, which was still unpaid when the father died. A suit for Rs. 1,800 followed but, on a plea of minority, was rejected. Undaunted, the money-lender got the young man's cousin into his toils and obtained a decree against him for Rs. 1,500. One day he came with a large party to execute the decree and arrest the cousin. This led to a fight, and his death. A savage fight it must have been, for the High Court judgement shows that he received twenty-three injuries, two of which fractured his skull. Both sides 'complained' to the police, but as the money-lender was clearly dead, the complaint from his side was taken up and the other filed. My two acquaintances were put into the dock; also two old men, one of them the bank's treasurer. Both of them were sitting in front of me with beards dyed blue-black. The Sessions Judge found them all guilty and sentenced the two first to be hung and the two blue-beards to twenty years' imprisonment. The High Court has been more merciful and, let us hope, more just.

'What did you say when you were sentenced to be hung?' I asked the plump middle-aged member.

'It is the order of God.'

'Were you not distressed?'

'No, our time had come.'

[1] See *Peasant*, 129.

And when you heard that you were to be released, what did you say then ? '

It is God's goodness.'

The most hardened criminal could not have expressed himself more phlegmatically, and yet they were hardly criminals in the western sense of the word, for in India a money-lender who presses a false or an extortionate claim to extremes places himself outside the pale of village law ; and this is one reason why thirty-four money-lenders have been made away with this year in the Punjab.

16 *December.—Laluwali to Chokera* (10 *miles*)

We are now in the canal colony, where till thirty years ago nomad and camel, lizard-hunter and cattle-thief earned a precarious but healthy living. Long avenues of dark almost ever-green trees mark where the canal runs, and with what effect it runs is shown by the wide-spreading wheat, young and green as fresh-mown grass, the mustard-scented rape riotous in its yellow flowering, and the reedy islets of cane filled ' with ripeness to the core '. Fodder troughs (some on wheels) appeared in the fields, the dividing ridges were firm and straight, and the fewer and smaller clods showed that the clod-crusher is freely used. In short, cultivation was much superior to what we saw yesterday in the riverain. But even so it is not to be compared with what may be seen in the Lyallpur colony, and one reason for this is that many occupiers cultivate through tenants and the tenants are largely drawn from the unirrigated areas of the district, where the standard of cultivation is low.[1]

**Cash in the village**

We stopped at a village to see a Better Living Society and two banks, one for the zemindars or village masters and the other for the village servants. The village servant is so important a member of the village community that he requires a chapter to himself, and he will be given that later.[2] One complaint was common to both master and servant—the shortage of cash : ' We cannot put our hands to it,' said one of them. Till the beginning of this century cash played the most limited part in village life, and its use now varies greatly from tract to tract. A good judge with me estimates that in the neighbourhood of big towns and where the countryside has been enriched by large export as in the canal colonies, or by emigration as in Jullundur, or by military service as in Rawalpindi, as much as 75 per cent of village dealings may be in cash ; and that contrariwise in unsophisticated areas, like that through which we have just

[1] In 1931-2 only 18,000 acres in Shahpur were double-cropped and 8,500 acres under sugar-cane as against 825,000 under wheat, millet, and gram.

[2] See chapter xiv.

passed, 75 per cent will be in terms of produce and service.[1] Cash is mainly required for the small occasional purchases of salt, spice, oil, and cloth; but even these are often the subject of barter[2] or adjustment in grain,[3] and the need for cloth varies with the amount of spinning done by the women. A marriage or a case in the courts occasionally demands a stout sum, but, if necessary, marriage can be done 'on the cheap' and the case can be compromised or postponed. The money-lender's demands have also to be reckoned with, but many are meeting them with a *non possumus* folding of the hands, or with cattle and grain. A generation ago his dealings were chiefly in kind, and a tendency to revert to this, in consequence of the slump, is discernible where cash has taken its place.[4]

**Government dues**

But there is one demand which is inexorable. Twice a year, that is at each harvest, land revenue, and in a canal-irrigated tract water rate as well, has to be paid to Government, and both must be paid in cash. 'Send me the revenue quick,' shouted the zaildar yesterday to a passer-by from his horse. The fellow had not paid his summer instalment of Rs. 12-6. 'Why?' I asked.

'The poor devil had nothing to pay it with.'

'How will he pay it, then?'

'God will find the means. What can we do? If we do not pay, Government will think we are followers of Gandhi: but we are not.' And he added: 'It is Gandhi's fault this great cheapness has come.' But 'this great cheapness' is not the only reason why the land revenue is not always punctually paid. I was once looking at a village when I heard the headman whisper something in the ear of the Naib Tahsildar,[5] who was walking with me along the narrow

[1] I have recently made further enquiries as to this, and they suggest that the variation is even wider than that given above. No one that I have consulted puts the percentage for cash higher than 75, but for most of the Indus valley (cf. *Rusticus*, 255) and the drought-stricken south-east (see chapter 10) it is put as low as 10 to 20 per cent. For the more developed central districts the following estimates have been given me by good judges (1934):—

| | Dealings in cash |
|---|---|
| Jullundur and Hoshiarpur .. .. | 75 per cent |
| Gurdaspur, Sialkot and Amritsar .. .. | 45 to 55 per cent |

[2] p. 209.

[3] This is the case in the extreme south-west, and for an account of the system, see *Peasant*, 199.

[4] In Russia, the peasants have only very recently been placed on a money basis (Wicksteed, *Ten Years in Soviet Moscow* (1933), 50); but, says Maurice Hindus (*Red Bread* (1931), 32): 'No (Russian) peasant ever likes to meet a cash obligation.' Compare, too, China where up country the peasant 'hardly ever sees silver: the most he is ever possessed of is a string or two of copper cash' (*The Times*, 11 May 1934).

[5] Assistant to the Tahsildar, who is in charge of a tahsil (part of a district).

high-walled lane. 'What is he saying?' I asked. 'He tells me that one who will not pay his land revenue is here by chance: it is an opportunity.' We took the opportunity and turned into a courtyard, where a middle-aged man in a long black coat, with a white muslin scarf gracefully draped over each shoulder, was sitting on a string bed enjoying the leisure and sunshine of a cold weather Sunday. 'Looks most respectable,' I thought. Yet for two months he had dodged every effort to make him pay the modest sum of Rs. 38; and he had managed it, because he was an engine-driver and rarely at home on week-days. Confronted with authority, he was all deference but murmured something about the convenience of paying the amount in a few days' time. The Naib Tahsildar, however, having at last caught his fish was determined to land it, and the defaulting engine-driver was obliged to accompany him to the tahsil.

By itself the land revenue demand is not heavy, a few rupees per cultivated acre for good land, a few annas for bad, with an average of only two rupees for the whole province; but when the charge for canal water is added, ten or twelve rupees an acre may have to be paid. A landowner I met the other day told me he had to pay Rs. 16,000 a year, and that to meet his last payment he was forced to pawn some of his family jewellery at 12 per cent. All along our route there has been a general tale of the pawning and selling of jewellery for the payment of Government dues, and I hear it from such good and varied sources that I cannot doubt that much of it is true. There is more pawning than selling, and roughly it is only the more educated who sell. 'The zemindars sell their daughters,' said a sardonic patwari,[1] 'but they will not sell their jewellery.' This is because most of it belongs to the women, and they cling to it tenaciously as their surest defence against separation or widowhood. The fact, however, that many must either pawn or sell is an indication of the need for the reduction of Government dues. It is, therefore, good news that Government has now decided, in the case of cotton and rice, to knock off 25 per cent of the coming demand, subject to a minimum charge of Rs. 7-8 an acre.[2] But the colonist is hard to please. When the reduction was announced, there was only a growl—'We have no rice: why nothing for the sugar-cane?' Let Government look for gratitude anywhere but in a canal colony. There it has done so much that it is blamed for not doing everything.[3]

[1] The village accountant, who is in charge of the village record of rights, etc.

[2] For further remissions, see p. 215 n. 4.

[3] Cf. *Peasant*, 129, and *Rusticus*, 198.

Of the forty odd members present seven were literate—an improvement upon yesterday, and the atmosphere was livelier in consequence. Yet even so no one had heard of the Round Table Conference except the Honorary Sub-Inspector. 'We only know about our work.' The question that really interested them was how they were to live with prices at their present level. I suggested that the only course was to reduce expenditure and that there was ample scope for this, since in no colony has extravagance gone further. This is partly because the colonist has been given 56 acres (two squares) to cultivate and made a small fortune out of them when prices were high, and partly because the landlords of the district set a standard which many emulate but few can afford. The other day when two members of my staff rode out to meet me, the local man wore a snow white puggaree with one end flounced above it like the tail of a baby peacock, and the other, his superior, a man from a more thrifty district, an ordinary puggaree modestly wound about his head: a tiny point but characteristic of the general desire in this district to pass for a Sardar or gentleman at large. This is particularly true of the colonist from the adjoining district of Gujrat. In his home village he lived like any other peasant proprietor: his womenfolk gathered the manure and made the dung cakes. But now, since he would be a gentleman, his wife must be a lady. She no longer grinds the wheat and rarely fetches the water. If she takes any part in the picking of the cotton, it is only to see that her hireling wenches work as they should. The women from Gujranwala and Sialkot still take out the mid-day meal to their menfolk in the fields, but this is no task for a lady and many Gujrat women do not do it. They have therefore too little to do: nor have they acquired the skill with the needle that would make leisure useful. 'Women,' said someone when we were talking of all this, 'should work all day, for no one quarrels worse than an idle woman.'

**High prices and the standard of living**

But the most striking effect of giving the colonist so much well irrigated virgin land to cultivate was the expenditure on social ceremonies when prices were high. The figures mentioned to-day were startling. Two Gujars said that five years ago, when they married their children, they spent over Rs. 5,000 each, and an Honorary Sub-Inspector of Co-operative Societies who lives here asserted that it was recently quite common to spend Rs. 1,000 on a circumcision. 'A circumcision was then a wedding.' A feast was given to all kith and kin, and six pounds of gur to every household in the village. Four or five hundred rupees were distributed amongst the village servants, and occasionally the rejoicings would end in a dancing party and fireworks. Even if his figures are halved, the

amount is absurdly large for 56 acre farmers. The Better Living Society,[1] and still more the fall in prices, has changed all this, and now a circumcision does not cost more than Rs. 35. The village servants are the chief losers, as they shared liberally in the general jollification involved in these *tamashas*; but they take the change philosophically and have worked out a new scale for themselves. 'Our expenses were too high; we did what the zemindars did.'

**Horse-breeding**

In one respect the colonist has gained by the slump. He has been granted the right to cultivate 56 acres of colony land indefinitely as a Crown tenant, and one of the conditions of the grant is that he maintains an approved mare and keeps her fit for breeding. All approved colts must be sold to the Army Remount Department, and for one eighteen months old the price is from Rs. 200 to 250, as before the slump. The fillies are used to replenish the parent stock, or sold, in which case good prices can be obtained. Horse-breeding, therefore, provides the colonist with a second string to his bow, the value of which, with the increased purchasing power of the rupee, he now begins to appreciate. About 4,000 peasants are concerned, but many are too feckless or too indebted to benefit. I once examined the records of two villages, and they showed that in thirty years while one colonist had made as much as Rs. 8,000, another had made only a few hundred, and he owed Rs. 10,000. Sooner or later every rural activity is water-logged by debt.

**Co-operative conferences**

The afternoon was taken up with one of our annual Co-operative conferences. Once a year throughout the province neighbours are brought together at convenient centres by the Co-operative Department to discuss their economic and social problems and the means of improving their lives. The area of a conference is never larger than a tahsil and may, as to-day, extend only so far as a man may go and return on a horse in a day. Usually the smaller the area, the more live the proceedings.[2] Since the village is a whole, representatives of other 'beneficent' departments attend to explain their activities and, if they are wise, to learn where these activities are misplaced or do not suit. The Agricultural Assistant preaches, it may be, the virtues of some new type of wheat or cane, the Veterinary Inspector, the advantages of inoculating cattle and castrating scrub bulls; the District Inspector of Schools, the importance of keeping children at school till they are really literate, and the Health Officer perhaps

[1] For Better Living Societies, see *Peasant*, 253. In 1933 there were about 500 in the Punjab.

[2] Conferences embracing a few villages only have taken the place of the old tahsil conferences, which proved to be too formal and unwieldy (*Co-operative Societies Rpt.* (1933), 71).

shows them how malaria may be avoided by mosquito nets and quinine; lessons of the utmost importance to the peasant, but unintelligible or ignored unless taught in his dialect, spiced with his wit, illustrated from his life, and quickened by sympathy with his almost overwhelming difficulties. Our conference this afternoon showed how much might be done in this way and how difficult it is to do it with our present tools and material.

The material consisted of about 200 villagers mainly Janglis, nearly all illiterate, and many not even co-operators, rudiments of the riverain, with almost nothing of the new light about them, but with a very definite character stamped upon their red sunburnt faces by generations of tribal life and by centuries of heat and Islam; thorough sportsmen in their love of horses, yet with an almost feminine grace enticingly expressed in the glossy love-locks that curled lovingly round their ears. A few of us sat stiffly on an arc of chairs, but most squatted comfortably knee to knee on the sunlit lawn in front of the canal rest house. A local notability of vast proportions and influence was formally voted to the chair—pre-arranged of course—and two non-officials made trite text-book speeches about cutting down expenditure on marriages and so forth, the second at such length that even his shrill falsetto voice did not prevent some of us beginning to nod and the rest to chat.

**An open air meeting**

The only point that really interested the audience was the question of Government dues. 'I am sixty-five,' said a stalwart zemindar with a well clipped beard, 'and I have seen both times, the days before the canal and the days after. The days before were good. Our income was small, but our wants were few and our life simple. We ate millet and found it good, and drank milk. We wore few clothes and went on foot. Debt was small, and there was little land revenue and much land. Now we go in lorries and spend foolishly, and the land is old and yields less, and the land revenue is much increased: also there is little land for us. What can a man do with only a few acres?' He sat down amidst applause, and others took up the tale. Feeling was strong and only partially allayed by the announcement of the remission on cotton, which here is one of the staple crops. Everyone demanded that Government dues should be greatly reduced, and no one gave a thought to the consequences. Later on when they were asked whether their societies should not curtail their loans owing to the great rise in the value of the rupee and the consequent difficulty of repayment, there was a babel of voices. 'Now more than ever do we require money; the money-lender will not lend, and how else shall we pay the land revenue?' The rural conscience, as an Italian writer calls it, has

not yet been awakened, and there was not even the elementary knowledge of rural economics which may now be found amongst intelligent co-operators in the central Punjab. Yet some of the scattered seed fell upon good ground, and at the close of the meeting a number asked the Inspector to come to their weddings and help them to cut down expenditure. The appearance at this point of a photographer summoned from Sargodha turned our minds from economy to its great enemy—vanity; and since 'tis vanity that makes the world akin, the cynic shall be silent.

*17 December.—Chokera to Sargodha* (10 *miles*)

**The soldier as farmer**

We spent over two hours in a village colonized by Rajputs from Rawalpindi and Jhelum, and by Bhattis from Gujranwala. Seven ex-soldiers were present. Though the land they held in the village had been given them by Government in reward for their services, they were not very enthusiastic about military service. Work was heavier than it used to be, parades were many, and there was much digging; also, till prices fell, living was difficult. An average[1] of four annas a day had to be spent: an anna morning and evening for milk; half an anna on barber, soap, and washerman; another half anna on polish for boots and buttons, etc., and an anna for clothes. Now with low prices—it was refreshing to meet someone who liked them—service was well paid, but it was very short, only five years, after which it was difficult to get work. This complaint is general.[2] The other need not be taken very seriously, as the prosperity of the soldier family is one of the most striking features of the Punjab landscape.

I asked whether the ex-soldier made a good cultivator. A sturdy peasant from Gujranwala said emphatically—'No. He weeps at the work. We work day and night, the whole family of us: but he gives his land out, dividing the produce. In the army he becomes "gentelman", wears fine clothes, and has a flounce (*turra*) to his puggaree.' 'I at least am as good as any zemindar,' said one of the soldiers with perhaps less than a soldier's modesty. 'Then drive your plough against mine. What soldier can fast as we can? We have only two squares, but the soldiers have received three.' The implication that the army made the soldier extravagant was challenged, and after discussion it was agreed that he had a better idea of the use of money and was thriftier than the zemindar, but took things more easily with plough and sickle. Of the seven

[1] The sepoy gets his rations and need not spend more than four or five rupees a month on extras out of his pay of Rs. 16 p.m.

[2] The period was shortly afterwards extended to seven years.

soldiers present only two cultivate their land themselves, and of the fourteen in the village only one has an improved type of plough (a Meston), whereas five members of the bank have two each and four have harrows as well.

Continuing our march we had in view a short isolated line of hills called Kirána, more ancient than Himálya itself. Arid and jagged, their 'splintered pinnacles' point a finger of warning to the fertile plain below them. The warning is needed, for, as we saw last week, canals may ultimately bring death to the land. Thirty years ago the water in this tract lay 50 to 70 feet below the surface. Now it is a mere 10 to 30 feet, and it is still rising. In the neighbouring colony of Phália (Gujrat) it rose 40 feet in ten years—from 69 feet down to 29.[1] From many villages in both colonies comes the complaint that land is slowly going out of cultivation, and in Phália alone nearly 25,000 acres are water-logged. So serious is the situation that Government has built a number of drains, one 73 miles long and 10 to 12 feet wide, to draw off the surplus water.[2] Many thousand acres have been reclaimed, but the land is now hard as iron and to bring it under cultivation again requires strong ploughs and good bullocks; also determined cultivators, with sufficient capital to purchase both.[3]

**Water-logging**

That good crops can be grown where these conditions are present is shown by a Khatri,[4] who, though a non-agriculturist, is farming a good slice of this land with success. He has managed even to grow cane upon it. When I entered the courtyard of his house, the air was full of the sweet appetizing smell of the gur that was being made from its steaming juice. It was steaming from the cane-stalk fire below it, which a musalli[5] fed, and an old peasant sat comfortably by gently stirring it in its large shallow pan with a wooden stick. Peasant and musalli each got three pounds of gur out of every 82½ made. No need for cash here. By their side sat one even humbler, smoking his huqqa in the sunshine. 'And what does he do?' I asked. 'In the hot weather,' said the Khatri, 'he

[1] *Gujrat Settlement Rpt.* (1930), 5.

[2] Cf. p. 12. In 1932 there was no appreciable rise in the water table between the Ravi and the Jhelum; more drainage projects are consequently contemplated (*Land Revenue Admin. Rpt.* (1932), 16).

[3] 'After the removal of the surplus water there remains' (says the Deputy Commissioner, Shahpur) 'a very big problem indeed—the problem of bringing under the plough the land which was water-logged,' and 'even in proprietary areas, where there is no hope of exchange, zemindars are slow to resume cultivation' (*Punjab Colonies Rpt.* (1932), 32).

[4] The Khatri is a village money-lender, shopkeeper, and grain-dealer, all in one, see *Peasant*, 186.

[5] See p. 266.

pulls my punkah ; in the cold he sits here.' In India, poverty has its compensations ; but to obtain them one must not live in the town. ' Which do you prefer ? ' I asked the Khatri, who had once been engaged in business in Rawalpindi. Without hesitation he replied : ' The country, though now I make only a few hundred rupees. Here there is health and contentment.'

19 *December.—Sargodha to Bhalwál* (20 *miles*)

It is impossible to march through this district without becoming aware of its landlords, particularly of the two great families of Tiwána and Noon, who include some of the best and most progressive landowners in the province.[1] Their ancestral demesnes lie off our route in the non-colony part of the district, but they have their colony estates, where they breed horses for the army ; and this they do uncommonly well, for, unlike the peasant colonist from the central Punjab, the Tiwána of the western marches is a born horseman and accustomed to saddle and spear from his earliest youth. One of their villages lies between Sarghoda and Bhalwál, and it shows what a young well educated landlord[2] can do to develop his land when he is not in debt and capital is available. The Malik's great advantage is that the whole village belongs to his family and that his word is law. He has lined the watercourses that thread his fields with 2,000 young mango trees, the oldest of which, planted six or seven years ago, are already bearing. They stand 20 feet apart and are watered and tended by the tenants concerned, who get three-fifths of the proceeds. Both parties are therefore interested in the experiment. In spite of this casualties are heavy : about a third of the young plants come to grief in the field, and many more in the nursery. The Malik tried the same experiment in a village nearer the Jhelum, but a flood came, the water table rose, and the young roots rotted and died. Such experiments can be made only by a landlord, and one could wish that more were made. But most landlords are in debt,[3] and an indebted landlord is like a Persian wheel with broken pots : the wheel goes round and round and the pots go up and down, but they

**A progressive landlord**

[1] Colonel Nawab Malik Sir Umar Hayat Khan, G.B.E., K.C.I.E., A.D.C., lately Member of the Council of India, belongs to the Tiwána clan and is its most distinguished member. The Noon family is seen at its best in Khan Bahadur Malik Fateh Khan, who in different capacities, and now as Deputy Registrar, has been associated with the Co-operative Movement almost since its inception and has throughout played a vital part in its development.

[2] A son of Sir Umar Hayat Khan.

[3] My enquiries suggest that amongst landlords with over 300 acres three out of four are in debt. In the district there are 124 who pay Rs. 750 or more in land revenue or have as much assigned to them. Rs. 750 would be payable on about 200 acres of canal-irrigated land.

leak or come up empty, and the land round the well bears only half the crop it might. This is one reason why this colony has a much less developed look than Lyallpur. In Lyallpur, the orange tree is widely established and the orchard garden a familiar sight; but here hardly even one is seen on a march. In the mad emulation of man with man, family with family, the colonist, following the neighbouring landlord, has preferred to deck his wife and daughter with jewellery rather than his trees with oranges.

If one would taste the full beauty of the open plain one should ride either at dawn or at sunset, for then the empty horizon becomes alive with colour, at dawn with crimson turning to amber, at sunset with yellow turning to crimson, and both with the tenderness of a flower in its first bloom. To-day I was riding late and came upon a field of sugar-cane, where half a dozen figures in white were crushing cane with the crimson sky behind them. I stopped, and at once they uncovered a pan and brought me a handful of the warm gur[1] beloved of horse and peasant. The air rang with joyful satisfaction that I had come on horseback. 'We can do the Sultanate homage, and you will know our state, and we can talk with you. We heard you were enquiring about the peasants.' A little further on, though it was almost dark, a line of peasants were patiently awaiting my coming. 'Your feet bring blessing,' said their spokesman, a middle-aged man with shining eyes and a beard as red as the sunset. 'Why are you waiting?'

**On the march**

'We have complaints, great complaints. Our village is water-logged. Our very houses are falling. We have lost 400 bighas (200 acres):[2] the canal has done us evil. Let us be given land elsewhere.'

I rode on speculating whether this could be done, and as the twilight deepened, two horsemen disappeared across the plain, leaving behind them a stream of white dust, which drifted like incense towards the west, which still glowed.

### 20 *December.—Bhalwál*

The little market town of Bhalwál is a pleasant place to halt at: it has a commodious rest house, and round it is a garden full of roses and orange trees, the latter with their sunset-coloured fruit and jade green foliage faintly reminiscent of the fairy tale's enchantment. In the evening I inspected two banks in a suburb of the market, one of zemindars and tenants, the other of village servants. A zemindar who has matriculated acts as Honorary Secretary of the latter, and there would be more to be said for zemindars matriculating if they often did this kind of thing.

[1] Unrefined sugar.
[2] In this district two bighas make an acre.

Over forty peasants were present, and all sat on the ground in the small open courtyard where our meeting was. The twenty-five members of the zemindars' bank were Wahraich Jats from Jhelum. In nineteen years they have accumulated Rs. 8,000 in undistributed profit and reserve. But the interesting thing about them was the effect on their lives of being near a small but active market. Yesterday, for example, they sold their cotton (600 maunds) collectively to the Zemindars' Trading Company, thereby escaping the numerous irritating petty charges of the commission agent and the market: and they have done this with their cotton (but not their wheat) for the last four years. Moreover, unlike other villages visited this month, they have a number of improved implements. Twelve of those present have Meston ploughs, and many have 'kharif drills'. One even has a bar barrow. Seed of improved types, Punjab 8A for wheat and Coimbatore 223 for cane, is obtained from the Agricultural Department, and in the last four years, taught by two Arain tenants, a dozen have learnt to grow vegetables. But so little now can be got for them that they meditate giving them up. 'Look,' they said, pointing to a cart laden with cauliflowers, 'that fetches only five or six rupees, and last year each cauliflower sold for two pice.'[1] Growing vegetables and *paunda* cane, the cane that is dearest to the chewer, they see manure in a new light. Dung-cakes were used in every house, as is still the case in most of the district, but to-day seven said that they had almost entirely given them up and used cotton stalks, etc., instead. Nine members have joined together to buy the market refuse. Before they grew paunda cane, it sold for only Rs. 10; and six years ago, when prices were at their highest, it fetched Rs. 1,300. Even now it fetches Rs. 700. Its distribution amongst the nine purchasers is simplicity itself: each gets it for a month, and in the three odd months it goes to those who pay more.

**The effect of a market**

'The zemindars cannot be saved unless God saves them,' said a member, when we were considering how to improve their condition. And he added bitterly: 'Government has withdrawn its money, and no one buys our produce. Congress has stopped trade, and Government has done this to punish them.' Pretty crude politics but widely held. For the moment Congress, or 'Cangress-Mangress' as many call it contemptuously, is the Muslim peasant's *bête noire*, and I hear many unsolicited and not over-enlightened comments on the baneful effect of its policy of boycott upon the economics of the village. Made to please the Sahib, some will say; but twenty-six years' service in a country attunes the ear

**Congress and the Round Table Conference**

[1] About ½d.

to the difference between what is said with the lips and what is said from the heart. Not that what is said from the heart is necessarily right. Alas for the human heart, No. Such indeed was the case here: for though 'civil disobedience' has not been without its economic effect, it is as nothing to the effect of the world slump.[1] The significance of the remark is that it was made and believed, and that to-day, owing to the proximity of the market, we were in a more intelligent atmosphere than usual. Eight out of the twenty-five members were literate; three had read up to the middle standard, and one is at college. Yet of the forty-two present only three had even heard of the Round Table Conference.[2] The matriculate Secretary merely knew that a conference was going on in England and that it was 'for the advantage of the country'. Another commented: 'Big big men (*mote mote admi*) have gone there for their advantage; for us wretches there is trouble.' Only the Secretary of the zemindars' bank had any idea of what the Conference was about: 'Some say Hindustan should manage its affairs; others that it is impossible: they are having a meeting to discuss it.'

This ignorance is general in the village and is due to the fact that so few read a newspaper. In this village, for instance, there are only two. 'What do the poor wretches know of the Conference?' exclaimed one of my visitors in the last district. 'All they think of is how to fill their bellies.'[3] An educated zemindar who was recently with me thinks that the peasant is wise not to take an interest in politics, for 'otherwise he will do less work and quarrel more'. He said that in last September's election for the provincial Council all voted according to their tribe, and that only those went to the poll who were taken in lorries. In one case (not in this district), the two rival candidates are said to have tossed, and the toss was won by a man who had squandered his father's substance in riotous living. I recently asked a number of peasants whether they had voted at this election. Their reply was typical: 'The zaildar told us to vote for Umar Din (an Arain like the zaildar) and we gave him our vote.' I then enquired what the Council did for them. 'If we want something, we tell the Council-wala, and the Council will beg of the Sirkar.' These people had a glimmering of the meaning of parliamentary government, but most have none and would much rather beg of the Sirkar themselves. As nearly everyone votes according to tribe or religion, elections stir up a cloud of communal dust, but the

**Elections**

[1] In the summer of 1930 'civil disobedience' was at its worst.

[2] The first Round Table Conference met in London in November 1930.

[3] Cf. *Rusticus*, 106.

peasant is not a political animal and generally (not always)[1] the dust soon settles.[2] If, however, the elector gains little from an election but a breath of excitement and faction, the successful candidate at least benefits in outlook by exchanging village for provincial politics. The effects are sometimes curious. A bank president tells me that when he was elected he gave up having a pir. 'My election taught me what my rights were.' But such knowledge is usually purchased dear. Rs. 10,000 is no uncommon price to pay for election, and sums twice and even thrice as large are not infrequently mentioned, where personal rivalry is keen and purses deep.[3]

21 *December* (*Sunday*).—*Bhalwál to Bhera* (15 *miles*)

**Politics**

To-day we spent three hours at a village near Bhalwál with thirty-four cultivators and a number of schoolmasters, who had collected for the weekly meeting of their co-operative Thrift Society. The level of intelligence was much the same as yesterday, and the only newspaper that comes to the village is a periodical taken in by the schoolmaster.[4] Five had heard of the Round Table Conference, but all they knew about it was that 'leaders' had gone to London to ask for power (*hakumat*), and that each community wanted power for itself. 'We have heard,' said a Muslim, 'that the Hindus want the land and would become King.' More was known about the administration, and the different rungs in the official hierarchy, executive and judicial, were correctly stated except for a slight to the Financial Commissioners, who were ignobly placed under the Sessions Judge. But—significant omission—in naming everyone from patwári to King, no one mentioned the Ministers. When I asked who they were, they said: 'They are made by our votes; we have no knowledge what they do, nor why they are made: everyone is for himself.' They mentioned two by name, and knew that one was for education and the other for revenue. 'The Maliks (the big landlords of the district—one is a Minister) gain, not we: they exist for their advantage, not ours.'

**Mr. Gandhi**

We passed on to Mr. Gandhi. 'We know his name, but we have no certain knowledge of what he teaches; we have not seen him.'

'Many,' I said, 'see him as a saint.'

'If he is a saint,' commented a sceptic, recalling those who wanted a sign from one greater than Mr. Gandhi, 'let him put right our water-logging and our prices.' (Water-logging is bad in the village.)

[1] Cf. *Rusticus*, 22.
[2] Cf. ibid., 63, 211, 271.
[3] Cf. ibid., 212.
[4] Ten of the thirty-four cultivators were illiterate, and three had been through the Middle School.

'When Gandhi's name is spoken,' said another, 'we are silent: he thinks of his advantage, not of ours: it is his doing that trading is stopped.' This is not fair to Mr. Gandhi nor sound economics but typical Muslim peasant talk. As to Mr. Gandhi's ideas about spinning, it was said: 'For men it is impossible: from generation to generation they have not done it, and they have no time.'

**Effects of the fall in prices**

The peasant is very sour about the fall in prices. The usual effects were mentioned. Firstly, expenditure on marriages had fallen enormously. One member in marrying his son eight years ago spent Rs. 3,000 to 4,000, but only Rs. 50 when he re-married him recently, his wife being dead; and yesterday a bridegroom had set out with a marriage party of only five instead of the usual 'hundred'. Secondly, like yesterday's Jats, they are combining to sell their cotton to a local mill and cut out the commission agent altogether. They have been driven to this by the action of the agents last summer. The agents sold their wheat for them and, instead of handing over the proceeds, applied them to the repayment of their loans and then refused to advance them anything more for their Government dues, unless they pawned their jewellery.

Thirdly, rates of interest have gone up. The customary rate when jewellery was pawned used to be 12 per cent (occasionally 9), but now it is 15 or 18¾, and even 24 per cent is charged. In five cases given me to-day the rate was 15 per cent in two, 18¾ in two more, and 24 per cent in the fifth. In the first two cases the rate was low, because the borrower sold his grain through the lender, and in the last case high, because the amount of jewellery pawned was considered inadequate. All my informants agree that jewellery has been freely used in the last six months to replenish resources, mainly for the payment of Government dues, and that much more has been pawned than sold. 'God has got it pawned,' was the answer to a question why this was so. Fatalism could not go further. Some goldsmiths I met last week said that the peasant began to part with his jewellery eighteen months ago and that he has only 25 per cent left. Others consulted put the percentage at 25 or 30, and no one at more than 50, but such estimates are perforce the merest guesses. Meanwhile, recovery from the peasant is so difficult that loans without security, commonest of all before, have almost ceased. Sops have to be given to old clients to keep them in a good temper; otherwise loans are made against only jewellery, or land. 'They will not even give us the fare to our homes,' said an indignant colonist, and in India family ties are so strong that to the colonist to be unable to raise money for the journey to the home village is a complete example of shattered credit.

All along our route I find an indifference to politics and a keenness for education. Yesterday when I asked the gathering what were the advantages of going to school, tongues were unloosed. 'With education one can measure the land, understand accounts, perhaps get service,' said a tenant. 'One becomes a human being; one does not eat fraud,' added an older member who had read in the Primary school. Then quoting Saadi: 'Without knowledge one cannot recognize God.'

**Education and the peasant**

'Which is the greatest advantage of all?' I asked.

'He who reads may take part in the assembly (*ijlas*) of a king.'

Another less ambitious said: 'He knows how to rise and sit down, and he can get service.' In the same modest spirit did Solomon exclaim in his famous prayer: 'I am but a child: I know not how to go out or come in.'[1]

'Some say,' I continued, 'that education is not good for those who cultivate. What do you think?'

'The man who can read and write knows what to do: he can think and look at books.' Actually neither in this village nor in to-day's could I discover any material difference between the educated and uneducated farmer. 'We are all the same,' was to-day's verdict, and enquiry showed that it was substantially correct: five of the seven who had Meston ploughs were literate, and five of the six who had chaff-cutters were illiterate.

As a number of schoolmasters were present, I asked them what effect education had upon the peasant. All agreed that the Primary and Vernacular Middle Courses had no bad effect, but that the Anglo-Vernacular Middle tended to dissociate him from the land, and that the High School was worse.[2] 'It is the boycott of the land,' said the president expressively.[3] To a question, why the boys do not help their parents in the fields during the holidays he replied: 'Those in the Primary and Vernacular Middle schools help: in the other schools they have much home-work. Also their parents are to blame. When they go to school, they take too much care of them; they look upon them with anxiety, and do not like them to do anything which may make them fail in their examinations.' Some of those present said that boys who had matriculated could not do farm work, but they admitted that if they set themselves to it, they would develop the necessary strength in a year or so.[4]

[1] 1 Kings iii, 7.
[2] Cf. *Rusticus*, 180.
[3] Cf. ibid., 43, 66, 358.
[4] Cf. ibid., xxx.

In the village are Primary schools for both boys and girls, but the girls' school, though started seven years ago, has only twelve pupils against forty-five in the boys' school. Another ten or twelve girls are taught to read the Koran in Arabic at the mosque, without of course understanding one word of the text. At the soldier village visited a few days ago[1] the same thing was being done, and boys and girls were being taught together. I asked whether there was no objection. 'They are children: when they become mature (*baligh*), then without doubt it will be different.' I then asked whether they would like to have a girls' school. 'Yes,' said the soldiers in a chorus; but an old Bhatti disagreed: 'We do not want our girls to learn English: there is no custom.' This roused a member of the younger generation: 'He is 70 or 72 years old: his words are not good: he does not understand.' Of the boys' school (only a Lower Primary) there was but one opinion: 'Our boys become wise (*aqlmand*) in their work. *We* have no eyes, but they will be able to read the Khatri's account and the patwari's papers.' Much the same was said of the girls' school yesterday. 'They get civilization; they learn to understand profit and loss; and to look after their children; this is the most important of all. At present our women are in darkness.' And indeed they are, for in the whole district, rich as it once was in the days of high prices, out of a total female population of 376,000 only 8,000 are literate and 5,500 at school. As is the case everywhere, the boys are far more considered, and in about 150 small areas education for them is compulsory. Yet even in these areas over a third do not go to school.

**Schools**

For schoolmasters, as for all on fixed incomes, the fall in prices is a blessing; and realizing this, the schoolmasters present had wisely increased their monthly contributions to their Thrift Society. They contribute from one to five rupees a month, and some of them a rupee or two more for special objects. In two years they have accumulated Rs. 500 (now on deposit at 7½ per cent), which is a respectable sum for men on only Rs. 25 a month (£22 10s. a year).[2] They all came from village schools within a radius of six miles and meet in this way once a month on Sundays.

**Thrifty schoolmasters**

Leaving the canal colony behind us, we crossed the northern branch of the Lower Jhelum Canal, its water a jade green, showing that we are not far from the hills, whence only such water can flow in these plains of mud, clay, and sand. Hills indeed we saw, not the mighty Himálayas but the long

**Bhera**

[1] p. 23.

[2] In a small village in Scotland the schoolmistress gets £215 (house-rent £15) a year (1934).

flat-topped ridge of the Salt Range, which stretches over 100 miles westwards from the Himálayas, like the great wall of China dividing the rugged moorlands of the north from the vast Punjab plain. As we sighted it, we entered the wide open riverain of the Jhelum. Dust lay a foot deep on the road and rose round the passing lorries like surf. In places the sand was so deep that strips of brick causeway had been sunk in it to help motors through. The sun was far down in the west when we approached Bhera—an imposing little town of 20,000 inhabitants, with eight stately gateways built over sixty years ago by a Deputy Commissioner, whose name (Captain W. G. Davies)[1] is still remembered; and most ancient it looked after the upstart market towns of the canal colony. Famous for its henna dye and its craftsmen, cunning workers in wood, iron, and stone, it owed its affluence in pre-railway days to its position on the Jhelum, then an important highway. Such prosperity as it has at present is due largely to many of its sons having done well in Government service. The surroundings are beautiful, so beautiful that they once made Thorburn[2] exclaim in famous Persian quotation —'If there is a paradise on earth, it is this, it is this, it is this.'[3] But now the city is torn by faction, its lanes are filthy, its drains full of stagnant water, and its Municipal Committee half bankrupt, and so rotten is its state that one of its retired officials exclaimed in parody: 'If there is a wicked city on earth, it is this, it is this, it is this.'[4]

**A rest house and its garden**

Sipping tea in the garden of the old rest house, the 'wicked city' out of sight, one felt that Thorburn was right. A Persian wheel crooned plaintively by the well, the doves cooed as only Indian doves coo, and the setting sun pierced the jungle of palm tree, banyan, and cactus with spears of light. The canal colony with its rectangular fields, its straight roads, its interminable avenues of shisham trees, and its trim four-cornered villages speaks of a new order of things. But this was the old India—melodious, plaintive, prodigal, prickly, above all warm-hearted. The rest house is in keeping. Its two centre rooms (26 feet by 16) are spacious enough for a durbar, and in each stands a looking-glass of regal proportions supported, in characteristic eastern fashion, by a table with all the look of the under-dog; and hung above the mantelpiece, in solitary state, is a large plan of the rest house. 'Know thyself,' it seems to say; 'know how large

[1] Deputy Commissioner 1862-7.

[2] The late Mr. S. S. Thorburn, C.S.I., author of *Mussalmans and Moneylenders in the Punjab*, etc.

[3] *Agar firdaus bar ru-e zaminast*
*Haminast o haminast o haminast.*

[4] In the past, too, Bhera used to be 'notorious for its factiousness and pseudo-religious animosities' (*Shahpur Gazetteer* (1918,) 291).

yet bare thou art.' Rest house and garden belong to an age that is passing: sure sign of this—the stables are a heap of ruins.

*22 December.—Bhera to Lilla (12 miles)*

**Tailors and the fall in prices**

The day began with the inspection of a small society of tailors. There are about 200 in Bhera, nearly all Muslim, and twenty-eight have joined the 'bank'. Seventeen were present, and, the tailor being nimble of wit as of hand, we had animated talk. All are working independently, and six have apprentices. A year ago, before the slump, they were doing well, and eleven were earning over Rs. 650 a year, and one, thanks to a brother and three apprentices, Rs. 1,000.[1] They bore out what we have heard in several villages, that homespun was now more freely worn. I asked them how they knew this. 'We take the wool for our quilts to the oil-presser to be carded, and nowadays he tells us—I am very busy, you must wait.' 'I had to wait twenty-two days,' said one tailor, 'and I went to him daily.' The change began five months ago with the fall in prices and the Congress boycott of foreign cloth. One result, and we have heard this all along our route, is that much more spinning is done in both town and village;[2] another, that the tailor earns less. For sewing homespun they cannot charge more than three or four annas a yard as the material itself does not cost more than ten annas a yard. For mill-made cloth they can charge twice as much, and for making up silks—now little worn—they go up to Rs. 2 a yard. More costly fabrics, too, mean more elaborate clothes: for example, a shirt with collar, cuffs, and buttons instead of the country shirt, which at most requires only a collar. And the country shirt is so simple that it can be made up at home; but the more elaborate and closer fitting modern shirt needs an expert hand to cut it out and machine it. So too with the peasant's bedding. A quilt made of mill-made cloth must be machined, but an ordinary quilt can be just stuffed with cotton or wool.

**A thrifty tailor**

It is rare to find a peasant steadily depositing small sums of surplus money with a bank, but several of these tailors were doing this in sums of a few annas to a rupee. It is certainly easier to do it when income comes dribbling in from day to day instead of from harvest to harvest, and necessary, too, for one who works with a costly machine if he would

[1] The figures given me at the meeting were 50 per cent higher. I have reduced them as there is a strong tendency on the part of the members of credit societies to exaggerate their incomes in order to have their maximum credit limits pitched as high as possible (1931).

[2] This applies to other parts of India as well, see Mr. Gandhi's article in *Young India*, 30 April 1931.

keep out of debt. One tailor told us that before the days of the bank, when his machine was beginning to wear out, he bought a money-box and, having locked it, he threw the key down a well that he might be under no temptation to open the box. Every day he slipped an anna or two into it, and on lucky days a silver piece. Two years passed, and he reckoned that he must have saved the Rs. 90 required for a new machine. He opened the box and found Rs. 93. By this simple means he saved himself a debt of Rs. 100 (6¼ per cent 'discount' would have been deducted) and interest at 25 per cent. And here is another case. Till prices fell a Muslim dyer (met elsewhere) used every day to put aside an anna for his son and another for his daughter against the day of their marriage. When the money-boxes were opened, he found Rs. 80 in the one and Rs. 125 in the other, a sum which represented five and a half years' steady saving. 'Meritorious is small expense and small accumulation,'[1] is what Asoka wrote on India's rock over 2,000 years ago, and if only the peasant would seek merit in this way, saving, instead of borrowing, to spend, the face of rural India would soon be changed.[2]

**Sartorial economics**

Few are the sewing machines in the village, but in Bhera there are over 100. They are becoming the stand-by of the Hindu widow. Many earn their living with them to the tailors' loss. The local girls' school is also a rival, for it has done much to improve the sewing, embroidery, and crochet work of the girls of the town. They showed me specimens with unconcealed admiration, but complained that all this competition had reduced their income by four or five annas in the rupee. How were they meeting this? 'Two, two and a half months ago we had a meeting of the brotherhood (*biradari*)[3] of our ward—each ward has its own—and appointed a panchayat of five good men to fix what each family should spend on their marriages and funerals. No fixed rule was laid down, as circumstances vary.' Three marriages have taken place since, and in one case a member said he spent only Rs. 300 in marrying his son instead of Rs. 1,000, which he must have done before. Another marriage is about to take place, and it has been arranged that only those who take part in the marriage procession, and not the whole brotherhood, shall be feasted. In the village the indigenous panchayat survives only in the south-east with any vigour, but amongst the humbler castes of the town it

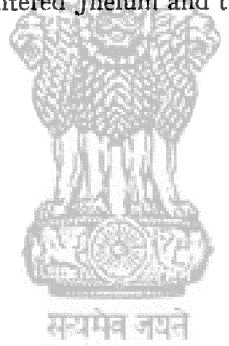
[1] *Asoka*: Carmichael Lectures by Dr. Bhandarkar, 278 (quoted *Indian Journal of Economics*, vol. viii, part 2).

[2] Some peasants do it already: see *Rusticus*, 257.

[3] Brotherhood is a literal translation of this common word; the tie is relationship not religion.

still thrives. These tailors have had one for years and so successful is it that no one goes to court.

The sun was high when we left Bhera, and hot when we ploughed our way through the heavy sands which betokened our approach to the Jhelum. Before us rose, no longer shadowy, the long oblong mass of the Salt Range, bare as a skeleton, stiff as a corpse, its face splashed with red, symbolic of the blood that flows so freely amongst those who live in its uplands. This was the red of the salt which gives the hills their name. The Jhelum, like all Punjab rivers in the cold weather except the unharnessed Indus, was a mere wraith of its summer self, but beautiful, as all running water is on these dry thirsty plains ; and as we splashed through its clear shallow stream, the sunlight spun a thousand fairy arcs and rings on its sparkling surface. We were hardly on to the white sand beyond when men of Jhelum cantered up to greet us, and with many reciprocated good wishes for Christmas and the New Year, I bade good-bye to the men of Shahpur and entered Jhelum and the northern Punjab.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## CHAPTER III

# THE SALT RANGE[1]

### RECONSTRUCTION[2]—FEUD AND FACTION—THE SOLDIER AT HOME

THE river Jhelum, the 'fabulosus Hydaspes' of Horace[3] and the scene of Alexander's victory over Porus, is the most northerly of the five rivers that give the Punjab its name and is a real boundary. It marks the end of the great plain which begins far south of Delhi, and beyond it live Muslim tribes who have more affinity with those of central Asia than with India's prolific races. Braced by a colder climate and grudgingly fed by a dry rocky soil, they are the most virile and martial peasantry in India. South of the Jhelum, men's sport is the theft of cattle, here it is the murder of enemies. And there can be no doubt that the murderer is more attractive than the thief. 'A murderer is often a good man, a thief generally a bad,' an experienced magistrate once said to me of these parts. The thief is a timid shifty fellow, a man of smiles and wiles; but the murderer, having a more passionate temperament, is bolder, straighter, simpler, and, when disciplined by military service, makes a first rate soldier.

**Mr. Brayne's campaign**

Lilla is a townlet of 7,000 inhabitants and stands on the open plain a few miles from the base of the Salt Range. I was ahead of my three camels—this was our first day with this majestic but leisurely means of transport—and I settled down for a talk with two Muslim veterans, one a humorous, loquacious Captain who had seen much service in Irak and Kurdistan, the other a matter-of-fact but quick-tempered Risaldar[4] who had served in East Africa. They had a great deal to say about Mr. F. L. Brayne's village campaign, started a year ago when he came to this district as Deputy Commissioner.[5] The Captain had become a life member of some 'uplift' organization at a cost of Rs. 100. The other had got off more lightly with only

[1] Rainfall 22 inches (eastern half).

[2] This word is gradually displacing the odious word 'uplift', which, however, is still freely used in the *Report on the Progress of Education in the Punjab* for 1932-3.

[3] *Odes* iii, 6.

[4] A cavalry officer.

[5] For an account of his earlier campaign in Gurgaon, see *Rusticus*, chapter v.

Rs. 10. Even so, he spoke with feeling: 'My pension is only Rs. 34: the Captain Sahib's is Rs. 270.' Then the Captain had subscribed to a prize fund, and further subscriptions were spoken of. They laughed good-humouredly at all this, but it was the laughter of men drenched in an unexpected shower. They mentioned the many things for which money was needed, and when they came to the loud-speaker, which cost Rs. 3,200, the Risaldar exclaimed, throwing up a dark but emphatic hand: 'That at least is not required.'

Nor did he like the manure pit, one of which I noticed empty on the property of some retired official as I entered the town. 'It takes a man six days, probably more, to dig, and we have to pay a man eight annas a day to do it. Our labourers won't do it. It is not our work, they say. Nor do we need manure on our land here. There is too little rain, and it heats the land, and the crop withers.'[1] But the Captain had absorbed more of the new teaching. 'It is, of course, a good thing,' he said, 'to put all the dirt and refuse into a pit, and Brayne Sahib says we must use it as a latrine; and, it is true, some people here relieve themselves in the lanes.' Then, taking a wider view: 'There is no doubt the Sahib's ideas are good and what he tells us is true. Our villages are dirty and our health is bad and we are not educated. But the people are ignorant and lazy. They are so ignorant that they do not see that these things are good. And they are too lazy to be willing to dig pits. Here the land is rain-land and when the ploughing and the sowing are done, there is nothing more to do till the cutting. They work for three months and are idle for nine. They are very lazy.'

The Captain took up the tale again. 'The Sahib asks us—do the people think I am mad? (Loud laughter at this idea.) We say to him—the people must have thought Moses mad, and certainly they thought Muhammad Sahib mad when he told them their idols were of earth and should not be worshipped. Then people regarded him as a prophet.'

'And what else is the Sahib doing?'

'He says girls must not wear even earrings. But say the people, if our girls do not wear them, how shall we know they are not boys?' Whereat the Risaldar related with gusto that in East Africa he had seen men and women going about naked, and when remonstrated with they said: 'You wear clothes, but how can you tell who is man and who is woman?' 'The Sahib said,' he continued, 'buy mosquito curtains instead of jewellery. Jewellery does you no good. A thousand curtains were ordered, but if a person buys one, his neighbours say—"He has made himself

[1] Cf. 'In these dry and thirsty soils manure is said to burn up the crop' (*Chakwal (Jhelum) Assess. Rpt.* (1898), 9).

a Nawab "[1]—and everyone laughs at him. The people are very ignorant.' The Risaldar was quite sure that it would all end when Mr. Brayne was transferred. ' So it always is. There was B . . . Sahib: his passion was roads, nothing but roads: we all made roads. Much money was spent here in collecting stones to make a big road; but he was transferred, and the metal was auctioned for nothing, and no one thought any more about roads. When the Deputy Commissioner says a door must be opened, we all throw ourselves against it, because we want to please him; not because it is in our hearts to do this. It will only last if it is in people's hearts, and this is not in their hearts.'

How is it to be put into their hearts? That is the question.[2]

It was now evening, and from the plain around us arose waves of dust made by the shambling cattle trailing homewards. Beyond them the sun was setting in clouds, an angry sun, which made the hills look as if they had been steeped in blood. But my camels had arrived, and I sat hungrily down to a belated meal by the fire.

*23 December.—Lilla to Sardhi* (10 *miles*)

I breakfasted in the sun and shivered, so cold is it now. The cattle, with lean discoloured flanks, were going out in search of pasture. Here they do not remain at home in the winter months as colony cattle do, for in this unirrigated country there is plenty of waste: at present, indeed, there is little else but the stones and salt washed down from the hills. This means a hard life for the cattle but, though small and thin, they are inured to hardships which would kill more showy beasts. And man must be hardy too, for harvests are as uncertain as the hand of God—two-thirds of a crop may be lost for want of rain,[3] the heat in summer is terrific, and water is as scarce as it is bad. An official tells me that at a village near here he saw over a hundred people struggling to draw water from a small well, the only drinking supply in the village, and the water was ' a foul liquid full of mud and salt '. Yet this village was fortunate to have a well of its own. Many villages have none and men have to go miles to find one.

**Hardships of man and beast**

There are two societies in Lilla, and 70 of their 150 members were present at my inspection. The six soldiers amongst them were the only bright spot. No one else was literate, and the only improved implement in the town was a Meston plough, which one of the societies had got three

**Administration**

[1] A Muslim title signifying great position and wealth.

[2] Cf. *Rusticus*, 48, 157.

[3] The rainfall is only 12 inches.

years ago as an experiment. But I could not find that anyone had used it, though a few had seen it. For the first time this year—probably the result of Mr. Brayne's campaign—selected wheat seed (Punjab 8 A) was made available, and a few used it. One member, the owner of 100 acres, knew the different rungs of the official ladder, though he did not know the King's name. But when it came to the Judicial, there was a long pause before anyone (apart from the ex-officers) could remember who came above the Sessions Judge; and no one knew how many Ministers there were. Someone mentioned a Minister who lives across the Jhelum, but when asked what he did, merely said: 'He tours about the Punjab like others.' Of the other Ministers no one knew anything.

**Ascent into the Salt Range**

We set out at three to climb the hills to Sardhi, which stands on the outer edge of the Salt Range. 'You will be late if you do not start at once,' said the Captain: 'it is not a road for the dark.' He was right. It is years since I was on a worse. Across the few miles of dividing plain it was well enough, but when we entered the narrow gorge where the climb began, it became all stones and boulders, and the stones rang with the slithering and scraping of our horses' shoes. At the entrance to the gorge, a spot too desolate for anything but the worship of God, was a shrine with a small colony of stone houses, where lived a pir and his satellites. People come there, appropriately, to be healed of stone, for the cure of which the shrine has acquired fame. I thought this might be due to some virtue in the salt-red cliffs above; but, said my Inspector, 'people come not to drink but to salaam.'

The hills around and above us were not so bare as they had seemed from Lilla but far more diabolic. And the road up them was diabolically steep. I got off my mare to relieve the strain, and after climbing a bit cast a furtive eye backwards to see how my companion, an Indian colleague, was faring. He had dropped behind to a convenient distance and had mounted his pony again. Catching my glance, he dismounted at once—such is the courtesy of the East in the presence of a 'superior'—but a word shouted down the hill brought him into the saddle again. Catching me up, he said apologetically: 'My weight is greater than yours,' and it was indeed by nearly two stone. As we climbed higher, the hills did not grow less bare, but their grim cracked faces became alive. The purple shadows of evening chased the sunlight up their slopes, and as they did so the light grew radiant, and the cliffs above shone as if they saw beyond the sunset. On their outer edge, like crenellations on a fort, stood the village of Sardhi. Inaccessible it seemed, and to reach it the road passed through the living rock. On the

SARDHI

A COURTYARD IN BUCHHAL KALAN

(see p. 41)

crest we paused to look at the plain 1,500 feet below, but all we could see was the Jhelum faintly showing through the haze of dusk. Beyond the crest lay an entirely new country of moor and field stretching away to a far line of hills; and on the edge of the moor, by a solitary pipal tree,[1] stood the aged rest house that gives us shelter for the night.

*24 December.—Sardhi to Kallar Kahár* (10 *miles*)

A feeling of leisure to-day, for the Christmas holidays have begun, and for ten days there will be no daily post-bag of files from Lahore. I started breakfast on the terrace, but the sun was no match for the north wind, and I was driven in. After breakfast we strolled over to the village to see how it did. The headman and a white-bearded one-toothed veteran appeared. They showed us their mosque, which the village had recently enlarged at a cost of Rs. 500, each house contributing according to its means. Labour, too, was given free, so that only three artificers had to be paid.[2] There is no co-operative society in the village, but much indigenous co-operation. At a marriage everyone lends a hand: fuel is collected from the hillside, beds are carried to the house of entertainment, and water brought to the barber and washerman[3] for the cooking. When anyone dies, those who come to condole on the first day are entertained by the village, so that the bereaved may be left to their mourning, and neighbours dig the grave. At plough-time and at harvest, if anyone has more work than he can manage, he is helped; also if timber has to be fetched for a new house or an old. In fact, as the headman said: 'If there is any work a man cannot do himself, we help him.'[4] Even when there is enmity, those who are at feud help each other, and speaking of this, the veteran said: 'If my enemy asks me to help him, I do so with great willingness.' My companion, who was a little sceptical about this, subsequently verified the point from an educated zemindar.

**Indigenous co-operation**

The curse of the district is faction. 'A good quarrel to draw emulous factions and bleed to death upon'[5] is what these virile people love. My companion, who knows the district well, says that not more than 25 per cent of its villages are free of it, and most of them only because they are too

**Faction**

[1] *Ficus religiosa.*

[2] By the same excellent means the village church of Dalmeny (near Edinburgh) has been restored to its ancient beauty.

[3] According to local custom, he makes the *halwa*, a compound of flour, clarified butter, and sugar.

[4] So is it also in the remoter villages of the island of Mull.

[5] *Troilus and Cressida*, ii, 3, 79.

small for rival parties. In the rest it smoulders, and in about a third it breaks out from time to time in fight and murder.[1] I asked the veteran how things were in his youth. 'When I was young,' he replied, 'there was less faction; then there was more; now again there is less. When I was young there was also less falsehood; now there is much cheating. But it is the wisdom (*hikmat*) of Allah.' That there was less strife he attributed to education and to greater severity in punishment. The improvement began after the war. This opened men's minds to the folly of always fighting with each other. 'We even kill a man because he makes himself a Sardar (a gentleman at large)'—an allusion to some murder of the past when democratic principles were more forcibly upheld than they are now. The occasion, not the cause, of this constant strife is the comparative idleness of the people. The tract depends mainly upon rain, and, as the rainfall is only 22 inches, the cultivation is necessarily of the simplest character and leaves the peasant with little to do from November to April, from seed-time to harvest.[2] Fodder for the cattle has to be brought in and chopped, and 'when that is done, we sit and smoke the huqqa and plan the next fight.' I mentioned Mr. Gandhi and his recipe for the idle peasant. To which the veteran answered: 'The women spin, but the men have never done it and would never do it. If we were to spin and weave, we should lose our *izzat*.[3] If Gandhi gives the order, we will never do it; but (here the old soldier's sense of discipline asserted itself) if the Sirkar orders, we will.'

**Soldier and co-operator**

At mid-day we set out on foot. Our path led us across the open moorland, where the young wheat was sprouting in small terraced fields. The terraces, which were supported by walls often many feet high, spoke of great labour, but the cultivation was of poor quality until we approached Buchhal Kalán, round which the fields had been prepared and sown with care. Buchhal Kalán is a large village of 1,800 houses and is the first clean village of any size that I have seen in the Punjab. Some of the side lanes had their quota of rubbish and dirt, but the winding ways by which we threaded our course through the straggling village were almost spotless, and the windowless biscuit-coloured walls of the mud-plastered houses on

[1] For the western half of the Salt Range, which lies in Shahpur and is Awán country, an intelligent Awán gave me much the same figures.

[2] Cf. *Rusticus*, 131, 140, 144.

[3] A word for which there is no precise English equivalent, denoting objectively, social position, and subjectively, *amour-propre*. It should be noted as it is frequently used.

either side were cleanly and smoothly leaped, and the many courtyards of which we got glimpses were carefully swept.

In rural life when anything specially good is found, there is nearly always a personality to account for it. In this case it was an enlightened and forceful Subedar.[1] Seventy years and more have passed over him, and a white beard now fringes his reddish-brown face. With close-set eyes, decided nose, thick but firm lips, long strong fingers and thin wrists, he suggested one of the dour old Rabbis that Rembrandt delighted to paint, and doubtless like the original Rabbis he owed his hard resolute dominating character to a vigorous climate and a stony soil. When he retired from military service in China thirty years ago, he found the dirt here intolerable. 'One got as dirty in a minute as in a month in China.' He started preaching cleanliness to the people and in time got them to clean their houses every day and sweep the lanes in front of them. Manure pits have not yet been dug, as the ground is too stony, but it is proposed to make stone-wall enclosures instead.

**Tree-planting**

I noticed with regret rows of dung-cakes piled two or three deep, like loaves in a baker's shop, along the walls of the flat-roofed houses. In the old days fuel could be got from a Government forest area, but now it is closed and cattle dung has to be used instead. The obvious remedy is to plant trees oneself. A few have done this, but so little part does the ordinary schoolmaster play in village development, that of the seven present at the bank inspection only two had done anything.[2] One of these, however, has planted eighteen trees in front of the school. With the exception of a boy who, following Mr. Brayne's advice, had planted some fig trees, the other tree-planters were all soldiers; but only one has planted his courtyard with fruit trees (almond and apple) though nowhere could they be more easily watered and guarded. He was a retired N.C.O. with the lean tenacious look of the Puritan, and so keen a cultivator that he was nicknamed *Mâli* (gardener). 'When no one else has a crop,' said the Subedar, 'he manages to have one.' Once, not to waste precious ploughing time, he set his wife to plough while he had his mid-day meal, but neighbours laughed and he did not repeat the experiment. In the courtyard of his house I found the first attempt at a hen-house that I have seen in a Punjab village. Though it consisted merely of wire netting propped up on stakes, it contained the germ of a great possibility.[3]

[1] An infantry officer.

[2] The village has an Anglo-Vernacular Middle School with 385 boys (1933).

[3] At Nowshera in Amritsar (p. 86) I found a small wired in hen run in the house of a Risaldar, but nowhere else on this tour.

I had a look at one of the most up-to-date houses in the village. An ex-soldier was the owner, and under Mr. Brayne's influence had made two windows in one room and had actually wire-netted them to keep out flies and mosquitoes. Another innovation was a primitive fireplace with a pipe to carry away the smoke. On the table stood a large clock and a bicycle lamp, and on the floor a small cistern with a tap, objects rarely seen in village houses. Floor and ceiling were both remarkable, the floor of strong smooth cement and the ceiling set with tiles made in the district. But, alas for modern ways, this up-to-date room had a plain doorway, while the old-fashioned one next it had one pleasantly carved. 'The new one,' said the soldier apologetically, 'was made thus to avoid extravagance.' Is beauty ever an extravagance? A surprising feature where so much trouble was taken with the house was that cattle pass the night in some inner chamber. This is common throughout the Salt Range and must be the result of villages having to be huddled on hillock and hillside. The same is the case amongst the Arabs in the uplands of Palestine, and there the results are most noisome. But here the rooms in which the cattle are kept are swept daily and occasionally sprinkled with fresh earth.

**A soldier's house**

The army was well represented at our meeting, and of the fifty who sat on the floor of the schoolroom where we gathered about forty had had military service. Thirteen were literate, a higher proportion than usual and due to the army. They were emphatic that education is good for cultivation; yet there is not a single improved implement in the village, and only this year has one of the better types of seed (Punjab 8 A) been tried. The use of the country plough was justified on the ground that the land is too dry for a Meston and local cattle too feeble to draw it. But they had never tried one! I asked the Subedar whether any change had taken place in cultivation since his return from China. The rotation, he said, was the same—wheat followed by bulrush millet, the one reaped in April and the other sown in July, and then a year's fallow.[1] But in the old days the peasant ploughed his land only twice or thrice, and now he does it eight or nine times. In those days, too, less manure was used: now it is highly valued, and even the refuse is collected and put on the fields. This is not due to agricultural teaching but to an increasing population which requires more food. The holdings are so small—the 87 members of the society have only 600 acres between them—that men have been forced to supplement their income from

**Farming**

[1] This two-year course is general in the district (*Jhelum Assess. Rpt.* (1899), 7).

nd in various ways. This is characteristic of the whole range of ills, and the members have a miscellaneous income of Rs. 20,000. The main source of this is soldiering, but cattle-dealing is also of importance. Cattle are bought in the fine breeding grounds of the Dhanni to the north, and sold in the colonies to the south, and wheat straw is bought in the colonies and sold for fodder in the hills. Thanks to this, and contrary to the general case elsewhere, members are maintaining their repayments to the bank.

Buchhal Kalán would be a model village but for one thing: it has caught the prevailing distemper of faction. A few months ago there was an affray and a man killed. Twenty persons are now under trial and the village is divided in two; but both parties were present at our meeting. The danger is that the affair may develop into a vendetta. In Shahpur, faction turns mainly upon the rivalries of the big landlords—there is hardly a zemindar family of any substance not identified with one or other of them—but in the Salt Range it has all the bitterness and blood-thirstiness of the primitive family feud which is prosecuted from generation to generation. From the stony soil of its hills seems to spring an implacable hostility to enemies. So is it, too, with the stony soil of the hills of Palestine. There the Arab will cut down even fruit trees in the prosecution of a feud.[1] Here a man's trees are spared, but his life may be taken with every circumstance of brutality and cruelty. A peasant was suspected of an intrigue with a woman and invited to tea by her relatives. He went and was seized by eleven men. They took sharp stones and ground away the joints of his legs below the knee until they could tie his legs to his arms. He died two days later in hospital. Revenge acknowledges no Act of Limitation. A girl was seduced. Marriage followed, but the stain upon the family honour remained. Nothing, however, could be done at the time, for her father was dead and her brothers were minors. Twenty-five years passed, and then at last the stain was removed. In another case a man was implicated in three murders, each affecting a different family, and seven members of the three families joined together and slew him. A grim form of co-operation, and twenty-two years had passed since the first murder. Nor is age any protection. A injured B, and B died of his injuries. B's brother then murdered A's child in broad daylight. A boy at school was told by his parents not to eat with a boy with whom he was friendly. A little later the latter was murdered.

**Vendetta**

[1] Information obtained in Palestine. Lawrence's *Revolt in the Desert* shows how bad faction is in Arabia, a point that is not without interest as the Awáns have a tradition that they came from Arabia. Cf. too Bentwick, *Palestine*, 176.

All these are comparatively recent cases. Even mothers are n safe, if they misbehave. A Shahpur landowner tells me of a cas that happened within his clan. I asked how they treated th murderer, who managed to escape hanging, when he came out o jail. He replied: 'At first we would not admit him to our company but he begged and entreated us, and some were on his side. So we admitted him again to huqqa and water.'[1]

Worst of all for the feud are the Awáns. We were amongst them to-day, and they people the country from here to Sakesar, the peak which at the western end of the range overlooks the valley of the Indus. Bravest of soldiers, toughest of cultivators, and matchless as tent-peggers, they are cursed with the camel's brooding lust for revenge. It is as it was when Orestes slew Aegysthus for killing his father, and Joab Abner for killing his brother. 'Why do you fight and murder so?' I once asked an Awán, who told me that four men had recently swung for the murder of his brother. 'It is nature,' he replied; 'it is not a matter within anyone's power. As God has made us, so is our disposition (*fitrat*). It is also a matter of air and water': in other words, of climate. As in Palestine and Greece, the climate of these hills is very dry, and has a heating effect upon the temper and a tense effect upon the nerves. An educated Awán, who now lives in the plains, tells me that he feels this when he returns to his home in the hills. In a lesser degree this applies to the whole of the dry belt north and west of the Jhelum, and death is often due simply to 'the flash and outbreak of a fiery mind',[2] as, for instance, when some hill weavers quarrelled over the sweetmeats to be given to their pir. In this tract, too, the standard of living is low, and human life is correspondingly cheap. The remedy is to raise the standard, but where the soil is thin and stony and cultivation depends upon a low and capricious rainfall, it is not easy to do this through the land. Fortunately there is the army, and the army is the salvation of the people, disciplining tempers, widening minds, and raising standards all round.

The vendetta spirit is more difficult to deal with. As amongst the more civilized, loyalty to the country may compel men to kill each other collectively, so amongst the unsophisticated, loyalty to the family may compel men to kill each other singly. The one loyalty is almost as inexorable as the other, and the consequences are the same as they were 2,400 years ago, when Aeschylus wrote

[1] Cf. Orestes' cry after his mother had been murdered: 'Who shall break bread with me?' (Euripides, *Electra*, 1197, trs. Gilbert Murray).

[2] *Hamlet* 2, i, 33.

the greatest blood feud of the ancient world. It is the Furies to speak :—

> Ruin is ours, ruin and wreck
> When to the home
> Murder hath come,
> Making to cease innocent peace ;
> Then at his beck
> Follow we in,
> Follow the sin ;
> And ah ! we hold to the end when we begin.[1]

' We hold to the end when we begin.' Therein lies the tragedy. The passions of the fathers are dyed red on the hands of the sons, and heart and mind are hardened by what Nietzsche calls ' the conscience born of murder and cold-bloodedness . . . the proud indifference to loss, to one's own existence, and to that of one's fellows.'[2] Good strangely mixed with evil, but with no place for the daring man's most needed grace—pity.

**The remedy**

For this the only possible remedy is education and contact with the outside world. For 80 years and more the prison and the hangman have been tried—one day when I was in Jhelum 9 men swung there in a single case—yet the bitter feuds continue and the courts are as busy as ever. If there is a change, and the best judges agree that there is some though not very marked, it is due to the two factors I have mentioned. The view expressed by a retired Indian officer whom I met in a townlet with a High School, is typical of the best opinion on the subject : ' The High School has made great difference ; when the young who are being educated grow up their ideas will not be those of their fathers. Already ideas have changed. Men go to the plains, to the canals (a reference to a new road connecting hill and plain) ; they see that people there think and act differently from them, and that there are other ways.' Government's first duty, then, to this tract is to spread education through the length and breadth of it. That education has so far had but little effect, is due to its limited scope, so limited that in the district even now only 14 per cent of the males, and 2 per cent of the females, over ten years old are literate. The last figure is of particular significance, since by all accounts women are the arch fomenters of feuds. With the milk of their breasts they mingle in imagination the blood of their enemies. From the earliest age they teach their children whom they must hate, whom they must slay ; and if, when they grow to man's estate, they stay their hand, they taunt them with cowardice. In a village not far

[1] *Eumenides*, 297 (trs. Verrall and quoted by Dickinson, *The Greek View of Life*, 25).

[2] Quoted by Dean Inge, *Christian Ethics*, 298.

from here a woman whose brother had been murdered swore on Koran not to eat with her right hand till the murder was aveng and then to drink the murderer's blood. The hour came, t woman was summoned, and the vow fulfilled. Could there a more powerful argument for the girls' school? Yet only one g is being educated for every seven boys.[1]

It was dusk, a very cold dusk, when we crested a hill and sa in the valley below us the village of Kallar Kahár and its wid spreading jheel.[2] As the jheel is famous for its duck, the rest hous is admirably equipped for the traveller; less so for the servant, for there are no quarters for my syce[3] and grass-cut. Said the watchman apologetically: 'Sahibs now do not come on horses.'

*Christmas Day.—Kallar Kahâr to Choa Saidan Shah* (18 *miles*)

Kallar Kahár is a lovely spot, worthy of the day. The rest house stands on a hillside terraced and planted with fruit trees—pomegranate, banana, apple, and plum; and below is the reedy jheel beloved of water-birds and sportsmen. This is a day when the gun may well be at rest, and the birds lay undisturbed; but on another occasion at the first shot—it was the hour between dawn and sunrise—they rose in thousands and filled the air with the roar and traffick of wings, and in their midst, against the reddening sky, a flight of flamingos wheeled 'to and fro, upward and downward' all wand and wing.

After breakfast came the customary distribution of largesse to the servants. This they thoroughly deserved, for though we have marched almost every day, there has not been a complaint, and both syce and grass-cut have had bouts of fever. The syce shows how varied peasant life is in this country and how different its types. Small and lean, with a face which humour never lightens but keenness never leaves, Rahmat Ullah is a master syce; yet not of the stock of syces, for he is a Muslim Rajput and comes of a family that owns land in the foot-hills of Jammu. He first became acquainted with the horse through an uncle in a cavalry regiment and in his youth—he is nearly fifty—rode in half the race meetings of India. Now there is no horse he will not turn into a racer or a well-mannered hack, if it has the makings of either racer or hack. He has served generals (many are his stories about them), and is only content when stables are full. His value is great and he knows it, and having inherited the sensitiveness of the

[1] In 1933 the percentage of boys of school-going age at school in the district was 78 as against only 11 for girls.

[2] A reedy lake.

[3] Groom.

Rajput, he canters off at the first hint of being crossed. But ridden with a light hand, there is no difficulty he will not overcome, no fence he will not take.

My companion and I set out at mid-day. We rode along a wide shallow valley, green with sprouting wheat. The hills on either side were naked and sterile, and here and there gaped with black oblong holes; entrances they seemed to the underworld. Actually they were the doors of village houses, and no dwellings could better suggest the umbilic tie between nature and man. In one of these villages there recently occurred a characteristic crime. A year ago a man was murdered by his cousins. They were tried and acquitted. Other measures were therefore necessary. The head of the family, feeling unequal to the task, hired an assassin: in the Salt Range they can be had for a few hundred rupees. The assassin had a relative in a village sometimes visited by the murderer, and in due course the two 'chanced' to visit it on the same day. The next morning, when the murderer was returning to his village, again 'by chance', he fell in with the assassin and an accomplice. They all became friendly, and the assassin commented pleasantly on the beauty and strength of the axe carried by the murderer and asked to be allowed to examine it. No sooner was it in his hand than the accomplice tripped up the murderer, and the murderer became the murdered. The tale came to be told because one of the first persons we met on the road to-day had an axe of so attractive a design, with red handle and engraved head, that instinctively I took it from his hand to admire it.

**Vegetables and wells**

In a field we found a man and his wife filling a fuel basket with clods of dung: stripping the earth itself of what should give it strength. And still more foolish: their child was ill and they had just slain a goat at a fakir's shrine that he might be well. More sensible was a peasant who had been in the Burma Military Police. He had a well and was growing carrots and onions round it. But he, too, had his taboos. Being an Awán, he would not basket his vegetables and hawk them round on his head like a mere market-gardening Malliar.[1] That would affect his izzat, and lower him in the sight of other Awáns.[2] A little further on, another man was at work on onion and carrot with his pretty young wife, who unabashed took part in our talk. He had no prejudice about hawking, yet claimed to be an Awán. He admitted, however, that others called him a Malliar. The

[1] 'Malliar is the name of an occupation, not of a tribe, and means simply market gardener.' The term includes men of many different tribes (*Jhelum Gazetteer* (1904), 112).

[2] The feeling that it is shameful to sell vegetables is 'strong amongst ordinary zemindars' (ibid., 117). Cf. also *Rusticus*, 50.

Malliar is in essence a market-gardener and a first rate cultivator, and much of the best land in the hills is in his hands. Everywhere the land that is best in quality and situation tends to be cultivated by the best husbandmen, as they alone can afford to pay the highest rents. But such land must have an assured water supply, and in this stony soil it is a costly business to turn ' the hard rock into a standing water, and the flint stone into a springing well '.[1] We passed a half-made well, 12 feet in diameter and 45 feet down to water : it is to be faced with stone and, though prices have fallen, it will cost Rs. 1,000. In the Soon valley farther west, where the water level is only 20 to 25 feet down, the cost is not much more than Rs. 500. But in both tracts the difficulty is that only two and a half acres (less in the hot weather) can be irrigated by a well as against fifteen to twenty in the Jhelum riverain.[2] This is because the water level sinks rapidly with the draught and after a few hours must be allowed to rise again. Even so, a well provides a much better balanced cultivation and is the best cure for idleness. Without a well, only wheat, barley, millet,[3] and gram[4] can be grown ; and there are months of idleness every year, as holdings are small. But with a well, chillies, onions, and maize can be added, and a little cotton for home use ; vegetables, too, if a man is a Malliar or the Awán will pocket his pride.

**Izzat**

This pride or izzat[5] is one of the Punjabi's deepest feelings, and as such must be treated with great respect. Dearer to him than life, it helps to make him the good soldier that he is. But it binds him to the vendetta and often makes him a poor farmer. At Lilla a soldier who had just come back from Hongkong drew a vivid picture of the way the Chinese peasant worked. I asked him why he worked so much better than the Punjabi. ' He does not give a thought to his izzat,' was the illuminating reply. One is reminded of the verse in Proverbs (xii, 9) : ' He that is despised, and hath a servant, is better than he that honoureth himself, and lacketh bread.' My companion says that the Wahraich Jats of his district (Gujrat) would rather put themselves to any inconvenience than fill up the bowl of their huqqas, and members of this tribe whom we met last week said they would not sell eggs though their village servants do. Fortunately there are signs of change ; for example at Lilla, the zemindar will now sell milk, a thing he would not have done twenty years ago.

[1] Psalm cxiv, 8.

[2] *Jhelum Gazetteer* (1904), 100, and *Shahpur Tahsil Settlement Rpt.* (1911-16), 1.

[3] *Bajra* and *jowar*.

[4] *Cicer arietinum*.

[5] See p. 42, n.3.

A few miles on we found fifty zemindars gathered on the roadside below a village built, as it might have been in Italy, up a steep hill. They were members of two village banks, Awáns and Janjuas. The Janjuas used to own the whole tract but were too full of their izzat to devote themselves heart and soul to their fields.[1] The Awán, not so bad in this respect, has gained at their expense and there is keen rivalry between them, which found expression at yesterday's meeting when an Awán veteran burst into doggerel verse, of which the following is a rough translation :—

**Janjua and Awán**

Awáns, we went to the war and fought
for little or nought.
To German guns we bared the breast
and they ran like men possessed.
But, Janjua, Janjua, where were they ?
skulking at home night and day.

A merry aspersion this, for the Janjuas did almost as well as any tribe in the war.[2] If the Awáns think they did better, it is perhaps because the Awán village of Dulmial close by produced more recruits in the war than any other village in India : 460 served out of a population (in 1921) of only 879 males.

The members of the two banks said that 90 per cent of their families had military connexions. It was, therefore, a good opportunity to gauge the effect of the army on village life. In the first place, both banks were good, especially the older of the two. After twelve years only one of its 43 members owes anything outside the bank, and 14 are entirely free of debt. A sum of Rs. 2,000 is on deposit, mostly from widows, and the funds of the bank are freely and sensibly used. Holdings are small—in all only 335 acres—but miscellaneous income, mainly from soldiering, amounts to Rs. 12,000. The army has not only saved these people from penury, but has even made them prosperous. It was much the same at Buchhal Kalán.[3]

**The army and the peasant**

In the field of education, the results were also reasonably good. The number of boys of school-going age was put at 150, and of these 59 were at school, 12 in the local High School. This, of course, is not what it should be ; but the fact that it is much above the average shows how backward education is in the village. Three newspapers are taken in, the journals published under the auspices of the Army, the Rural Community Council, and the Punjab Co-operative Union. We asked a member who had served for twenty-one years in the

[1] *Pind Dadan Khan, Assess. Rpt.*, 33.
[2] Leigh, *The Punjab and the War*, 49.
[3] p. 42ff. ; cf. also p. 183.

Quetta police what he knew of the administration. He got as far as the Tahsildar; then after a long pause and much thought he added amid general laughter—'There is the Deputy Commissioner at Jhelum.' Beyond that he could think only of the 'Lat Sahib', who lived at Calcutta,[1] and the King. 'His name?' I asked. 'Badshah,'[2] he replied. A younger man, a soldier with nine years' service, did much better and got as far as the Viceroy. 'And who is above him?' 'The Commander-in-Chief.' So perhaps it should seem to the soldier. He, too, knew the King only as Badshah. Both these men were illiterate. The literate doubtless knew more. They knew, for example, that Ministers existed, and even named two of them. One, they said, looked after agriculture, which is correct, but all they could tell us about the other was that he made speeches at fairs: this apparently because last year he made a speech at a local fair. Someone mentioned, correctly, that Sir Muhammad Shafi had gone to London to give his opinion about the country. This led to questions about the Round Table Conference. It was known that many had gone to London, as one said, to give their opinions about 'our rights'. But more than this no one knew, not even the Risaldar president or the Sergeant secretary.

Then I asked about their farming. Is the man who has been a soldier as good a cultivator as the zemindar? A soldier maintained that he was, but a zemindar remarked: '*He* rides wherever he goes,' a shaft that went home. One would at least have expected to find the soldier using new types of implement and seed. But, as in Lilla and Buchhal Kalán, there was almost nothing to suggest that such existed—nothing more than a Meston bought by a headman now dead. It seems extraordinary that in these three places, one a townlet and another a large village, no selected seed should have been used till this year and that modern agriculture should be represented by two Meston ploughs.

After the inspection we climbed the hill to look at the village of Taträl. It was far less clean than Buchhal. By one of those inexplicable differences of custom which make the Indian countryside so diverse and difficult of generalization, the Vanhár tract, through which we have just come, is noted for its high standard of cleanliness, while the Kahun tract, which we have just entered, has no such excellent tradition. We had a look at a house which a soldier had recently built for Rs. 3,000, and at another which belonged to an ex-regimental vet.

**Healing by spitting**

[1] Literally, the Lord Sahib. Presumably he meant the Viceroy, but Calcutta has not been his headquarters since 1912.

[2] King.

His front room was full of medicines, and he now doctors both man and beast, as the nearest hospital for both is eighteen miles away. I enquired whether parents still asked people coming out of a mosque to blow upon children that were sick.[1] 'That is *my* duty,' said the Risaldar president. He proved to be a pir, and in his retirement was more of a pir than a soldier. He claimed to be able to cure all diseases sent by God, simply by his breath.[2] If a man is bitten by a snake, a mad dog, or a jackal, he spits into a cup of water and gives it to the patient to drink, and the vomiting and flux that follow cure the patient. He asserted that the remedy had never failed. The 'new light' has affected his practice, but the whole village still looks upon him as their pir, and every house gives him something every year: a rupee it used to be, but since the fall in prices less. Talking about this afterwards, my companion said that he was once fingering a firework when some powder exploded and burnt him badly in the face. Seeing the pain he was in, a pir offered to heal him. He spat several times on his face and the pain left him. There was no rubbing either before or after. Nor was it a case of healing by faith, as my companion had no faith at all in the pir's powers. It would seem that sometimes spittle has healing properties, and this, doubtless, was the case with Christ.[3]

Seeing a Hindu standing in a doorway in this very Muslim village, I stopped for a passing word. He was a Khatri money-lender. The times were bad for money-lenders, he said: their receipts were only four annas in the rupee of what they used to be. Forty per cent of the peasants won't pay, and the rest can't. Now he lends only against jewellery, and for this his charge is 12 per cent as before. Earlier in the day we had met another money-lender riding along with two peasants. After ancient custom, common enough when I first came to India (twenty-six years ago) but now rare, they all dismounted to let us pass. Though a Hindu, the money-lender had a beard dyed blue and clipped after Muslim fashion[4] (such is the influence of environment), and from his wizened face hung a large nose like the signboard of a dilapidated inn. After his kind he was timid and took quick little steps away from my companion's pony

**Money-lending**

[1] See *Rusticus*, 169.

[2] Cf. ibid., 87.

[3] Cf. 'When he had spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him, He asked him if he saw ought.' (Mark viii, 23). Cf. also Mark vii, 33. Vespasian is said to have cured someone by spitting at Alexandria (*Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*).

[4] See p. 60, n.1.

when she backed towards him. He, too, was pessimistic about the times. ' But,' said he with pride, ' I have never brought a suit against those who deal with me.' This the two peasants cordially endorsed. ' Good days have passed between us,' said one. ' Even if we pay two months after we agreed to pay, he does not sue us.' His usual rate of interest (for an unsecured loan) is 25 per cent, but now he has no money to lend. My enquiries show that the general rate of interest in this tract is 18¾ or 25 per cent, usually the latter. Although much less is advanced, rates have so far not been affected by the slump as in the plains below. There are probably two reasons for this : in an isolated tract custom is more rigid ; and there is a large inflow of money through the army. There may even be a third : the money-lender here is unusually cautious.

In a Muslim tract where tempers are hot and shrift short the Hindu is most careful not to offend, and tribal ties are still strong enough to make the money-lender remember that not long ago he was little better than a village servant. One I met in the Soon valley further west told me that in fifty years he had never filed a suit, though he has three or four hundred clients. Speaking of the difficulties of the present times he said truly enough : ' If the zemindars do not repay, it is on account of their poverty. And what can we do when they do not repay ? We cannot take their land, we cannot take their cattle, neither their ploughs, nor their food. There is nothing from which we can recover. Even their jewellery is sold.'[1] When I asked him whether zemindar and money-lender got on well together, he became very eloquent : ' If we do not have ties (*ta'aluqat*) with them ; if we do not have sympathy (*muhabbat*), if we do not have agreement, if we displease them, how can we live ? They quickly get hot : then they take out their knives and slit our throats (here a vivid gesture across his throat). If we anger them and go out into the " jangal ",[2] how can we be sure we shall come back ? And if we do not come back, who will know where to find us ? They are many, we are few. They are ignorant, we are intelligent (*samujhdar*). We *must* be friends with them.' One thinks of the thirty-four money-lenders murdered this year, and understands.[3]

When we continued our march, the sun was setting and we were soon chilled to the bone by the dusk—too chilled to do more than glance at the seven temples of Kitás standing on ground made

[1] For the legal position in regard to this, see *Peasant*, 183.

[2] Uncultivated land.

[3] Cf. *Rusticus*, 75.

holy, even in the semi-mythic days of the Pandavas, by a crystal stream, which gushes out of the stony soil into a pool reputed by the devout to be bottomless but actually 23 feet deep. At Choa I found the air mail on my table, and with it the full feeling of Christmas. 'As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country.'[1]

*26 December.—Halt*

The rest house here is superior to most. The windows have muslin curtains, the sitting-room a waste-paper basket, the dining-room a wine glass, and amongst the books are *The Mill on the Floss* and *The New Republic*. But the charm of the place is its situation. This is enchanting even in winter. House and fruit tree garden stand on a shelf of rock overlooking a saucer-shaped valley, where the holy stream of Kitás waters the fields of young wheat in sparkling course. Across the valley, clinging to the stony hillside is the stone-built village of Choa, and when the sun appears, smoke rises from its hearths and in the windless air spreads slowly up the hills, blue as the sky above. I went out before breakfast to have a look at this and found the terrace in front of the house littered with waste paper, empty tins, and worse. I sent for the sweeper. An aged musalli came, aged as only sweepers can be, a man bent low by sixty years of sweeping and sufferance. Diligently he collected an armful of refuse and, advancing to the edge of the scarp on which we stood, flung it feebly forward to litter itself afresh a little further on. He was astonished that he had to collect it all again and this time burn it utterly.

**Fruit-growing**

My afternoon walk took me down a wooded glen and along a clear swift-flowing burn, which tumbled its way melodiously over rock and stone or slept a space amidst flowering weed and reed—the very place for an orchard, yet all tangle and thicket. Climatically there is no reason why the more sheltered valleys of these hills, wherever water is available, should not be as thickly sprinkled with fruit trees as those of Judea, and already Choa is reminiscent of Hebron. Even California may not be too distant a guide, for it has much the same climate; and realizing this, the District Engineer of Shahpur is importing fifty orange trees—Washington Navels and Valencias—from there to be planted in the District Board gardens near Sakesar. He is also experimenting with superior varieties of peach, plum, and

[1] Proverbs xxv, 25.

loquat,[1] and the results already justify high hopes.[2] But there is one doubt. He is an enthusiast and watches over the young trees as a mother over her children. All are carefully and regularly watered—not periodically drowned as is the Indian gardener's wont; white ants are attacked directly they appear, and insects on the bark are killed with Flit and lime; and if a rough wind half snaps a branch, the wound is bound up and plastered over with healing cow dung. Can such tender continuous care be expected from the happy-go-lucky peasant accustomed to do little more for his crop than plough, sow, and reap? In greater or less degree, this is the difficulty that besets all agricultural development in this country. A hopeful feature is that interest in fruit trees is growing. The 'máli's' courtyard at Buchhal Kalán will be remembered,[3] and at Dalwál, a village near here, there are already twenty-one gardens. If fruit-growing can be extended, and there is also scope for the almond and grape, it will strengthen the peasant's economic position, which at present is too dependent on military service to be secure. As we have seen, holdings in these hills are very small, and with population increasing they must become smaller. The fullest possible use of the land is, therefore, essential to well-being.[4]

**A Belgian High School**

Dalwál, the village just mentioned, is remarkable not only for its gardens but also for its High school. Started thirty years ago by Capuchin Fathers from Belgium, it now contains 400 boys and enjoys a high reputation throughout the eastern half of the Range. This is largely due to the personality and devotion of the Fathers and to a continuity of tradition. About 500 'old boys' served in the war, and many still enlist. The Fathers, when I visited them (on another occasion), were full of praise for the army and said that it gave the peasant humanity as well as discipline. They thought, too, that the school was good for the army, since it did not prejudice enlistment and fitted those who enlisted for promotion. But, like the schoolmasters of Shahpur,[5] they agreed that a High school was a doubtful advantage for the land, as it disinclined boys to cultivate. So was it, too, in Belgium, they said, and for the same reason—farming

[1] *Eriobotrya japonica.*

[2] I visited the gardens (at Nowshera and Sodhi) in 1932 and found the Californian orange trees well established at a cost of Rs. 15 each. They came the whole way packed in moss and only four died. The other trees were also doing well: from one peach tree had been taken 123 lb. of fruit, and the plums were so large that only seven went to the lb.

[3] p. 43.

[4] The total garden area of the district is less than 300 acres. It is a happy effect of the slump that is has stimulated interest in fruit growing: in 1932-3 the demand for plants from Government nurseries was so great that only 25 per cent of it could be met (*Agricl. Rpt.*, 24).

[5] p. 31.

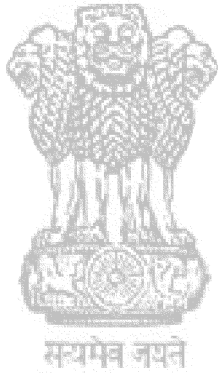
offers no future. It is also a question of izzat, for an educated boy looks down upon tilling. The Fathers claimed that the general effect of the school had been good, and that in the last thirty years faction had declined and murders decreased. The zaildar, who had been in the army, doubted this but admitted that an educated man could not take an active part in a feud without some feeling of shame and hesitated to do so openly. He admitted, further, that it was partly owing to the school that husbands treated their wives better than they did—more as companions and less as chattels. When I remarked that they certainly beat them less, the burliest and most bearded of the Fathers leant back in his chair and, laughing loudly, exclaimed—'*c'est vrai, c'est vrai.*'[1] Another said he had actually witnessed a shoe-beating. 'The woman tore her hair and her clothes and screamed.' Continuing, the zaildar said that the old-fashioned were still against education for girls, and that recently when he made a speech in its favour, someone got up and said—if girls are educated, they will be able to write to their 'friends'. He silenced him by challenging him to quote a single 'affair' in which an educated woman had been involved. In Dalwál opinion is strongly in favour of schools for girls, and when one was opened there, fifty girls joined it almost at once.

**The administration and the Englishman**

Speaking of the administration, the oldest Friar said that the people had little cause for complaint, but they feared the passing of the Englishman. This put me in mind of what a foreigner long settled in the Punjab said to me the other day: 'The people tell me again and again that they wish that the Commissioner, the Deputy Commissioner, and the Assistant Commissioner, and even the Inspector of Police, could be Englishmen. From Englishmen they can always count upon justice, but a Muslim, they say, cannot count upon it from a Hindu, nor a Hindu from a Muslim.' I leave it to those who are not English and who know the Punjab well to say how far this is true. But in fairness to the Indian official and to the many Indian colleagues with whom it has been my privilege to work, I must add that there are, of course, many Indian officials in the Punjab who have the strongest possible sense of justice; but, whereas the English official is usually presumed to be just until he proves himself the contrary, in any matter affecting persons of more than one religious community, an Indian, *however just*, will generally be suspected of partiality towards the member of his own community. This is a disability from which the English official is exempt, and from which, most regrettably, the Indian suffers, irrespective of personal merit, and the only reason

[1] 'It is true, it is true.'

is that the one is English and the other Indian. Initially, it springs from the deep distrust which centuries of insecurity have bred in the minds of a highly sensitive people ; and in the Punjab it has been aggravated by the communalism which certain persons, for selfish or short-sighted ends, have blindly fomented between Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh. The remedy is obvious, and it is one that every good citizen, and certainly every good co-operator, will apply to the best of his ability, regardless of religion or race.



## Chapter IV

# THE SALT RANGE (*continued*) AND THE JHELUM RIVERAIN[1]

### Religion, Reconstruction, Flood, School, and Cattle

*27 December.—Choa to Basharat* (8 *miles*)

On our last two marches we have traversed, without much rise or fall, wide plain-like valleys. To-day we were on stony broken ways and climbed laboriously from one valley to another until we emerged on to a wide plateau, on the edge of which, perched on a hillock, stood the village of Gurah, our immediate bourne. On the way, this being a Muslim tract, we talked of the influence of Islam upon village life. The local *Gazetteer* says (p. 129) that ' religion has little practical influence as a regulator of conduct '. My companion, to whom I quoted this, did not agree and pointed out that no Muslim will eat pig or meat not slaughtered in a certain way, that almost none will take wine or spirit, that few gamble, and many will not take interest on a loan ; none, in fact, on a loan to a friend. Then there is the yearly fast during the month of Ramzán, which is observed by most, and the hour or two spent every day upon the five-fold prayer.[2] He thought that amongst men about 20 per cent still said the latter,[3] and if amongst women the proportion is less, it is because they have so many tasks, and with their children ever about them they find it difficult to keep hands and clothes sufficiently clean to perform the ablutions which are the indispensable preliminary to prayer.[4] Whether religious observance and good character go hand in hand is a moot point, upon which much contrary opinion is expressed. My companion's view is that the best characters in the village are not necessarily the most punctilious in religious observance, but as a rule they are the most careful of its essential obligations ; and he thinks that less

**Islam**

[1] Rainfall 22 inches.

[2] See *Rusticus*, 3, 211.

[3] Cf. ibid., 161, 211, 241.

[4] Face, hands (to the elbow), and feet must be washed in the prescribed manner.

stress is now laid upon such outward observances as trimming the beard and moustache to the traditional length and shape.[1]

**The reading of the Koran**

This discussion, when we got to Gurah, led to some questions about the advantage of reading the Koran in Arabic, a language that very few in the village understand, even amongst Mullahs.[2] 'What Moses wrote God alone can read,' says the proverb, and in north-west India, there are innumerable boys, and many girls, who spend a year or two learning to read the Holy Book without understanding it. Thinking of this, I asked those present who were literate how far this was helpful. A Risaldar replied: 'It is written in the Holy Koran that it is good to read it even if one does not understand.' Actually this is not written in it, but that it is good to read it in this way is a view very generally held, and it is based upon the belief that the Koran is literally God's word and that therefore its repetition must be good. Not all, however, agreed with the Risaldar, and another officer expressed the opinion that it was useless to read it without a translation. On the other hand, the zaildar, who had learnt the whole of it by heart without understanding a word, had no doubt that the fifteen years spent in doing so were well spent: 'It put the mind in remembrance of God and was *sawáb*,' that is, an act of merit which God would reward. A young B.A. added his testimony and said that, in reading it, mind and spirit were quickened. St. Paul perhaps put the case well when he wrote: 'If I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful.'[3]

**Co-education**

Of the twenty-five present fifteen were literate, a very high proportion for a village meeting in any part of the province and due in this case to the Army, of whose beneficent influence in the village I get more and more evidence. Although so many had been educated, they were entirely opposed to co-education, which has some vogue in this district.[4] 'Even for those who are still immature?' I asked. 'Yes for them too; for small boys are often wicked (*sharir*).' And an old man with a big flat nose shook his finger at me and said: 'Let the boys play by themselves, and the girls by themselves.' My companion says that 75 per cent of the peasants in the district would endorse this, but in time, he

[1] Strict Muslim custom requires that a beard should be long enough to protrude by the thickness of a finger, if caught in the hand just below the chin: this means a length of about five inches. The moustache, just below the nose, should not be more than one-eighth of an inch long.

[2] Cf. *Rusticus*, 45, 109, 144, 280 etc.

[3] 1 Cor. xiv, 14. Cf. ibid., 3.

[4] The number of girls reading in boys' schools in the district is unfortunately declining: in 1931 it was 1,365, in 1933 only 962. For the whole province it was 25,758 (*Pb. Educ. Rpt.*, 13).

thinks, 50 per cent might be induced to support co-education in the primary stage.

Though opposed to co-education, these soldiers did not doubt the value of education for a moment and said that nearly all their children of school-going age went to school. Yet, as in Lilla, Buchhal Kalán, and Tatrál, there was almost no sign of any modern method of agriculture. Only one person in the village has a Meston, and till this year, when two brothers applied to the Agricultural Department, no one had ever thought of getting any improved type of seed. 'My land is stony,' said one soldier in self-defence, 'and Meston ploughs break in stony soil.' Though modern methods are not in vogue, the farming of its kind is good. The fields are admirably terraced, and, unlike most of those seen earlier in the day, tolerably clear of stones. Those near the village are double-cropped, and between the cutting of the wheat in May and the sowing of the maize in July they are ploughed four or five times and well manured. It was claimed that education had made them keener on manure and that forty or fifty manure pits had been sunk. 'By order or by your wish?' I asked. 'Three-quarters by order, one-quarter by our wish,' was the frank reply. But they did not doubt their advantage. 'We shall get more manure, and our village will be cleaner and our health better,' said a Hindu member of the bank, a Khatri landowner. 'Then why do you not all sink pits?' 'It is our laziness; but now our Deputy Commissioner has come to wake us up and make us active (*chust*).' One great advantage the village has—it has plenty of wood-fuel and only uses the dung cake to simmer the milk before the milk is made into butter (*ghi*).

The cardinal points of Mr. Brayne's campaign are well understood. The Khatri summed them up thus: Dig pits and keep the village clean; educate the children; give up extravagant ways; neither buy nor wear jewellery; and eschew litigation. I enquired which was the hardest commandment. This required thought, and after discussion they agreed that it was to give up litigation. Their lives, they remarked, were honeycombed with quarrels, and when we considered possible remedies, they said a feud could only be laid to rest by a marriage—as, indeed, was the case between nations in the days of dynastic alliances. The side against whom vengeance is due must give a daughter, and if both sides have taken vengeance, there must be a double marriage. A zaildar of these hills is a case in point. Many years ago, a relative told one of his tenants who claimed to be an Awán that his mother was none. Izzat was touched and murder followed. The zaildar was suspected of having had a hand in it for ends of his own, and ever since he has had to be on guard, especially at night, though outward relations are friendly

and the two branches of the family even inter-dine. Two or three years ago, weary of his haunting fear, he proposed that the hatchet should be buried and that a girl on his side should marry a boy on the other. But, so sensitive is izzat, his household thought it would be interpreted as a sign of fear. So the standing on guard continues.

The giving up of jewellery is only less difficult than the giving up of litigation, for, as already noted,[1] it belongs to the women, who have little else besides. The Khatri was eloquent on the folly of buying it. 'We take our gold to the goldsmith and he gives it back with some base metal mixed in with it; we are cheated and only get half what we gave for it.'[2]

'Why then don't you sell your earrings?' (he had a gold one in each ear). Laughing and almost blushing, he replied: 'When I was young, our fakir put them in my ear and said: "As long as you wear them, all will be well." And now my family will not let me take them out.' The goldsmith has a bad name in India—in his own mother's bracelets will he mingle dross, runs the proverb—but he is not quite as bad as he is painted. My enquiries suggest that with the more elaborate ornaments, which give a dishonest goldsmith the greatest scope, the loss on sale is 15 to 20 per cent of the purchase price, and with the more solid only 10 or 15 per cent.

Throughout the Salt Range holdings are so small—the thirty-nine members of the Gurah bank own only 319 acres of un-irrigated land—that nearly every zemindar family has a man or two in the army. The effect is much the same as with emigration in Jullundur:[3] the villages are full of new houses. In Gurah, though there are only 120 families, forty or fifty houses have been rebuilt since the war. One I saw cost Rs. 1,800.[4] This was the top figure, the lowest Rs. 400. Even at Rs. 1,000 per house (a cautious estimate)[5] the village must have spent about Rs. 40,000 in little more than a decade; and most of it is derived from army pay. As in Palestine, the houses are all built of stone, and in some cases of stone so well dressed, evenly laid, and firmly mortared that it would be difficult to find better masonry work anywhere: all done, too, by local masons. Moreover, in marked contrast to the schools provided by the District Board, some of the houses were beautifully proportioned, and their smooth-plastered doorways pleasantly decorated with floral designs, as in Austria. There could be no doubt that the village had a sense of beauty and the craftsmen of the neighbourhood, whether mason or

**Effect of the army on housing**

[1] p. 19.
[2] Cf. p. 249.
[3] See *Rusticus*, 179.
[4] Cf. p. 44.
[5] Cf. *Rusticus*, 191.

carpenter, a sense of finish. The deodar beams of the new raftered ceilings were well planed and accurately laid ;[1] and the cement floors, actually made by the women, left me wondering that in a remote village of the Salt Range one should find better floors than in an ordinary Punjab bungalow, and so spotless, even in the dark inner rooms, that it seemed a crime to tread on them booted.[2]

The display of possessions was amazing. In one room, 20 feet by 10, we counted 300 articles hanging on the walls: amongst them 42 bottles—wine bottles, medicine bottles, hair-oil bottles, scent bottles, every kind of bottle the jackdaw owner could lay hands on, and all empty. Then there were scores of plates and dishes, pictures, brushes, looking glasses, and even empty boxes of playing cards, as if the owner had been unlucky enough to win the contents of a lucky bag. On the shelves below were countless earthen pots piled above each other, row upon row, and below the shelves stood six heavy chests each supporting a metal portmanteau or suit case. The whole tract is infected with a passion for collection and display, and let no one laugh who has ever collected picture postcards or stamps, or crowded mantelpiece and table with the trivial purchases of a tourist.[3]

We reached Bashárat at sundown, and I found 87 Christmas cards waiting for me: this on top of 40 yesterday.

**Magic**

At this season, in this warm-hearted country, the slightest acquaintance is marked by a card of good-will, and they are rained upon every official, and as with rain in hilly country, the higher one is the heavier the downpour, but from this point of view 127 cards are the merest shower. About 800 feet above us is the highest point in the eastern half of the Salt Range, a matter of only 3,700 feet, but this is high enough to attract the devout. Those who have received some special token of the divine favour climb to its summit and mark their gratitude by the sacrifice of a goat and their appetite by devouring it. But faith, or gratitude, is weakening, and this is less done than before. So too with another rite. When the grain heaps are piled on the threshing-floor, a paper bearing the name of God is placed in each, and round it is drawn a circle, which no one may pass with shod feet, and women not at all; as some think, because they are unclean; as others, more

[1] Thirty years ago deodar beams were ' seen only in the houses of the rich ' (*Jhelum Gazetteer* (1904), 140).

[2] There is nothing new in this. ' Inside the houses are in general kept scrupulously clean ' (ibid., 141). Cf. *Rusticus*, 197.

[3] It is ' a point of honour ' with many housewives in this district ' to cover the wall of the main room, facing the door, with skeins of cotton, vessels of brass and tin, cheap looking-glasses, tinsel ornaments and miscellaneous trash . . . all for show and never used ' (*Chakwal Assess. Rpt.* (1898), 32).

gallant, because the jins cannot resist their charms.[1] An iron implement is also kept near, since iron is credited with the power to keep evil spirits away; a view widely held, for recently in Central India I found that a hand-sickle was hidden in each of the heaps I examined. Although these magic rites are no longer invariably practised, they are still common throughout the province.[2]

28 *December.—Bashârat to Rawal* (13 *miles*)

Cloud above and stones below has been our fate to-day. There never was a stonier country. Road and field were littered with them, some fields so thickly that one wondered how any blade of millet or wheat could ever get through. We passed from valley to valley, and in one of them, where the soil was a pleasant sandstone red, we came upon a rose-coloured village climbing up the hillside. 'The people who live there,' said our guide, a retired soldier, 'are men of the old ways: they live all day in the "jangal" and know nothing of the world.' This excited my curiosity, and we walked across stony fields to the village of Amrila. The headman came out to meet us, and with the words, 'Your feet bring blessing,' offered us the customary rupee in token of his loyalty to Government. In accordance with custom we touched it, and it returned to some fold of his dress. The 'old ways', as he described them, might have been envied by more modern villages. 'Since the English Ráj came—God knows how many years ago—there has been only one man in the courts, and he got three years. We settle all our disputes amongst ourselves. We do this now and have always done so.' As there was no bank in the village, I was curious to know how it got on without it. 'We do not go to the Khatri:[3] none of us has dealings with him. When we want a loan, we take it from one of the brotherhood, and no interest is charged.'

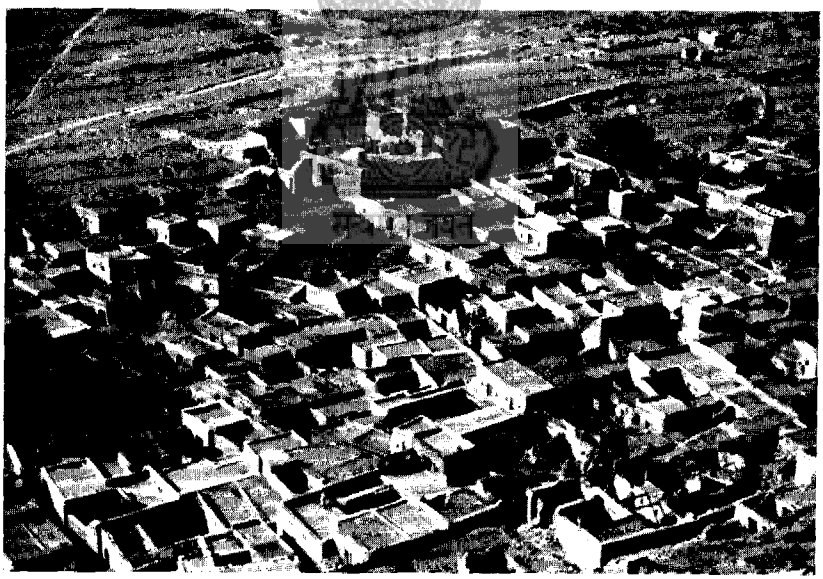
**A self-sufficient village**

'But what if there is a wedding?'

'This is done with the help of the wedding gifts (*tambol*);[4] and if there are no gifts, the marriage verse (*nikah*) is read, that is all.' Then he told us of all the ways in which they help each other, and they were the same as those described at Sardhi. 'Whenever we have to do anything which a man cannot do by himself, joining together we do it.' This was the case with an embankment upon which the moisture of their fields (all rain-watered) depended: it was leaking, and they were repairing it together. The village,

[1] *Jhelum Gazetteer*, 131.
[2] Cf. *Rusticus*, 283.
[3] The money-lender of these parts.
[4] See p. 176.

SALT RANGE NEAR BASHARAT



A LARGE VILLAGE IN THE SALT RANGE

[face p. 64

an ant-heap of thirty-two houses, was in effect a co-operative society, which had sprung up automatically from the needs of the village, and it was difficult to see what help we could give it, except perhaps with its farming. This was primitive enough and pointing out the stones in their fields, I asked why they did not remove them. 'We are lazy,' said the headman, 'but since the Sáhib came, he has stirred in us a desire to change our ways: so we are repairing the embankment, and then we shall remove them.'

Eight boys go to a school a mile away. I asked the headman what were the advantages of education. 'There is a boy who has gone to the normal school: he will become a teacher. That is one advantage. In conversation the words of an educated man have more influence than those who cannot read. That is another advantage. And there is one more. If an educated man has a quarrel, he quarrels with understanding (*aql*).' There is nothing abstract about the peasant's point of view: he measures everything by his own observation. The houses were not so ken-speckle as yesterday's, but the floors were spotless, and the cattle rooms cleaner than many byres I saw last year in different countries in Europe. In one courtyard three cows were munching fodder, and near them on a bed of refuse straw, as it might have been Argos himself,[1] lay an old bulldog. No pie dogs here. In the Salt Range the dog has his master and serves him as watchman. Crouching in the doorway of an inner room was a woman with prominent teeth, shining eyes, and intelligent look. She was quicker in understanding than the headman and prompted him more than once. The women here, and they are typical of these parts, grind, spin, make the bins (of fine white clay mixed with chopped straw) cook, look after the children, fetch the water, clean and sweep the house, re-plaster the walls, and help in the fields. I asked whether the women or the men rose first? 'The women.' 'And who go to bed last?' 'The women.' 'This is a good village,' I said, 'but there is one fault: the women work harder than the men.' The general laugh showed that this was true, and with that we went on our way.

**Women's work**

Our next village stood on a high plateau. Though it had eighty houses, the bank, which was two years old, had only twenty-one members. The reason for this is one nearly always given in these hills when things are not as they should be. 'There is faction here,' said the president, 'an old faction; it has been here ever since we came: that is many

**Faction**

[1] The hound of Odysseus: 'despised he lay (his master being afar) in the deep dung of mules and kine, whereof an ample bed was spread before the doors' (*Odyssey*, xvii, 296, trs. Butcher and Lang).

generations ago; we do not remember how many, but it may be ten or twelve. When the English came there was a dispute who should be headman of the village. Forty houses are on one side, forty on the other. We are of one family (*got*), they are of another. Nine or ten years ago there was a murder but none since.'

'Is there no chance of the others joining the bank?'

'They fear guile and say they will see how it runs first.'

It was after four when we left the village. We were told it was only four and a half miles to Rawal, which lies on the plain at the foot of the hills, but it took us nearly two hours to get there. One of our party thought he knew a short cut, but it was 'a thieves' path' and at one point on the steep hillside we had to breach a wall to get our horses through. The owner helped us and seemed surprised at the rupee he got for his pains. There followed a perilous descent (perilous to our horses) to the road, which brought us to the edge of a cliff, at the foot of which, 1,500 feet below, lay the great plain, brown as a camel, wide as the sea. Down, down we went over endless stones, our ponies slithering and scraping behind us. At last, long after the sun had set stormily behind dense cloud, we came out on to the plain, and another half mile brought us to the rest house, where I was hospitably received by Mr. and Mrs. Brayne.

**Mr. Brayne's campaign**

Much talk with Mr. Brayne about his campaign. Conditions here, he says, are far more favourable than in Gurgaon. There is neither the grinding poverty nor the unspeakable filth. The mentality, too, is altogether more vigorous and frank. If people object to anything, they say so at once and both give and take hard knocks with humour. Change for the better is mainly a matter of education. The people must be taught to abandon bad customs, such as wearing jewellery and relieving themselves round the village like dogs, to use their vast leisure to improve their farming and the countryside, and to give up quarrelling and murdering each other. There are about forty murders a year, and in one village alone there are twenty-seven widows, all said to have been widowed by murder or the hangman's rope. Mr. Brayne laid the greatest stress on the manure pit, since it not only improved farming but was much the best way of keeping the village clean: it also provided the possibility of a latrine system, now entirely non-existent. As to means, he thought that a district magazine like the one he has started (*Nei Zindagi*)[1] was the best way of reaching the educated, and the lecture the best for the uneducated. Better still for the latter is the drama, and it would be well if the dramatic talent of the province could be mobilised and harnessed to the cause of reconstruction.[2]

[1] New Life. [2] Cf. p. 86.

29 *December.—Rawal to Jalálpur* (15 *miles*)

The road to-day was as flat as yesterday's was steep, and the bare red hills rose above us straight as a wall. We were near the Jhelum again, and though it lay meek and mild as a babe, it was of no babe that we heard. One evening last year it rose from its bed and before morning had carried away scores of villages. 'Our village is nearly all destroyed,' said a petition I received from a number of ferrymen. 'We are in such bad position in the world around us as some masterless, left off, and totally undone beings.' The helplessness and despair that come from a devastating flood could not be better expressed. The seventy members of the two banks who were awaiting us on the roadside were amongst the sufferers. They lost houses, furniture, grain, and fodder. But Co-operation came to their rescue with special loans at 7 per cent—the usual rate is 12½—and houses were rebuilt and stocks of grain replenished. A few took loans from Government, but the bank loans were preferred, for a reason that one may hear in any part of the province. 'There is a kindness about these, great pressure (*zor*) about the others. When a Government loan has to be recovered, the men of the Tahsil come with a thick stick. Instalments have to be paid on the date fixed, but the bank's loan is repaid when it can be managed.'[1] One bank has repaid over two-thirds of the amount borrowed, but the other only one-third. To every cloud its silver lining, says cloud-spread England. India's equivalent might be—to every flood its silt. Here the swollen river deposited it so richly upon the fields that there followed a bumper harvest. But then, again after India's fashion, came drought and a withered autumn harvest.

**A flood**

The houses were rebuilt by the peasants themselves, with the help of a carpenter for the woodwork and a Pathán and musalli for the mud walls. These were still unplastered and had the lumpy cracked faces of the aged; blind faces too, for no one had thought of windows. Strung across a lane, out of reach, hung a rope with a charm knotted in the middle of it. Cattle were ill, and this was the remedy; effective, it was claimed, for 'those who have faith (*yakeen*)'. From near by came the sound of mourning, a long lament sung by women gathered to weep the death of a member of the bank.

Of the seventy present only five were literate, three of them army men. The army here had not a good reputation for habits of industry. 'The soldier cannot do our work,' said a member, 'nor can he do any other. In the army he works for a few hours, then takes rest. We work all day. He drinks tea and eats bread: we are content with

**For and against education**

[1] For Government loans, see p. 200.

buttermilk. He wears fine clothes and boots : our clothes are dirty, our shoes split, and our puggarees torn.' A smack of envy as well as hyperbole about this, but the evidence of this tour certainly suggests that the sword is not the best preparation for the plough though far better than the pen. The president of one of the two banks had something to say on the last point. ' I have two sons. The elder went to school—he read in the eighth class : the younger read only in the mosque. He can do every kind of work ; but the elder does not know how to twist the well rope (to which the waterpots are fastened), nor to fit the wooden rungs to it. The younger can lift any load : the elder is too weak. Those who work when they are small can do every kind of work.'

' But surely education has some advantages ? '

' Your Honour's word is true. The son who is educated is better in matters of the brotherhood—for instance, when a visit of condolence has to be paid. He can tell stories, too, by which men's hearts are pleased.' This last is a fresh argument for education, and perhaps the most persuasive ; for what would life be if there were no stories ' by which men's hearts are pleased ' ? There was no general feeling against education. On the contrary, it was thought to be good, and for the usual reasons : one does not ' eat guile ', one may get service, and ' what does a person know who can neither read nor write ? '

Jalálpur is famous for its shrine (*roza*), and its dome can be seen for miles. The great grandfather of the present incumbent came here from Bokhara a century ago ; but it was the saintliness of his son, who died only thirteen years ago, which has made the sanctity of the spot and the fortune of the family. The dome was built to mark his grave, and now once a year, on the anniversary of his death, many thousand pilgrims visit the shrine.

### 30 *December.—Jalálpur to Daráp̂ur* (11 *miles*)

With no society to see on the way we did not start till after twelve. The road skirted the hills on one side and the wide almost empty bed of the Jhelum on the other, and at one or two points it touched the river itself, a sluggish shallow stream drained of all strength by the two great canals it feeds. A lame man came limping by on his way to pay his respects to the Pir of Jalálpur and present him with a rupee. Twice a year he does this. He was followed by a potter and his wife driving home a pregnant buffalo. When the great flood came, it swept away house and byre, and they handed over their buffalo to a relative, who agreed to look after her in return for a half share in her. This was assessed at Rs. 26 and had

just been paid. As at Amrila, the woman was quicker than the man with the story.

**Boy Scouts**

While we were talking to them, a gaily dressed boy in a blue puggaree and pink coat appeared on a pony, and as he was bound for Darápur, we went along together. Fifteen years old, he was at a High school, and in the ninth class; also a boy scout. Asked about the scout law, he said that his duties were to do good to 'the general public', give *izzat* to his father and mother, and pay *salaamat* (homage) to the King. I asked what good he had done to 'the general public'. His only answer was a sheepish smile. Not a single 'good deed' could he mention. 'What then do boy scouts do?' 'We drill, and salaam officers when they come to the school.' A few days ago I asked the same questions of a boy who had been a scout nearly a year, and all he could say was that he had been taught nothing. So far I have not been fortunate in my meetings with boy scouts;[1] and when I mentioned this to an Inspector of Schools he said that boys were often recruited by schoolmasters for inspection purposes only. Eyewash and whitewash, varnish and veneer—these vices ruin half the beneficent activities of the country.[2]

**Home-work**

At yesterday's meeting when we were discussing why peasant boys who went to school gave their fathers so little help in the fields, three reasons were mentioned: they were coddled by their parents (the same was said near Bhalwál); they thought too much of themselves, and they had too much home-work. I asked my young companion how he fared in this last respect. He replied that out of ten days' Christmas holiday he had been obliged to give up five days to home-work. Each day he got up at three and worked till nine, and again from eleven to three, that is to say for the better part of ten hours; he was wise enough to go to bed at eight. In his summer holidays, which last about seven weeks, his home-work took him a month. He added that about two-thirds of the boys at his school worked in this way. My companion said there was nothing exceptional in this and instanced his own boys. 'The number of books they bring back for home-work is larger than my whole library. But (he added with a laugh) they don't read them: they prefer to idle and be fined.' Wise boys, I thought, to prefer a fine to overwork. But

[1] Cf. *Rusticus*, 76, 167. It is fair to add that the 1932-3 *Report on Education in the Punjab* states that 'the record of social service rendered by the scouts at public functions and in fairs and festivals is remarkable' (p. 19).

[2] India is not the only country that suffers from this. Cf. Russia: 'It is excessively hard to disintegrate the positive achievements from the effects of the twin Russian vices of trying to rush things and "window-dressing"' (Wicksteed, *Ten Years in Soviet Moscow* (1933), 60).

one can well understand that those who do what they are told have no time or energy left for field-work, and that gradually they become divorced from the land.

An even greater defect is the way English is used in the secondary school as the medium of instruction. Both my companion and the boy agreed that this imposed a great strain upon the mind and that much of what was taught was not understood. They also agreed that in the lower forms the masters took little trouble to teach the boys, as they themselves examined them and could pass as many as they liked. The consequence is, when boys arrive in the upper classes, they know little and have great difficulty in keeping the pace.

Remembering what Mr. Brayne said about the village latrine, I asked the boy what was done at school to encourage their use.

**Sanitation**

A latrine is provided, but as the sweeper comes only once a day, its state is not pleasant. My companion said, that, when fresh from village life and its unsophisticated ways, he first stayed at an Indian hotel in town, he was horrified at the arrangements, and he added that hotel lavatories were still indescribably filthy.[1] I asked him whether he thought the village latrine pit would work in a country where people were happy-go-lucky and careless. He replied, that was just the question that people who discussed the proposal were asking themselves.

A surprising point in this connexion is that the village child is never taught to control itself in any way. Until it is of an age to observe the ways of its elders, it behaves like an untrained dog. The point arose from my asking my companion to explain the village woman's difficulty in keeping herself sufficiently clean to pray five times a day.[2] A mother always keeps her infant with her, generally in her arms, and as the napkin has not found its way into the village, accidents happen. Even in the households of educated zemindars no training is given. An important difference between English and Indian children is that the latter learn so little at home. He was surprised at the knowledge shown by Mr. Brayne's boy of nearly four when he questioned him yesterday. He answered questions which would have been too much for an Indian boy of twice his age.

**Infant training**

We had been meandering through a tangle of ravines and now came out on the open riverain, beautiful with sarkhanda grass and young wheat. To our left rose Tilla's sacred hill, high and lonely, and to our right across the river the glittering headworks of the Lower Jhelum canal. At

**Drawbacks of a canal**

[1] Russia appears to suffer from the same drawback, see Cicely Hamilton, *Modern Russia* (1934), 107, 185, 188; and Wicksteed, op. cit., 113.

[2] See p. 59.

Darápur I turned into the village unexpectedly. String beds were produced, and twenty members of the village banks soon collected. The president, a Janjua and an ex-Subedar, complained of the ill effects of the head-works, which held up a large volume of water. 'Thirty years ago no mosquitoes troubled us, but now when the wind blows from the river we cannot sleep, and fever afflicts us. Formerly there were 300 houses: now only 150. This year 16 have been born and 33 have died.' I called for the village watchman's book and found that it was so, and that all but one had died of fever.[1] A little of the great wealth brought by the canal might, I thought, have been spared to protect these people who have gained nothing but fever from it. There is, however, a dispensary only five miles away.

**A progressive soldier**

The Subedar is a thoroughly progressive soldier, and the second we have met in this district.[2] He left the army many years ago to cultivate his 400 acres. Two years later he sold all his jewellery and now deposits his savings with a co-operative bank on behalf of his wife and daughters.[3] Two years ago he introduced Virginian tobacco, getting his seed from Pusa,[4] and this year, on the advice of the Agricultural Department, he followed up with lucerne, berseem, and elephant grass. Unlike the other places visited in the district, the village has a number of up-to-date implements—2 Raja ploughs, 7 Mestons, 3 harrows, 2 hoes, and a chaff-cutter. It has also 15 three-quarter Merino rams, and their plump snow-white lambs show their value. The Subedar is a good example of what the true rural leader may do for a village, and at present it is this type that the province needs more than any other.

**Education and its difficulties**

The village is ahead in other ways. With 150 houses, it sends 95 boys and 30 girls to school. All present were in favour of education for girls, but many did not think it wise for them to be educated with the boys, for the reasons given three days ago. The Subedar saw no objection to it in the primary classes, and actually twenty boys and girls are taught together at the mosque. When I made the obvious remark, they said the school was different because several of the masters were young. There are 13 Hindu shopkeepers in the village, and though they would like their girls taught in Hindi or Sanskrit, they object to their being taught in Muslim-made Urdu. How difficult is the education of the masses in a country where boy and girl may not be educated together, where each religion gives its teaching in a different language, a language, too, that is either foreign, archaic or

[1] Cf. *Rusticus*, 71. [2] See p. 43. [3] Cf. p. 4.
[4] An important agricultural experimental station in Bihar.

dead,[1] and where the speech of the people changes so rapidly from tract to tract that education cannot be given to them in their mother tongue.

The village is owned by four landowners, and most of the cultivators are their tenants. What even a tenant can achieve in the way of material comfort was shown by one of the houses I visited. It was entirely *kacha*;[2] yet, but for the absence of windows, one could not have wished for a nicer abode, and the wide L shaped verandah in front gave it the charm that a loggia gives in Italy. The main room was as clean as could be and, following Gujrat fashion,[3] had a well-carved shelf running right round it, which was adorned with twenty-seven metal dishes and nine pottery plates. In an alcove were three shelves supporting a dozen empty wine bottles, and in a corner a new meat safe. An innovation, which I have seen only once before, was the use of two enormous wooden chests for grain. Their advantage is the greater security from weevil and the ease with which they can be moved into the sun during the rains when grain must be periodically dried. The house had cost Rs. 1,750; yet the owner had only a single plough and a 12 acre farm. But he had the second string without which no arable farmer with a small holding can readily prosper: he traffics in grain, fodder, and cattle. He is in fact the thrifty type of peasant which in Russia, under the name of Koolack, has been stamped out by the Revolution.[4] Although he had not troubled about ventilation—I have never seen a tenant who did—there are in the village 32 houses with windows and fourteen with ventilators. I was told again, as a score of times before, that it is the fear of thieves that makes houses windowless;[5] but so far none of these pioneers has suffered for his boldness.

**A tenant's house**

When I walked across the fields to the rest house, the golden sarkhanda grass was flooded with evening light, and as the sun set, the light passed into the sky above and turned to amber behind the purple hills.

*New Year's Eve.—Daráp̃ur to Jhelum* (23 *miles*)

A bitter cold morning, so cold that the peasants drew their white cotton shawls over head and shoulders. Even when the

[1] i.e. Arabic, old Punjabi, see p. 92 and Sanskrit.

[2] Applied to a house not made of stone or burnt bricks; the opposite of *pukka*.

[3] Gujrat is just across the river. In the Salt Range possessions are hung on the wall itself.

[4] Maurice Hindus, *Red Bread* (1931), 149, 163, 166-7.

[5] In 1933 I was told the same in a village in Central India.

Indian shivers, he keeps his inborn grace. We passed out into the open, on to the wheat-bearing plain, and there before us stood the Himályas in all their snowy splendour: a sight to catch the breath, and make one pause.

We stopped at a village to see a cattle-breeding society, and around us pressed an eager throng of humans and cattle. The cattle were of the northern Dhanni breed, a breed that recalls the Dutch Friesian and looks as if ink had been splashed over snowy flanks. The District Board has given the village a bull, which a villager looks after for Rs. 13 a month, but one is not enough as there are over 100 cows to be served. I strongly urged the purchase of a second, but this would mean some outlay by the villagers themselves. The only response, therefore, was polite acquiescence. A Muslim tract is much more favourable to cattle-breeding than a Hindu, where the cow is worshipped and cattle may not be slaughtered. North of the Jhelum, therefore, with 90 per cent of the people Muslim, cattle-breeding should be as easy as everywhere else it is difficult; for, except amongst the few Hindus, there is not the least prejudice against the sale to the butcher of infirm or aged stock, and it is even rare for a bullock or cow to be kept from affection after it is past work.[1] Nor does anyone object to either castration or inoculation on religious grounds. Even just across the Jhelum breeding is more difficult, since, by one of those differences which make this river a real boundary, to the north of it bulls are nearly always tied up, and to the south, according to Hindu custom, they are allowed to roam wherever they like. In the one case breeding can be controlled, and in the other, bulls cover as they please. The difference is of great importance in a country where cows are of all sorts and good bulls far too few.[2] Furthermore, if bulls are tied up, fees can be charged for their use and their number multiplied with the proceeds. This seems the obvious remedy for the present shortage, and if District Boards would apply it they could buy more bulls. Unfortunately, rule and routine block the way, and most people dismiss the proposal as impracticable. Yet those who keep buffaloes often charge a fee for their services.[3] To the Hindu there is something sacrilegious in doing this with a bull, and even the Sikh feels a strong scruple, but not the Muslim born in the north.

**Cattle-breeding**

Cattle-breeding on modern lines is so much more feasible in a Muslim than a Hindu tract that it seems a pity that so much more should have been done to develop it south of the Sutlej than north

[1] Cf. p. 180 and *Rusticus*, 62.
[2] See ibid., 104, 105.
[3] Cf. p. 158, n.3.

of the Jhelum. Till recently the Dhanni breed was almost entirely neglected in favour of that of Hissar,[1] and though undoubtedly the powerful Hissar-bred bullock is better suited to the heavier soils irrigated by canal and well, in these parts there is not a cultivator who does not prefer the quick light-footed Dhanni bullock for unirrigated land, where ploughing need not be deep but must be swift, lest precious moisture be lost.[2]

No one, not even a retired officer of the Veterinary Department who was present, could explain why bulls should be tied up on one side of the Jhelum and not on the other. One may guess that it is due to the Hindu origin of most of the tribes to the south ; and this, too, is probably the reason why across the river the Muslim Rajput and Gujar occasionally let the young bull of a good milch cow go free as an act of merit. This is an entirely Hindu custom, and both Rajput and Gujar were once Hindu.[3]

**Need milk be heated ?**

The most surprising difference north and south of the Jhelum is the way milk is treated. South of it, from Gujrat to Delhi and south-west to the borders of Sind, milk is kept simmering on a fire all day and vast quantities of cattle dung that should enrich the soil are used as fuel. This is considered an indispensable process. Yet to the north once the riverain is crossed, few heat their milk for more than an hour a day and many do not heat it at all. The reasons given for heating it are, firstly, it keeps it from going bad, to which the hot climate makes it prone ; secondly, it produces more buttermilk and *ghi*,[4] and thirdly, it gives them a more agreeable flavour. The last two points refer particularly to buffaloes, which are scarce in the dry stony north but abound elsewhere ;[5] and in general it may be said that milk, being less abundant in the north, is more quickly consumed, that cows there are kept mainly for breeding, and that the hot weather is shorter. But as against this, very little heating is done in the Bhakkar tahsil, which lies in the hot Indus valley opposite Dera Ismail Khan (in the hot weather the milk is kept cool by a covering of ash or sand moistened with water), and in the Mianwali tahsil, immediately to the north, heating is done not in the hot weather but in the cold. Further north still, in the Pindigheb tahsil (except in a small area[6]) no heating is done at all. The reason given me for this on the borders of the two tahsils is typical of India :

[1] In 1933, in the three southern districts of Hissar, Rohtak, and Gurgaon local bodies owned 1,828 stud bulls (all presumably of Hissar origin) as against 201 owned or subsidized in the three districts of the Dhanni tract (*Vety. Depart. Rpt.* (1932-3), viii).

[2] The point is developed on pp. 155-7.

[3] For this practice, see p. 180.

[4] Clarified butter.

[5] See p. 157.

[6] The Narára tract near Makhad.

the villagers were told by a pir, wiser though perhaps not more scientific than most, that heating would be bad for their cows!

As to the other arguments, an Inspector who lives in a central district says he has given up heating his milk and lost nothing by it; a landowner from Attock declares that when he visits his colony estate in Shahpur, his buttermilk and ghi are made from heated milk, and he can scarcely tell the difference; and the inhabitants of a village near here, who keep both buffaloes and cows, declare that they heat their milk for barely an hour, and in both cases the results are excellent. Surely then cattle should be allowed to put back into the soil what they take out of it, and if this were done, it would add more to the wealth of the province than a new canal.[1]

**Litigation**

At Sanghoi, having done thirteen miles on my mare, I continued the day's march in the servants' lorry. A little Hindu pleader in shabby European clothes got in too. He had just received a fee of Rs. 100 for defending an appeal in High Court at Lahore. The case, a civil one, was decided by the original court in January 1925, and now six years later, after the unfortunate manner of civil litigation in this province, for which the High Court is not responsible but which amounts almost to a denial of justice, it is to come up for hearing on January 12. When I deplored the fact that in these days of slump he should have to take such a large sum from a peasant, he said that he had persuaded him to drop two of his three cases. This was much to his credit, for the slump has hit his profession hard. It is not only that fees are lower—in this case the normal fee was Rs. 150—but cases are fewer. At Sargodha a pleader said that the income of the local bar had fallen by 50 per cent, and last month I was told much the same at Amritsar.

**Prices**

In this district there has been little occasion to mention the fall in prices, as it is much less felt here than in the colony tracts. There are three reasons for this. Military service brings in large sums—over thirteen lakhs (about £100,000) a year from pensions alone[2]—and these purchase more than they did. With no canal, there is no water rate to pay, and the land revenue is light, having been last fixed in the nineties when prices were as low as they are now.[3] The district lacks

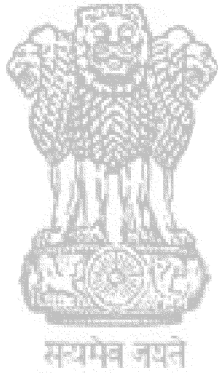
[1] Cf. *Rusticus*, 356, and *Village Survey*, No. 3, 179, where it is calculated that 'about 42 per cent of the best manure of the village (Tehong in Jullundur) is burnt.'

[2] *Punjab Banking Enquiry Comtee. Rpt.*, 1930, p. 362.

[3] The land revenue is periodically revised, district by district, largely on the basis of existing prices. For the ten years ending 1895 the price of wheat in the Pind Dadan Khan tahsil, through which we have been passing, averaged just under Rs. 2 a maund (*Assess. Rpt.*, 1898, 4): for its present price, see p. 2.

water but not cash, and at present, for most, cash is the scarcer of the two.

We were now lurching across wide sandy torrent beds, and as we approached Jhelum the Himalayas became more and more distinct, and their snowy far-flung line, crowned by the Pir Panjál, spread northwards and southwards along the blue horizon. From their midst issues the river whose passage Alexander forced, almost at this spot, in the heat and flood of May. His victory over ' Porus Maharáj ' is still remembered, and by some (on the left bank) he is spoken of as a *'paighambar'* or messenger from God. A few hours in the Calcutta mail, and we were once more in Lahore.



# PART II: SOUTHWARDS

## CHAPTER V

## RAVI TO SUTLEJ[1]

### THE SIKH JAT—THRIFT, EDUCATION AND VIOLENCE

*19 January, 1931.—Lahore to Attari*

THIS time southwards, our bourne Delhi. The first twenty miles were done in a car along the Grand Trunk Road, the road that runs from Calcutta to Kabul. Passing Shalamar and its ancient Moghul garden, all mango groves, fountains and flowers, we became involved in a ceaseless stream of lorries plying between Amritsar and Lahore. The road was pleasanter in the days of Kim, and though it was then untarred, it could not have been dustier, for, as lorry met lorry, both were forced on to the mealy, earthy tracks on either side and the air became thick as London fog. I was bound for Vanieke to see the beginnings of an experiment in rural reconstruction just started by the Y.M.C.A. In appearance the village is typical of the central Punjab, which means that there are thousands like it. Dung heaps surround it, and dung cakes, like large Bath buns, trellis the flat-topped roofs. The houses are of clay and many are crumbling. Here and there a red brick mansion rises arrogantly above its neighbours, one the zaildar's, another the goldsmith's. But mansion, house, and hovel are jumbled together in democratic confusion with less plan and design than a touring officer gives to a day's encampment, and no one looking down upon the mud-pie mass could suppose that men have lived there continuously for generations.

**A typical village**

But the village has one unusual feature, a twelve-sided keep, romantic as a Peel tower in the Scottish borders and once serving the same purpose. Built ninety years ago for the son of one who had shared Ranjit Singh's bed but not his throne, it has a dark dungeon-like room below with arched recesses and walls 6 feet thick, and airy rooms above

**A Y.M.C.A. experiment**

[1] Rainfall about 20 inches.

looking out upon battlements and the empty plain. It has now been converted into a Y.M.C.A. centre, and from it, as from a lighthouse in the dark, radiate the energy and faith by which it is hoped to lift the village on to a higher plane. It will be no easy task, for the village has a bad reputation even for the Manjha,[1] on the edge of which it stands. There are four factions in the village, and so bitterly opposed that they will not attend each other's weddings, and every year it is the scene of murder. Even as we looked down from the battlements, a pony entered the lane below bearing on its back a goldsmith who had recently had the narrowest squeak: an enemy struck at him with a sword as he slept, but in the dark hit the wall beside him and only grazed his skull. There has not been time for the Y.M.C.A. to do much, but a small playground has been made and the youth of the village is learning to play volley ball. After peace, England's greatest boon to India is games, and it is hoped that in time this will distract the village from its feuds. Meanwhile it is of happy omen that every day the village waterman gives the playground a skinful of water without charge.[2]

**A devoted missionary**

From Vanieke we went on to see a remarkable missionary settlement, which for many years has been trying to improve the conditions of the village woman round Asrapur. Even the bitterest critics of Christian missions (generally those who know them least) can hardly doubt that the missionary doctor is an asset to this greatly under-doctored country, and when the doctor is a woman, she is always a godsend and sometimes a saint. This is the case at Asrapur, where an Indian lady, small in stature but big in heart, runs a woman's hospital and also a school for girls and small boys. It is forty years since Miss Bhose went there for her health. 'When I had been here fifteen days,' she told me, 'I felt I could stand it no longer, it was so tedious. Yet after fifteen years I felt I had only just begun to know the village'—weighty words to be pondered by those who think they know the Indian peasant. One of Miss Bhose's best services to the neighbourhood is the training of ordinary village midwives—women of such humble castes as weaver, cobbler,

[1] The tract lying between the Grand Trunk Road, the Sutlej and the Beas, and embracing most of the districts of Amritsar and Lahore. Its correct name is Majha, but Manjha has long since passed into official publications.

[2] The work still continues, with a young Indian graduate in charge. Much use is made of local panchayats, which generally meet once a week and settle disputes on the lines described below (p. 138 ff). Village games are also promoted, and in Vanieke itself a night school has been started for adults and a small library opened (1934).

waterman, and sweeper. Over twenty villages benefit, and last year the 600 children born in them were brought into the world at the cost of only three lives as against a Census average of eight. The result is a strong demand for trained women.

Another enterprise is the starting of two co-operative societies, one for women, the other for the school-children. I was taken to the school to see them, and on entering it I felt at once the presence of modesty and grace; also of mischief, for in front were rows of children with bright impish eyes. The members of the women's society, hospital nurse and servant, teacher and peasant wife, were seated behind, all in Indian dress. No dress, east or west, is more beautiful, and when, as in one instance to-day, it is the adornment to intelligence, simplicity and beauty, the effect is ravishing. The twenty or thirty members have already saved Rs. 2,000, and two recently helped their husbands to pay their land revenue.[1] One contributed Rs. 200, and her husband was so pleased that he raised her monthly contribution to the society from five to ten rupees. The peasant's wife with little income of her own perforce depends upon her husband for most of her contribution. But she is not entirely without resource, for any milk and ghi sold are her perquisite, and no doubt she draws occasionally upon the household store of grain, which she usually controls. In any case the idea of thrift is put into her head, and it is the idea she needs most. It is the same with the children. Their society is a very new and miniature affair, but it is a first lesson in the handling of money. Some of the members put by as much as a rupee a month, but most only a few annas. The president is a boy of ten, and the treasurer a girl of the same age. The treasurer's functions are nominal, but the president signs all entries in pass-books.[2] The school has as many girls as boys, and though some of the boys are eleven or twelve years old, there have been no difficulties, despite the Salt Range verdict that small boys are often evil.[3] The success of the women's society is bound up with Miss Bhose, and when she went off to Europe for a holiday, members began withdrawing their money. In this country, as has already been noted,[4] there is nearly always some personality behind any outstanding achievement.

**Thrift for woman and child**

The Manjha is notorious for the toughness and brutality of its inhabitants, who are mostly Sikh Jats. 'I doubt,' says a

[1] There are now thirty-six members and in eleven years they have accumulated Rs. 5,900 (1933).

[2] There are now thirty members and in three years Rs. 690 has been saved. There are four other societies in the province (1933).

[3] p. 60.

[4] p. 43.

Settlement Officer, 'if there is any other tract in the province where there are more crimes of violence, more contempt for law and order, or more indulgence in strong drink.'[1] This is variously explained. One zemindar says that the people have always been lawless and men for a feud, another that there is a peculiar strength in Manjha wheat, and a third, with undoubted truth, that it is largely the effect of prosperity and idleness.[2] All agree that the brutality is there, and a zemindar remarked that the people think no more of cutting off a person's head than of slicing a carrot. This explains the forty-four murders that took place in the district last year[3] and episodes like that of the Vanieke goldsmith: also the following story told by Miss Bhose. Two headmen were at feud, and one of them, after getting his rival nearly murdered, contrived things so craftily that ten men got penal servitude though only three were guilty. This would have satisfied most, but not a Manjha Jat. One day chance brought his rival's sweeper, a mere stripling, to his door. Though the quarrel was only with his master, he caught him and tied him by the feet to the branch of a tree, and called to his wife to heat the family tongs. They were flat-sided, and next day when Miss Bhose saw the burns on his buttocks, they measured six inches by four. So great was the fear the headman inspired that few would give evidence against him: he had a friend, too, in the local police-station. Fortunately those above became aware of this, and he has just been sentenced to eighteen months' imprisonment.

**The village brute**

Within the school-house all was innocence and beauty, and these are the doings without. But within was the religion of peace and goodwill, and the influence of a gracious presence. Even without there is more goodwill than one would suppose. It is surprising, Miss Bhose said, how well the Manjha Jat looks after his wife. She could think of only one case in which a sick wife was left to come to hospital alone. When a wife is ill, her husband makes every possible arrangement for her comfort, and in serious cases the men, being more intelligent, make much better nurses than the women. The desire not to lose a valuable possession, for which money has often been paid, may explain this solicitude, but not, Miss Bhose said, the evident kindness in nursing. It is significant, however, that little care is spent upon the sick widow. The practice of wife-beating (rare

**Treatment of wives**

[1] *Assess. Rpt.*, 17.

[2] Cf. *Peasant*, 237.

[3] In 1932 the number was forty-seven, and in only two districts was it greater. In each of the 3 years ending 1932 it was greatest in Lahore, which is also part of the Manjha.

enough now) coming into my mind, I remarked that I had often heard it said that, in spite of being beaten, women had the upper hand. 'Yes,' she replied, 'they say to me: "for every beating we give them with a stick, they give us twenty with the tongue."' But apparently most couples live together very contentedly, and in the village she knows best, where there are eighty houses, there is only one couple that does not get on.

**A village church**

Every village, certainly every village with little or no education, should have a religious centre where touch can be maintained with spiritual forces. Here there is a church, and it is in keeping with its surroundings. Built many years ago by a Financial Commissioner, who became a missionary, it is well suited to a faith born of peasants. All its adornments, including the cross on the altar, have been made locally. There are no chairs, only a few low wicker stools; for, as is their wont at home, most sit on the floor, the women on one side and the men on the other. There are 1,200 Christians scattered in the villages round, and on Christmas Day the wide nave and transept were thronged.

**A new pir**

On our way to Attári we passed the shrine of a new pir, who died only four months ago.[1] Such was Pir Ahmed Shah's reputation that people brought him their troubles and ailments to heal and came even from such cities as Lahore and Amritsar. His ways were different from those of ordinary men. One who knew him described him as possessed by the Spirit[2] and holding aloof from men, helping some and reproaching others. 'He spoke no serious word (*sanjidah bat*),' said one, 'but he was a great saint (*aulia*).' His end was as striking as his life. The village pond of Ranike, where he lived, was being filled up, and though apparently in good health, he announced that he would die on the day on which the work was completed. When the news spread, 2,000 (said one who was present) came to behold the event. And a week before the crisis, when a sick woman begged him to intercede for her with Heaven that she might not die, he replied: 'I shall die before you: the day is at hand.' And so it happened. On the fifteenth day from his announcement he died, and to this day there has been nothing to account for it.[3] This is enough to establish his sanctity for generations, and there will certainly be an annual fair on the day of his death, and ten or twenty years hence a fine

[1] Cf. *Rusticus*, 147, 268.

[2] The word used was 'mast', which in this sense—it has a more common significance—implies absorption in the divine so complete as to exclude all consciousness of the material world.

[3] I have recently made further enquiries on this point and find that there is still no explanation (1934).

shrine, such as we saw at Jalalpur,[1] will doubtless rise over his tomb. Already a lamp swings above it, and festoons of flowers wave in the wind.[2] 'Pirs don't fly, but their disciples make them fly,' said one of my companions, quoting a sceptical Persian proverb;[3] and in more serious vein he added that a holy man is revered by all, whether Hindu, Muslim, or Sikh. The feeling for religion is the sacred thread that all India wears.[4] But it is sometimes badly twisted.

### 20 *January.—Attâri to Kasel* (12 *miles*)

**Education and the peasant**

To-day we were in the saddle again, and the trek southwards began. The sky was grey and soon turned to rain, and as it was the first rain since September, there was deep-felt satisfaction. 'Every drop,' said one who rode with me, 'is a grain of gold,' and when we reached Bhakna Kalán, the village of our inspection, pretty well soused, we were received with smiling faces and much congratulation upon having brought the longed-for rain. In India the very elements are made to yield their quota of compliment to those who are credited with power. We foregathered in a large covered gateway at the entrance to the village, where men gather in the evening to talk. Nearly all were Sikhs, as the rows of beards showed; such beards and such variety—shaggy, fluffy, dishevelled; sprouting, flowing, overflowing; combed and uncombed, curled and uncurled, jet black and snowy white. Of the sixty persons present twenty-one were literate, but only eight had been to school. The others had learnt to read and write Gurmukhi[5] at the local Gurdwára. Although there has been a Primary school here for over fifty years, 60 per cent of the boys of school-going age do not go to school at all. A recent visit from an important official led to the signing of a petition for compulsory education, but our talk to-day made me doubt whether this was inspired by more than a desire to placate authority. 'We are too poor to send our sons to school,' said a zemindar speaking for the rest; 'we cannot do without their help. They keep watch over the crops, they take the cattle out, and chop fodder for them, and sit on the driver's seat (*gaddi*) at the Persian wheel. But when they are at school they bring home so much work, that they cannot work for us. Their eyes do not look our way. And when they have been at school some time, they become weak and cannot work as we do.' 'Here

[1] p. 68.

[2] An annual fair is held at the pir's shrine and attended by about 3,000 people (1933).

[3] *Piran nami parand, mureedan mi paranand.*

[4] Cf. *Rusticus*, 131.

[5] The Punjabi script, of Sanskritic origin.

are two zemindars,' said another, pointing to two young men; 'one has read and the other has not; but the one who has read cannot possibly do as much work as the other.' The impeachment passed without protest and recalled the feeling expressed in the Jhelum riverain.[1] Of the eight who had been at school only three are actually cultivating and their farming is no better than anybody else's. Indeed, one person stated emphatically that those who had not been to school farmed best as they could work harder. Although there are 300 houses in the village and the school has been there so long, there is not a single improved implement of any kind, and no one has ever troubled to get selected seed. Yet Amritsar is only nine miles away.

*21 January.—Kasel to Tarn Taran* (14 *miles*)

'Why so late with chota haziri?' I asked my bearer this morning. 'The fast has begun and I got up at four to eat; this made me a little lazy.' This is the ideal month for Ramzán: the days are short and the cold too great for thirst.

**Congress and a flag-march**

We had not gone very far on our road when we became involved in the army. About 500 men, some British, some Indian, are doing a flag-march through this part of the country to remind possible law-breakers that there are those who will deal with them if necessary. The lesson is needed; for last summer, when Congress was at open war with Government and making every effort to persuade the peasant not to pay rent or land revenue, five or six Sikh villages in this district, misled for the most part by Hindu traders, became infected with the foolish propaganda, and some arrests had to be made. The same thing happened in Sheikhupura and Gujranwala.[2] '*Lala-log*',[3] as the Hindu intelligentsia of the town are familiarly called in the village, told the Sikh peasant that it was 'Gandhi-ji's'[4] order that no land revenue should be paid. The Muslim peasant paid little heed, but in about fifteen villages Sikh Jats (Viraks), who have strong Hindu affinities, were led astray and a number had to go to jail.[5] It is significant that only one of these villages had a

[1] p. 68.

[2] The districts of chapter i.

[3] Literally 'Mister-folk', *Lala* being a common Hindu equivalent for Mister, and *log* a colloquialism for people.

[4] '*Ji*' is virtually 'Mr.'

[5] In Sheikhupura arrests had to be made in only 2 or 3 of the 8 or 9 villages affected. In Gujranwala 6 villages were affected and 49 persons (only 7 Muslims) were prosecuted and convicted. Another 31 were let off on tendering an apology (information kindly supplied by the Deputy Commissioners concerned).

co-operative society, and that the society was in a Muslim quarter, which was not affected. With its training in elementary economics and its gospel of goodwill, Co-operation is the best antidote to agitation of this kind, and it cannot be doubted that last year the 20,000 societies of the province had a sedative effect upon the village and helped to prevent any general spread of the lawlessness which troubled many towns.

All along our road were groups of cheerful peasants and retired soldiers with medalled breasts waiting to see the troops march past. At one village the boys of the High school were drawn up in rows with a tiny Union Jack in each hand, which they waved rhythmically to the sound of a gramophone as the armed ranks went by. As is so often the case in the Salt Range, the army has been the making of this village. In the war over 100 went to the front, and now Rs. 7,000 a year are paid in pensions.[1]

From Manan, where we saw several different types of society,[2] we came along the best of all roads for horsemen—a good unmetalled road. In Moghul days it was the Grand Trunk road from Delhi to Kabul, and some of the old milestones, pillars of masonry that none could miss, still stand. Almost everyone we met salaamed, and it was difficult to believe that a few months ago people were mocking officials and the followers of Government with shouts of 'son of a toady' and refusing to pay land revenue. The sun had set when a succession of orchards, a leper asylum, and a High school ushered us into Tarn Taran, a townlet of 10,000 inhabitants with a Sikh shrine, whose minaret-shaped tower proclaims one of the sacred spots of Sikhism.

*23 January.—Halt*

**Thrift in a town**

Our chief concern to-day was thrift, and it is India's chief economic need. But not all in this country are thriftless. The tailor of Bhera and his sewing machine returns to mind,[3] and there is the bania or Hindu trader, who is as thrifty as any class in the world. He is an expert in the art of day to day saving, done generally for the education or marriage of a child. To see how he does it, we paid a visit to the bazaars of Tarn Taran—winding lanes where the petty shopkeeper squats all day and well into the night in narrow shallow shops surrounded by wares of a Woolworth cheapness. The first person

[1] The whole district receives eight lakhs (£60,000) in pensions (*Pb. Bkg. Enqy. Rpt.*, 362).

[2] Banks, Cattle-breeding, and Land Revenue Redemption societies (see p. 125).

[3] p. 35.

we spoke to, a grocer, kept an ordinary metal money-box for his children. The next was a chemist, who had hanging on his wall a roughly made wooden box, eight inches by six, with a slit at the top for coin. He told us how every day he had put in something against the day of his daughter's marriage. After five years he unscrewed the top—it was too roughly made for a lock—and counted out Rs. 900, a large sum but an average of only eight annas a day. We next visited the house of a piece-goods merchant. Passing through a little rubbish-littered courtyard, which seemed a meeting-place for all the smells of the town, we climbed up an unsavoury corkscrew staircase to a small room on the second floor. There, almost out of reach, we saw a slit in the plastered wall, and the merchant said that every month he put ten rupees into it to provide for the marriage of a tiny daughter, who just came up to my knees. Ten years hence there will be a wedding in the best traditional style, and not an anna borrowed. In the opposite wall was another slit for the merchant's son. The walls are used and not the floor, as the floor is of cement. Account is kept of all that goes in, and when three or four hundred rupees have been saved, the amount is taken out and lent against jewellery—never against personal security—and the interest earned is added to the store. The merchant said that in many towns shopkeepers save in this way, and my enquiries confirm this, but the practice is giving way to the more modern habit of deposit. This is markedly the case in Tarn Taran, where a highly successful co-operative Banking Union, whose president, the best type of Sikh soldier, inspires unusual confidence, has done much to popularize investment and has attracted nearly six lakhs (£45,000) in deposits, including Rs. 70,000 of small savings deposits.

As we saw a few days ago,[1] co-operation is doing its best to encourage thrift amongst women as well as men. Here there are thrift societies for both; one for the teachers of a High school, and the other for the women on the staff of the Leper Asylum. All the members are Christians, and several are daughters of lepers and teachers in the leper school.[2] The tending of the leper is one of the most merciful tasks undertaken by missionaries in India, and it is done on the most merciful lines. Lepers are allowed to keep their children till the age of three and after that to see them once a week. In this way touch is maintained between parent and child and the taint rarely communicated.[3]

[1] p. 79.

[2] In four years twenty-nine women accumulated Rs. 3,000 in monthly subscriptions of Rs. 1 to 10.

[3] In 1931 there were 1,853 lepers in the Punjab (*Census Rpt.*).

The day ended with a party given in honour of the 'Army', who marched in this morning 550 strong. We were treated to a lively dialogue à la Plautus between two rapscallions acting the parts of master and servant, the master armed with a tawse and plying it almost incessantly upon the half naked body of the servant to the rapture of the Indian audience, and the two for nearly an hour keeping up an unflagging patter in mockery of us all—police, kazis,[1] banias, mullahs, rajputs, rulers, with a most disarming humour and zest. Like the Frenchman, the Indian is a born actor.

*23 January.—Tarn Taran to Sirhâli (12 miles)*

A gathering of fifty to-day in the school-house at Nowshera for the usual bank inspection. Four or five retired officers sat on chairs, and the rest squatted thickly on the floor, beard by beard. More beards filled the doorway and the open windows. The atmosphere was unmistakably Sikh, and that is the livest thing to be had in the Punjab village. Sixteen of those present were more or less literate in Urdu, and five more could read and write Gurmukhi. Nine had served in the army, and the moving spirit was an old but vigorous cavalry officer, a Risaldar, and with him were two more retired officers, both of whom—be it said to their credit—cultivate their lands themselves. The secretary was also unusual, a Brahmin who was both farmer and grain-dealer. One of the banks had been so successful in attracting deposits (Rs. 8,000) that, unlike most village banks, it had not had to borrow from a central bank. Five of the depositors were women—some had sold their jewellery and deposited the proceeds—and there were two women members, one the Risaldar's wife, and the other the water-man's: features which are characteristic of the practical democratic spirit of the Sikhs, and of their liberal attitude towards women.

**Wisdom and waste**

The members varied greatly in intelligence. Discipline, authority, and experience had made the ex-officers sage. A Jat who had studied in the Khalsa College school was also intelligent. But at the other end were some typical village idiots. One, who owned only 12 acres, admitted having recently borrowed Rs. 400 from a money-lender at 37½ per cent, on top of a loan of Rs. 300 from the bank, to celebrate his second marriage with a dead brother's wife—a type of marriage that can be done, without breach of custom, at little cost. Acting like thousands of others, men insufficiently taught or too easy-going, he went to the money-lender after exhausting his credit with the bank, and he is now entangled for life. Another member confessed to having borrowed Rs. 300 at 36 per

[1] Interpreters of Muslim law.

cent. He, too, had cracked his credit with the bank, which refused him all further accommodation until he repaid part of its dues. Neither of these was educated. The effect of education was seen in the Khalsa College alumnus. He cultivates 30 acres and said that, if he had more money of his own, he could farm on more modern lines, but he hesitates to borrow, which he could easily do, since crops often go wrong and defeat the most earnest intention to repay. He was, in fact, that uncommon Indian peasant type, a farmer who wants money for development. On leaving school, having failed to matriculate, he became a clerk, but after a year or two he wisely decided to farm and has done so ever since; and he now has a Meston plough and grows Molisoni cotton, Coimbatore cane (No. 223), and Punjab 8 A wheat.

**Influence of the army**

The influence of the army was seen in the attitude towards poultry and vegetables. South of the Ravi, most zemindars think it derogatory to keep poultry at all; but eight of those present, amongst them the Risaldar, have started keeping them, as sensible smallholders do everywhere. The general prejudice against the growing of vegetables is also weakening. 'We saw very good men growing them in France,' said one who had fought there; 'and the thought came to us, why is it shame to grow them here?' If there is any shame left, it should soon melt away, for vegetables are now grown by the schoolboys on the farm attached to the local Middle school.[1]

**School and land**

The school farm represents an interesting experiment. After the war, largely as the result of Mr. Calvert's[2] vigorous pen and Sir George Anderson's[3] broadminded understanding of village conditions, the educational authorities began to realize that the type of education being given to the peasant was divorcing him from the land. A certain number of secondary schools, therefore, were equipped with small farms and many more with school gardens.[4] The one here has 4 acres, and is worked entirely by the boys in the middle classes of the school. There are 78 boys and all, irrespective of caste, have to work for 40 minutes a day on the farm. Their elders thought that this kept them in touch with farming and their muscles up to farming strength.

[1] The position in regard to poultry is summed up on p. 179. As to vegetables, see pp. 169-70 and *Rusticus*, 354.

[2] Mr. H. Calvert, C.S.I., C.I.E., lately Financial Commissioner, Punjab.

[3] Sir George Anderson, C.I.E., lately Director of Public Instruction, Punjab, and now Educational Commissioner with the Government of India.

[4] In 1933 there were '87 farms and 104 garden plots attached to High and Middle schools' (*Pb. Educ. Rpt.*, 16).

'The shopkeeper's boy,' said one, 'squats all day and grows weak.' Some said, however, that education had a weakening effect upon the body. The Khalsa College Jat did not deny this, and when I asked which was the better for the peasant, the army or the school, he said: 'The army makes a boy punctual, up-to-date, and strong; the school makes him punctual, up-to-date, and weak': to which all assented. At the same time he maintained that education and farming went well together and said that it was another Khalsa College boy who first started him on improved implements and seed. The boy was only 'Middle-pass', and up to that standard education is all to the good. It is the boy that goes through the High school who will not return to the village if he can help it.[1] One reason for this is that those who return are regarded by the village as failures. 'Here's sport for the gods,' says the proverb, 'a man who has learnt Persian and sells oil.'[2] One of my companions tells me that after he became a B.A. he used to be laughed at for ploughing. This attitude is well-nigh universal in the village.[3]

**The peasant proprietor's one-sidedness**

In the Muslim north the peasant proprietor will turn his hand to almost any means of making a living. As we go south and approach Hindu India, the influence of caste makes itself felt, and zemindars are inclined to hold aloof from men of other occupations and keep more closely to themselves. This tendency is most noticeable in this tract, and is perhaps accentuated by the large villages, of which there are many with two and even three thousand inhabitants; for men are ever more exclusive when they congregate together in large numbers.[4] The Manjha Jat will not work on road or canal or take up any trade or craft. A zemindar, he thinks, must be a zemindar and if he works with his hands at anything but farming he will lose caste. Though there are signs of change, particularly where there are returned emigrants, 90 per cent are still of this way of thinking. The Risaldar has been at great pains to get those who have too little land to take to some trade or craft but all in vain. Another intelligent Sikh at Tarn Taran said much the same, and yesterday's headmaster told me that when with some difficulty he got scholarships for three of his boys at a Government weaving school, they refused to take them up.

The sun was low in a cloud-laden sky when we set off to do the few remaining miles. We met a thin old man with a white beard

[1] Cf. p. 31, 32.

[2] *Vekho Rab di Khel, parhe Farsi veche tel* (Punjabi).

[3] Cf. *Rusticus*, 57.

[4] Cf. Rohtak, where villages are also large (p. 179).

running, shoes in hand,[1] beside a man on a pony. We asked him why he made such haste. 'I have still four *kos* (six miles) to go and it will soon be dark.' He feared to be on the road alone after dusk. The road was unmetalled but well lined with trees and wide enough for fifty soldiers to march abreast. On both sides the country stretched away in a dead monotony of flatness, and the widely scattered trees all lopped and windowed, mocked the eye in its search for repose or beauty. There was no lack of cultivation, but it was of the dull routine kind—fodder, wheat, and rape. In the dullest landscape, however, beauty lurks, and here it lay in the leafless russet-brown cotton stalks, which stood ready for the sickle and the burning.

24 *January.—Halt*

*Basantpanchmi*[2] and according to Hindu reckoning the first day of spring. But this morning there was no touch of spring in the air: a thunderstorm with heavy rain had left behind a soppy world and a leaden sky.

**The Jat at his worst**

Sirháli is a townlet of over 5,000 inhabitants, and as one approaches it two things are conspicuous—the mansions of the Brahmin money-lenders and the dung-heaps of the Jat zemindars. Has any place of human habitation ever generated so much dung? The entrances were blocked, the ways lined, the open spaces piled with it, and after the rain it spread like a flood towards the very gates of the mansions. The lanes were worse: the rain had turned their hard sun-baked lumps and ruts to soft clotting mud. We sleeched through all this to a small courtyard packed with zemindars and infested with flies. We spent two restless hours there trying to hold our own with the flies and intelligible converse with the zemindars, who were mostly Sikh Jats. In this tahsil the Manjha Jat 'is to be found at his best and at his worst'.[3] Yesterday he was at his best, to-day at his worst. The president could hardly answer a question, and sitting near me on the floor was a handsome-featured man with the sour, scornful, sinister expression of the political assassin. To every question he replied with a sulk that he knew nothing. The treasurer and a few others knew something, but most had no more life or wit than buffaloes. Only one had heard there were such persons as Ministers, yet a Minister of several years' standing lives less than ten miles away. No one had heard of the Round Table

[1] Cf. 'I caught up with a bare-footed boy who was carrying his shoes peasant-fashion on a stick slung over his shoulders' (Hindus, *Red Bread*, 134).

[2] The Hindu May Day or spring festival.

[3] *Tarn Taran Assess. Rpt.*, 17.

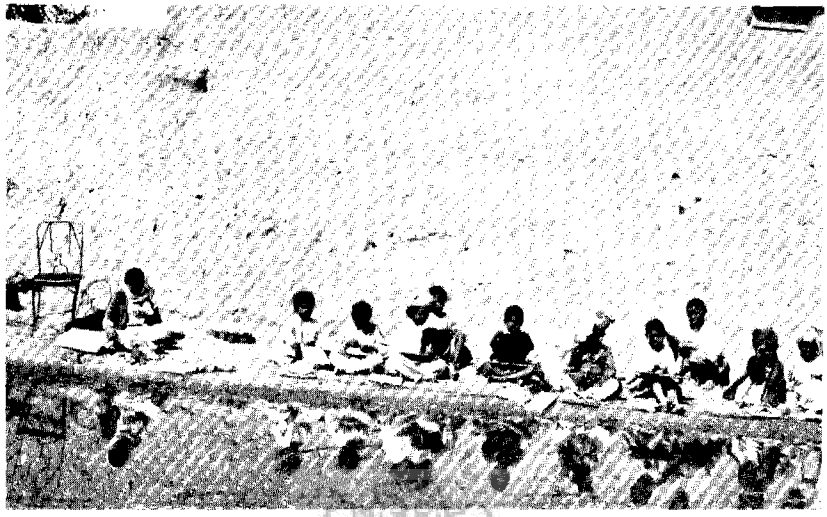
Conference, and when asked about the judicial system, someone remarked: 'The money-lenders know: what do we know?' It is significant that only three had served in the army and only six claimed to be literate. The latter was surprising as there is a high school here.

Their agriculture is on a par with all this. The fodder-chopper is known, but not the iron plough, and in Sirhâli only two have harrows. No one has tried any of the improved varieties of seed or crop, and only one of those present keeps poultry. When I asked whether this was out of regard for their izzat, a voice from behind called out: 'It is because of the cat.' The canal water was said to be inadequate; yet, though the water level is only 26 feet down, no one has sunk a well for many years. 'A well costs Rs. 1,000 and where are we to get this?' I suggested an advance from Government, but no one knew it was possible. Inertia lay upon their minds like the dung upon their waste places. But there was one sign of grace: a Jat said he had started growing potatoes, the result of seeing them on the farm attached to the high school, and others are doing the same.

**A Sikh High school**

In the evening I visited the high school, a Sikh institution, and with the clean open country round it, it was a life-giving contrast to the dungy mud-clotted atmosphere of the morning. The headmaster is a firm believer in self-help and, following the methods of a well-known and most successful English principal,[1] whose pupil he was at the Khalsa College, he has got a brick-kiln entirely cleared by his 350 boys and its site added to the 8 acre school-farm. They have also drained and filled up a pond and converted it into a playing ground for volley-ball, and they provide about a quarter of the labour required for the farm. Remembering the heavy tale of work described by the high school boy we met in the Jhelum riverain,[2] I enquired about the boys' time-table. For the boarders in the top class it is as follows. They get up at 5 and after one and a half hours' 'prep', bathe, dress, and attend the Gurdwára[3] for half an hour. This is followed by twenty minutes' drill, breakfast, and half an hour's leisure, from which the more zealous will steal a little extra time for work. At 9.30 there are prayers, after which school begins. This goes on, with half an hour's break, till 4 or 4.30. Then comes the hour for games—hockey, football, etc.—which all can play as there are spacious playgrounds. Evening service, which takes the best part of an hour, and supper follow; after which there is another and

[1] Mr. G. A. Wathen, C.I.E.
[2] p. 69.
[3] The Sikh temple.



AN ALFRESCO VILLAGE SCHOOL

THE MID-DAY MEAL—CHUPATIS

[face p. 91

even longer ' prep ' from 7.30 to 10, and finally the boys go to bed for a brief seven hours' sleep before starting another ten-hour day.

**Home-work**

There is nothing exceptional in this. Another headmaster of the district says that throughout the year the boys in the top class average ten hours a day ' to make certain of matriculating ', and their average age is only sixteen. In the lower classes things are not much better owing to the amount of ' prep ' or home-work done. This varies with the idiosyncrasy of both master and boy, and the headmaster just quoted says the average is as follows:

| Classes | Hours a day |
|---|---|
| High school .. .. .. .. | 3 to 4 |
| Upper Middle .. .. .. .. | 2 to 3 |
| Lower Middle .. .. .. .. | 1½ to 2 |

Two other headmasters of the district mentioned even longer hours. All this follows a long enough day in school, 10 to 4.30 in the cold weather and 7 to 12 in the hot, with a short break. This is bad enough, but what seems outrageous is that the home-work goes on through the holidays. The high school boys then average three hours a day, summer, winter, and spring, and what this means has already been recorded.[1] The boys in the Upper Middle have an hour less, and those in the Lower Middle get off with an hour a day, bad enough for boys who have worked hard all through the term. A former principal of the Khalsa College says that parents often complained to him that their boys would not help them in their work ; and it is self-evident that for boys in the upper classes field-work is out of the question. For others, too, it must be difficult, especially when, as often happens, the home-work has to be squeezed into the hours of daylight for want of a lamp after dark.

**Under-feeding**

The burden of home-work presses with special severity upon boys who live three or four miles from school and who have to plod in and out on foot, because they are too poor to become boarders or buy bicycles. Round Tarn Taran 50 or 60 are in this case, and as we rode in the other evening we met groups of them on their way home. It was after 5.30, and they still had a mile or two to go. And then the cursed home-work. One group said this would take two hours, another three. And this is not their only trial. For those who live within two miles of school the daily walk to and fro is good exercise in the cold weather and no great hardship in the hot ; but if an extra mile or two has to be done both ways, the strain upon the body in the hot weather must make it difficult for the mind to learn. From April to October a boy is up at 5.30, and after no more than a cup of buttermilk he

[1] p. 69.

must be off by 6 to be in time for school at 7. He takes his morning meal with him, probably no more than unleavened bread smeared with ghi, and upon that, with a snack of gram or sweetmeat in the afternoon, he subsists until the evening, for it is too hot to return to his village in the middle of the day. Even in the cold weather when school does not being till 10, conditions are not very healthy. True, he will have a meal before he leaves, but he is certain to be in a hurry and bolt what he eats, and the thought of school is not likely to sharpen his appetite. This would matter less if, like the English schoolboy, he could look forward to a good meal in the middle of the day. But he cannot afford this. A headmaster tells me that he arranged a hot meal for those who were willing to pay the modest charge of four annas a month, but most preferred to save the charge and depend upon an odd bit of bread saved from breakfast or a mouthful of not very wholesome sweetmeat. Another headmaster arranged with a confectioner to provide each boy with a half-anna meal—some gur, laddu,[1] jalebi,[1] or gram[2]—but when he left, the arrangement lapsed. A further point is that peasant diet is at the mercy of circumstances: when the buffalo goes dry, there is no milk; when crops fail, rations must be reduced; and now, with the fall in prices, more milk and ghi have to be sold. Small wonder that with so much to handicap him an educated boy cannot vie with an uneducated in the field. One remedy for this is physical training, and its general introduction into the school curriculum is one of the best things educationists have done since the war.

**The Granth Sahib**

But to return to the high school. We visited the Gurdwára, a hall large enough to seat the whole school. It was empty but for a boy who was squatting on the dais reading the Granth Sahib aloud. An *Akhand Path* was in progress; that is to say, the whole of the sacred book was being read from beginning to end without a stop. It takes forty-eight hours and the boys read in turn. The rite is performed six or seven times a year, always with a special 'intention'. In this case the annual inspection was approaching. 'We are doing it to invoke God's blessing.' And it is to be done again before the examinations. The Granth Sahib is written in archaic Punjabi and is not easily understood by anyone not instructed in it.[3] I am informed that even an educated man understands no more than a word here and there. If, however, he is intelligent and attentive, he may catch the gist of the simpler hymns. This gives him an advantage over his Muslim brother, who rarely understands anything at all of his Arabic

[1] An Indian sweetmeat.
[2] An Indian pea.
[3] *Rusticus*, 233-4.

.[1] Moreover with an effort, much less than what is needed in .se of the Koran, the Granth Sahib can be understood, and Sikhs—perhaps 50 per cent of those who are educated—read dy. The Sikh peasant, however, is on much the same footing .is Muslim brother and, as noted on my last tour,[2] does not ɔuble much about the formal observance of religious rites. With him *laborare est orare*—to work is to pray—and his motto is 'hand on plough, heart in God', and no bad motto either for those who lead busy lives. Yet, when a Gurdwára has to be repaired or built, like the Muslim with his mosque, he is ever ready to give both service and money.[3] And so general is this spirit that recently, when the tank of the Golden Temple at Amritsar was cleaned, the greatest as well as the humblest thought it the highest privilege to carry a basket of clay or bricks on their heads and vied with each other in the honour of leading the work.

25 *January.—Sirháli to Makhu* (12 *miles*)

I left the Sirháli rest-house without regret. Built in the corner of a large serai, which it shares with the post office and a dispensary and with all who come and go, it has one large room (27 feet long) with an ink-spattered durry, a leaking basin, and a ceiling from which dust descends continually. The day was superb, and horizon and sky were radiant with a 'clear shining after rain'.[4] We were on the wide high road again, now glassy with rain-pools and channelled with mud. The plain around us was as large and empty as the sea; and like the sea it reduced life to its narrowest proportions—until, cresting a rise, we saw before us the riverain of the Beas and Sutlej stretching away to a thin blue line of trees. Imagination and curiosity were awake again, and once more horse and rider pressed eagerly forward.

As it was Sunday, we conversed with many we met and took three hours to do the six miles to the ferry. Our first encounter was with an aged but cheerful fakir on his way to beg bread from the charitable of Sirháli. He lived in a village near by and had done this every day of his life.[5] 'When you were young, did you not work?' 'No, never,' he replied with a satisfied grin of his three front teeth. He was in good spirits for charity works bounteously in Ramzán. Behind him

**Wedding invitations**

[1] See p. 60.

[2] *Rusticus*, 34.

[3] Cf. ibid., 191, 196; 201.

[4] 2 Samuel xxiii, 4.

[5] In 1931 there were about 2,500 religious mendicants in the Punjab (*Census Rpt.*).

came a barber's son bearing an invitation to a wedding, no letter but, as the custom is, a gift of gur, in this case wrapp dirty homespun shawl. The village servant is the zeminda and has to carry messages from one village to another. A later came another barber, on similar bent but with no gur. asked why this was. He was a Sikh and said : ' The Akális[1] forı it : they say it is wasteful expenditure, and if we do it our throats will choke (*ghutan lage*).' I asked of what use was it for a Sikh to be a barber.

' Our patrons (*jajman*) became Sikhs and said : " you too must let your hair grow and wear a topknot, or you cannot be our dependents (*lagi*)." So we did, and now we do not shave our patrons but cut their nails and take their messages ' ; and saying this, he pulled out of the folds of his dress the neatest little manicure knife.

As over 80 per cent of this tahsil is cultivated,[2] there is little grazing for the cattle and most of the year they are stall-fed. Many, therefore, were gathering armfulls of rape for fodder. Two were Sikhs, and on leaving them after a talk, when we were thirty or forty paces away, my companion heard one say to the other : ' The English work in the fear of God (*Angrez log dharm nal kam karde*) : the Hindustanis do evil work.' Further on, seeing two Sikh Jats standing by a field of well-weeded wheat—this is sufficiently rare to attract attention—I enquired whether their women-folk had helped them to weed it. ' No, this is not work that women do.' But I said, pointing towards the Doába,[3] ' in that country they do it : then why not here ? ' The voice of a sturdy Jat working fifty yards away boomed across the field : ' Here, too, in a little while they will have to do it ' : a reference to the hard times. As we moved away and were almost out of earshot, my companion heard more flattering words : ' See what good talk the Sahib makes with us. If our men were to talk like that, we should soon be well (*bhale*). But they eat our bread and become proud (*khushi men samate nahin*).' All of which I set down as it was said and heard.

' Mother, whither are you going ? ' I asked a lady on a little brown pony.

' To the bazaar to buy clothes for my daughter who goes back to her husband.' A daughter never returns from her parents to her husband empty-handed, and this is one reason why a daughter is more expensive than a son. In the better-to-do families she receives veil, shirt, and pyjama trousers, in others only shirt

[1] The stricter and more ardent followers of the Sikh religion.
[2] Before the war it was 83 per cent (*Amritsar Gazetteer* (1914), 83).
[3] The country between the Beas and the Sutlej.

and veil. In this case the threefold suit was to be given, as befitted the wife of a headman; or rather widow. Seven years ago her husband was murdered for giving word to the police that a relative was meditating a dacoity. He was on his way to give evidence in a case, when his enemy fell upon him and slew him—at the cost of his life, however, for he was hanged. 'There is more violence in one village in the Manjha,' said a zaildar we met later, 'than in the whole of Ferozepore,' the district across the river. The usual hyperbole in this, but substantially true. An educated Sardar with me says he was once reproached for returning to his village at night: 'You might have been murdered,' said his uncle. On which a Muslim headman commented: 'In this district a man dare not go to the mosque alone after dark.' Only to-day the newspaper reports that a village not far away and within thirty miles of Lahore has been raided by dacoits, and that a man and a woman were shot and three more women burned alive. Faction is even worse than in the Salt Range. 'There is not a village without it,' said the Sardar, and in 50 per cent of them the parties are not on speaking terms with each other. Across the river the percentage is put at only 10.

The Manjha Jat is the same when he migrates to the colonies, and the Sardar, who has colony land, related several examples of this. His first case was as follows. His village had as its headman a Sikh Jat, who was a money-lender of the kind that 'seizes you by the throat and knocks you down.'[1] No professional money-lender could have been more unscrupulous, and thrice did he forge bonds to support an unjust claim. Amongst his clients was another Jat who drank. He lent and lent to him, determined in the end to get his land. The drunkard's son, seeing his inheritance in danger, resolved to kill him, and for this purpose invited him to his house for a settlement of accounts and division of the property. As the matter seemed one of family importance, the headman took his eldest son with him and when attacked escaped with a wound, but the son, who was only 16, was killed. For this the drunkard's son was hanged. That was six years ago. The next case was a more recent affair and began like the first with loans to a drunkard. This time the lending ended in a decree and an auction. The headman somehow got hold of the pyjama trousers of a lady of the debtor's family and at the auction paraded them about the village, as much as to say (to quote the Sardar)—now she will go naked. Incensed, the drunkard's son announced that he would murder the headman. According to the rules of the game an intention of this kind must be proclaimed: the

**A village feud**

[1] *Peasant*, 209.

bird may not be shot sitting. The Sardar was away at the time but on his return was told of his intention: there was, however, no indication of immediate action. A week or two passed, and there came an afternoon when the headman was taking a siesta on a platform by his well in the shade of a tree, and the son and a confederate stole upon him unawares and smote him with their fodder-choppers. He rolled off the platform to the ground, and when the Sardar found him lying there, his body had over a hundred cuts and gashes on it. The sight has given him a permanent distaste for village life.

Once more a peasant swung, but this time there was a sigh of relief and people said—now that the headman is dead, there will be peace. Peace there has been, but it is like living on the edge of a slumbering volcano. The Sardar has a special interest in the matter: it was a first cousin who murdered the headman, and though he swung for it, the headman's family still nurses feelings of revenge. This, however, does not prevent both sides joining amicably in the joint concerns of the village. As long as things are quiet there is little cause for fear, but at any moment a match may set feelings ablaze. Only six months ago this nearly occurred. The headman's brother—evidently a chip of the old block—quarrelled with a relative of the last murderer and in the presence of the village abused the relative's closest female relations so eloquently that the relative announced that he would kill him. The Sardar arrived in the village at the critical moment and was told—'there is going to be murder'. This time he went to the relative and besought him to desist. 'Do you not remember the two who were hanged?' 'But we shall no longer be Jats,' was the izzat dictated reply. It took the Sardar a whole week to persuade the offended Jat to pocket his pride. The incident recalls the one we came across in the Salt Range, but there izzat prevailed.[1] That it did not in the present case shows that the old brutish ways have met a new force.

This force is education, and the Sardar has high hopes that in the end it will win.[2] He says that in the village the educated man is usually opposed to violence and on the side of clean decent behaviour. In his own village, a small one of only thirty houses, there are eight or ten more or less educated men. These are the nucleus of a new party, which is using its influence to curb the primitive passions of the uneducated. But where violence is concerned, and might considered right, the enlightened are always at a disadvantage. Whether it is an affair of factions or of nations,

**Education**

[1] p. 61-2.

[2] Peace continues unbroken (1933).

they have to fight with one hand tied behind their backs, and in this country in the case of factions the bully or brute is always ready to follow up violence with an attempt to corrupt justice.[1]

Arrived at the Sutlej,[2] we prepared to cross the stream, but were surrounded by the members of a new village bank. One was a Sikh in a black puggaree, black because it had to be washed only once a month and that could be done for a pice.[3] They spoke warmly, and of their own accord, of the Sub-Inspector who had started the bank. 'He took nothing from us—no fowl, not even bread. "There is an order," he said.' One of the most difficult forms of oppression to prevent in this country is the battening of the petty official on the village. Everything favours it: the fear of authority, however mean its shape; the low pay of the humbler officials; the claims of hospitality, ever acknowledged in the east, and immemorial custom. It is even difficult to prevent one's own camp followers doing the same; and almost impossible, however much one tries or pays, to secure that the many who actually supply the eggs, milk, fuel, and hay required on tour receive the amount handed over to the headman or zaildar, who not long ago was everywhere responsible for camp supplies. In partial remedy of this the Punjab Government engaged contractors on a monthly salary to furnish supplies and attached them to the rest houses most frequently visited. This is a great improvement on the old system and well worth its cost; but it does not always work, as the following incident in another district shows. The contractor was duly paid in my presence for all he had supplied to my following. A day or two later I learnt by chance that the local zaildar had gone the round of some of the villages in his circle and collected a store of fowls and eggs, which he declared were required for my camp, and carried them off without giving a pice in exchange. At once I despatched a trusted official who knew the people well to record the statements without which nothing could be done. He came back the next day to say that the report was true but that no one would make a statement in public. 'A dog's obeyed in office,'[4] and the zaildar's

[1] The Manjha maintains its evil reputation. In November 1933 the headman of a village twenty-five miles from Lahore is alleged to have shot eight persons, including a woman and a boy of four in pursuance of an enmity, in the course of which one of his enemies is said to have broken the leg of his son, aged 12. The climax was characteristically brought on (so it is alleged) by another of his enemies challenging him when standing in front of his house to come forward and settle accounts finally. Three of the victims are reported to have been shot while ploughing.

[2] See *Rusticus*, 53, 160.

[3] About a farthing.

[4] *King Lear*, iv, 7, 163.

office is one in which even a dog can bite. Nothing, therefore, could be done beyond recording a note in the opinions book that every zaildar must keep.

And here is another tale, which shows how much the unsophisticated peasant takes this kind of thing for granted. I was once touring down the Indus by boat and had to moor for the night near a village that did not expect me. I went ashore to have a look at it. A little later the boatmen appeared and, not noticing me in the dusk, began demanding various things for the sustenance and comfort of my party—milk, eggs, and a hen. The demand was accepted without question and I saw a woman in black hand over an egg, as one hands over a few rupees when pressed at one's door for a subscription. I explained at once that everything would be paid for; but this was a new idea to them, and for a time they could not grasp it. And a generation ago there was hardly a peasant in the province who could have grasped it.[1] But times are changing, and in the central Punjab at least the peasant is beginning to realize that he need no longer be the prey of the kite and vulture that circle above his village.

सत्यमेव जयते

[1] Cf. Kinglake, *Eothen* (ed. Hogarth, 162): 'One of the greatest drawbacks to the pleasure of travelling in Asia is the being obliged more or less to make your way by bullying.'

## CHAPTER VI

## FEROZEPORE[1]

### VILLAGE FINANCE, THE FALL IN PRICES, SIKH MAID AND MATRON

*26 January.—Makhu to Kot Isa Khan (14 miles)*

OF Ferozepore and its 4,300 square miles I have written elsewhere.[2] It is the most heavily indebted district in the Punjab and one of the most prosperous, if such a word can still be used of any part of the province.[3] The Sikh Jat is still prominent and owns half the cultivated area of the district; but in the riverain, as is always the case in the Punjab, the Muslim predominates, and to-day we met no one else.

We rode out through Makhu's thriving little bazaar, blocking the narrow lane with our horses. There were the usual sights:

**Poultry**

the bania weighing out orange-coloured maize, boys chewing long knotted stalks of sugar-cane, potters shuffling after brick-laden donkeys; a flock of geese, too, the property not of a peasant, as one might have supposed, but of a goldsmith, who has 'a liking' for them and sells their eggs. In the district few but village servants keep poultry, but along the Sutlej a certain number of Muslim zemindars keep a bird or two; amongst them the zaildar, as he admitted with the uneasy smile of a child caught out in something a little shameful.[4]

We spent the afternoon amongst Arains, the chief tribe of the riverain.[5] Sixty of us sat in a field, mostly on strips of sacking.

**Cattle trade and finance**

All but six were illiterate, but this did not prevent a number trading in cattle. This is the only form of trading for which the zemindar shows any partiality. These men go off to the fairs of Hissar, Patiala, and Bikaner to buy bullocks, which the small peasant proprietor of the central

[1] The rainfall of the tract covered by this and the next chapter is about 19 inches.

[2] *Peasant*, 47, 236.

[3] For the explanation of this apparent paradox, see ibid., chapter xii, and 261-2.

[4] Cf. p. 179.

[5] For a description of this tribe, see *Peasant*, 45-6. They own 27 per cent of the riverain (*Bet*).

Punjab rarely breeds for himself.[1] All is done on retail lines: ten or twenty bullocks are purchased, generally with money borrowed at 25 per cent, and brought north by road and sold in the fairs of the district. There cash is paid, but if they are sold in a village and the purchaser is known, payment is allowed to stand over till next harvest and not even sureties are taken. 'Supposing,' I said, 'the cash price is Rs. 100, what do you ask at the next harvest?'

'Rs. 120.'

'Then you, too, are money-lenders.' There was loud laughter at this; but the traders, touched in their Muslim consciences, protested vehemently. 'This is not interest: it is profit (*munáfa*).'

To the orthodox Muslim the distinction is of vital importance,[2] and many devices are resorted to for circumventing it. I had therefore almost charged these men with sin—a charge not entirely justified, since, if payment cannot be made at next harvest, the debt is allowed to stand over another six months and nothing is added to the price. One man, with less than 3 acres, said he was financed by a Khatri at 12 per cent. That so small a holder should be able to borrow so cheaply was surprising, and I enquired how he managed it. 'I pay back quickly,' was the illuminating reply. I could not resist the opportunity and rubbed in the lesson that those who want to borrow cheaply must be trustworthy; and it was the more pointed, since it is a condition of the loans that if they are not repaid within four months, they will carry interest at 25 per cent.

### 27 *January.—Kot Isa Khan to Moga* (10 *miles*)

When I rose this morning, there was a flush of rosy cloud above a low jagged line in the east. For a brief moment the Himalayas were in sight 120 miles away, no higher than a fortress wall.

**The money-lender's point of view**

'Be silent, don't make quarrels,' said an angry elder at yesterday's gathering when voices began to babel contentiously over the question whether the money-lender carries off the grain from the threshing-floor, as he does in the south-west of the province. As Kot Isa Khan is a money-lender stronghold—this perhaps explains its walls—I thought it opportune to hear their point of view and invited a number of them to come to the rest house. They came at once, and the presence of a large number of zemindars added piquancy and excitement to the proceedings. All sat on the ground, the money-lenders in front; some with short, scrubby beards, others with unshaven chins;

[1] See p. 158, 159.

[2] See *Peasant*, 176, n., 208.

some with faces wrinkled by years of calculation, others with soft, slippery cheeks or shrewd cautious eyes; but all, once warmed by the friendly sun, courteous in both manner and speech. They said there were forty of them at Isa Khan, mostly Khatris with a sprinkling of Aggarwal Banias and Aroras. Most of their advances are in cash, but all but 5 per cent is recovered in grain and cattle. The grain is not carried off from the threshing-floor but taken from the peasant's house at a price fixed with his consent. Here the zemindar kettle came suddenly to the boil with the remark: 'Certainly they take it from our threshing-floors.' 'How could we?' asked a money-lender: 'a borrower may have four or five creditors.' With a soothing word the kettle subsided, and the money-lenders admitted that, if a surety is taken, the grain is weighed at the threshing-floor and taken to the surety's house to guard him against loss. But, they said, sureties are taken only when a client is 'bad'. And both sides more or less agreed that it was only when a borrower's state was weak (*mari*) that produce is valued as the money-lender pleases.

The interest rate for an unsecured loan is 25 per cent, and against jewellery (since the slump) 18¾ per cent. Confirming what we heard yesterday, the money-lenders said that a good dealer could get money at 12 per cent. 'We give a low rate to one with whom there is no suit, no trouble, no loss, and who offers no cattle. But when a man offers a ten rupee animal in payment of a big loan, who will lend to him at a low rate?'[1] With the fall in prices recovery has become very difficult, and only two annas out of every rupee normally recovered is coming in. No money-lender I have met puts the proportion higher than four annas. Few new loans, therefore, are possible. 'It is also a matter of fear,' half whispered a money-lender near me. Compound interest, the peasant borrower's greatest peril, runs only from the date on which an account is renewed, and this is usually done two or three years after the original bond is taken.[2]

In a country where land development is urgently needed the financing of long-period loans is of importance. The money-lenders said, they lent occasionally for the sinking of wells, but never for any length of time because, as one truly remarked, a long loan requires a mortgage and (owing to the Land Alienation Act) they can get possession of land for only twenty years.[3] Here the zemindars boiled up again. 'They take one of us and get the land

[1] Cf. *Rusticus*, 74.

[2] The general, but not invariable, practice owing to a three-year limitation for the recovery of debt (*Pb. Bkg. Enqy. Rpt.* (1934) 32).

[3] For the Punjab Alienation of Land Act, see *Peasant*, 164.

mortgaged in his name.' This is a way of dodging the Act, and the charge was not denied with much emphasis. The worst boil came when they said that Muslims, as well as Sikh Jats, did money-lending. This touched Ramzán tempers to the quick, and they were only appeased when the money-lenders admitted that the dealings were in grain and not in cash—one of those distinctions that are dear to men who serve both God and Mammon. All the money-lenders have wheat in store, mostly purchased at Rs. 3 a maund or more and now worth barely Rs. 2.[1]

One of the money-lenders was old enough to be able to compare past and present. I asked whether there was much difference. 'Great difference,' he said. 'In the old days there were no suits, no accounts, and no sureties, and all held their peace. Now, unless a man is honest (*bhalamanas*) there are constant quarrels, and people collect together and make us give up our claims, and others encourage debtors not to pay. To protect ourselves we have sometimes to write Rs. 70 in the bond when we give only Rs. 50.' The kettle began to boil again, but when I put it to the zemindars whether there was not less straight dealing even amongst them than of old, they admitted at once what indeed is a universal complaint of the times. Then turning to the money-lenders I suggested that they should give up a business that gave them so much trouble and brought them so little profit—10 per cent net, said one[2]—and deposit their money with a co-operative society, which would give them 6 or 7 per cent and no trouble at all.[3] 'And why not join the society itself?'

'But only zemindars can do this.'

'By no means: any honest man can.'

'We did not know of this before.'

'But how can the goat drink with the tiger?' interjected a zemindar realist, expressing the distrust which is the root of the difficulty.

'It is not easy,' I answered, 'but in many societies he does and is none the worse.' Till recently few Hindu money-lenders realized that they were eligible for membership of a credit society. Actually it is a great advantage to a society of peasants to have the Hindu trader's wit, money, and experience at its service, and it often happens that when a trader who is also a money-lender joins a village bank he closes down his money-lending.[4]

[1] Cf. p. 208.

[2] For the Punjab as a whole it is probably 12 to 13 per cent (*Pb. Bkg. Enqy. Rpt.*, 137).

[3] Cf. p. 250.

[4] To avoid a possible clash of interest, one who does money-lending may not be on the managing committee; otherwise there is no restriction.

At this point a peasant, lean and helpless with want, approached with folded hands and begged my protection from a money-lender who was suing him for a sum which (so he said) he had never had. Fortunately the money-lenders were now in such good mood that they promised to look into the matter and arrange a compromise if they could. In the old days, says a member of my staff, money-lender and cultivator lived as members of one family,[1] but now there is division between them. The Hindu trader is sore about the various Acts[2] that have been passed to restrict or control his operations, and he believes that the co-operative movement is also directed against him. The Lahore pleader whom I met near Jhelum,[3] spoke with bitterness on the subject, and I note the fact because he is typical of a large class and it is as well to realize the existence of any widely-felt discontent. In spite of the difficulties created by the slump, relations between money-lender and peasant, though rarely happy, are on the whole satisfactory.[4] At Makhu I heard complaints of fraudulent dealing, but the best informed say that the money-lender generally plays fair.[5]

**Character and finance**

In the Moga tahsil, which we entered to-day, the professional money-lender has been virtually ousted. The Sikh Jats, who mostly inhabit it, are a much sturdier peasantry than the riverain Muslims and, as in Jullundur and Hoshiarpur and with much the same result,[6] large numbers have sought their fortunes abroad and returned with large sums, much of which has been put into money-lending. Money became so abundant that interest rates fell from 18¾ to 12 per cent, and most repayments, probably 75 per cent, were in money. But the slump with its frozen credits has changed this, and to-day in a Sikh village we were told that the rates had risen to 18¾ per cent for loans against jewellery and to 25 per cent for loans without security. For ' good dealers ' the rate is much lower. I asked what was meant by ' good '. ' Those whose property is good and whose behaviour is good,' was the reply, and unconsciously it touched on a basic principle of banking, namely, that in lending character as well as purely physical security must be considered. However good security may be, if the borrower himself is unreliable, trouble may follow, of a kind, too, that every banker will wish to avoid.

[1] Cf. the money-lenders in the Salt Range (p. 54)).
[2] The Punjab Alienation of Land Act (1900), the Usurious Loans Act (1918), and the Punjab Regulation of Accounts Act (1930).
[3] p. 75.
[4] Cf. p. 146-148
[5] With the account given above compare *Rusticus*, 111-12.
[6] Ibid., 362.

Whenever low rates are mentioned in the village, the reason nearly always given is that punctual repayment can be depended upon; and wherever this is the case, rates are reasonable. A Jat who had been thirty years in Sumatra said that men there borrowed at 12 per cent because they paid back their loans month by month; and another told us that he had obtained a loan of Rs. 500 at this rate on the understanding that he would repay it on demand. Before the slump, loans could be had in this tahsil (as in Jullundur) at 6 to 9 per cent. The best urban rates are no lower.[1] The peasant, therefore, who learns to deal faithfully and intelligently with money is able to borrow as cheaply as any small business man in the town. In both town and village, where dealings are mainly in money, the dominating factor is not custom but risk. The amount of money available for loan is also important; for, as we have just seen, the lowest rate for the peasant has risen to 12 per cent. In areas where dealings are mainly in terms of service and kind, the dominating factor is custom, and it is rarely possible for the peasant to borrow at less than 12 per cent.

**Mortgages and the slump**

One effect of the slump has been to reduce the return on current mortgage loans made against possession. A concrete case will show this. Some years ago a Sikh advanced an owner Rs. 12,000, and as security and in lieu of interest he was given usufructuary possession of some colony land in Sheikhupura. He leased the land in 1929 for Rs. 1,000, and in 1930 for Rs. 800. This year he tried to get Rs. 500, but has had to content himself with half the produce as rent. Had he got Rs. 500, the yield on his capital would have been 4·16 per cent instead of the 8⅓ per cent obtained two years ago. Actually he does not expect a return of more than 3 per cent. Before the slump, a mortgage without possession brought in from 9 to 12 per cent (generally 12), and one with possession 6 to 9 per cent.[2] The fall in prices has not affected the former, but it has automatically reduced the return on the latter (for existing mortgages) to 3 or at most 5 per cent. Since about half the amount owed by the landowners of the province is in this form,[3] it means that although it is twice as difficult to repay, much of it at present carries a very low rate of interest. To this extent the lender is as hard hit as the borrower. Again may be noted the advantage of payment in kind instead of money.[4] In western Europe the common form of mortgage is the mortgage without possession with a fixed rate of

[1] *Pb. Bkg. Enqy. Rpt.*, 130.
[2] *Peasant*, 190.
[3] Ibid., 6.
[4] See p. 2.

interest payable in cash; but in the Punjab most agricultural mortgages are with possession, which means, so far as the borrower is concerned, that interest is paid in kind. Consequently when prices fall, part of the strain is borne by the lender.

**Village economies**

But we have travelled far from the Sikh village where this digression began, and we must now return to it, taking our way to the shady garden of the Gurdwára where our meeting took place. There, in a long bearded line, were drawn up the twelve members of the bank, all but one illiterate, and as we approached, twelve pairs of hands rose, pressed palm to palm in the courteous Indian way, and from twelve voices came the grave Sikh greeting—*Satt Sri Akál*—the blest Immortal One is the Truth. We sat down, and on the table in front of me was a phulkári[1] with a beautiful border worked in floss silk of blue, white, yellow, and red. I asked whether phulkáris were made as much as ever. 'No, they are useless and give no advantage, except for adornment. Our expenses are great and our income is small and we have become weak. We now give thought to what we shall wear. When prices were high, we went freely to the bazaar and bought muslin and calico, and in those days there was little spinning. Now we all wear homespun and there is much spinning. Those who were wise said, why buy calico when we can make our own clothes and cotton is cheap, and nothing remains with us (*kol kuchh nahin rahgya*)?' There was a clear echo of Mr. Gandhi's teaching in this, and it comes through the Akáli movement, which enjoins the wearing of homespun. But, like all Puritans who are not poets, the Akális are careless of beauty, and the beautiful phulkári is no longer desired.

**Marriage expenditure**

The mention of economy led to talk about expenditure at weddings. Before the war an ordinary zemindar's wedding cost from Rs. 800 to Rs. 1,000.[2] The high prices after the war doubled these figures, but the slump has restored or lowered them. A son's wedding still costs about Rs. 800, but the owner of ten or fifteen acres need not spend more than Rs. 500 on the marriage of a daughter. The difference is significant, for when it costs more to marry a son than a daughter, it generally means that directly or indirectly a bride-price enters into the account. The most respectable form of this is a handsome present of jewellery, and in another Sikh village a man who owns twenty acres said that he had just spent Rs. 500 in this way. In the village where we were sitting there is more

[1] Red embroidered shawl, much used as wedding presents especially by those who cannot afford costly clothes.

[2] *Moga Assess. Rpt.* (1912), 13.

feeling for economy. It began twenty years ago with a Jat who had been in China—the third example on this tour of China influencing the Punjab[1]—and was strengthened by the Akali movement. The treasurer of the bank said that his uncle, a man of thirty acres, had recently married his son for Rs. 2-8, the cost of the *anand* or marriage rite.[2] By agreement with her father nothing was given to the bride—'not a farthing' (*kakh nahin ditta*)—and only five were allowed in the marriage procession. They came in the evening, supped, and left the next morning.[3] Another member, who owns fifteen acres, said he had spent only Rs. 50 on the marriage of his son, but later on we found a bond in his name for Rs. 200, and then it transpired that he had spent Rs. 400. In India, truth lies very deep in her well, and one has to accustom oneself to the light to see her. In this case the excuse was that Rs. 50 represented the cost of the actual ceremony, and that the dowry was separate.

As we rode on a large flock of cranes passed overhead, at first scribbling a long waving 'W' across the sky, then snaking out grey quivering ranks into cobra coils, and all the time filling the air with falsetto caws. We talked of the fall in prices. Some of its consequences have just been noted—the difficulties of recovery, the tightening of the money-lender's money-bags, the higher rates of interest, the effect on mortgages, the losses incurred by those who have held up their grain, the lower expenditure on marriages and clothes. Less opium and drink are also consumed, and land revenue is paid with difficulty. For the rest the effects and adjustments are much the same as those already described. Wages have been generally reduced, for carpenters and masons from Rs. 2 a day to Rs. 1-8 or Rs. 1-4, and for coolies from twelve to eight annas. Only the weavers are obstinate: in some villages they have agreed to take 10 or 15 per cent less, but in others they contend that till now they were under-paid. There is much truth in this for of late the village weaver has earned less than a coolie.[4] One of the hardest hit, after the peasant himself, is the landlord whose rents are in cash. Like the Sikh mortgagee just mentioned, many have been forced to accept a produce rent instead of cash, and those who have not done this have been obliged to reduce their rents by 30 per cent or more. Even the Pir suffers, though not as much as some, since part of his income is in kind. We met one the other day who,

**Effects of the fall in prices**

[1] See pp. 43 and 50.

[2] Certain verses are read from the Granth Sahib, after which the parents give their consent to the marriage, and bride and bridegroom formally accept each other.

[3] Cf. *Rusticus*, 70.

[4] *Pb. Bkg. Enqy. Rpt.*, 79.

with his rugged brows, immense nose, and chest-reaching beard, seemed as old as religion itself. He has several hundred disciples, and when he visits them, ' they slay the hen and feed me well, but when it is time for offerings they remain silent.' ' Their faith is strong,' he added, ' but their lot is straitened ; and I am straitened (*tang*) too.'

*28 and 29 January.—Moga*

Moga is a live little place of 15,000 inhabitants and is noted for its eye doctor, Rai Sahib L. Mathra Das, and its missionary training school. The doctor has achieved fame by his skill at operations for cataract. In twenty-nine years he has done over 100,000. In November he did 1,298 in three days. I had the good fortune to see him at work. Within less than a minute out came the lens from the patient's eye, looking like a half-melted pearl : which is why Indians call cataract *motia*.[1] The doctor's skill early expressed itself in a passion for operations. As a young man he would stop people with bad eyes on the road and give them a rupee to come to the hospital, and he would even explore the surrounding villages for patients. ' A man who is determined to get a thing can always get it if he wants it enough ', was his comment upon his life and his 100,000 operations.

**An Indian oculist**

The training school, which is run by the American Presbyterian Mission, under the stimulating direction of Mr. A. E. Harper, is as interesting as the hospital. Its object is to train young men to teach, in the village schools of the Mission, on up-to-date methods. One of these is the project method. Each class chooses a subject capable of being used pictorially to illustrate the geography, history, science, etc., that it is going to learn during the year. The subject is then given concrete form, and the wits of the class are tasked to make it as varied and informative as possible. The choice of subjects is all-important and takes at least a week's thought and discussion, and in working it out the boys have to depend upon themselves with occasional guidance from the master in a difficulty. One class had chosen commerce and had moulded a corner of the compound into a map of India and dug a small pond round to image the Indian Ocean. Mud pies eighteen inches high marked the chief towns, and boats, laden with such appropriate merchandise as cotton and wheat, the chief exports. Another class had chosen tanning and had figured in clay rude representations of the main

**An up-to-date mission school**

[1] *Moti* means pearl.

processes of tanning from the bringing in of the hides and skins on bullock cart and camel to their export from Karachi, which was shown at the end of a railway line 12 feet long. In this way the creative impulse, which many children have, is stimulated instead of being thwarted by school, and learning becomes a pleasure instead of a task.

The same practical spirit is applied to the teaching of reading and arithmetic. For arithmetic a small shop is run by the boys, and careful account is kept of everything bought and sold. As to reading, they are taught to recognize words before letters, and phrases before words. A familiar story is told and repeated until it is memorized, and easy phrases are written down until they are photographed on the brain. The boy is then asked whether he can identify any word, and when he has done this, whether he can pick it out elsewhere, and so on. It is claimed that those who are taught in this way learn to read in one year instead of in two. No doubt this is partly due to the high standard of teaching and supervision, but it is thought that even under ordinary circumstances only eighteen months would be needed. It is characteristic of the whole spirit of the school that in the room where the lowest class were at work there was a simply carved bookcase, which had been placed there to give the children some idea of what was good, and it was used by them for keeping the things they made themselves and thought beautiful. It needed a curtain in front to keep out the dust, and two mites were at work on a curtain rod, one with a saw, which he kept in its place with the ball of his right foot.

It is a question for experts whether so excellent a system could be adapted to a large rural area. The initial difficulty would be the teachers, for if learning is to be a pleasure, teaching must be an art, and few of us are artists. The school clearly owes much of its success to the personality of those who created and who now guide it. It has another advantage: nearly all the boys are Christians, which means that they are of artisan or village servant stock and accustomed to use their hands. If they were peasant boys, the problem would be more difficult, for the zemindar makes little skilled use of his hands.

Moga in its modest way is an important educational centre, and reflects the Sikh Jat's keenness that both daughter and son should be educated. The son, of course, has much the best of it, and there are 2,000 boys at school to 600 girls; but I doubt whether there is any small town in the Punjab which educates so many girls. Most of them are at the Government high school for girls, and they are fortunate in their headmistress. A thin little woman with long delicate

**A girls' high school**

fingers, she is the daughter of a Sikh Jat who when 'in the military' became a Christian. Ten years later her mother, completely uneducated, but a woman of character, followed her example. Miss S. started the school four years ago and now has 400 girls, of whom 100 are boarders, mostly daughters of zemindars. Hitherto, she said, the home has influenced the school more than the school the home, but gradually, sometimes in the teeth of hot protest, the process is being reversed. After being here a year, she thought it was time to introduce a few games—badminton, net-ball, and skipping. This brought many anxious parents to her door, amongst them a stubborn old Jat, who complained that his daughter now went skipping about the village to the scandal of her elders. Long argument followed, and at last she said: 'Here they skip only in the school compound where no one can see them, and if I can control 400 girls, why can't you control one?' It was a case of Jat meeting Jat, and the old man retired discomfited but laughing. A few months ago she started drilling the girls, this time without protest. 'The dust on antique time'[1] is being slowly swept away.

She has introduced yet another innovation. At first the girls were so few that all household service was left to the servants. But now that the school has grown, girls are obliged to clean the tables after meals, wash up platter and pot, and dust the rooms; all of which they now do as a matter of course. It is noteworthy that girls who come from educated homes take to this more kindly than others, partly because they are quicker to see the advantage of it. They also take more readily to needlework and stitchery, doubly important in a country where happily garments are still largely made at home. Each girl has to produce a home-made garment at the annual Government inspection, and to show that it has been made at school it must be new. For most this is sensible enough, but there are some so poor that they cannot wait till the inspection is over to wear what they have made, and recently I heard that some of these were not allowed to put in garments made for themselves because they had worn them! Miss S. said that on the whole the garments made were such as suited village life; yet the girls learn to knit stockings, though they are rarely worn in the village, and they make no phulkáris 'because it takes too long'. What with the Puritan and the educationist, the phulkári with its red and amber embroideries appears to be doomed.

We have already seen that the boy at school is petted at home.[2] The same is the case with the girl. She is spared her share of field and household task, often at the expense of an uneducated sister, and in time comes to regard herself as a being apart. On the other

[1] *Coriolanus* ii, 3, 120. [2] p. 31.

hand, life in the village is difficult for an educated girl, for she has little opportunity of bringing the new light into a home over which uneducated elders reign. Miss S. gave an amusing example of the clash of the new light with the old. Once when visiting a village she found an old class-fellow installed there as master. Instinctively she shook him by the hand: and all who saw shook their heads.

In one direction the influence of the school seems misdirected, though this is no fault of the headmistress. To satisfy the influential few who observe purdah at home, the school has to be carried on under purdah conditions. But most village girls have no idea what purdah means and learn its ways for the first time when they come to school, and so the timid furtive purdah psychology is actually spread by the very means which should be used to check it. The effect is even more deplorable in the north and west of the province, for there, outside the houses of Seyyeds and Sardars even semi-purdah hardly exists. And even where it does exist, as in the east and south, it does not go beyond veiling the face in the presence of a stranger, an elder, and a superior. An ancient custom this, reaching back to the days of Abraham, for when Rebekah first met Isaac and the servant said—'It is my master'—'she took a vail and covered herself.'[1]

**Purdah**

Though in the village strict purdah is normally confined to the tribes at the top of the social tree, Rajput, Seyyed, etc., and to families who form, or would like to form, the country gentry, one may sometimes come upon peasant villages that observe it. This happened to us two days ago. People from two Arain villages were present at our meeting: one village kept purdah, and the other did not. Both were villages of small holders, and purdah is a luxury of the well-to-do. The purdah village admitted the difficulty, but a pious maulvi[2] once told them to keep purdah, and they have done so ever since. It is not the four-walled purdah and no burqas are worn; but faces are veiled outside, and no work is done in the fields except picking cotton and maize. The economic consequence of this is that most families have to employ labour, generally a village servant, to help them with their cultivation,[3] and their standard of living suffers accordingly. A theological reason for the difference between the two villages was given by the other village. 'They are Wahabis and followers of the Hadís.

[1] Genesis xxiv, 65.

[2] One learned in Muslim scripture.

[3] Compare the Arain village of Tehong in Jullundur, where 'there is little need for the permanent services of field labourers' because the women work in the fields (*Pb. Bd. of Econ. Enqy.*, op. cit., 7); compare too *Rusticus*, 64, 140, 254.

We are followers of the Sunnat and do not keep purdah. Our custom is merely that a man may not go inside quickly, and our women veil themselves before the stranger (*ghair admi*). Ours is an industrious tribe (*mehnat ki qaum*), and our debt is great. The money-lenders have increased, and to make our living, our women must work with us and our children too.' The children look after the cattle and mind the sheep and goats. The women pick the cotton and the chillies, do all the cleaning and make the dung-cakes.

**Women north and south of the Beas**

This cleaning and dung-caking accounts for the fact, noted on my last tour,[1] that the daughters of Amritsar are not given in marriage to the sons of Ferozepore and Jullundur, though till recently the contrary was done. 'We used to give them our daughters twenty years ago, but then we stopped it, because they were lawless men.' A valid enough reason, as we have seen, and more palatable to izzat than the real one. In Amritsar the women in a zemindar's house sweep 'only where men may not enter'; but to the south, unless they observe purdah, they normally do all the cleaning of house and byre, and no man cares that his daughter should perform unaccustomed menial tasks. Broadly, the Beas and Sutlej may be said to be the boundary between the women who share most of men's tasks with them and those who share very few. To the north, the only tasks done outside the courtyard are to take out the mid-day meal and pick the cotton. The making of dung-cakes is left to the sweeperess, the drawing of water to the waterman, and the chopping of fodder to the men. But women milk the cattle, make the butter and ghi, and control the stores of grain and the general economy of the house.

**The Sikh's attitude towards women**

In the central Punjab the Sikh woman has a better position than any other. Amongst Muslims, women do not go to the mosque,[2] but a Sikh wife accompanies her husband to the Gurdwára, and men and women worship there on an equal footing. Generally, like the Christians of Asrapur, they sit apart; but often they sit together and not infrequently the women lead in the congregational prayers and hymns. Sometimes even they are numbered amongst the 'Beloved Five' (*Piaras*) who superintend the rites of the Gurdwára. In this they are even ahead of orthodox Jews.[3] Outside the Gurdwára, too, inequality is much less marked than with most,

[1] *Rusticus*, 175.

[2] Unless a well-known maulvi is to lecture, in which case special arrangements are made. I have, however, come upon villages in the western Punjab where the aged sometimes go. Cf. *Rusticus*, 285.

[3] Amongst orthodox, but not amongst liberal, Jews, women at the synagogue sit apart and virtually out of sight.

and no distinction is made in the treatment of boy and girl. If there were three oranges to be divided between a brother and sister, the sister would certainly get one and a half and quite possibly two: in the ordinary uneducated peasant household she would be lucky to get one and a half. The taking of a bride-price, which is common amongst Sikh Jats (as it was amongst the Homeric Greeks),[1] is the greatest blemish on the Sikh villager's attitude towards women; but with a businesslike people even this operates to make a man take particular care of his daughter.

It is typical of the Sikh that he is almost as eager for the education of his daughter as of his son, for the double reason that she may be able to read the Granth Sahib and be an economical housewife. An old Sikh Sardar, who can look back seventy years, says that education has made Sikh women both freer and more intelligent, and that about 50 per cent are now on an almost equal footing with their husbands. In regard to this, another Sikh (of middle age) tells me that whereas his wife touches his feet when he returns from office, as his mother did his father's, his daughter-in-law does not touch his son's. His mother, too, would never eat before her husband, however long she might have to wait, and his own wife does so only if he is very late; but his daughter-in-law sometimes does not wait at all. The greater freedom has naturally led to some decline of discipline. His mother, for instance, did all the household tasks—milking, cooking, spinning, etc.—and his wife does the same; but his daughter-in-law eschews the rougher tasks and potters over the lighter jobs and her fancy needlework. According to the old Sardar, the greatest change is the increased cleanliness. Seventy-five per cent are now clean in their persons as against only 5 per cent in his youth. Both these Sardars, and the younger is a good judge, think that in the village not more than 10 per cent of Sikh marriages are positive misfits, and that over half, perhaps even 60 per cent, are reasonably happy. They thought that in the town things were not so satisfactory. As to character, they said that less than 5 per cent of the women were badly behaved (*badchalan*), and that there was less singing of ribald songs than there used to be.

**Women money-lenders**

It is characteristic of the Sikh Jat that his womenfolk not infrequently do money-lending. There are over fifty who do it in Attari (six or seven of them Jats),[2] and a sprinkling in the villages round Kasel.[3] Most are in the smallest way of business, but a co-operator told me that his

[1] See Butcher and Lang, *The Odyssey*, 430, and Aristotle, *Politics*, 2, 8. Compare also the selling of Leah and Rachel to Jacob for fourteen years labour, and Genesis xxxi, 15.

[2] The rest are *Khatris* and *Aroras*.

[3] Cf. p. 83.

mother had accumulated 'a very fine estate'. She took to it on finding herself married to a worthless fellow who drank. Much the same explanation was given of two cases mentioned at Bhakna Kalán: 'Their husbands are weak,' it was said, and an assenting titter went round the gathering. No accounts are kept, nor are they necessary since the loans are nearly always against jewellery. All that is done is to tie a ticket to the ornament and fix a date for redemption. The rates are the same as those charged by men, viz. 18¾ per cent for secured loans and 25 per cent for unsecured.

**Jewellery**

One striking change has occurred since the war in the Sikh woman's life: she wears much less jewellery. 'Now people boycott jewellery,' said one of my staff in up-to-date vernacular phrase. Ten years ago the Akális set their Puritan faces against both jewellery and drinking, and this was the best side of their movement, which was strong in this district. The co-operative movement, too, encouraged the conversion of jewellery into interest-bearing deposits, and the canny Sikh was quick to see the advantage of this.[1] Now the fall in prices makes fresh accumulations of jewellery virtually impossible for men of moderate means. A Sikh landlord in speaking of this related with refreshing candour, that when his grandmother died an arbitrator was called in to divide up the family jewellery amongst the heirs and there was so much of it—it was worth over half a lakh—that he took some of it himself and no one missed it. Now, he said, all that is changed. In making themselves 'gentelman' people had made themselves poor, and even a Sardar commanded but little cash.

**Drink**

The landlord was equally candid on the subject of drink, the besetting weakness of the Sikh, who is denied by his religion the solace of tobacco. 'I used to drink, and so badly that no one put any trust in me. Our tenants demanded receipts from me, and I used to take my father's money secretly. Then I became a member of the ——— Committee (he named a well-known semi-religious body), and all laughed at me, knowing how I drank. When I saw this, by your honour's kindness (he raised a salaaming hand) and God's grace I gave it up. Now all trust me and I have not to give receipts, and I have been elected manager of the girls' school in our village.' Here his father broke in with another and perhaps more convincing reason for his conversion: 'I was very displeased with him and told him that if he did not give it up, I would turn him out of my house and leave all my land to my second son.' The son's engaging frankness led to talk about Sikhism and to a question about the five K-s, which

[1] Cf. p. 4.

the true Sikh must always wear.[1] He said: 'They all have a meaning. These bangles (and he pointed to the thin steel rings about his wrists) bind my hands so that they cannot steal; and the drawers which I wear below (and he pointed to his dark tight-fitting cloth trousers) are a padlock upon me in case any wickedness rises in my heart.'

A zaildar tells me a tragic story to illustrate the Jat's attitude to both jewellery and drink. A Jat had drunk most of his substance away when he received a visit from his married daughter. He took her jewellery and sold it for drink. When she went back to her husband, he was so angry that she returned to her father and begged her ornaments back that she might not be dishonoured.[2] Overcome with shame, the father went to his well, tied his puggaree round his neck and, binding hands and feet, hung himself.

There is no doubt that the Sikh's drink bill is much less than it was before the War. For this the Akális deserve credit, though the most potent factor has been the lack of money following the slump. The same applies to the consumption of opium, which is common amongst the Sikhs south of the Sutlej, but, curiously, not amongst those to the north. An official who knows Ferozepore well estimates that 20 per cent of the men over thirty take it, and 70 to 80 per cent of those over fifty, about half of them habitually. In Hissar, doubtless influenced by Rajputana, Hindu Rajputs are also addicted to it, and their babes are sometimes taught to suck at the breast by mixing a grain of it in the first few drops of their mothers' milk.[3] The opium is taken with water or tea, and though it is never smoked, it does much harm to habitués, and they can generally be detected by their sunken faces, lack-lustre eyes, unbraced movements, and shrill inebriate voices. On my last tour I was told in Ambala that, notwithstanding the ban on tobacco, snuff was becoming popular with the Sikh.[4] I hear the same here. The tea habit, too, is spreading fast,[5] and little piles of white loaves, three or four inches square, are now to be seen in the bazaars. They cost a farthing each and are taken with the morning or afternoon cup of tea, and they have this advantage over the heavy unleavened chapati, that they are more easily digested and are available 'ready-made'.

**Opium eating**

[1] These are the top-knot (*kes*), bangle (*kara*), comb (*kanga*), drawers (*kachh*), and dagger (*kirpán*).

[2] Cf. 'Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire?' (Jeremiah ii, 32).

[3] Amongst montane and submontane Rajputs the habit is rare.

[4] *Rusticus*, 56.

[5] Cf. ibid., 56.

30 *January.—Moga to Bâga Purâna* (11 *miles*)

**A girls' school**

To-day I followed up my enquiries about girls' education with a visit to an 'aided' primary school for girls. After ten years it has but twelve pupils, of whom only six were present. They were being taught by a carpenter's wife, and the schoolroom was a space in her tiny house, half passage, half verandah, opening on to a miniature courtyard, where a bulky buffalo was warming his hairy flanks in the sun. The six little girls, all under ten, sat in a row, some on the bare floor, others on scraps of sacking. They wore red shawls over their heads and silver bracelets on their arms, and one a gold ring in her nose. All were dirty; but not so dirty as the mistress, who was dressed in black pyjama trousers and a shirt that looked as if it had been made out of a last year's duster. I asked why more girls did not come to school. 'They are so dear to their mothers that when I scold them they take them away.'

'And if you do not scold them, how long do they stay?'

'They take them away as soon as they have learnt to read and write. What need to know more? they say.' Not very encouraging after ten years' effort, but the fault, I suspect, lies as much with the mistress as with the parent. Neither her qualifications—she had read only up to the fifth Primary—nor her appearance suggested that she was fit to educate the young. Nor even her house: it was clean enough and even had a hand-pump, but all was disorderly.

सत्यमेव जयते

## Chapter VII

## FEROZEPORE—(*continued*)

### Reconstruction, Village Banks, and Markets

30 *January*—(*continued*)

THE most interesting feature of this tahsil is the systematic attempt that is being made at village reconstruction by the Sub-Divisional Officer, an Indian official who inherited the beginnings of the experiment from his predecessor. In general method and object the campaign resembles Mr. Brayne's in Jhelum. There is a central committee to bring together the representatives of all the beneficent departments and co-ordinate their work, and under them are six Honorary Inspectors who are supposed to act as village guides on the Gurgaon model.[1] Of the six two are good, one bad, and three 'twixt and between. The Sub-Divisional Officer does a lot of preaching himself and, as in Jhelum, there is a magazine, which is intended to be self-supporting but is actually Rs. 600 down. In this the fourth year of the experiment 170 manure pits have been dug, 80 improved ploughs and 2,000 fodder-cutters sold, and 5,000 feet of pukka drains constructed in sixteen villages. Here and there, too, people have been persuaded to abandon the insanitary practice of stacking their dung-cakes in the village. But in many places this continues for lack of convenient sites outside. If there is no common land or a man has no land of his own near the village, all that can be done is to hire or lease a plot, and few are both willing and able to do this. In a number of cases special arrangements were made, but when it came to the point they were not carried out. Like Mr. Brayne, the Sub-Divisional Officer thinks it important to show the people unmistakably that Government is doing something to help them out of their poverty and ignorance, and he found this aspect of the campaign of special value during last summer's political agitation. Like Mr. Brayne, too, he claims that activities of this kind help to keep the peasant occupied and to divert his mind from quarrels and litigation. Only in one respect do his methods differ materially from Mr. Brayne's. No subscriptions are raised, on the salutary principle that the people concerned must pay for everything

**Village reconstruction**

[1] *Rusticus*, 154.

themselves and not depend on the generosity of others. If this is possible, it is a great merit of the scheme, since both Jhelum and Gurgaon show that few like being touched in their pockets for schemes to benefit others.

Schemes for improving the village look so differently at head-quarters and in the village that I was at some pains to-day to find out how the scheme was working. The village where I stopped for the usual bank inspection was one of those which had come within its operation, but although I examined it carefully I could find nothing to indicate change, and the people said quite candidly that theirs was the old way of doing things (*purana intizam*).

'The Tahsildar came once two years ago and gave us an order to clean the lanes and throw the manure and rubbish 100 yards from the village. At the time we agreed, but after that no one came, so we did nothing, and now we throw things as we please.' This was evidently one of the failures, and it was doubtless due to the inactivity of the Honorary Inspector, who was not one of the two good ones.

We rode on and came to a Sikh village. Unfortunately the people had been warned of our coming and all was spick and span. A Jat who had dug a manure pit admitted it was done 'by order', but added: 'Without doubt it is a good thing.'

'Then,' I said, turning to the ring of bearded faces round me, 'I suppose others have dug them too?'

'No one else has dug them: our land is too far from the village and we cannot get land near it.'[1]

'But those of you who have land near the village—surely you have dug them?'

'No.'

'Then you think them bad?'

'No, we think them good.'

'Then why have you not dug them?'

'It is our laziness.' And so said the men of the Salt Range;[2] and who would say anything else, if he had to live under a sun which for seven months of the year takes the temperature by day to anything between 90 and 115 degrees in the shade?

Last of all we came to Bága Purána. It has 3,200 inhabitants and is the second clean village of any size that I have seen in the Punjab.[3] It has twice won a prize for cleanliness and hopes to win a third at the competition to be held next month for the cleanest village in the district.

**A clean village**

[1] Cf. *Rusticus*, 69.
[2] pp. 38, 61.
[3] For the other see p. 42.

It was therefore at its best, and though the lanes may have been prepared for our coming, this could not have been the case with the houses, whose smooth mud-leeped walls stood transfigured by the setting sun. Some of them put modern mansion and villa to scorn, notably one which had a porch a hundred feet long with three high-arched gateways and nine brick pillars sentinelled down the centre and supporting a lofty roof. The Malwa Jats are lovers of the round arch, and their houses are the finest in the province. All I saw were clean, but as usual inner rooms were pitch dark, even in the case of a family that had risen to the rare luxury of a kitchen with a fire-place. 'There is great comfort in this fire-place,' said the shrouded lady of the house, as she bent over the fire to keep away the chill of dusk.[1] It was a pleasure to walk about this village, and there was almost a garden fragrance in its cleanliness. And it had been obtained cheaply enough: for the lanes three sweepers are paid one rupee a month each, and as to the houses, the people are not 'lazy'.[2]

Amongst those prowling round with me was the headmaster of the local Middle school, and this brought us back to an old subject.

**Education and farming**

'The educated make the better farmers,' he said.

'They can't work as we do,' asserted a small, broad-chested Jat at his elbow.

'Without doubt, but they learn the new ways.'

'How many,' I asked, 'farm with the new implements?'

'There are only five or six,' replied the Jat, 'who can read and who farm, and none of them uses the new implements.'

'Does not their farming differ at all from the farming of those who can't read?'

'No, not at all.'

'Then here at least education has had no influence on farming.'

'But those who go to school learn to rise and to sit; they can talk to the patwari and keep accounts.'

'That is most true, but do any of these five or six men keep accounts?'

'No, not one.'

'And can those who have been to school do as much work as those who have not been?'

[1] Cf. *Rusticus*, 49.

[2] Thanks to panchayats (see p. 138 ff.) and sustained official interest, the reconstruction work described above has taken root in the tahsil, and the village sanitation shows marked improvement. In some villages, the lanes are kept clean; in others, water is not allowed to stagnate, and here and there manure is kept outside the village (1933).

'At first not,' admitted the headmaster; 'but in three or four years they can do as much as anyone. Look at Jiwan Singh,' said he, turning to the Jat, 'is he not as good as you?'

'Yes, without doubt,' was the generous admission, and the headmaster is right: education may impair strength but farming will bring it back. We were standing in the courtyard of two brothers, one a clerk and the other a cultivator. Whether it was the influence of education or not, everything was arranged with an orderliness rarely found south of the Ravi. One room, and that a small one, was full of chopped fodder and the dry was kept carefully apart from the green, and all round the courtyard everything had its appropriate peg, even the pails, a nicety I have not seen before.

**Religious instruction**

As so often happens, the boys have their school, but the girls have none. Six parents, however, have boldly sent their daughters —the eldest is ten—to the boys' school, amongst them the Sikh headmaster, the Sub-Inspector of Police, and a Brahmin. Others have not followed their example because there is 'anxiety' about the arrangement. The lack of education for the girls would matter a little less if they could get instruction in their religion, but the only community which gives this is a group of Christians, who are mostly of the humblest origin. They have an Indian padre who can both read and understand his Bible. For Sikh and Muslim there are many places of worship, three Gurdwáras and four mosques, but not a single granthi[1] or mullah who can expound his scriptures. One of the granthis, indeed, is blind, and in another village seen to-day, the same was the case with one of the three mullahs. Spiritually all three were blind, for none of them knew Urdu, still less Arabic. They teach a few boys to gabble the Koran, and some years ago when there was an elderly mullah a few girls were taught as well. The girls of the village, save the dozen who go to the school just described, now have no teaching of any kind, and the village is as large as Bága Purána. For the boys there is a school, but even they get no religious teaching, with the doubtful exception of the few who go to mosque and gurdwára. I found the same thing on my last tour,[2] and it is typical of the Punjab, probably of the whole of India. If I mention it again, it is because it is my firm conviction, rooted in the experience of Europe, that, until at least the peasant is fully educated, he requires religious teaching and guidance if his life is to be illuminated by either the old light or the new. But the teaching must be given by men who understand the spirit of religion as well as its letter.

[1] Sikh priest.

[2] Cf. *Rusticus*, 44, 85, 338.

Bága Purána has as many midwives as priests, and they are just about as well qualified for their work, for all are untrained.

**Midwives**

One who used to be here was recently given six months' training at Ferozepore and paid Rs. 15 a month while she trained. But, on her return, she found her skill so little in demand that she went elsewhere. 'Our women prefer the old ways and do not like midwives with instruments,' was the explanation. And what else can one expect when there is no girls' school?

To-day for the first time this year I heard the lark pouring out his intoxicating song over the ugly plain. On a horse one hears these things.

### 31 *January.—Bága Purána to Kot Kapura* (18 *miles*)

Most days I inspect a bank or two, but it would be tedious to set down day by day what each bank is like. I will content myself, therefore, with noting a few characteristic traits for the benefit of those who would know at first hand how the agricultural Thrift and Credit co-operative society works in the field.[1] One of yesterday's villages, for instance, had once had four banks, but has now only one. A society of zemindars and two of sweepers (Sikh and Christian) had failed, and two years ago even the fourth was officially described as 'hopeless'. The cause of this collapse was the failure to get good men together at the start and two years' departmental neglect: there are few village societies that do not require wet-nursing in their infancy. The fourth bank was saved by persuading good men to join it and giving the members the careful teaching that they should have had at the outset. In starting a society too much care can hardly be taken in the selection of members: it is the bees who make the honey rather than the flies who rush to it, that are wanted. And every member should be well grounded in the by-laws of his society and in the elements of co-operation. How easy this sounds, but in most villages there are ten flies for every bee and ten men who cannot read for one who can; and with those who cannot, all teaching has to be given by word of mouth and imprinted on the mind by constant repetition. In 1930 only 13 per cent of the members of our 16,000 village banks could read and write,[2] and in the Zira tahsil, through which we have just passed, 97 per cent are illiterate.

**Village banks**

[1] In the Punjab there are over 16,000 of these societies with an average of thirty-two members each (1934).

[2] *Co-op. Soc. Rpt.* (1930), 29.

And this is the kind of thing that follows. We were looking at a society of Arains near the Sutlej, and of the fifty-six men present all but six were illiterate. Much the most intelligent was the secretary; but he had used his intelligence to obtain for a relative a loan of Rs. 400 in excess of his credit limit, and on the bond were the thumbmarks of two bogus sureties. A month ago the managing committee promised the Inspector that the loan would be recalled, but did nothing. It was clearly a case for a new secretary, but the old one was present and no one wished to make him an enemy by turning him out, for his education and intelligence make him formidable. The situation was a delicate one, and much persuasion had to be used before the committee would agree to any action at all. It ended in a compromise: a new secretary was appointed to hold office till the loan was repaid.

In a village bank liability is unlimited, and to protect members from its consequences every loan must be guaranteed by one or more sureties. A quick way of distinguishing the good from the ordinary bank is to see whether the borrower knows who his sureties are and whether the sureties realize their obligations. The other day on being informed by the members of a bank that till recently their society had been in class A and 'by your Honour's kindness' would soon be so again, I applied the test and found that a member who had taken a loan only a month before had not the least idea what the amount was nor who were his sureties. A member of the committee came to his rescue and said he was one of them, but the bond showed that someone else was. He then said he was referring to an earlier loan, but again the bond proved him wrong, at which he was laughed into silence.

The village bank's lynch pin is its committee. Service on it is honorary and more attractive to the honey-loving fly than the honey-making bee. Many is the committee that takes more than its share of the honey. In Shahpur we came across a treasurer who had borrowed Rs. 4,500, and in this district there is one who has taken Rs. 30,000. Large loans of this kind spell disaster and can only be recovered with infinite difficulty.[1] Another common defect is infrequent meetings and slack attendance at them. In the case of the mortgage bank at Bhalwál six of its nineteen directors had not attended more than one of the last nine meetings; but fortunately the bank has a capable president and, though it has Rs. 50,000 on loan, it has not a single defaulter.[2] With good banks the committee meets frequently, and in a society seen in the Salt Range there had been fifty-five meetings in twelve months.

[1] They are now virtually impossible.
[2] For mortgage banks, see *Rusticus*, 325.

The Salt Range societies are almost the only ones I have seen on this tour which have not been obliged by the slump to reduce their loans to a minimum. This is because the army is behind them and pay and pensions keep credit liquid. But anything that brings in a steady flow of cash serves the same purpose. In one village we saw there were six banks. In five credit was frozen, but in the sixth business continued because the members, who were primarily cultivators, employed their spare time in weaving. Mr. Gandhi believes that the Indian peasant badly needs an industry which will increase both his resources and his employment, and for this purpose recommends spinning. So far as unirrigated tracts are concerned, where cultivation is necessarily precarious and leaves large leisure, there can be no doubt that he is right, and this is a case in point. The village is entirely dependent upon rain, and in five banks the members, being cultivators and nothing else, were locked out of employment by drought, but in the sixth they fell back upon their weaving.[1]

**Easy credit and its dangers**

The great danger of village banks is that they may facilitate borrowing. 'There can be no advantage from a bank,' said a grain-dealer once when we were discussing this in a colony market: 'a man will spend as much money as he can get: 10 or 20 rupees, he sees no difference: he wastes it all.' There is profound truth in this charge, as I have shown elsewhere,[2] and when some years ago in another district the experiment was tried of letting village banks borrow up to a certain limit without any check from the staff,[3] the results were disastrous. Most societies at once borrowed up to the full limit, and, when the time came to repay, unable to do so, they made fictitious repayments. The effects of this still clog the district, and the A B C of handling money has to be taught all over again. Fortunately, there are many now amongst our members, especially in the central Punjab, who have grasped the fact that for the peasant the fear of money is the beginning of wisdom, and the slump, which has dissolved the prosperity of the past 'like the baseless fabric of a vision', has enforced the lesson. But there are still many amongst our 500,000 members[4] who look upon their society simply as a cow to be milked; and when they find their credit with it exhausted, they return to the money-lender.[5] The last state of such men is often worse than the

[1] Cf. *Rusticus*, 361.

[2] *Peasant*, 222, 262.

[3] Normally only societies in Class A or B (there are four classes) are allowed to do this. Others, the large majority, are required to submit their applications for loans through the co-operative staff.

[4] In July 1933, 490,000 for agricultural credit societies and 656,000 for all types.

[5] Cf. *Rusticus*, 112-3.

first, and at present it is impossible, except by continued teaching, to protect them from themselves. It would seem as if the only remedy were not to allow a money-lender to sue a co-operator for a loan given him after joining a bank.[1]

Another and more subtle danger is that men not in debt may join a bank and start borrowing. If they borrow for productive purposes and are careful about repayment there is no harm in this; but borrowing is full of pit-falls for the inexperienced and improvident. The Sikh bank we saw near Moga is an example of this. When the society was started, only one or two of the members were in debt, but now all but one have borrowed to pay land revenue and water rate.

One sometimes wonders why one village has a bank and another close by has none. Last month I came upon two Sikh villages within a mile of each other, one with a vigorous bank of fifty members, the other with none. The latter said they preferred to deal with the money-lender, because he did not press them when they had nothing to give him, whereas the bank got its members' property attached. Charging only 12½ per cent and no compound interest, a co-operative society is obliged to proceed against those who won't pay when they can, and in most societies the fault lies not on the side of severity but of lenience. The money-lender is more easy-going and often waits two or three years before beginning to harry a client. This naturally suits the peasant, and is a main reason why he is so careless about repayment. The sage amongst them realize this, and at Sardhi (in the Salt Range)[2] when we were discussing whether the village should have a bank or not and I pointed out that it would mean repaying every six months instead of every three years, an old soldier said: 'That is good for us; then what we have to pay does not increase.' Receiving so pertinent and unexpected a reply, I asked why they had not already started a bank. 'No one has told us how to start one, but we hear from other villages that it is a good thing and brings much advantage.'

And of that, despite many failures and countless imperfections, no one can doubt. During this tour and the last it has been impressed on me again and again, but one incident will suffice to show what is meant. At a meeting of a Banking Union in an area where Co-operation had long been established I enquired from the 100 present, who included the presidents of many village banks, what benefits Co-operation had brought. One of those sitting on the ground was chosen by his fellows to act a spokesman and his reply, which they endorsed, was as follows: 'It has added to our

[1] Cf. *Rusticus*, 224, 248.
[2] p. 41.

capital (*sarmaya*) ; it has reduced our debt ; it has increased our good fellowship (*saluk*), and money is not wasted.' Solid benefits indeed, and, with the possible exception of education, the four most needed by the Indian village at present. Should not Government then back the co-operative movement to the full extent of its resources, borrowing if necessary for the purpose ?[1]

**Land revenue**

The borrowing to pay land revenue and water rate, just mentioned, is an ominous sign of the times. The cold weather instalment is being collected and my enquiries both in this district and the last indicate widespread borrowing to pay it. In Amritsar a tahsildar put the amount at only 10 per cent of the whole, but one of my Inspectors, who knows the people well, puts it at 50 per cent. A Revenue official at Moga estimates that half the people in the tahsil have borrowed, and the local co-operative staff say the same. The greatest persuasion was required to collect the amount, and durbars of headmen had to be held for the purpose. In Amritsar, to facilitate payment, a tahsildar induced the local money-lenders to open their money-bags, closed on account of the slump, and they charged 30 per cent for the favour. Interest rates vary considerably, no doubt with the credit of the borrower. At Makhu,[2] a zemindar told me that in return for a loan of five rupees he had promised to pay back ten in June ; and another said that he had borrowed Rs. 22 and received Rs. 20 in cash on the understanding that, if he repaid Rs. 22 within six months, nothing more would be due, and that otherwise he would have to pay 25 per cent from the date of the loan : that is to say, if the loan was repaid within six months, the rate was 20 per cent (prepaid) ; otherwise it would be 25 per cent, plus 20 per cent for the first six months. At a Sikh village in Amritsar I found that of fifty people present sixteen had pawned, and twenty-three sold, jewellery to pay the current instalment. I asked why they had not all sold. ' A matter of izzat,' said an officer : ' they hope to redeem it next harvest, but they will not be able to do so.' In this village the position was complicated by a police post quartered on the inhabitants at a cost of Rs. 10,000 a year for refusing to pay their land revenue last summer. The reduction in land revenue announced last month[3] will save the district about Rs. 50,000, and in this village (unlike the people of Shahpur)[4] the zemindars had a word of gratitude for Government on the subject. As in the north,[5] it is in every peasant's mouth that the economic crisis is due to ' Cangress-Mangress '. ' Gandhi-ji has forbidden people to buy English cloth ;

[1] Cf. *Peasant*, 263. [2] p. 99. [3] p. 19.
[4] p. 19. [5] p. 27.

England will not buy our wheat,' is their simple but fallacious reading of the situation.

As no one likes having to pay land revenue, a resourceful member of the Co-operative Department,[1] has devised a means of escape; and it is as simple as possible. All that is necessary is to join a land revenue redemption society and, whenever land revenue has to be paid, to deposit an equivalent amount with the society. If, as is usual, the society pays 7 per cent compound interest on the deposit, in twelve years the member will have to his credit a sum bringing in sufficient interest to pay his land revenue. A number of these societies have been formed, and one of them we saw at Manan last week.[2]

**The camel**

There came a point in our march to-day when it was evident from the sudden change in the condition of the road that we were entering an Indian state. The country, too, began to change: sandhills appeared amongst the crops, and the edges of the fields became more ragged, and on the road we met more and more camels. We were entering the great camel country which stretches westward, with hardly a break, across Baluchistan, Persia, and Arabia, and along the whole length of north Africa to the Atlantic. In this vast area no animal can vie with the camel. There is no task done by either horse or bullock to which he cannot be set with advantage. 'He will do everything for us but cook,' exclaimed a Jat of Hissar. In the desert he will outstay all but the hardest rider, and it is recorded of him that he has done 150 miles in forty-nine hours[3] and journeyed for ten days 'with nothing to drink and almost nothing to eat.'[4] And, with a philosophy that is characteristic of the great, he will perform the most humdrum tasks as uncomplainingly as the most adventurous. Since yesterday it has been a common sight to see him at the Persian wheel instead of the usual pair of bullocks, and he is preferred for the purpose. His pace is quicker, and with blinds on his eyes he will go round and round the wheel for six hours on end and will irrigate five or six kanals[5] instead of the four done by bullocks; and he will do this

[1] Sardar Behadur Sardar Beant Singh. Co-operation in the Punjab owes much to his judgment and devotion and to his intimate knowledge of village life.

[2] Since killed by the economic depression. The latter in combination with the general reduction in the rate of interest to about 4 per cent, has made the work of these societies very difficult, and only three or four are keeping their heads above water. One of these, however, can now pay its members' land revenue for one crop a year (1933).

[3] Lawrence, *Revolt in the Desert*, 164.

[4] St. John Philby, 'The Empty Quarter of Arabia' (*The Listener*, 20 July 1932).

[5] In Ferozepore 9·68 kanals make one acre.

with no one to drive him,[1] and with no more urging than an occasional shout. Such a beast can be had, four years old, for Rs. 180, a bare thirteen guineas. At the plough, too, he does well, though except in sandy soils not quite so well as a pair of bullocks; for, like the plough horse, he is six or seven paces in front of the plough and must cut his corners. With the large holdings common in camel country this matters little, but the small holder prefers the bullock.[2]

**A typical market**

At Kot Kapura I inspected the market, and as it is the fifth seen on this tour, I shall describe it. Dating from the early nineties when the prosperity of Ferozepore began, it is embellished neither by man nor by time, and its two-storied red brick houses with their corrugated iron verandahs form an unlovely square round a large and almost treeless market-place. That market-places in the Punjab should nearly always be treeless, when for some months it is one of the hottest countries in the world, shows how little man cares for comfort when absorbed in the pursuit of gain. To-day, however, there was no need of shade for either man or beast, and trader and camel were both glad of the sun. We sought out a veteran commission agent and found a fine old bania, pock-marked but with wide-set eyes and penetrating glance. Camels thronged and bubbled round us as he told us about the market.

In early days when markets were few, produce would come fifty miles,[3] but now, as with most markets, its radius is about fifteen miles, the distance that a man can journey to and fro in a day with bullock-cart, donkey, or camel. Ninety per cent of the produce is said to be brought in by the cultivators themselves, and much the same is the case at Moga, where there is also a market.[4]

[1] Detailed enquiry on a farm in Ludhiana, a district which marches with Ferozepore, showed that, including depreciation and interest, it cost Rs. 252 to maintain a camel as against Rs. 314 for a pair of bullocks (Punjab Bd. of Econ. Enquiry, *Farm Accounts in the Punjab*, 1929-30, 52). Bullocks will also work the Persian wheel without a driver if they wear blinds, and they do this in certain districts (e.g. Jhelum and Multan), but in Ludhiana (and presumably in Ferozepore) the people do not like putting blinds on them (ibid., 52).

[2] In the Amritsar and Tarn Taran tahsils, the average area (unencumbered by occupancy tenancy or mortgage) owned is only five acres (*Amritsar Gaz.* (1914), 135). In the Zira tahsil (Ferozepore) the average holding is from 6 to 8 acres (*Peasant*, 66, n.). On the other hand, in Sirsa it is 60 acres and in Fazilka to the west of Kot Kapura 84 (ibid., 3, n.).

[3] e.g. from Jagraon.

[4] A detailed enquiry done into the marketing of wheat in 1930 showed that 77 per cent of the wheat sold in the markets of Ferozepore Cantonment, Fazilka, and Moga was brought in by the growers themselves. In the Sutlej riverain the percentage is said to be 25 or less.

In spite of this, there is not a single zemindar or peasant amongst the fifty-five commission agents of the market. All but eleven are Aggarwáls, a section of the great Bania community of the southern Punjab.[1] As there is no bank in the market, the commission agent depends for his finance on the bigger money-lenders and the latter upon the banks at Ferozepore. The basis of this finance is the grain-godown, which usually holds about 1,000 maunds (36 tons).[2] The borrower pledges a godown, and on handing over the key is advanced up to 75 or 80 per cent of the value of its contents, at 7½ per cent. The slump has strained this simple system to the utmost, for with the drop in prices many borrowers have found it impossible to maintain any margin at all between the amount borrowed and the value of the produce. Nor have most been willing to sell, ever hoping for the rise that would save them from heavy loss; and the lenders hesitate to compel sale for fear of losing old clients. The amount involved is considerable, for about 200,000 maunds (over 7,000 tons) of grain, mostly wheat, are in store in the name of the commission agents. 'We have not the strength (*taufiq*) to store,' said a peasant by-stander. The storage capacity of the market is about a million maunds as against 400,000 at Moga. In both cases this more than suffices, and my enquiries in different parts of the province show that storage facilities in the Punjab are adequate in quantity however inadequate they may be in quality.[3]

Some markets have informal panchayats to regulate their practice and settle trade disputes. There is one at Moga, but the agriculturist is not represented on it; yet without him the market would not exist. Actually, as at Kot Kapura, there is no agriculturist commission agent, and the peasant would have no ally in the market at all but for the existence of a co-operative Commission shop, and even this has no representative on the panchayat; and when I pointed out the anomaly, the Banias defended themselves by saying that, as some of them owned lands, the landowner was represented. But unfortunately all landowners are not agriculturists. I then said that according to sound co-operative principle the sweepers, weighmen, and other servants of the market should also be represented. They objected that there was no need for this, since they all lived on good terms with each other and there was 'no question' between them. I complimented them on this happy state of affairs, but said it might not always continue and, if ever 'question' arose, it would be much easier to settle it amicably if all

[1] Cf. p. 207.
[2] At Moga there are about 400 godowns.
[3] See also *Pb. Bkg. Enqy. Rpt.*, 61.

parties were in the habit of deliberating together. An amusing and lively discussion followed and many pressed round to hear so unusual a debate. It ended in high good humour with the most garrulous commission agent saying that he would himself propose the election of a representative of the commission shop to the panchayat.[1]

**Commission shops**

I have inspected several commission shops on this tour, and since they were not described on my last, they must be given a page or two here. They represent the only effort so far made by the small and medium grower in the Punjab to market his produce co-operatively, and they do this on the lines of the ordinary commission agent, selling, and to some small extent storing, their clients' produce, and occasionally buying for them. They do this for each client individually, never collectively; and this is one of their weaknesses. Unless hard pressed,[2] the peasant is too much of an individualist to pool his produce, and peasant produce which is not pooled cannot be graded —the quantities brought in are too small and the qualities too mixed —and without grading and bulk, marketing for export is out of the question. There are several other difficulties. In most districts holdings are small, and outside the canal colonies the peasant has too little to sell for a society to be able to render him any very material service, measured in terms of money. Within the colonies conditions are more favourable, and most societies are to be found there. But even there, the obstacles are formidable. The birth of a society is generally the signal for concerted opposition on the part of the commission agents, and since they completely dominate the markets, they have only to proclaim a general boycott for a society to be placed in serious jeopardy. At Sangla a young society was boycotted for two months because it distributed a rebate of six annas in the rupee, and the boycott was only ended by the authorities taking security proceedings under the Criminal Procedure Code. While it lasted, the society found itself unable to sell its clients' unginned cotton; and to prevent this happening again, next year it entered into an agreement with the owner of a ginning factory to gin all their cotton in return for extensive credit. The result was no boycott, but (as I found at Sangla)[3] a debt of Rs. 36,000 covered by very doubtful bonds.[4] If a society escapes boycott, it may be half ruined by bad debts, of which this is an example, or by embezzlement. It is extremely difficult to find

[1] The promise has not been redeemed: so is it ever with the garrulous (1933).

[2] Cf. pp. 27, 30.

[3] p. 8.

[4] This has now swelled to Rs. 47,000 (*Co-op. Soc. Rpt.*, 1933, 37).

a manager both honest and efficient on the salary that most societies are able or prepared to pay, and it is of the very nature of co-operative marketing that much must be left to the manager. Many embezzlements have occurred, and sometimes thousands of rupees disappear.[1] Finally, there is the possibility of communal dissension, and that is the worst plague of all; for nowhere does the Biblical saying about a house divided against itself apply more surely than in a co-operative society.

**Market charges**

In India, therefore, the co-operative commission shop, simple in form though it is (and it could hardly be simpler), is a difficult enterprise. Yet there would not be twenty-five of them with a turnover of nearly 30 lakhs (£225,000) if they did not offer some solid advantages. The most obvious of these is in regard to charges. In all Punjab markets, the sale of produce is subject to a surprising number of small payments, which incidentally illustrate the extent to which the division of labour may be carried in a mediaeval state of society. The commission agent's charge (in Lyallpur 12½ annas per Rs. 100 of produce sold) and the small payment made to the broker are reasonable enough: less so the payment (*shagirdi*) to the agent's apprentices, whether they exist or not. Then there are payments in kind to weighman, waterman, sweeper, coolie, and cook, who all perform some small customary service. Thus, 'two men remove the sacks of grain from the cart; another arranges the grain in a heap on the platform, a fourth hands it to the weighman, and a fifth weighs it,' and the cook prepares the modest refreshment to which, in courteous eastern fashion, the dealer treats his customers. But strangest of all, yet characteristic of a country where religion is never far away, one pice per Rs. 100 is charged for the local *gowshála*,[2] and five more for religious purposes (*dharmao*). This last charge is devoted by the more scrupulous to schools, orphanages, and other charitable institutions in which they are interested; but others, the majority it is said, spend it upon religious ceremonies, gatherings for the singing of hymns, the feasting of Brahmins, pilgrimages to Hardwar and Benares, and bathing in the sacred waters of the Ganges; and sometimes, it is alleged, 'upon objects of more mundane advantage.'[3]

These charges vary from market to market but rarely (if ever) amount to more than 2½ to 3 per cent of the value of the produce

[1] An embezzlement of Rs. 47,000 has just been discovered in a shop in the Lyallpur colony (1933).

[2] Almshouses for aged or infirm cattle.

[3] The passages quoted are taken from a note written by the author in 1930 (*Pb. Bkg. Enqy. Rpt.*, note E, 206). The note deals in some detail with marketing in the Punjab.

sold.[1] They are, however, troublesome in number, and some of them vexatious in character. For, whatever arguments there may be for linking together business and charity, there is nothing to be said for making the peasant, who is more often than not a Muslim, subscribe to funds almost entirely controlled by Hindu traders. The commission shop saves the peasant entirely from this, and its total charges are only two-fifths of the grain-dealer's.[2] An even more valuable service is the provision of accurate weights and scales. Enquiry in 1928 showed that 'out of 1,407 scales tested in five districts, 69 per cent were found to be incorrect, and of 5,907 weights 29 per cent.'[3] Yet another advantage. Every market is dominated by the Hindu trader, and its atmosphere is so different from that of the village that a villager going there for the first time feels almost as lost as the desert Bedu entering a town. For such, a commission shop is an oasis, the more so that men will be found there ready to help rather than exploit. These are its three main advantages, and with an effort there might be a fourth. Large sums are paid to the grower on the sale of his produce, and in the west the sensible farmer banks the amount, retaining only what he requires for immediate need; but in India, the peasant carries it all home. Yet, in or near most markets, is a co-operative central bank where good rates are offered for even short deposits. A persuasive manager might do much in this direction if he tried. But I have never yet met one who tried.

The future of the commission shop is uncertain, but one thing is clear from what has been said. The agriculturist should have more voice in the management and control of the markets of the province.[4] So far as their actual management goes, he is almost voiceless, and even on the local bodies that control them, he is in a helpless minority. The sooner this is remedied the better.[5]

At Kot Kapura we entrained, and four hours' travelling, during which we covered only seventy-three miles, brought us to Sirsa and the edge of Bikaner.

[1] Ibid., 205.
[2] Ibid., 207.
[3] Ibid., 52.
[4] In six markets, in 1928, only 11 out of 408 members of the local bodies concerned were agriculturists (ibid., 200).
[5] In July 1933 there were only twenty-three shops, and, largely owing to the slump, their turnover had declined to nineteen lakhs. Special efforts are now being made to tighten up control and stimulate loyalty amongst the members (*Co-op. Soc. Rpt.* (1933), p. 37).

## CHAPTER VIII

# HISSAR[1]

### LANDLORD AND TENANT—'EXTENSIVE' FARMING—PANCHAYATS, AND MONEY-LENDING

*2 February.—Sirsa to Suchan* (10 *miles*)

THIS morning I was off before seven to shoot, clad in two jerseys and an overcoat and even so feeling barely warm. At 7.30 the sun came up behind a high bank of cloud, which it turned to splendour. We pursued a dusty course in a buck-board to Mangála, which we reached in an hour. A long wait followed on the edge of a lake with reedy islands, the air full of the music of low-toned bells made by the cattle gathering near the village for the day's grazing in the 'jangal'.[2] The imperial sand-grouse came at last, and we did not go back empty-handed.

We are now in the heart of the camel country and on the edge of Hindustán—Hindu India. The Punjab with its Sikh and Muslim peasantry lies behind us, and Punjabi is spoken only by the Sikhs to the north-east. Flowing beards no longer surround us, and many faces are beardless. Complexions have a pleasant reddish-brown like well-tanned leather, and the shawls and full-flounced skirts of the women are also red. The wives of the Bágri Jats[3] look at one with level eye, and their children gather excitedly to see one pass down the village lane. There is no purdah, and the veil (*ghund*) is used only when an elder or man of importance is present. Round the villages—sure sign one is amongst Hindus—the royal peacock treads delicately, unmolested and unconcerned, a vivid reminder of the Creator's power where all else proclaims a careless hand.

Though the district is predominantly Hindu,[4] there are important Muslim elements, and it was amongst Muslims that I found myself on my way back to Sirsa when I stopped to see a bank formed by the tenants of an absentee landlord. As is generally the case when the landlord

**Landlord and tenant**

[1] With this and the next two chapters compare *Peasant*, 85-96.

[2] Any uncultivated land with vegetation.

[3] Immigrants from the Bágar country of Bikaner and inhabiting the western half of the district. Cf. the Deswali Jats, who inhabit the eastern half. Both are Hindus.

[4] About 65 per cent of the population of the district (900,000) is Hindu.

is absentee, there was an atmosphere of poverty and depression.[1] The members sat in front of us in a spiritless group, their faces sunken, their shirts discoloured, and their puggarees coiled droopingly round tired heads. As is common with tenants in the Punjab, they are not allowed to cultivate the same land for many years running, lest, as the bailiff admitted (and as most landlords would admit in the same circumstances), they should assert a claim to occupancy rights.[2] In the Jhelum riverain (on two different occasions) I met twenty-three tenants, and I found that one had been cultivating the same land for forty years but that no one else had been doing so for more than eight, and most for only two or three years. Here the general rule is four or five. These are not conditions that make for the best use of the land, and all sensible landlords I have met admit this. Yet one can hardly blame them, seeing that every year the greatest landlord of them all, Government itself, leases thousands of acres for a year or two only.[3] Although tenants are periodically shifted from holding to holding, they rarely leave the village to go elsewhere. This, too, is typical of the province, and it is partly because the average landlord rarely evicts a tenant, but still more because the peasant is most reluctant to leave for good a village where he is rooted. Elsewhere, indeed, he may find it difficult even to get a house.

In all outlying districts, of which this is one, relations between landlord and tenant are still of a feudal character. This is shown here by the rental charges. There is first of all the usual payment of a part of the crop, in this case a third or a fourth according to circumstances. One advantage of this type of rent I have already pointed out.[4] Another is that the landlord is equally concerned with the tenant that the crops should be good, and for this reason here he does not allow the tenants to sell their manure. Then there are a number of further payments, which may be shown thus :—

**Feudal rent**

[1] Cf. *Peasant*, 125, and *Rusticus*, 205.

[2] See *Rusticus*, 205, 252, 257, 260, 264, 292 ; cf. also p. 277.

[3] Attention was subsequently drawn to this and enquiries set on foot. Actually there is nothing in government orders to prevent land being leased for more than two years (*Punjab Colonies Rpt.* (1932), 17), but in practice very short leases have been the rule ; in the colonies, no doubt, in order that land might be readily available for allotment. The area involved is very large, in the Nili Bár colony alone over 100,000 acres. In regard to the latter the Commissioner, Multan, writes : ' There is absolutely no incentive to improve the land and it is just squeezed for all it is worth ' (ibid., 20). That puts the position in a nutshell.

[4] p. 1.

| | |
|---|---|
| per plough at each harvest at marriage of son or daughter. | 5 seers of grain.<br>1½ seers of rice.<br>1 seer of sugar.<br>½ seer of ghi. |
| fee payable by a marriage party coming to fetch away a bride | Re. 1. |
| grazing fees | 8 annas for a buffalo.<br>4 for a cow, and one or<br>2 for calf, sheep, or goat. |
| for the watchman | Rs. 70 per annum. |
| for his assistant (*daurah*), who summons the tenants and carries the village papers about at crop inspections. | Rs. 12 at each harvest. |

(The last two charges are divided amongst three villages.)

In return for these payments the landlord advances seed when required without interest and settles all disputes. One had just been 'settled', and the case is typical of both village crime and village justice. Twenty days ago an uncle and nephew quarrelled, and unforgivable words passed. The nephew struck out with his quarter-staff and smote his uncle on the head. Either the head was softer than he expected or the staff harder, for the uncle died, and the nephew is now being prosecuted for culpable homicide. 'But you said you have settled the case.'

**Village justice**

'And so we have: it has been arranged that no one will give evidence against the nephew.'

'But how is that just?'

'This is the first case to go to court from this village, and it is necessary to settle it in this way that it may be the last. If people go as witnesses there will be enmity, and that will be bad for the village. And the nephew did not mean to kill his uncle.' I leave it to townsmen to challenge the wisdom of this decision. It shows at least how difficult it is to graft a western on to an eastern system of justice, or even, one might say, an urban on to a village system.

I could wish these men were as wise about their finance. They belong to a tribe who call themselves Rajputs but are locally known as Pachádhas or 'men of the west'. Descended from semi-pastoral freebooters, they have the worst possible reputation both for looking after their own property and for getting away with other people's. In the last fifteen years they have been advanced Rs. 50,000 by Government for sinking wells, and so far not a single well has been completed: one cunning fellow even got a loan for a second well, and the first is still not made. No one knows where the money has gone, and attempts at recovery are met with eloquent protestations of poverty. How, indeed, could such men not be poor? They are almost beyond help. Fifteen years ago village banks were started amongst

**Thriftlessness and finance**

them with the highest hopes, and a central bank was founded at Sirsa to finance them,[1] and now the central bank is owed more than a year's interest on its loans. Times have certainly been hard, for drought and slump have come together, but what has hit them harder is their lack of backbone and financial sense. Very different are the Bágri Jats who cultivate the sandy wastes along the edge of Bikaner. Repeated famine has taught them to look ahead and husband their resources. But the Pachádhas, with the Ghaggar (actually more ditch than river) and a canal to depend on, live shamelessly from hand to mouth and are as thriftless as the peasantry of the south-west. Both Jat and Pachádha suffer from insecurity of harvest; but with the Jat insecurity is more allied to famine than to plenty, and the reaction to that is thrift; and with the Pachádha it is more allied to plenty, and, as in the south-west, the reaction to that is improvidence.[2]

**Insecurity and thrift**

Drought recurs so frequently that the Bágri Jat is compelled to be thrifty. The rainfall averages 9 to 12 inches, but in good years it may be 20 and in bad only 3 or 4 inches. In the good there will be an overflowing harvest, in the bad nothing at all. In the good, therefore, the Jat stores at least a year's supply of grain and stacks all the millet and wheat straw he can to keep himself and his cattle alive through the lean years. There may be a succession of these—there has not been a good harvest since 1924—and in the past sooner or later that meant death to the thriftless and still means death to their cattle. Accordingly, the Jat is a man of frugal habits and pinches himself at every turn. On a journey he walks shoes in hand; at night he spares his lamp; and when he goes abroad, unlike the peasant farther north, he wears a homespun puggaree, and if it coils droopingly about his head, it is because it is only five or six yards long instead of the normal ten or twelve. His diet too is of a Lenten simplicity. Few touch meat, and no one eats eggs: 'there is no habit.' Most live entirely on grain, buttermilk, and ghi, eating bread made of wheat in the hot weather and of millet in the cold. Twenty years ago, like the Janglis,[3] they ate millet all the year round. Those who are not well off mix it with gram,[4] the staple crop of this sandy tract,[5] and taken thus it is

[1] The difficulties encountered in starting this bank are described in *Peasant*, 242.

[2] Ibid., 96.

[3] See p. 14.

[4] A pulse (*cicer arietinum*).

[5] The area under gram in the province is about 4 million acres (*Agricl. Rpt.* (1932-3), 6).

appetizing and nutritious. To the thrifty it is an advantage of millet bread that it can be eaten without the smear of *ghi* needed to make the drier wheat bread palatable. All the *ghi*, into which most of the milk is made, can then be sold. I asked the Jats who gave me these particulars whether they had enough to eat. Their answer had a pleasant ring of peasant cheerfulness and truth: 'We could not eat less, but we keep our strength.'

**The country**

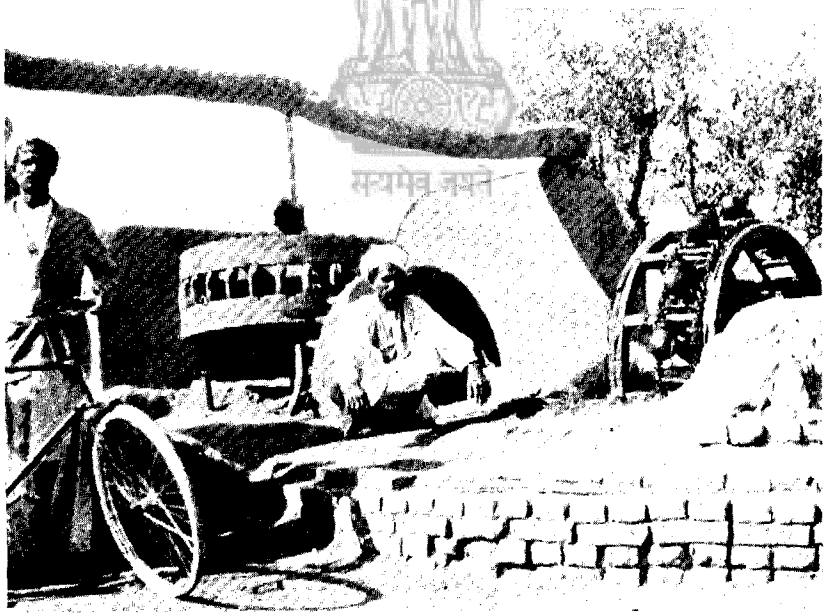
We returned to Sirsa[1] cross-country in a cloud of dust blown about us by a following wind, and on arrival I was so befloured with it that the mere rinsing of a sponge passed over my face turned the water brown. No rain has fallen for over four months, and the earth has become so brittle that one cannot move a step without dust rising. In the evening we rode to Suchán and followed an old road recently raised to the dignity of a Grand Trunk connecting Delhi and Multan. In 1398 Tamurlane passed this way on his devastating march to Delhi, and it is still said that the large mounds outside Sirsa owe their origin to the skulls of those his army slew. In those days the country must have been better watered to permit of great armies passing through. This would now be impossible in the old style, for 90 per cent of the tahsil depends entirely upon a rainfall which is so capricious that a village may suddenly find itself in the middle of a lake or go for years without enough crop to lay the dust all round it. The soil is so light that heavy rain will wash the seed away before it germinates, and if it escapes this, a dust storm may choke it. With water from 60 to over 100 feet down,[2] the only wells that are worth sinking are a few near the village tank to take its place when it dries up. As to canals, the tail of the Western Jumna just reaches Sirsa, but with so frail a supply that only a fringe of country on either side is green.

**'Extensive' farming**

Farming therefore must be extensive, even as it is in Europe where rain is scarce and the sun hot;[3] for intensive farming requires a regular supply of water and a liberal use of manure. This is a cattle-breeding district and there is plenty of manure, but hardly a quarter of it goes into the land for want of moisture to rot it into the soil;[4] and since very little irrigation is possible, ploughing and sowing depend almost entirely upon the rain. This is so infrequent and holdings are so large that many ploughings cannot be given, and normally land is ploughed only twice for gram and thrice for wheat.[5] All that the farmer can

[1] A town of 19,000 inhabitants.
[2] Except near the canal and the Ghaggar.
[3] E.g. in Sicily.
[4] Cf. p. 38.
[5] Cf. p. 44.

SUGAR-CANE AND CANE CRUSHER



PERSIAN WHEEL WITH EARTHENWARE POTS

(see pp. 13, 200)

[*face p.* 137

do is to use good seed, vary the crop with the rainfall and weed it with care, fence his fields against wild animals and stray cattle, and hoard moisture as he would gold. Some of these things he does now. He treasures his seed grain and sows it with a drill, wheat or gram as the rainfall is heavy or light, or the two together in the hope that one may do well. But the ridges round the fields are too small to hold up heavy rain and so loosely made that they are sometimes washed away, and comparatively few plough their land immediately after harvest to prepare it for the next shower. Weeding, too, is much neglected and done only to the monsoon crops;[1] and though the thorn bush is used to fence the fodder stacks, it is seldom seen round a field. An agricultural official who was with me was critical because few improved implements were used; but it may be doubted whether there is much scope for them in the very primitive conditions of the tract. I note these points, for, broadly speaking, they are typical of all unirrigated areas which have a rainfall of less than 20 inches.

### 3 *February.—To Bahauddin and back* (10 *miles*)

**A progressive landlord**

Yesterday we saw the effect of an absentee landlord; to-day we observed the influence of a good. Bahauddin is a village of over 5,000 acres and the sole property of one of our most genuine co-operators, Khan Sahib Yakin-ud-din Khan.[2] Irrigated and unirrigated land is about half and half. The two areas are divided into three sections, and in each, one section is cultivated for the spring harvest and another for the autumn and the third lies fallow the whole year. The tenants include 200 Muslim Rajputs, 50 Hindu Aroras, and 60 artisans and village servants. The number of Aroras is unexpected as they are primarily a money-lending and trading community.[3] Amongst the artisans and servants are blacksmiths, carpenters, shoemakers, potters, watermen, grain-roasters (*machi*), and weavers. Tenants are rarely moved and get to know their land intimately. This is the first point of contrast with the estate we saw yesterday, and in making better farming possible, it leads to the second: the farming is more intensive.[4]

[1] Cf. *Rusticus*, 71, 84, 258.

[2] See *Peasant*, 248: unfortunately the Khan Sahib died the following summer.

[3] See ibid., 186; also cf. *Rusticus*, 230.

[4] The rents are as follows:—on irrigated land, one third of the produce (the water rate is paid by the tenant); on unirrigated, two-fifths plus Rs. 2 an acre. In both cases there are small additional charges, i.e. Re. 1 per plough, and twelve seers per plough at each harvest.

This is largely because, on the advice of the Agricultural Department, the Khan Sahib introduced a number of improvements.

**A successful experiment**

To conserve water and give even watering, irrigated fields are plotted in small squares, and crooked field ridges are made straight. Cotton also is sown in lines, and Punjab 8 A wheat has been introduced, so successfully that, thanks to its richer yield and higher price (two annas a maund), it has displaced all its rivals. But the greatest novelty is sugar-cane. The Khan Sahib introduced it into the tahsil fifteen years ago, and now forty-five of his tenants grow it; also four land-owners of the neighbourhood, two of them non-agriculturist Aggarwáls.[1] The case shows the advantage that it is to small holders to have in their midst a progressive landlord who is willing to make experiments which lie beyond their resources; and it is not our first example of this.[2] Sugar-cane requires so much manure and takes so long (almost a year) to mature that no one with only a few acres could safely have undertaken the risk of an experimental growing. The Khan Sahib has followed up the experiment by presenting the local Better Farming Society with two iron cane-crushers, which cost Rs. 150 each. They were at work to-day, and the juice they had squeezed out of the long knotted stalks was being boiled in a vast cauldron poised over a furnace sunk in the floor. It lay there slowly stiffening into the soft golden substance that is gur. When ready this is put into a shallow wooden tray to cool and harden. It is then, while still warm, that it is most delicious; but at every stage from juice to cake its taste brings contentment. And, just as in southern Europe the vintage makes the peasant's heart glow, so in northern India does the cane harvest make it mellow with its life-giving sweetness.

With vegetables the Khan Sahib has been less successful. The Rajputs will have nothing to do with them. 'Our work,' they said, 'is with millet and wheat, the big big crops (*moti moti jins*), not with carrots and radishes. That is for *mális* (market-gardeners). Nor is it for us to lift the basket on to our heads.' The only tenants who grow vegetables are a dozen families (*Kachis*) who come from Farukhabad in the United Provinces. It is a sad commentary upon our attempts to improve farming in this country that the trained assistant (*muqaddam*) sent here to help the Better Farming Society knows nothing (as he admitted) about either vegetables or poultry; yet both are essential to the small holder's well-being.[3] In contrast to the north,[4] only

**Vegetables**

[1] See p. 127.
[2] See p. 71.
[3] See p. 87, n. 1.
[4] See p. 179.

one person, a village servant, keeps fowls. 'It is the work of sweepers' was the comment of some Rajput idiot. Rajputs, however (unlike the zemindars of Amritsar),[1] consider it no shame to keep sheep and goats. Ultimately nature is stronger than izzat and in a dry semi-pastoral country man, being unable to live by bread alone, must supplement cereals by milk, meat, and wool.

4 *February.—Suchan to Bhattu* (13 *miles*)

As we rode off this morning, necklaces of Imperial sand-grouse passed overhead with a swift swish of beating wings, and a little later we passed the only landmark in this flat featureless tahsil, the high-placed mansions of the twelve Gosains[2] of Jodhka. Around us lay a waste of sand patched with gram, and as the wind still followed us, we rode along in a cloud of dust. The jade green of the gram against the snowy sand-hills was the landscape's one concession to beauty. Everything else, as happens when beauty is absent, seemed unreal—the bushes that looked like trees, the trees that looked like bushes, and the camels, so imposing as they passed us yet a little later mere specks on the horizon.

**The indigenous Panchayat**

In such a country men were lost did they not hold together. The village community is, therefore, more alive here than in most parts of the province, and the best sign of this is the survival of the panchayat. In most of the province, this ancient and once vital village institution is defunct, and Government is wisely trying to revive it with the help of an Act (passed in 1922); but in the south-eastern Punjab it survives in its indigenous form. At Ding, where we stopped to-day, there has been one for 100 years, ever since the village was founded. The panchayat has many different forms, for uniformity is as unnatural to the village as it is natural to Government. It may be confined to a single caste, as with the tailors of Bhera;[3] or, as in Gurgaon, it may embrace a dozen villages of the same tribe;[4] or, as in the north, it may go no further than invoking the help of 'white-bearded elders' to compromise a dispute.[5] In Hissar, among the Bágri Jats, it generally deals only with cases affecting

[1] Enquiry made by the Inspector, Co-operative Societies, Tarn Taran, shows that in that tahsil few but village servants keep sheep or goats in any number. He estimates that amongst zemindars perhaps one per cent (mostly men who have sold or mortgaged their land) do this, and that about 5 per cent keep a goat or two in place of cow or buffalo (1931).

[2] A sub-division of the Sanyási sect, a sect whose practising members renounce the world. These Gosains are ordinary landowners.

[3] p. 35.

[4] *Rusticus*, 141, 152.

[5] Ibid., 308.

a single village, but among the Deswali Jats,[1] it sometimes takes up cases in which the parties live in different villages, and two villages within earshot may combine in a single panchayat. In single village cases, if the village is not a large one, all concerned meet in conclave and matters are decided in open assembly. But if it is too large for this, the different castes or quarters of the village depute representatives to attend meetings. Ding with its 400 houses is an instance of this. When a dispute occurs, each party appoints an arbitrator (*panch*), and the panchayat of representatives appoints a third to act as president (*sarpanch*) and give a casting vote if required. The three hear the case and, after considering their decision in private, report it to the panchayat, which either approves or modifies it. The disputes are usually about small loans, petty encroachments, field boundaries, the partition of joint rights, and cutting down trees on village commons. No fines are imposed but cases are compromised and public apologies exacted. Amongst recent cases were two about money. A Bania money-lender claimed Rs. 3,000 from a Jat and was awarded three buffaloes, two bullocks, some fodder, and Rs. 400 in cash to be paid in four annual instalments. (One notes the combination of kind and cash so typical of village life.) In the other case both lender and borrower were Jats. Rs. 200 were claimed and Rs. 100 allowed. Occasionally, as must happen in all but the best villages, cases are taken to court.

Some intelligent Jats who came to see me yesterday said that in the Bágar every Jat village has a panchayat, though often of the most informal character. Men of all castes meet together and settle matters of common interest by general assent. No arbitrators are appointed, but the views of elders are treated with special respect, and one of the younger of the Jats, a title-holder and the president of a first-rate bank, said that if he tried to force his opinion upon one lower in position but much older, he would be forbidden the huqqa and water. This is the extreme penalty, and in a waterless caste-ridden country it is a serious thing not to be allowed to use the well of your caste-fellows; for the only alternative is to use the well of a lower caste, and that means temporary loss of caste. The Jats related how two of their tribe had been punished in this way, one for marrying a Brahmin widow and the other for marrying his aunt, and it was three years before the latter was reinstated. Generally a man is reinstated on pleading guilty and paying some minor penalty. In the president's village, where there is no well, a common penalty is digging so many maunds of earth—it may be 100 or even 500—from the tank kept for drinking water; or a man

[1] See p. 131, n.3.

may have to pay a small fine to the gowshala or temple. The worst penalties are inflicted for breaches of caste, of which two examples have just been given. This is characteristic of village Hinduism. Fifteen years ago, when I was stationed at Sirsa, I remember asking a Jat zaildar whether the Jats who had joined the Árya Samáj[1] were the better or the worse for the change. 'They are not good men,' he replied. 'How not good?' I asked, expecting to hear of some moral defect. 'They do not observe the funeral feast on the thirteenth day after death.'

It was in a large village of Deswali Jats that we found the most systematic panchayat, and, as in the first village, it had been in existence over 100 years. The village has 250 houses and is divided into six quarters (*thola*). Each quarter elects a representative, who serves on the panchayat technically during the good pleasure of the electors, but usually for life. 'If any bad thing were done he would be changed.' As five quarters are inhabited mainly by Jats and one by Brahmins, the panchayat consists of five Jats and one Brahmin. The humbler castes—there are fifty Dhánaks (sweepers) and twelve Chamárs—are unrepresented. 'That is a fault,' I said censoriously. The zaildar shook his head emphatically: 'They have not the intelligence to do the work.' The six members of the panchayat select one of themselves to act as president (*sarpanch*), and they had chosen the zaildar, a man who bears the stamp of authority in his energetic clean-cut face. Cases are heard in the presence of all who care to attend, and after true democratic fashion everyone may give his opinion, but it is the opinion of the six that prevails. Here in miniature is the ideal form of government, democracy at the base and aristocracy at the head. As in most other villages, no fines are imposed and in extreme cases *huqqa* and water are banned. A few years ago a Chamár was banished from the village for breaking into someone's house and stealing a camel or a bullock. After 'six—five days' he paid the compensation assessed and was allowed to return to the village. Last year four more Chamárs were summoned to appear before the panchayat for encroaching with their dwellings on the village lands. In India encroachment of this kind is always a thorny matter to deal with whether in town or village. Accordingly, representatives of three neighbouring villages with which the village has old ties were called in to assist in settling the case. This is always done when the parties wish it or the matter is of importance, and it is an admirable way of strengthening the panchayat.

[1] A section of Hindus (important in northern India) who have tried to reform Hinduism by returning to the authority of the Vedas.

If a party refuses to accept the panchayat's decision and goes to court, the panchayat assists the other side; but no one has been to court for at least two years. On the last occasion the parties rushed there before the panchayat had time to intervene, but in the end it was amicably settled. It was complained that in the past the courts hampered the work of the panchayat and even objected to what it did, but the Panchayat Act of 1922 has put new heart into them. 'Do people always tell the truth before the panchayat?' I asked. 'Always,' said the zaildar with immense emphasis.

'And do they in kachhery?'[1]

'No, there falsehood is spoken.'

'And when *you* go to kachhery, do you speak falsehood too?'

'When I am an assessor,[2] never,' he exclaimed proudly, throwing back a solemn face.

'But what if you have to give evidence?'

'O, then,' and the wrinkled face broke into a beaming smile, 'I make the lower the higher (*niche upar karlen*).' There was general laughter at this, broken by a Brahmin saying in earnest tones: 'In the panchayat there is justice, but in the court there is none'—a sentiment which won general assent.

'But why do men fear to speak falsehood in the panchayat and not in court?'

'In court it is an affair of parties, but in the panchayat two lines are drawn on the ground, one for the Ganjes and the other for the Jamna, and no one dare speak falsehood in the presence of the holy water.'

All I ask agree that the truth is as surely told before the panchayat as the contrary in kachhery. 'How could a man venture to tell a lie before his brotherhood?' said one of yesterday's Jats; and another added: 'It is a Hindu belief that where five sit together God himself is present and no one would dare to lie in His presence.'[3] The wholesale perjury that goes on in our courts is 'the worst feature of British rule', said a highly educated zemindar with me, and it is the strongest possible reason for encouraging the panchayat. Another reason, only less strong, is that a panchayat is not bound by our rules of evidence, which, as Macaulay noted, 'exclude much information which would be quite sufficient to determine the conduct of any reasonable man, in the most important transactions of private life'.[4]

[1] The district courts.

[2] Assessors sit with Sessions Judges in serious cases.

[3] Cf. 'Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them' (Matthew xviii, 20).

[4] *Essay on Warren Hastings*, 635.

Something is being done by Government to encourage panchayats by organizing them under the Act of 1922. In this district there are thirty-one,[1] of which ten are said to be good and five or six useless. Every three years there is an election, and one '*panch*' is elected for every thousand inhabitants, subject to a minimum of three and a maximum of seven. As no one can be elected who does not pay at least five rupees a year in land revenue, only one Bania, and not a single village servant, is a panch. In the village the zemindar has things as much his own way as the Bania has in the market.[2] The one is the complement of the other, and both are out of keeping with the times. It is an advantage of the arbitration society, which is an attempt to revive the panchayat on co-operative lines, that it is based on the principle that all important interests, high and low, should be represented on its committee or panel of arbitrators. And usually it is not difficult to secure this, for on a point of manifest equity the zemindar is very open to persuasion. Another advantage of the arbitration society is that there need be no limit of value in civil cases, and disputes involving large sums are occasionally settled.[3] Under the Panchayat Act no dispute involving more than Rs. 50 may be taken up: criminal jurisdiction is also narrowly restricted to cases of petty theft, assault, mischief, cattle, trespass, etc. In spite of this, 650 civil and 150 criminal cases were decided in this district last year. Imprisonment cannot be inflicted, and (except in special cases) no fine exceeding Rs. 25. Actually very few fines are imposed; for, like many in authority in this country, the panches are singularly afraid of punishing for fear of making enemies, and for the most part they confine themselves, a little lamely, to apologies and promises not to offend again.[4] This is one reason why in the sphere of sanitation, in regard to which they have also been given powers, they have achieved very little.

**New panchayats**

The Panchayat Act is the best bill that the Punjab Council has passed since the war, for its main object is to improve village conditions on *indigenous* lines. The fullest possible use should therefore be made of it, but my enquiries on this tour and the last suggest emphatically that this is not being done. In the Tarn Taran tahsil there are few that are vigorous and many that are paralysed or perverted by faction. In the Moga tahsil, where there are thirty-six, they were charged with fomenting faction by their partiality and by not hearing cases in open assembly. In

[1] Now forty-five (1934).

[2] See p. 127.

[3] Arbitration societies were described on my last tour, see *Rusticus*, 113, 306. In 1933 there were eighty-four societies with about 12,000 members.

[4] Cf. ibid., 234.

Hissar, presumably because the panchayat tradition has survived, cases are heard in the presence of all who attend. This is a wholesome practice, which should be generally adopted. It is even more important that every district should have a trained officer, who is himself a villager, to foster and supervise the growth of panchayats. Co-operative societies could never have multiplied in their thousands without the assistance of a large carefully chosen and highly trained staff, and it is absurd to suppose that panchayats, which are akin to them, can possibly thrive without it. Hissar has an officer, and its panchayats are consequently doing moderately well;[1] but Jhelum and Shahpur are without one, and the result is, Jhelum has only one panchayat and Shahpur none at all. Yet next door, in Gujrat, which has an officer, there are over fifty with some of the best in the province. As to the ten districts visited on my last tour, there are few where any systematic effort has been made to develop them.[2] If it is desired to encourage real democracy in India, it is surely not too much to ask that a little money—for the Punjab a lakh a year would be ample—should be spent upon encouraging the one type that is native to the country.[3]

**Democracy and the peasant**

How ignorant and indifferent the peasant is in regard to other types we have seen again and again on this tour, and in view of impending political changes, even at the risk of tedious repetition, I propose to continue faithfully recording what he says about the new machinery of Government. I asked the usual questions at Ding and in another Hindu Jat village. Although 106 were present in the latter and fifteen of them were literate, no one could tell us anything about the Ministers. I doubt if anyone had even heard of their existence. Three had votes for the District Board, but all they could remember about the last election was that one of them had voted for a politician who was named. Two were also entitled to vote for the provincial Council, but they had not the least idea what the Council was, nor had anyone else. And yet the village was within three miles of

[1] Now there is no Panchayat Officer, and hardly one panchayat appears to be working satisfactorily (1934).

[2] Cf. ibid., 135.

[3] Actually what was done in 1931-2 was to reduce the existing fourteen Panchayat Officers 'owing to the financial stringency'. How far the 1,018 panchayats formed under the Act, which existed in the Punjab in March 1932, have suffered from this I am unable to say, as the report for 1932-3 is not yet available. But my experience since 1931 (in the northern Punjab) confirms me in the view expressed above. In my opinion the best course now, if the movement is to be both strengthened and developed, is to give each district a Panchayat Officer and to place him, and all panchayats, for the purpose of supervision and development, under the control of the Registrar, Co-operative Societies, and his staff, who are experts in every form of village enterprise demanding co-operative effort (April 1934).

a market station. At Ding, which is itself a market station, the darkness was almost as great. Of the twenty-three present (four were literate) two or three knew the official hierarchy, but only one that there were Ministers, and he had not the least idea who or how many they were, nor what they did. 'The patwari,'[1] said one, 'is too much for us: how can we know about bigger men?' Which recalls a saying of these parts—'The Creator above, the patwari below',[2] implying that there is nothing of moment in between. Of the Round Table Conference all that was said was: 'We hear that a date has been fixed, but for what purpose we do not know.' And another, evidently remembering the telephone at the railway station close by, added: 'England is very far, and who sends us a telephone message from there?' Two of those present had votes, but for what body they had no idea. They thought it was for the district board, but they were not sure. I asked whether they had heard of the Legislative Council. 'We have heard the name, nothing else. But now our sons are "reading", and they will tell us.' This was an allusion to the Lower Middle school, which was at work within earshot. This was, of course, for boys. The girls have no school, but the people said there would be no harm in their reading with the boys up to the age of eleven. 'But there is no custom, so it is not done.'

**Houses and village life**

Whenever I enter a new tract I examine a house or two to see how the people live. To-day we stopped at a Bágri Jat village for the purpose. Although it belonged to a man who owned over 100 acres, it was bare of all possessions save a few necessaries.[3] But everything was clean: the living rooms were swept twice a day, and, as we have found more than once before,[4] the cattle byre, which formed part of the house, was sprinkled with sand. So far as the Punjab is concerned, it is a complete fallacy to suppose, as stated in a book which I was reading to-day, and as believed by many who live in this country,[5] that most peasants live 'in filth and squalor'. The village lanes and surroundings are often dirty enough, but in a large part of the province the houses are kept scrupulously clean, and though I have little experience of other parts of India, I have at least found the

[1] The village accountant, see p. 19, n. 1.

[2] *Upar Kartar, niche patwár.*

[3] Cf. *Rusticus*, 130.

[4] pp. 10, 44.

[5] In a recent official report (*Punjab Colonies*, 1932), it is mentioned of a high official of Government that 'he was astonished at the high standard of cleanliness maintained in the interior of the houses inhabited by the Janglis.' There are several references to their remarkable cleanliness in *Rusticus* (220, 225, 240). Cf. also *Peasant*, 129, and 229 infra.

same in the Malwa tract of Central India. The chief defect of Punjab housing, and one exemplified by this house, is the almost complete lack of ventilation in the sleeping rooms. As we have seen, this is largely due to a feeling of insecurity, and the best cure for it is an efficient police.[1] In this case, like a good watchdog, the master of the house himself sleeps at the gate, but his family sleep in a room which, apart from the door, has neither ventilation nor light. The feeling of insecurity is very real, and to guard camel, bullock, and buffalo against thieves there are only two entrances to the village, the outer walls of which are fenced with a ten foot hedge of dry thorn bush. How much better would it be if people felt so secure that instead of fencing their villages they fenced their fields!

Even as the Malwa Jat loves the round arch,[2] so does the Hissar Jat love the flat, and every house here has a square gateway high enough to let a loaded camel pass in and out. The gateways are supported on each side by a buttress, which adds strength and dignity to their appearance; and also comfort, for in the inner angle of each is a pedestal seat to enable two men, one on either side of the gateway, to sit and converse together at their ease. If the byres (*neora*) are within, the gateway is closed by wooden gates strengthened with nail-studded strips of iron. The gates are closed at dusk, and those who would pass in and out at night must scramble through a small wicket gate two feet square, set in one of the larger gates.

Slung across the lane was the familiar sign of cattle disease, a rope and a potsherd inscribed with a charm, in peasant eyes far more potent than inoculation, which, however, has never been tried. The headman said that in the last three years of drought they had lost 500 out of their 2,000 cattle, and in reply to a question he added that all were now reduced to buying their food grain. A little later meeting a Subedar of the village, I said: 'Subedar Sahib, how many cattle have died here in the last three years?' 'Two hundred, Sahib.' 'And are many now buying grain for food?' 'No, Sahib, very few.' The wise enquirer in this country will accept nothing he hears from one person until it is confirmed by another.[3]

Our route proved so interesting that we did not reach Bhattu till nearly two, and I was so ready for breakfast that even the unpleasantness of the approach did not take away appetite. We had to pass a large enclosure fenced with thorn bush and piled high with the bones and skeletons of dead cattle, on the top of which a number of yellow-beaked kites were pecking voraciously. The bones were awaiting dispatch to Europe, where they will be turned

[1] Cf. pp. 9, 72. [2] See p. 118. [3] Cf. pp. 3, 106.

into bone meal. The water, too, is not pleasant—the colour of lemonade and slightly brackish. This is no district for the epicure.

**A talk with money-lenders**

In the evening I repeated the experiment made at Kot Isa Khan[1] and had a talk, *coram populo*, with some of the money-lenders of Bhattu. Twenty or more live there, mostly Aggarwál Banias with a sprinkling of Aroras, and also 'five four' Jats. Nearly every Bágri Jat village has one or two Jat money-lenders. We foregathered at the open meeting place (*chowk*) of the village, and some of the members of the local bank were also present. I broke the ice by saying that I was the largest money-lender in the Punjab (the co-operative societies for which I am responsible have £6 millions on loan) and that I was anxious to compare notes, since these were difficult times for those who lent money. 'Very difficult,' they agreed. 'What are you doing about fresh advances?' I asked.

'We recover nothing; how then can we advance?'

'But some of you have money?'

'Yes, and if we don't advance something to our clients, they will stop dealing with us, and we shall recover nothing of what they owe us.'

'And what are your rates?'

'The general rate is *paisa rupya* (18¾ per cent), but from some we charge only 12 per cent. When money is plentiful, as it was before the drought—there has been no good harvest since 1980[2]—our lowest rate for zemindars is 12 annas (9 per cent). But we only charge that when we are certain that we shall get back our money on asking for it.'

'Do you hear that, O zemindars?' exclaimed the moralist. 'You think that it is through the oppression of the *sahukar* that you have to pay high rates, but it is because you do not repay at the right time.' In the past it has not been sufficiently brought home to the peasant that his financial troubles are as much due to his slovenly thriftless ways as to the greed of the money-lender. The thrifty and the hard working are as solvent in India as anywhere else.

The money-lenders here take no sureties but refuse at present to lend without the security of jewellery.[3] I asked the oldest of them whether any change had occurred in money-lending in the last thirty years. 'Our expenses have increased, and theirs have increased: we spend more than we did on marriages and houses, and all want to be "gentelman". So it is more difficult to repay

[1] p. 100 ff.
[2] 1923-4 according to the Christian era.
[3] Cf. p. 101.

what is borrowed. In the old days men did everything with their own hands, but now that is stopped and even spinning is less.'

'Then why do you not obey Mahatma Gandhi and spin with your own hands?'

'It is written in the *Shastras*[1] that women shall spin and men cultivate.'

'Is Mahatma Gandhi wrong, then?'

'Our wisdom (*aql*) cannot reach as high as his.'

'Is there any other difference between now and thirty years ago?'

'There is much difference in trust. At one time not even a thumbmark was taken. The pen was put into the borrower's hand for him to make his mark; that was enough: he had agreed, and no other sign was needed. Then came the thumbmark; then the bond. Now the bank asks for repayment every six months; but in the old days accounts might go on for ten years.'[2]

'Yes,' said the president of the local bank, 'and at the end there was so much to pay that it could not be paid, and debt continued for ever. It is good for us that we must pay every six months. So the debt remains small.' The money-lender countered with the familiar [3]charge:—

'Nowadays if a zemindar owes a large sum, he brings us a cow for which we can't get Rs. 100. We recover only eight annas of what we lend; we are lending as little as possible, and in three years we shall have stopped altogether.'

'Much better, too,' I said; 'then you can put your money into the bank and get 6 or 7 per cent regularly and without trouble—no running here and there after your clients or filing suits against them in the courts.'

'We do not go to court: in two years only one person in the village has gone to kachhery: disputes are settled by compromise (*rázibázi*). We are ready to do the zemindars' work, and they are ready to do ours.' With this expression of good will the meeting broke up, all of us, I think, a little the wiser.

**Money-lending in the south-eastern Punjab**

It is always difficult to gauge the rights and wrongs of the eternal conflict between creditor and debtor. Much depends on the relation between the two, and this varies from village to village. There are many money-lenders who pride themselves on never having taken a client to court,[4] and there are others who haunt the courts like kites. Taking the district as a whole, it may be said that relations are neither good nor bad. The village community still

[1] Hindu scriptures.
[2] *Rusticus*, 142.
[3] Cf. p. 101 and ibid., 74.
[4] Cf. p. 54.

retains much of its old cohesion and, as we have seen,[1] this is a protection against those who would exploit its members. There is plenty of cheating, and an official who has made a careful study of money-lending in the south-east tells me that he rarely sees an account book which does not include a few thumb-marked accounts with the amount due left blank. Some of these are certainly cases of mutual trust, but in many advantage is taken of the debtor's ignorance or laziness.[2] Since, too, dealings are largely in grain and the money-lender is usually a grain-dealer, it is easy for him to manipulate both sides of an account by over- or under-valuing produce as suits him best. On the other hand, co-operators I meet admit that the Jat is also no angel; and one tells me that only two months ago four Banias of his village were set upon as they were returning from the Income-tax Officer and one was so badly damaged that he nearly died. Another who is over 70, agreeing with the money-lenders of Bhattu and with most people of his own age,[3] said that trust had deteriorated on both sides. He ascribed this to the lack of religious teaching in the village. In his young days Brahmins used to teach children at the village *patshálas*[4] and to recite the Ramayan 'to thousands'.[5]

**Accounting**

Though dealings are largely in grain, accounts are nearly always kept on a cash basis. The official just mentioned says that in the last six years he has come across accounting in grain only in Gurgaon (one of the three most undeveloped districts in the province) and here and there in Rohtak, and that if it survives at all in Hissar, it can only be amongst small money-lenders in the remoter villages.[6] All agree that the condition of the money-lender at present is a wretched one. An experienced Jat thinks that he is even worse off than the peasant and says that three out of four have lent all they have and can get nothing back: they realize that suits are useless, and that their only course is to wait for better times, which (says the official) will come with the first bumper harvest. Meanwhile, they are lending out roughly what comes in, but only to retain their clients, and for the rest they are employing all their art and wit to induce the peasant to renew accounts in danger of being barred by time.[7]

As is generally the case elsewhere, accounts are renewed every two or three years,[8] and in this way an account may be kept alive

[1] p. 54. [2] Cf. *Rusticus*, 230. [3] Cf. ibid., 149.

[4] *Patshála* is a place (*shala*) for giving a lesson (*pat*).

[5] Cf. ibid., 19, 45, 97, 130.

[6] An Income-tax Inspector tells me that he has come across it in the remoter parts of the Ambala district (1931). Cf. *Peasant*, 199.

[7] Cf. pp. 54, 101. [8] See p. 101.

for thirty years. To defeat a possible application of the Usurious Loans Act,[1] renewals are generally shown as fresh loans, and not till cash books are in common use will it be possible to detect this. At present a renewal is shown by the entry of a fresh loan a few days after the last balance was struck and apparently settled. This would be impossible if a cash book were kept, for it is of its very essence that transactions are recorded in it day by day, as they occur, and dated accordingly. Nor is deliberate falsification probable on any scale, since the Bania looks upon his account books as sacred, worshipping them at Diwali[2] and taking off his shoes when he approaches the place where they are made up.

**Ancestral debt**

In India economics, indeed the whole of life, is steeped in religion, and it even affects debt. This was forcibly brought home to me the other day at a village in Amritsar by a discussion about ancestral debt. All present, Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh, were unanimous that responsibility for a father's debts must be accepted to save him from 'trouble', or, as blunter tongues put it, 'from hell'. The only exception allowed was a debt incurred for some obviously bad purpose. Amongst those present was the president of a bank who had matriculated, and even he declared that repudiation would be irreligious, and my friend X, a highly educated Sikh Sardar,[3] says that this feeling is general. The feeling is doubtless fortified by the desire to retain possession of the ancestral property at all costs and by the fear that non-payment may lead to a suit against the land;[4] but the real sanction behind it is religion. To quote X: 'Repayment of debt is a religious duty for Sikh, Hindu, and Muslim. Everyone must square up accounts with his creditors before laying down his life, because a soul burdened with debt does not find rest in the next world. The last words of a dying man always contain mention about creditors and liabilities, and a request that dues may be settled.' Socrates' last words come back to mind: 'Crito, I owe a cock to Aesculapius: do not forget to pay it.' X adds: 'Willingness to repay is one of the most important requisites of a sound system of credit, and religion sought to establish this by making it incumbent on every man to repay his debt before death.' How much easier the economic development of India would be if this simple rule were observed and debt kept within a figure that could be repaid either before death or immediately afterwards.

[1] For this Act see *Peasant*, 214-15.

[2] An autumn festival in honour of Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth.

[3] See *Rusticus*, 34.

[4] Ancestral land is only liable for the payment of debts if they are charged upon it (*Peasant*, 183).

## Chapter IX

## HISSAR—(*continued*)[1]

### Hoarding—Cattle-breeding—Intensive Farming

5 *February.—Bhattu to Adampur via Sadálpur* (13 *miles*)

The cold north-west wind was behind us again when we set out and I fear those who followed me along the narrow track 'ate' much dust. The country was the same as yesterday, but towards the end of the march there were signs of better cultivation—well weeded fields of gram and much hedging with the invaluable thorn-bush, invaluable for sustenance as well as protection, for it makes both buffalo and cow give more milk. The large number of new fodder stacks showed that the last harvest had been a good one, and all were built with care and ringed with ten foot hedges of thorn to protect them for the four or five years that the fodder may be required to last.

We went a little out of our sandy way to see Sadálpur, a large village with a bank in each of its six quarters (*patti*). The most interesting thing about the village was not its banks but its religion. It is inhabited by a strange Hindu sect called Bishnoi, and as their Brahmin priest was present, we heard all about them. Any Hindu may become a Bishnoi, and in Sadálpur Brahmin, Jat, Bania, and Chamár are all represented; but once a Bishnoi, the original caste ceases to be of importance. They have twenty-nine articles of faith and practice, the most important of which are these. Every 'eater of grain', that is everyone over five, must bathe in the morning before tasting food. Ceremonial purity, important throughout Hindu India, is doubly important to the Bishnoi, and the saying goes: if a Bishnoi's food is on the first of a string of twenty camels and the twentieth is touched by a non-Bishnoi, it must be thrown away. Drinking water must be strained through a cloth in order that no life may be consumed. No spinning or ploughing may be done on the first and fifteenth of the month. Tobacco, bhang, opium, and meat are prohibited, and clothing of indigo blue may not be worn. This last taboo no one could explain, and it scarcely needs explanation in an age when every new political faith insists that its followers should

**The Bishnois**

[1] Rainfall (Hissar and Hansi) 16 inches.

wear a shirt of some special colour and all but one ban the wearing of red. Adultery, thieving, and backbiting are specifically forbidden; also the felling of green trees, a wise commandment in a half-desert country. Goats too may not be sold, doubtless because with their rich milk and frugal diet they are the poor man's friend. It is an act of merit to buy one that is about to be slaughtered, and anyone doing this should turn it loose with a ring in its ear as a sign that it has been redeemed. A Chamár said that at different times he had released four he-goats born in his house—just as bulls are set free by pious Hindus. Cows may be sold to Hindus but not to Muslims, who might slaughter them. Buffaloes are less regarded and may be sold to either. Amongst ordinary Hindus the religious objection to the castration of bullocks has been overcome, but the Bishnoi is adamant and never allows it. Finally, all children must be baptized on the day before full moon. The founder of the sect was a sadhu called Jhamba, who lived in Bikaner about A.D. 1450 and is now worshipped as an incarnation of Vishnu. Twice a year there is a pilgrimage to his village (Mukam), and though it is 150 miles away, 200 or more go from Sadálpur, taking five days if they go on camel back and only a week on foot.

The cleanliness of the Bishnoi is proverbial, and Sadálpur was a good example of it. The houses are cleaned twice a day, and their walls are smeared once a month with moistened earth and re-plastered twice a year.[1] The latter is done when the tanks dry up and their soft clay beds can be dug: wherein there is double advantage—the houses are strengthened and the tanks deepened. But the cleanliness of the Bishnoi goes farther than their houses; otherwise it would not be particularly noticeable, for, as I observed yesterday, Punjab houses are often kept scrupulously clean.[2] In Sadálpur the village lanes are as clean as the houses. This is a much rarer sight and due to the employment of two families of sweepers in return for daily bread and a present of grain at harvest. This is not an uncommon practice,[3] and if cattle are stalled in the village, it is the only sure way of securing clean lanes, and it is sure, because it rests on general consent. The alternative, sanitation by compulsion, resting upon external authority, is likely to be resented if the authority is strong and defied if it is weak. This is a further argument for the extension of panchayats, for they offer much the best means of introducing sanitation by consent.

These Bishnois are good farmers, and though no one has any kind of new implement or has even seen an iron plough, they have

[1] Cf. *Rusticus*, 163.
[2] p. 144.
[3] See *Rusticus*, 61, 99, 148.

obtained cotton seed from the Agricultural Department, and many plough their land after harvest to prepare it for the next fall of rain.[1] Their weak point is their moral reputation. In spite of their twenty-nine articles, they are said to play fast and loose with marriage ties and to be 'overbearing and quarrelsome'.[2] When I suggested that the six banks might be amalgamated into four, I received the pithy reply: 'Eyes do not meet.' Nevertheless a remarkable joint financial transaction has recently been carried through—the purchase by the tenants of a quarter of the village from the well-known Skinner family,[3] who are large landowners in the district. There were 487 purchasers, and the purchase was carried out by a panchayat of five men acting on their behalf, of whom only one, the zaildar, was an agriculturist. The others consisted of three Banias and a goldsmith, all no doubt better fitted for business of this kind than the average zemindar. The price fixed was Rs. 62 per acre, and it was no light task to collect the large amount involved (1¾ lakhs) from so many persons, who were mostly small holders. In due course the money was taken by the panchayat to Hissar, where it was paid over in the presence of most of the 487 purchasers. The case of Ding is similar: there the whole village was purchased by the tenants for Rs. 1,15,000 at the rate of Rs. 102 per acre. The tenants we met there said that they had provided most of the amount from their own resources which suggests that they were thrifty as well as prosperous; but not perhaps very provident, for they admitted having borrowed a substantial sum at 18¾ per cent; a ruinous rate, because in the Punjab land, even when cultivated by the owner, does not normally yield more than 8 to 10 per cent.[4]

**Land purchase**

I tried to discover how the purchase money had been raised at Sadálpur, but it was a Hindu atmosphere and my questions were met with a natural reticence. One or two interesting points, however, were elicited. Amongst the purchasers were eighteen weavers who put up Rs. 3,000 from their own resources. A Jat admitted having dug up the Rs. 700 he had to pay, and another said that his uncle had dug up Rs. 5,000, and he added that for at least three generations his family had been in the habit of burying part of their wealth against emergencies. This excited my interest, for I have long been trying to ascertain how far hoarding was practised and I have not often come upon specific

**Hoarding**

[1] Cf. p. 136.

[2] *Hissar Gazetteer*, 1915, 81.

[3] Descended from Skinner of Skinner's Horse.

[4] *Pb. Bkg. Enqy. Rpt.*, 45.

examples of it. The result of my enquiries may conveniently be given here.

First of all about Hissar. All I ask agree that hoarding is still common among zemindars, though much less so than it used to be—50 per cent less than fifty years ago, said a wise old Rajput. Amongst Banias, the old custom was to divide the family capital into four parts and invest three in land, money-lending, and jewellery, respectively, and bury the fourth as a reserve. Though this is no longer done, most of the richer men have large sums buried, and an official tells me that recently when he asked one of them how he was going to find a sum of 1½ lakhs required for a purchase of land, he received the reply: 'the amount is in my house.'

As to the other districts we have been through, when we were in the Jhelum riverain I gave an Inspector a ten rupee note to change. He took it to a zemindar acquaintance, who gave him such dirty rupees that he enquired how he had come by them. They proved to have been dug up. But in that part of the province hoarding as a practice is confined to the Bhatti Rajputs of the Chenab and the semi-nomad Janglis,[1] who like the people of Hissar are hardly touched by the currents of modern life. At Sukheke[2] I was told of a Jangli landlord who is credited with four lakhs (£30,000) of buried wealth, and of another who was on the point of unearthing two lakhs to deposit the amount with a Banking Union when the People's Bank failed, after which not a rupee could be got from him. 'He has pound,' commented the zaildar in an almost reverential voice. Since then the People's Bank has been re-started and failed again; and the much bigger Alliance Bank has also failed. No wonder that the zemindar has his fears. Fortunately the co-operative banking system inspires increasing confidence, and now two Janglis have each deposited Rs. 40,000 or so with the Banking Union at Nankana.[3]

As to the rest of the province, last year, when I was a member of the Punjab Banking Enquiry Committee, I made special enquiries on the subject from experienced Income-tax and Co-operative officials, men more in touch with economic conditions in town and village than any other set of officials in the province. It was the opinion of nearly all that since the war hoarding had become uncommon, and that, except in a few undeveloped areas,[4] it was only amongst women, village servants, and the more nomadic

[1] p. 14.
[2] p. 12.
[3] p. 1.
[4] The districts of Ambala, Hissar and Muzaffargash, and the tahsils of Thanesar and Gohana.

tribes that it persisted as at all a general practice.[1] One point must, however, be noted. Hoarding is a natural consequence of insecurity, and for the thrifty it is immaterial whether the insecurity is political or economic. With the establishment of a strong settled government and the spread of the canal, both forms of insecurity have greatly diminished. But recently this double process has received a check, in the field of economics from the slump, and of politics from civil disobedience. The slump has played havoc with stocks and shares and has made the thrifty chary of investment. As to civil disobedience, in India confidence is so delicate a plant that last summer's unrest was sufficient to set even educated people hoarding again, and an Indian friend in touch with the commercial world tells me that a number of officials commissioned him to buy sovereigns for them against a possible breakdown. Politicians should take careful note of this, for the material development of India will be impossible (on non-communist lines) without investment on a large scale.

**Jewellery**

So much for hoarding in cash. A much commoner form is the accumulation of jewellery. The enquiries made last summer suggest that, before the slump, of the four or five crores of treasure annually imported into the Punjab at least three and a half were normally spent upon jewellery.[2] Fortunately there is every reason to believe that this expenditure is decreasing. On my last tour I came upon indications of this, especially in villages where education had penetrated, and all I have heard on this tour points in the same direction.[3] These impressions are confirmed by the more elaborate enquiry made last summer at the instance of the Banking Enquiry Committee.[4] It may therefore be safely stated that hoarding of both kinds is less common than it was before the war. This is mainly due to an increase of confidence and of facilities for investment; and in the case of jewellery, it is further due to the spread of education, the rise in the standard of living with its greater demand for money, and recently, and most potently, to the slump.

**Touring on a horse**

At Adampur we found a colony of tents awaiting us pleasantly disposed in the open country between the village and its pipal-[5] shaded tank. Tents are little used these days, and the zaildar says they have not been pitched here for an 'officer' since Mr. L—— came here as Deputy

[1] *Pb. Bkg. Enqy. Rpt.*, 144, 175.
[2] Ibid., 148-9.
[3] *Rusticus*, 343 and *supra*, 4, 71, 113. Cf. too *Peasant* (3rd edition), 59.
[4] Op. cit., 150.
[5] *Ficus religiosa*.

Commissioner. That was about 1920. He also mentioned that the last Sahib to ride this way was Mr. C. H. T——, who was Deputy Commissioner in 1911-12. At Bhattu this morning the zaildar said that no Sahib had ridden through since Mr. C. M. K——, who was Settlement Officer in 1901-3. I do not vouch for the accuracy of these statements, but it is notorious and deplorable that touring on a horse is far less done than before the war. Politics and the motor are responsible, politics because they keep so many executive officers at the end of a wire or telephone, and motors for obvious but often quite bad reasons. Meanwhile, the peasant has as much to say as ever to those who meet him in field or village.

6 *February.—Adampur to Hissar* (18 *miles*)

In India, the peripatetic searcher after truth no sooner writes down one thing than he must qualify it with another. Yesterday I wrote that the cleanliness of the Bishnoi was proverbial. Yet Adampur, which is inhabited by Bishnois, is little cleaner than an ordinary village, and in the largest house I found everything—beds, bedding, quilts, and vessels—as hugger-mugger as in the humblest, though there had been lavish expenditure upon bricks, arches, gateways, etc.

It was bitterly cold when we set forth for Hissar and cold enough when we arrived there three hours later. The first ten miles took us across a waste of sand and gram and past stubble fields dotted with thorn-fenced fodder stacks. Then we entered the wide-stretching grazing grounds of the Hissar Cattle Farm and brushed our way through golden grass 12 inches high, upon which the 7,000[1] Government cattle pasture. A mile or two on we saw ahead of us two tall black chimneys, one belching smoke, the other idle. They looked strange enough rising from these solitary pastures and suggested the approach to an industrial centre. Actually they were ginning factories, and all they indicated was the neighbourhood of a canal, without which no cotton can be grown in this district. Soon we saw the canal itself, and at once the country changed from the arid to the fertile, from bush and scrub to mango grove and date palm.

**The Hissar bull**

At Hissar, a town of 25,000 inhabitants, most of our talk has been about cattle, for the farm with its 40,000 acres is the most important breeding centre of the province. In a warm climate cattle do better in a dry zone than in a wet, and all the best breeds in the province are to be found in dry areas; for example, the Dhanni breed, which we came across

[1] In 1933 there were 8,180 animals on the Farm (*Vety. Depart. Annual Rpt.*, 3).

north of the Jhelum,[1] and the Hariána, which flourishes in Hissar and Rohtak. Out of the Hariána breed, crossed in some cases with stock from Gujarat (near Bombay), has arisen the famous Hissar bull, majestic as the Government of India and in some other respects not unlike. Of immense bulk and strength but slow-footed and costly to maintain, grazing where he will and impatient of control, superbly self-contained, he dominates the countryside and distributes his favours so indiscriminately that half his energy and value are wasted. Owing to the unceasing patronage bestowed on him by Government for over half a century, he has achieved a much greater prominence than if he had been allowed to find his way about the province on his own merits. Costing Rs. 500 to breed and rear, he is sold to District Boards for Rs. 250, and where heavy ploughing is needed or hard sustained work at a well, his progeny justify their costly rearing and fetch much higher prices than the best local stock.[2] But on the light sandy soils of the north and west, and wherever the peasant is impoverished, a smaller breed does better and is greatly preferred.[3]

**Hissar and Dhanni breeds compared**

The best of these smaller breeds is the Dhanni, and it is in a district like Gujrat, where Dhanni and Hissar work side by side, that the limitations of the Hissar bullock are most evident. The case was very fairly put by a Gujrat zaildar, whom I met the other day. 'The Dhanni bullocks,' he said, 'have thick bones and strong horns, and their step is fast. The Hissar breed are very big, but who can feed them? They eat much. They are like your Honour's horses —good for the rich, bad for the poor.' Then feeling perhaps he had not done the Hissar breed justice, he continued: 'They are slow compared with those from Dhanni, but they go far and are not tired: fifty miles there and fifty miles back. We heard of one that did this. He started at four in the morning and went till four the next morning. The Dhanni bullock goes well too, but not so well. It works for six hours; if there is need, for twelve hours. With a stick behind its pace is good; but stick or no stick, the Hissar bullock goes slow. It is best for cart and draught, but if it does not get food, it gets thin at once. The Dhanni remains hard and strong, even if it gets no food. It is given oil directly it is born, and it remains strong till it gets old.' A much more biting attack was made upon the Hissar bull on my last tour by the people of Gurgaon at the other end of the province.[4] There it was not so much a case

[1] p. 73.

[2] Farm bullocks now cost about Rs. 300 to breed and rear and are sold to district boards for Rs. 100 (1934).

[3] See p. 73.

[4] *Rusticus*, 145, 148. Cf. too p. 165.

of two good breeds in competition as of sheer unsuitability, the people being too poor to support cattle of his standard and match. Indeed, to see him roaming like a god in search of some Europa and finding only small underfed cows was to be reminded of the saying—the best is the enemy of the good.

It is, in fact, useless to offer the peasant what he is too poor or too ignorant to use, however good it may be in itself. For him an 'improvement', whether it is a larger bullock or a more powerful plough, is only good if it is suited to his circumstances.[1] These circumstances, therefore, must be most carefully studied before any change is attempted, and that is the excuse for this lengthy journal. The Veterinary Department are now showing wisdom in trying to breed a smaller type of bull, a mere demi-god amongst his fellows, who will satisfy the peasant's needs. These needs centre round draught and milk. The Hissar breed is pre-eminent for draught, and the Sahiwál or Montgomery breed for milk, but neither excels in both; and as the peasant's resources are very limited, the object is to produce what is officially called a dual-purpose cow, that is to say, a cow whose stock will be good for either draught or milk. The closer study of the peasant's needs has also led, at last, to the development of the Dhanni breed, and it is no longer assumed that nearly every countryside in the Punjab will be the better for a Hissar bull.

**The buffalo**

On one point action has still to be taken. In districts with ample grazing the income from live-stock is very high: in Hissar alone it is probably not less than 15 lakhs (£112,500).[2] Now the bulk of this income is derived from the sale of ghi,[3] and for ghi the buffalo is better than the cow, as her milk is both richer and more abundant. In the north, where there is neither river nor canal, there is little rivalry between the two, for the country is dry and too stony for the tanks in which the buffalo loves to wallow.[4] But elsewhere, if both cannot be kept—and the peasant rarely has the means—the buffalo is preferred;[5] and even when both are kept, the housewife takes greater care of the buffalo, for the cow is regarded as the mother of the bullock and the buffalo as the producer of ghi, and ghi and its proceeds are the housewife's perquisite: hence the proverb—when fortune favours,

[1] Cf. *Rusticus*, 127.
[2] *District Assess. Rpts.*, 1909 and 1910.
[3] Ibid. (Fatehabad), 35.
[4] Cf. *Rusticus*, 316.
[5] Between 1904 and 1930 the number of cows in the Punjab fell from 3 to 2·6 millions, and female buffaloes increased from 1·9 to 3·1 millions. 'It is the higher fat content of the buffalo's milk which brings it into favour'; she also does better on stall-feeding (*The Milk Supply of Lahore in* 1930, 96, 97).

a buffalo drops a heifer and a cow a bull calf. Moreover the buffalo, black and sombre-eyed though she looks, understands affection and responds to her owner's call and sometimes refuses to be milked by any other hand. In many homes she stands first in the peasant's affections;[1] and, untouched by sanctity, her breeding presents fewer difficulties than that of the cow. In the central Punjab at least it should be comparatively easy, for, as I found near Tarn Taran,[2] the buffalo bull can be tied up and a fee charged for his services,[3] and in general the peasant watches more carefully over the mating of his buffalo than of his cow.[4] Yet, important as the buffalo is for the milk supply of the province, so far nothing serious has been done by Government to improve her breed.[5]

By its attitude to slaughter Hinduism makes any planned improvement in cattle-breeding almost impossible.[6] All that can be done, say the local experts, is to castrate bad stock and get the cultivator to keep good cows. No one now, except the small Bishnoi sect, objects to castration,[7] but all Hindus object to the slaughter, and even to the sale of unfit cows and keep them indefinitely; or, if they are too poor to do this, rather than sell them to a cattle-dealer, who would buy only for the slaughter house, they send them to a gowshala or let them loose to die. Some no doubt sell secretly, but this has its risks in an area where public opinion can find strong expression through the panchayat.[8] This feeling against slaughter is shared by many Sikhs, and when I asked the members of a Sikh cattle-breeding society in the Amritsar district whether they would sell a cow that was past work, they all said: 'No,' and one added, 'We have had great advantage from her; there would be ingratitude if we sold her; we remember her service to us.' One cannot but love and respect this gentle-heartedness,

**Cattle-breeding and its difficulties**

[1] Her rival is the indispensable bullock.

[2] p. 84.

[3] South of the Sutlej he is not usually tied up; but in the central Punjab and canal colonies he is often tied up, and when this is done, a fee (Rs. 1 or 2) is charged for his services (cf. ibid., 83).

[4] See *Civil Vety. Depart. Rpt.*, 1932-3, 18.

[5] In 1932 the Veterinary Department brought under supervision 'a fairly large number of buffalo bulls owned by zemindars' (ibid. (1931-2), 16). Till then Government had done nothing, and local bodies very little. Now, however, Government is giving much more attention to the subject, and in 1932-3 local bodies increased the number of their stud buffalo bulls from 261 to 1,121. Even so, seventeen districts have none, and the number of stud bulls (4,637) is far greater (ibid., 1932-3, pp. viii and ix).

[6] Cf. *Rusticus*, 97, 119; see also p. 19.

[7] See ibid., 97, 105.

[8] Cf. ibid., 97, 104, 133-4.

which may be found wherever there is Hindu ancestry, even amongst Muslims,[1] but when applied to cows that should never have been kept it is an obvious obstacle to cattle-breeding, and in Hissar and Rohtak this is the case with most cows and, to make matters worse, few—barely 5 per cent—are barren. One expert thought that in the circumstances the best remedy would be to ring the worst cows and so make covering impossible. This, he says, is done in the south-west of the province, and I am informed that in Lahore and Sialkot it is also sometimes done to young mares to prevent them from being covered prematurely.[2]

This remedy would be unnecessary if the bull could be tied up as the buffalo sometimes is. Unfortunately, as I have already pointed out,[3] everywhere south of the Jhelum he is allowed to wander about the fields as he pleases, eating and trampling the crops. The only advantage of this is that he both exercises and supports himself and *proprio motu* spreads the cost of his keep over the whole village. But the system is not economical. At Bahauddin[4] it was admitted that the Hissar bull there consumed or damaged at least three times as much fodder as he would need if he were stall-fed. But, said a peasant, quoting a popular saying, 'a bull can no more be tied up than a Rajah.' And in the Amritsar village, when I asked why what was possible with the buffalo was not possible with the bull, someone remarked: 'The buffalo is so tough (*sakht*) that it comes to no harm from this, but a bull is softer and would soon become unfit for work. The buffalo is like the Jat: nothing makes him weak. The bull is like the Brahmin: his strength is soon gone.' Yet, north of the Jhelum, the peasant is equally emphatic that bulls must be tied up!

As bulls cannot be tied up, it is fortunate that scrub bulls can now be castrated. Here a notable victory has been won over popular prejudice, and it is being used to sterilize worthless male stock.[5] It is only a matter of time before the peasant capitulates to the further remedy of inoculation. Already he no longer objects to it in principle, though in practice his faith in it is not very sure.[6] Of which the Superintendent of the Farm gives me the following example. Last month he inoculated the cattle of a certain village against

**Cattle disease and spells**

[1] See p. 180 and ibid., 62.

[2] It is called *chhalabandi*.

[3] p. 73.

[4] p. 136.

[5] In 1932-3, 482,000 animals were castrated in the Punjab (*Vety. Depart. Rpt.*, 26).

[6] Cf. *Rusticus*, 107, 133.

rinderpest, and on returning to see the result he was not allowed to enter the village, because the time-honoured remedy of a charm slung across a lane was being tried. The charm had been obtained from a sadhu and was being inscribed on a potsherd. The cattle were then driven beneath it, and as they shambled past, water mixed with milk was sprinkled on them from a large cauldron placed on either side of the road. During the rite no one was allowed either to enter or to leave the village, all work was suspended, and water could not even be drawn for him from the well.

My experience both on this tour and the last shows that throughout the province this is much the most popular method of dealing with cattle disease.[1] On this tour I have come across it amongst Muslims in Jhelum,[2] Sikhs in Ferozepore, and Hindus in Hissar.[3] The procedure varies slightly from village to village, but the charm is always slung across a lane. 'We hung it up,' said the Sikh village, 'and that night we did not allow either lamp or fire. The next morning we drove all our cattle under the string and went out ourselves into the fields and kindled our fires there and made our bread, and when we came back the disease—it was of foot and mouth—was gone and the cattle were well. Before this ten or twelve died; after that none.' In the Hindu village water dashed with milk was also sprinkled in a circle round the village, and in both villages, though in one there were only three Muslim families, the charm was obtained from a Muslim pir. This is often done, and when Hindu and Sikh quarrel with Muslim, as they sometimes do, they should remember that even in their religion they have things in common. The Sikhs had obtained their charm from a Pathán in Maler Kotla, who would take nothing for it: a holy man, indeed.

The employment of spells for curing disease is not peculiar to the Punjab, not even to India. I have already noted that it is common in Arabia, which however is a country in many ways akin to India.[4] It is more significant to find it in a Christian country like Russia. So far north as Archangel, the remedy for malaria is to sprinkle the sufferer with bog water, and with a spell 'to drive out the devil spirits, which are shaking him and rattling his teeth'. And when a person is down with small-pox, a spell is first whispered in his ear thrice, then written on paper and tied round his neck until he recovers.[5] In India, as no doubt in Russia, these practices are slowly, very slowly yielding to the new light

[1] *Rusticus*, 20, 84, 107, 195, 221.
[2] p. 67.
[3] p. 145.
[4] Ibid., 247.
[5] A. R. Williams, *The Russian Land* (1929), 26-7.

of science, but where man is still in the embryonic darkness of nature's womb, his only light is faith, and it is a light too often clouded by magic.[1]

A former Settlement Officer of Hissar says that cattle are the zemindar's treasury and that he puts all his savings into them.

**Does cattle-breeding pay ?**

Yet the melancholy fact is that breeding does not pay. According to the experts at Hissar, a special survey in Rohtak suggests that 70 per cent of the cows there do not pay for their keep, and in Hissar the position would be even worse but for the three years' drought. In a country that prohibits slaughter drought is one of the few factors that favour cattle-breeding. By weeding out weak stock it helps to maintain the quality of the whole, just as pestilence once did with human beings in Europe ; but it is a costly process for the cattle-breeder. In the Central Punjab very little breeding is done, and draught bullocks are mostly bought. This is prudent, as holdings are very small and the districts near the hills are moist and very liable to cattle disease. The dry uplands north of the Jhelum are more favourable, and the Dhanni breed is the result. Yet there, too, it is doubtful whether breeding pays. A retired vet I met near Jhelum calculated that an ordinary Dhanni calf, after being weaned, costs five or six rupees a month to maintain and when three-and-a-half years old fetches only Rs. 80-100 (£6 to £7 10s.), prices having fallen 25 per cent.[2]

### 8 *February.—Hissar to Hansi* (16 *miles*)

For the third day running there was heavy cloud, ' clouds without water, carried about of winds '.[3] But there was change in one respect : once more we were riding through a country of wheat fields and cotton stalks, and at one point the plain gave a sudden heave as if weary of its endless monotony. To the south there were even a few hills, only 800 feet high, but like those near Sargodha, abrupt, sharp-pointed, and sacred ; sacred no doubt, because they are so unexpected. A sadhu and his disciple live on their summit, and women newly widowed go there to cast away the clothes they may no longer wear.

**The high road**

[1] Cf. p. 63.

[2] In England, a good average cow, with an average yield in a lactation period of about 2 gallons a day, now (1934) costs about £20. For a good average Hissar cow the corresponding yield is about 2½ seers (two quarts) a day (compare the lactation figures given on p. 3 of the *Vety. Depart. Rpt.*, 1932-3).

[3] Jude xii.

As it was Sunday and no business pressed, we lingered on our way to talk with those we met. The first was a Brahmin beggar. He was shuffling homewards in a pair of aged flapping sandals, and his clothes, even more aged, revealed legs so thin that they must have snapped had the body they carried been less frail. Under his tattered shawl he concealed a large bag containing six pounds of millet. 'I went from house to house,' he squeaked, 'and each gave a handful.' After the beggar came a barber with a large sack. He had come 130 miles on a sorrowful errand and was bound for a village close by. The daughter of a patron was married there, and when tidings came that she was with child, her mother joyfully prepared gifts for her and her babe. The babe came, but died five days later. The barber showed us the gifts, which were in the sack—clothes for the mother, and for the babe a magenta-coloured waistcoat, a pink embroidered cap, and a ball to play with. 'Of what use will these things be to the mother now?' I asked. 'She will give them away to some other child.' But how will she bear even to look upon them? As the barber was re-packing his sack, a shallow two-wheeled cart drove up, drawn by a pair of fine grey bullocks and containing a recumbent figure covered with a quilt and two men squatting at his side. He had contracted pneumonia on a visit to relatives, and the two men were taking him home. They did not take him to the hospital, because 'we should have to sit with him, and we are zemindars and there would be hurt to our work. At home too there is more care: a fire can be lit, and the women can tend him.' More cheerful was a barber who had just delivered an invitation to a wedding on behalf of a patron, who lived 45 miles away. The invitation was sweetened with a present of sweetmeats, and he had been tipped a rupee. The next group were also concerned with marriage. A boy had been betrothed to a girl and Rs. 65 paid in jewellery and clothes. The boy died before he could be married, and his father was on his way to the maiden's village to arrange that a nephew should marry her instead, doubtless that the modest investment of Rs. 65 might not be wasted. Finally, came a mediaeval oddity, who said he was a Seyyed from Ghazni (in Afghanistan) and a beggar. He spoke in wheedling incoherent tones, and it was difficult to make out his tale. He claimed some kind of sanctity, but its only visible sign was a copy of the Koran tied to his waist in a green cloth.

**Marriage and funeral**

God, Love, and Death—the Indian roadside is full of their rumour, and the ministrants of all three are inexorable in their demand for money. Writing in 1909, the Settlement Officer ascribed one-third of the sales in

the district to extravagance on marriages and funerals,[1] and the extravagance still continues. Before the slump, an ordinary peasant spent Rs. 600 to 700 on the marriage of a son and perhaps Rs. 200 less on the marriage of a daughter. This is less than in the central Punjab,[2] but expenditure upon funerals is much higher, though not higher than in parts of the western Punjab.[3] When we were at Adampur,[4] a man lost his father and those with me said he must raise Rs. 200 at once for the feast on the third day, even if he had to sell or mortgage land. On a point of this kind custom is imperative, though it is only for father or mother that the sum need be so large; for others Rs. 50 to 60 suffices. As in the central Punjab, marriage expenditure is almost doubled if a price has to be paid for the bride. Only ten days ago one of my staff found that a Jat had taken Rs. 800 for his two daughters. But in this district, although there is little of the new light, the old light is still strong, and such transactions are comparatively infrequent,[5] and when the tale was told at a village gathering, the comment was: 'We don't give izzat to those who do this.' Here for once izzat was being used as it should be, as a reflector and not an extinguisher of light.[6]

If less is spent now on these ceremonies than before, it is almost entirely due to the fall in prices, which has halved the figures just given for marriage. But here and there there is also conscious effort at reduction. Some years ago the Bágri Jats of Sirsa agreed not to spend more than Rs. 100 on entertainment at marriage or allow more than one hundred persons to join in the *barát* or bridegroom's party, 'hundreds' having joined before; and in to-day's village we were told: 'We all sat together and it was our conclusion that we had spent too much before. Now fewer go in the barát, and less is spent upon jewellery.' Funeral expenditure has been cut down to 'five or seven rupees', the cost of taking the bones to the Ganges, and marriage expenditure halved. The last is admittedly due to the fall in the price of cotton (we are in a cotton country), but when I enquired whether expenditure would not go up again if prices rose, I got a reply touched with the new light:—'No, it is now understood that too much debt is not good. What we did before was a mistake. If we spend Rs. 2,000 on a marriage, it is gone in a day; but if we spend it on a house, it stands for three generations, and it is of use for our children and our

[1] *Hissar Assess. Rpt.*, 21-2.
[2] *Rusticus*, 4, 7, 24.
[3] Ibid., 228-9.
[4] p. 154.
[5] Cf. ibid., 31.
[6] Cf. p. 50.

children's children ; and also for the rulers (*hákim*) and the servants of Government.'

The concluding words were added by way of compliment to ourselves and the owner of the vestibule, where we were having the customary bank meeting. The vestibule was nobly built with two high-arched gateways and a square red brick pillar in the centre supporting a well-timbered *sâl* roof (much better than mine at Lahore). It belongs to four Jat brothers who own 62 acres and are the only money-lenders in the village, and it was characteristic of the easy tolerance of peasant life that we should gather there to discuss the affairs of a co-operative society whose object is to displace the money-lender. One of the brothers was present and had a shrewd agreeable face and the pleasant dark reddish-brown complexion of these parts. He was quite frank about their dealings. They have been lending money for seventeen years and have never had a loss : 'it may be three, even five years before money comes back, but sooner or later it comes.' As their usual rate is 18¾ per cent, it is a profitable business, and on Rs. 1,000 they expect to earn Rs. 180, i.e. a gross profit of 18 per cent, which is the highest return I ever heard a money-lender acknowledge. Their minimum rate is 12 per cent ; 'for those who repay when asked,' he explained, as so many have explained before him.[1] Like most money-lenders in the Punjab, the four brothers take no sureties :[2] 'it is a matter of trust,' said the one who was present, unconsciously stating the basis of every sound system of credit. He did not tell us the extent of their dealings but admitted that they buried their surplus funds.[3] Curiously, the village has ten Bania shopkeepers none of whom is a money-lender. I urged my usual plea, that the best of them should be asked to join the bank, and as usual it seemed a novel idea.[4]

**An agriculturist money-lender**

This district is too remote to have got much illumination from the new light, but where the old light burns this is not necessarily a disadvantage, for when they meet the new light and the old are apt to extinguish each other. In this village the old light burns strongly. Feeling is so good that for some years no one has been to court. Quarrels are few and are settled on the spot. There is no regular panchayat, but the assistance of some trustworthy person is invoked and all concerned sit together and decide the case as they think right,

**A village republic**

[1] Cf. pp. 100-1, 103, 146.
[2] *Pb. Bkg. Enqy. Rpt.*, 126 and 146 *supra* : cf. also 101.
[3] Cf. p. 152.
[4] Cf. p. 102.

and the decision is enforced by pressure from the brotherhood. Nothing is written, for few are literate—indeed, not a single one of the twenty members of the bank. Illiteracy is no bar to good feeling: it may even be favourable to it; but it is certainly a handicap in dealing with the new age. It is therefore a good thing that there is now a Primary school, and the master is so keen that he has started a night school as well.[1] But he has to teach thirty-three boys and eighteen adults single-handed, which is typical of the difficulties of education in India—so many waiting to be taught, so few ready to teach. One of his pupils, a soft-faced boy of fifteen, is secretary to the bank, and his only other occupation is the doing of odd jobs on his father's land. 'His mind is towards comfort, and he sits with pleasure in the shade,' was the sturdy peasant comment, and it might be applied to nine out of ten in this country who are not constrained to work hard for their living.[2]

**Drinking wells**

All arrangements for the common good are undertaken by the village collectively; whether it is the sinking of a drinking well, the deepening of a village pond or tank, the making of a stairway (*ghât*) down to it, building a temple or *chowpâl*,[3] or managing the common lands. Most of these collective activities are common to villages throughout the south-east, and the most important of them is the provision of drinking water.[4] Lucky villages get their tanks filled from the canal, but for most in Hissar this is impossible; and where, as often happens, the water level is 90 feet or more below the surface and the rainfall is 15 inches or less, sooner or later in the year the tanks dry up and man and beast have to depend on wells that can only be sunk at great cost. Here, for instance, a well sunk ten years ago cost Rs. 3,000, and the depth to water is only 60 feet. At Adampur,[5] where it is 90 feet, there has been endless trouble. Some years ago a masonry well was sunk at a cost of Rs. 4,000. Each house in the village contributed ten rupees and such labour as was asked, but although it was sunk near the tank (to secure sweet water), after two years its water became bitter and undrinkable. A second well, this time of a makeshift character, was sunk for Rs. 1,200, and this too has lost its sweetness. Now bricks are being collected for a third. When all else fails, water is fetched

[1] The Education and Co-operative Departments have both made great efforts to popularize adult schools, but the difficulties are formidable, and in 1932-3 their number in the province fell from 584 to 348 (*Pb. Educ. Rpt.*, 10).

[2] Cf. *Rusticus*, 10, 43.

[3] Village meeting hall; also called *chowpâr*.

[4] Cf. p. 135.

[5] See p. 154.

from the tank of a village half a mile away; but this is a laborious task and generally has to be done at a time of year when the sun is most scorching and the lightest weight a burden.

And if the tanks are not deep enough, they may fail long before the sun begins to scorch.[1] This was the case to-day. One of the tanks had run dry, and the opportunity was being taken to deepen it. Thirty years' silt has accumulated, and it is now so shallow that in heavy rain it fills up at once and spills on to the road close by. It is being deepened in the spirit of real democracy. There are 120 houses, and each house, whether rich or poor, is required to clear a space of 9 yards square and 9 feet deep (two *jul*) or pay a commutation fee of Rs. 2, which is the cost of employing four men for a day to do it. The bed of the tank has been mapped out like a chess-board into 120 squares by a panchayat of five men, who represent all important interests and consist of two Jats, a Gujar, a Bania, and a Máli tenant. The five are responsible for all arrangements, and to ensure fair treatment they have deputed two of their number to measure the work done.[2] But it is not enough that a tank should be full of water: it must also be clear. To secure this, a fakir or sadhu, lives beside it in what looks like a large bee-hive of white sun-dried mud. His duty is to see that neither man nor beast fouls it or washes 'black vessels' in it; and in return, after the simple fashion of the village, he is given his daily bread and a present of grain at harvest. Many villages do this, for example Adampur, and there the approaches to the tank were spotless.[3]

**Village tanks**

I left this village with regret. It is, in effect, a small republic, and in such a case, if there is a disinterested guardian above which preserves law and order but interferes as little as possible with daily life, the peasant has the form of government that suits him best.

As we rode into Hansi, a town of 18,000 inhabitants, gardens rose about us full of deep shade and fruit trees—mango, guava, pomegranate, and peach, the peach all sprayed with pink blossom.

[1] Village tanks vary in size with the lie of the ground and the size of the village; they may be as large as a London square.

[2] I hear of a very similar case in a Lancashire village. The local graveyard had to be enlarged, and for this purpose a large number of tree stumps had to be dug up. The local parson persuaded each household to make itself responsible for the digging up of one stump, which it could either do itself or pay half a crown to have done. The stumps were apportioned by lot, each being numbered (1934).

[3] Cf. Aristotle, *Politics*, vii, 11 (trs. Jowett): 'In all wise states, if there is a want of pure water and the supply is not all equally good, the drinking water ought to be separated from that which is used for other purposes.'

Hansi is one of the oldest places in India, and the canal, made by Feroz Shah in 1355, the oldest in the Punjab. After the arid wastes of last week, it is a most delectable spot. Yet—such are the times we live in—ten days ago a bomb was thrown into the courtyard of the police station and exploded violently, but happily without damage.

### 9 *February—Hansi to Sorkhi* (10 *miles*)

**Tanners**

To-day we were mostly amongst humble folk—tanners, shoemakers and market gardeners. A party of itinerant tanners, trained by the Department of Industries, were showing their fellows in Hansi better and cheaper ways of tanning. Thanks to fine cattle, no hides and skins in the province are as good as those of Hissar, but no leather is worse. Jullundur is far away and its hides and skins are much inferior, yet the leather made from them sells here to advantage. This inefficiency on the part of the local tanners is ascribed to laziness, and it is not the first time on this tour that bad work has been explained in this way.[1]

Of the fifty present at our meeting, thirteen were shoemakers and the rest Chamárs[2] and Khátiks, dealers in hides and skins, respectively. In Hindu India, no two castes, one might almost say no two persons, are on exactly the same level. In this case the Khátiks are slightly superior to the Chamárs, presumably because they do not touch the hide of the sacred cow.

Excluding the shoemakers, all but five members are in debt, but since their credit is low and debt follows credit,[3] only thirteen owe more than Rs. 100. As usual interest rates vary with security: a man who owns his own house (like one who owns land) can borrow at 18¾ per cent, but others have to pay 37½. Of the five not in debt three were Chamár brothers. They were surprisingly prosperous, and the fact that one has saved Rs. 4,000 shows what can be achieved even in the humblest circumstances. Their prosperity was put down to robust bodies and hard work. In a hot climate, to work hard a man must be strong, and as most can keep out of debt only if they work hard, debt and health are closely connected. It was depressing to find that even in the case of the three brothers the slow fruits of toil and thrift were devoured by custom. Two years ago one of them spent Rs. 800 on the marriage of a daughter (aged 12), and another bought a second wife, the first

[1] Cf. pp. 38, 65, 117.

[2] One of the largest castes in the district and very numerous in all districts south of the Beas.

[3] *Peasant*, 222.

being childless, for Rs. 725, paying Rs. 200 to her father and the rest to her first husband, who was tired of her.

Enquiry shows that a Chamár earns about Rs. 15 a month, and a Khátik Rs. 20: luck or hard work may bring in another 5 or 10 rupees a month. This is much what the village artisan earns,[1] and a family of four can live on it. Both Chamár and Khátik live on wheat in the hot weather, and in the cold on millet (*bajra*), which they like for its heating properties. They rarely drink milk, and the three brothers are the only ones who can afford to keep a cow. In spite of this however (like the Jats of Sirsa[2]) they declared they got enough to eat.

Without the canal, Hansi were nothing. Girt with orchards and fields of vegetable and cane, it presents a complete contrast to the desolate country through which we have been riding most of the week. There the farming was as extensive as any to be seen in the Punjab, but here it is almost as intensive as the cultivation round Amritsar and Jullundur.[3] The zaildar, a Ghaur Brahmin, showed us land which before the slump yielded Rs. 500 (£37 10s. an acre). He had just sown 4½ acres with paunda cane and melons and had already spent over Rs. 1,000,[4] though so far nothing could be seen beyond innumerable little ridges of well-piled earth. He expects to recoup himself entirely from the melons, which will be ready for the market in two months' time, and to make a clear profit out of the paunda, much loved by the chewer of cane for its soft rind and sweet juice. He has about 20 acres under vegetables and cane, and in the city there are six others who have as much or more.[5] But much capital is needed, and it does not always pay. Three years ago his accounts showed a profit of Rs. 4,000; next year he

**Intensive farming**

[1] p. 267.

[2] p. 134.

[3] See *Rusticus*, 191.

[4] Thus:—

| | Rs. |
|---|---|
| Manure (including transport charges) | 429 |
| Seed (*a*) paunda cane | 276 |
| (*b*) miscellaneous | 37 |
| Sand for soil (including transport) | 90 |
| Rent for land and water | 84 |
| Labour | 92 |
| Fencing | 20 |
| Hiring of ploughs | 50 |
| Miscellaneous | 10 |
| Total | 1,088 |

[5] About twenty have ten acres or more.

just made ends meet, and last year, owing to the fall in prices, he was down Rs. 800.[1]

Much capital is needed if only for the manure, of which, for instance, 400 to 500 maunds are required for a single acre of cane. The capitalists of Hansi buy up the city refuse and the night-soil, which (after being decomposed by water) even a few Brahmins use.[2] But those who cannot afford to do this buy manure from the villages round, and the Máli[3] tenants of a village we were in this afternoon said that they got it free from unirrigated villages ten or fifteen miles away, where it cannot be used for want of sufficient rain to rot it into the soil. Like the market gardeners in the central Punjab, they also manure their onions with the ash of the dung-cakes. At the moment they are sowing melons and *karela*[4] intermingled with cane, and they expect to pay all their expenses (about Rs. 350 an acre) from the two former and make a clear profit out of the cane. They also grow cotton, potatoes, vegetables and chillies, and in the hot weather, like many others, they fatten stock, buying in the spring and selling in the autumn. They have, in fact, a well-balanced system of mixed farming under which alone the small holder who would live entirely by the land can be prosperous. This was reflected in their bank. In most of those we have seen on this tour loan business has been brought almost to a standstill by the slump. The few exceptions have nearly all been societies whose members had some resource apart from their farming, such as military employment or weaving. This society was different: thanks to the variety of their farming, it is still thoroughly alive and in the last twelve months has made fifty-eight loans to its forty-seven members. This is largely due to the variety of their farming, and they have suffered less than most from the slump, which has pulled down the price of garden produce proportionately less than that of cereals and cotton.[5]

[1] Three other gentlemen who keep accounts kindly gave me the following approximate figures :—

| | Area cultivated | Profit (or loss) Rs. | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | acres | 1928 | 1929 | 1930 |
| (i) | 41 | 3,000 | 600 | nil. |
| (ii) | 21 | 2,500 | 2,000 | 1,000 (loss) |
| (iii) | 11 | 3,000 | 1,000 | 800 (loss) |

[2] In 1930 the city refuse was sold for Rs. 4,359 as against Rs. 2,555 in 1929, which suggests that the depression is leading to more intensive cultivation (see p. 25).

[3] A caste of market gardeners; in this district all Hindus.

[4] *Momordica charantia.*

[5] 'The biggest falls in price have happened to the important old staple commodities, like wheat and oats and cotton' (*The Listener*, 27 December 1933, 992).

In Hansi they have an excellent market near at hand, and they can also send their cane by lorry to Rohtak forty miles away, and some of their vegetables (gourds and *bhindi*,[1] etc.) go as far as Bikaner, over 200 miles away.[2] It is surprising how far vegetables travel: peas go from Agra to Bombay, which is over 800 miles. Considering how important vegetables are to the small holder and also to the health of the town dweller, and that they cannot be grown on any scale without good markets, everything possible should be done to encourage their cultivation by the grant of transport facilities and favourable freight rates.[3]

Intensive farming has many advantages. Not the least in a heavily populated country is that it provides employment for so much labour. Much of the work can, and even must, be done by hand, and in this village 20 acres can be worked with a single yoke of oxen. Another advantage in the case of tenants is that they cannot be constantly shifted, for no one will put a large amount of labour and manure into land if he is likely to be turned out at the end of a year or two. In this village leases are for a year only, but they are automatically renewed unless there is some obvious reason for not doing so. This is much better for both land and tenant than the common practice of shifting tenants every few years.[4]

We saw our first monkey to-day, a sign that we are approaching Hindustan; also our first pig, lean and bristly, a veritable outcast amongst hogs. They are kept for the Delhi market, but seeing how they feed—wherever the rubbish is thickest—I do not envy those who eat country pork in the Imperial capital. Near them, on the same bare brown earth, but oh! how different, strutted peacocks arrayed like Emperors.

[1] *Hibiscus esculentus*.

[2] Enquiry made on my behalf in Hansi suggests that about 25 per cent of its vegetables, etc., is consumed locally, and another 25 per cent is sent as far as Bikaner and Alwar. The rest goes to Rohtak, Bhiwani, and Rewari, etc. (1931).

[3] The recent enquiries made by Sir John Megaw (Director General of the Indian Medical Service) into diet in India show that, though the quantity of food is generally sufficient, its quality is inadequate (*Census of India*, 1931). The growth of vegetables emphasized in *Rusticus Loquitur* (p. 354) is therefore more than ever important.

[4] Cf. p. 132; also cf. p. 136.

## Chapter X

# ROHTAK[1]

### Drought, Finance, Self-Taxation, and Livestock

'The land . . . is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof.'[2]

10 *February.—Sorkhi to Maham* (13 *miles*)

For the first time this month it was warm enough to breakfast in the sun. But while the table was being made ready, an orderly had to stand by with a bow to chase away the brown grey-legged monkeys, which sported greedily round. It was a lovely day, and above, the stagnant clouds, which have muddied the sky for days, lay transformed into a fleet of white skiffs becalmed on a blue sea. Below there was nothing to break the monotony except a broad-spreading hump, where for a short distance the white road bent upwards. A little beyond it we found half a dozen horsemen waiting to receive us. Here was the boundary of Hissar, and we entered Rohtak. The western half, which is largely unirrigated and has a rainfall of only 16 inches, is suffering from prolonged drought, which had just begun when I last visited this part of the world,[3] and my main object in riding through it is to get some idea of what this means to the peasant. We therefore got off our horses at the first village we came to (Bhani Maharájapur) to hear how the people had fared. We sat on the plinth of a large masonry well, and despite our protests a peasant made us sit upon his homespun shawl. The villagers gathered quickly round us, all more or less 'locked out' by nature. The fields were bare, and there is little to be done but look after the cattle. These now have plenty to eat, as the last harvest was a good one; but in the five harvests before that only 17 per cent of the cultivated area matured:[4] that is to say, in two and a half years less than one-fifth of their arable land paid a dividend. And they have been hard put to it to keep their only other asset, their cattle: in the worst year 200 were sent away

[1] Area 1,797 square miles.

[2] Numbers xiii, 32.

[3] *Rusticus*, 140, 144.

[4] An average of 251 out of 1,435 acres, roughly the canal-irrigated area (240 acres).

to graze elsewhere, and the 668 they had three years ago have been reduced to 438. How, then, have they got through? Government has helped them by suspending the land revenue twice; and out of a population of 631, 60 Jats and nearly 100 village servants have gone off to find work elsewhere—westwards into Bikaner and northwards to Bhatinda, and a few even to Lahore. Those that remain have enough to eat, but many have come to the end of their grain and are buying millet. No marriage has taken place for two years, but marriage cannot be put off indefinitely and a boy is to be married in ten days' time. It will cost only Rs. 300, but, as ever, some of the amount will have to be borrowed. Throughout borrowing has been the great resource, and the 127 families in the village have raised Rs. 22,000, thus :—

| | Rs. |
|---|---|
| 200 cattle sold .. .. .. .. .. | 10,000 (round) |
| jewellery pawned .. .. .. .. | 4,000 (round) |
| land mortgaged .. .. .. .. | 8,629[1] |

**Motor and horse**

Riding on was no great pleasure with a dusty road and a following wind and many horsemen behind. The dust rose in clouds and, when we walked, swiftly outstripped us; but it was our first warm day and the wind rustled melodiously in the pipal trees by the roadside. Before us on a low hill rose the ancient townlet of Maham with a large white-domed mosque crowning the summit. Amongst those waiting to receive us was a retired officer who, seeing me on a horse, flatteringly deplored the habit of the motor, of which I have already spoken.[2] With wide gesticulating arms he drew a vivid picture of the days when officers came on horseback. 'Then we all rode out to meet them, and it was a tamasha for people to see us ride by. Now they come in motors and pass so quickly that they do not see us and we do not see them.' The zaildar said the last Sahib to come here on a horse was the 'Financial'.[3] That was four years ago; and before that he could remember no one since the war.

### 11 *February.—Maham to Lahli* (15 *miles*)

**Education**

To-day we left the Grand Trunk road which runs from Delhi to Multan, and which we first met at Sirsa. A dusty deeply rutted road was not a very comfortable exchange, and we were seven hours on the way. Four of them we

[1] The amount advanced on mortgage (Rs. 1,374) has been deducted. The figures take no account of unsecured loans, but these are now got with difficulty.

[2] p. 154.

[3] Financial Commissioner.

spent at a Jat village called Bahalba, and our meeting there took place in the courtyard of the Primary school. A round hundred were present, and leaning over the mud wall that surrounded us half a dozen women in red shawls watched the proceedings. These started with a poem composed by the headmaster, the secretary of the bank, and sung by two small boys, one dressed in trousers no longer white and the other in khaki shorts and yellow stockings blossoming at the top into purple and red. In such scholastic surroundings talk about education was inevitable. Although there has been a school here for twenty years and the village has 600 houses, only 73 boys out of a possible 250 are at school, and in the last five years the number of pupils has increased by a bare five. Of the hundred present only seven, six of them soldiers, could read and write and no one had read beyond the sixth class. We asked a few why they did not send their boys to school. One who had a boy of six replied: 'There is loss (*tota*).' 'His boy is at work collecting dung,' exclaimed someone in the crowd. Another with three sons said: 'It is my poverty: what else could it be?' And so said a third.

Technically, primary education for the peasant is free, but actually it costs something appreciable for books, stationery, and clothes, as is shown by the following figures (for a year) given us to-day:—

**Cost of schooling**

| | Rs. |
|---|---|
| 2 sets of books (two sets required as boys are destructive) | 6 |
| 2 slates | 1 |
| Pens, paper and ink (at 8 annas a month for eight months) | 4 |
| Clothes:— | |
| 1 coat for the cold weather | 5 |
| 1 coat for the hot weather | 3 |
| 6 shirts | 6 |
| 6 pyjama trousers | 4-8 |
| 4 puggarees | 4 |
| 3 pairs of shoes (at Re. 1 to 1-4 each) | 3-8 |
| Total | Rs. 37 |

Only Rs. 5 of this expenditure would be necessary if a boy did not go to school. Accordingly, even with no fees to pay, schooling costs over Rs. 30 a year, a sum which is more than most have to pay as land revenue. Moreover, when harvests are bad, land revenue can be suspended and even remitted, and during the last three years the former has been freely done in this tract; but these charges cannot be suspended, still less remitted. Then there is the old difficulty—who is to graze the cattle? And in a cattle district

like Rohtak or Hissar there are plenty of cattle to graze. One can understand, therefore, that for the ordinary peasant education and drought do not go well together. Yet there is keenness to learn, and for two years many grown-ups attended a night school, which has only been closed for want of funds.

I have so often had to comment critically on educated young men who refuse to go back to the land that it was refreshing to find that a Sergeant's son, who had read up to the eighth class,[1] was farming and was well spoken of. 'He was weak at first, but now—six years later—he is full of strength and does everything methodically (*sutra*). He ploughs straight—straight as a bullet.' People were much more critical of three young men we met in another village, who had passed through the same class and were also farming. 'They are too weak for that,' said their neighbours. 'They do not work with the charsa,[2] they do not cut the harvest, they cannot even milk the cows; when it is hot, they fear for their health and run off to Delhi.' The four years spent in a boarding house had proved their undoing, for boarders are completely cut off from outdoor village life. The holidays should mitigate this, but the holiday task leaves no time for work in the fields.[3]

**A money-lender on his business**

Finding an Aggarwál money-lender present, I made him squat at my side and asked him about his business. Physically he was typical of his kind, heavy and soft in build and with cheeks like small melons, but under his closely-knitted brows were such shrewd kindly eyes that I felt at once that I liked him. In his business, too, he is true to type, combining money-lending, shop-keeping, and grain-dealing; and he is sufficiently well-to-do to be able to advance Rs. 10,000 to the commission agents of a market town in the central Punjab, where he has another shop. He charges these only 6 per cent, but his zemindar clients never less than 12, because (as he said) 'their money does not come back for six months, and if the harvest is bad, not for a year; and when there is drought, not perhaps for years'; meaning in the last case that the full amount would probably not be repaid. Nothing to speak of has come back for three years, but in the market town money comes back quickly, and he has never lost anything there. As a rule he charges zemindars 18¾ per cent,[4] but like others he takes less from those who

[1] There are four classes in the Primary, four more in the Middle, and two (the ninth and tenth) in the High school.

[2] Large leather bucket used at a well.

[3] See pp. 70, 91.

[4] The ordinary rate for Jats in this tract: the thriftless Meos or Gurgaon have to pay 24 and even 37½ per cent.

repay within a year. The evidence of this tour shows conclusively that in the village, as in the town, punctual dealing secures favourable rates.[1]

As more than a year's interest was in arrears in the bank, I asked him how he was faring in this respect.

'Before the drought my money used to come in, but since it began I have had nothing, and now I have nothing to advance, not even if jewellery is pawned.'[2]

'Do you think that a bank should go on advancing when there is no prospect of early repayment?'

'Yes, money must be given for food and drink and for cultivation; otherwise the cultivator could not live.'

'Can he not sell his cattle?'

'But there are no purchasers: no one comes to buy anything.'

'If you had money now, would you lend it?'

'Certainly, I would.'

'One more question, Sethji. You have seen our bank and its ways. Do you think its ways good or your ways?'

'Your ways are good,' he replied courteously; 'your accounts are clear, ours are not.'

'Then why do you not give up money-lending and put your money with the bank?'

'There is much produce (*paidawar*) to be made out of the zemindars.'

This provoked a burst of laughter; also some caustic comment on the money-lender's habit of over- or under-valuing the zemindar's produce in his accounts, as suits him best.

'If grain is eighteen seers in the market and we want to buy it, he writes down fourteen seers.'

'No, not fourteen,' said the money-lender deprecatingly, 'only sixteen.' Urged once more to give up money-lending, he replied with a smile of his half-closed eyes—'If I give it up, my sons will start it again,' words which melted all criticism into warm friendly laughter. Relations between bania and zemindar here and hereabouts are friendly enough, and they attend each other's weddings. This is far from being the case throughout the district.

Prolonged drought raises the difficult question, how far should a co-operative society finance its members when their ordinary

[1] See pp. 100, 104, 146.

[2] A little later I was given the following figures based on the accounts of 97 rural money-lenders of the district (44 in Jhajjar tahsil) in 1929-30:

| | |
|---|---|
| Amount advanced .. .. .. .. | 18¼ lakhs. |
| Interest (*a*) stipulated .. .. .. | 15 per cent. |
| (*b*) actually realized .. .. | 5½ per cent. |

1930-1 was much worse owing to the slump and the continued drought.

**Co-operative finance and drought**

credits are exhausted and their agricultural work is at a standstill? The policy followed by the money-lenders has been to advance freely in the first year, tighten their money-bags in the second, and in the third to open them only so far as was necessary to keep old clients in leash. Village banks have varied according to their vigour. Only the most vigorous have advanced anything material during the last year, and many have advanced nothing for two years. Circumstances certainly justify the greatest caution: at the same time, it is essential that everyone should be able to work again directly the drought breaks, and most intelligent co-operators I have met therefore think that loans should not be stopped altogether but confined to advances for plough bullocks, seed, and food. The need for bullocks and seed goes without saying, and loans for food are necessary, for someone must stay at home to look after the cattle and be ready to take the plough out on the first fall of rain. The difficulty about bullocks is that, like the plough, they must be ready for immediate use, and for this purpose loans have to be given in anticipation of rain, and if the rain does not come repayment must be indefinitely postponed. There is general agreement that loans for other purposes should not be given, so that no one who can get employment elsewhere should be enabled to idle at home. This, in brief, is the policy we are following.

**A village club**

Like many Rohtak villages Bahalba is large, compact, and dirty, and stands so high that it is visible for miles round, and from the middle of it rise a number of square massive buildings which recall the strongholds of a medieval Italian city. The most striking of these is a chowpál built ten years ago by one of the four quarters (*panna*) into which the village is divided, at a cost of Rs. 12,000. Works of this kind abound and are the best evidence of the strength still retained by the village community in this part of the province, but so far I have never come across expenditure on so lavish a scale. The way the amount was raised is instructive. By general consent a poll tax of Rs. 25 was laid upon every male residing in the eighty or ninety houses of the quarter, and as this was not sufficient for the purpose, messengers were sent out to the twenty-four villages of the neighbourhood with which the quarter has marriage ties to ask for contributions. It must be explained that at a marriage each guest makes a contribution,[1] generally only a few rupees, to the expense of the wedding, and the compliment is returned when he has a marriage in his own house. Careful account is kept of the sums received, so that all concerned may know how much has been given and how much must

[1] Called *neonda*, *neota*, or *tambol* (see p. 4).

be given in return. As the chief use of a chowpál is to provide accommodation for marriage parties, the same principle was applied in the present case. The well-to-do in the twenty-four villages gave separate sums, and the rest clubbed their rupees together in a joint subscription. All the arrangements were made by a panchayat, on which every section (*thola*) of the quarter had a representative, and when it was finished the panchayat was dissolved. There is no permanent body to settle disputes in the village—' eyes do not meet '—but whenever any collective activity is undertaken, a panchayat is appointed for the purpose, and this is characteristic of the district.

The chowpál was unlike any that I have seen before. Built round a courtyard with two colonnades of pillars and arches, one above the other, and the whole roofed in, it resembled a small Italian *palazzo*,[1] and the likeness was heightened by the frescoe paintings (done by masons from Maham), which made wall and arch glow with reds, blues, and greens. The paintings suggested a talented child of ten and gave a lively view of past and present life. On one wall Rajput and English were engaged in mortal combat, the English very fierce with jet black moustaches and sharp-pointed noses ; and on another wall, a marriage party headed by the bridegroom was approaching a row of not very exciting ladies who were singing songs of welcome to the strains of a village band. Meantime, the young men and maidens of the village had joined hands in a dance, and so many were they that two walls of the court could hardly contain them. ' Was that ever your custom ? ' I asked remembering the tedious, slow-moving nautch in which woman alone takes part. An old Puritan shook his head. ' No, that is not lawful : the picture was made by someone's folly.' There are ten other chowpáls in the village, and one had cost almost as much as this one. Both were built in the days of good harvests and high prices when money was plentiful and village vied with village. The sad thing is that once built they are no better looked after than the humblest houses. The one we saw to-day looked like a palace turned slum. Many of the paintings were tarnished, and old string beds were the only furniture. Lying on some of them were sleepers completely concealed by their bedding. ' They come for peace,' we were told : ' they are quieter here than in their houses.' The chowpál is the village club, and as with more fashionable clubs one of its attractions is its facilities for an afternoon nap.

Continuing our march we picked our way across country brown and bare as mangy camel-back, but at Lahli we came upon

[1] Mansion.

a canal and saw young wheat stretching away in wide green fields to the setting sun.

*12 February.—Lahli to Beri* (15 *miles*)

We were soon out of our oasis and riding once more through a sterile world, and the north-west wind, which has pursued us since Sirsa, filled mouth, nose, and eyes with gritty dust scraped up by our horses. It helped, however, to keep us cool, and this was welcome, for the last two days the sun has shown a touch of its latent power. We were still on the great plain, but towards the end of our march it began to heave with a hint of approaching hills.

**The building of a mosque**

Our bank inspection took us to a small tumble-down village (Gaddi Balála) inhabited by Muslim Rajputs and dominated by a large mosque with three domes. Finished in 1927, it took seven years to build: 'We did it as we had means.' As usual a panchayat was appointed but of only three members, one for each quarter. (The founder of the village had three sons, and the descendants of each live separately.) There was no formal levy as with yesterday's chowpál, but every household subscribed Rs. 25, 15, or 5 according to its means. Some contributed in kind, and a large owner gave 400,000 bricks. It is astonishing what large sums villages will raise for ends they regard as important. This one has only sixty or seventy houses, and they spent Rs. 10,000 or more than twelve times the annual land revenue (Rs. 800). Herein lies a good means of reconstructing village life. But the villager must first be persuaded that reconstruction is important.[1]

**Geese**

For the third time on this tour we saw tame geese waddling past. They were the joint property (*shamilat*) of the village, and so little does the peasant regard economics and its money-making lore that they are kept 'for beauty'. Even their eggs are not eaten, and, once only two, they have now become six. A Subedar I met early in this tour also kept geese for aesthetic reasons, or, as he put it, 'for pleasure'. It seems that they are sometimes used instead of watchman or watchdog, and the Subedar told me that he had just given one away to a fakir for this purpose; which put me in mind of the sacred geese who saved the Capitol from the night attack of the Gauls. No doubt they were kept there for the same purpose, and I am informed that in the hills of the Jura the French peasant still uses them in the same way.

[1] Cf. p. 39 and *Rusticus*, 150.

In accordance with the custom of the tract, poultry are kept only by menials. 'They are unclean (*nipak*), and it is not according to our law to keep them.'

**Poultry and izzat**

'But in the north men keep them, and there men are Muslim.'

'There they may be clean: here they eat dirt and put their beaks into our dishes. The cat, too, eats them.'[1] When the peasant speaks of something not being according to his 'law', what he means is that it is not according to his custom. But with him custom, though often deriving from convenience or izzat or mere imitation, has the force of law, and also its infinite variety. In Shakargarh at the foot of the hills many Muslim Rajputs (which these men are) keep poultry; yet in the same area, if a hen strays into the house of a Hindu Rajput, he purifies the room defiled with the dung of the sacred cow, and he will not even eat eggs. The president of a Banking Union explained this by saying that a Rishi had once been so much troubled by a hen that in his wrath he cursed her, saying: 'Ever shalt thou eat offal, and whoever eats thee shall surely go to hell.' And in greater or less degree this seems to be the attitude of the orthodox Hindu towards the hen, and where Hinduism still dominates, the Muslim too has his scruples.

In the province as a whole there are, broadly, three attitudes towards poultry. North of the Jhelum, most zemindars keep cock and hen, and there is real cock-crowing at dawn, and they sell both birds and eggs. From the Jhelum to the Ravi and in the south-west, they may keep poultry but will not sell eggs. In the centre and south-east, they think it derogatory and, if Hindus, irreligious to do either, and the feeling is often so strong that even the village servant will not keep them, unless it be the sweeper, who is too lowly to boggle at anything.[2] And nowhere in the province is the keeping of more than a few birds general.[3] In the north and west they are largely kept that meat may be ready for the unexpected guest. How different is all this from the

[1] Cf. p. 90.

[2] These boundaries are only rough indications. In Mianwali there is some objection to the selling of eggs but not of poultry.

[3] At Buchhal Kalán in the Salt Range (p. 42) the doctor kept as many as fifty, and the Subedar 300 until disease decimated them, when he stopped keeping them. This, however, is exceptional, and in a Rawalpindi village (Turkwal) in the Gujar Khan tahsil, which is the best area for poultry in the province, a census taken (at my instance) in 1932 showed that 173 houses had 226 birds and 602 chickens, and that no one had more than four hens or twenty-five chickens; and in another village in the same area 109 persons were found to have only 131 birds, but not long before they had lost 908 from disease. Disease (not the cat) is the great enemy of poultry in the Punjab (cf. *Rusticus*, 258, 263, 313, 317, 357).

European peasant, and can the Indian hope for anything like an European standard of living in the circumstances ?[1]

For the small holder who is not wholly or in part a market gardener the answer is emphatically no, unless he keeps some other kind of livestock. In this village, and in many others in this cattle-loving tract, the people very sensibly purchase young or lean stock at a fair and sell them a year later well fattened with vetch (*gwar*). They have two bulls, one of them provided by the bania of a village three miles away. He let it loose on the death of his father and for two months during the drought supplied it with four seers[2] of milk a day, and also with ghi. This time it was not a case of aesthetics but of religion, for he did it primarily to acquire merit. ' But why did he give *your* village the bull when he is a Hindu and you are Muslims ? '

**Cattle and religion**

' Because he has money dealings with us,' was the unexpected reply. The arrangement serves a double purpose. Placed amongst the money-lender's clients, the bull is well looked after, and at the same time by increasing and improving their cattle he makes it easier for them to repay their loans.

As far north as the Jhelum we found Muslim Rajputs, presumably on account of their Hindu ancestry, occasionally releasing bulls to acquire merit.[3] Here under the double influence of Hindu ancestry and a Hindu atmosphere they do it oftener ; but they can only afford to set free young buffaloes. Following Hindu custom, too, most will not sell cows that have grown old in their service. ' There would be taunting (*tanah*) if we sold a cow after having had much profit from her.' Very sensibly they discriminate between cows that have served them well and those that become prematurely barren. ' Then without doubt we will sell even to a butcher : why should we not when we have had no profit from

[1] Unfortunately it is not known how many poultry there are in the province, but in 1932 the Poultry Expert estimated (in reply to my enquiry) that there were ' very approximately forty fowls of all ages per hundred of the population '. On this basis, the rural population being about 20·5 millions (in 1931), the number of birds in the village would be about eight millions. And for all these there is only one expert, and he is stationed at Gurdaspur, where the ordinary zemindar will not even keep poultry, in fact almost in sight of the Hindu Rajputs quoted above ! It is difficult now to move him and his office, but another expert is clearly needed for the north, which is the real centre of possibility. In my opinion, poultry-breeding has a very important part to play in the development of a better standard of living for the peasant ; and I gave reasons for this view in the account of my last tour (ibid., 356). My experience on this tour and subsequent enquiries have served only to strengthen this conviction (1934).

[2] A little over three quarts.

[3] See p. 74.

her? Also we eat this meat ourselves.' And a lusty voice added: 'Who will keep a barren woman? Who then will keep a barren cow?' A remark which set all fifty of us laughing loudly. If only the Hindu would discriminate in the same way, cattle-breeding south of the Sutlej would be much easier.

But if religion prevents Hindus taking life whether cows are good or bad, it also disposes them to special effort to preserve it in times of stress. Last year at Beri, when the drought was at its worst and only eleven seers of fodder could be had for a rupee as against eighty now, many Banias 'dropped' fodder in the way of the more famished beasts, and four of them spent from Rs. 1,000 to 2,000 in provisioning the open spaces where the cattle collect every morning for the day's grazing. Many animals were kept alive in this way, and better still it drew together Bania and Jat, who in this district are much opposed. This is not an isolated case, for the same was also done at Bhiwani in Hissar.[1]

**Cattle fairs and cash**

In a tract much given to cattle-breeding and the fattening of stock, facilities for purchase and sale are essential. In both Rohtak and Hissar, therefore, many cattle fairs are held and attended by buyers from far and wide—Pathans from the north, Sikh Jats from the central districts, zemindars from those south of the Sutlej, and dealers from across the Jumna and as far south as Agra. Generally competition is brisk and good prices rule, but owing to the drought and slump the supply at present greatly exceeds the demand, and zemindars who have just been to the fair at Dujána say—'Not a purchaser came.'[2] In the village, cattle are often sold on credit, but at fairs, as dealings are largely between strangers, cash has to be paid, hard cash too, not notes. To meet the demand for rupees, which may run to some lakhs, the District Board contracts with a trader to exchange notes for cash and allows him to charge a small commission on each transaction. This is all very primitive, but the peasant cannot read and is so 'mad' (as it was said) that he cannot tell a good note from a bad, and would never notice if the two halves of a note did not tally. There is danger, too, from the cattle. A Jat left his shawl lying on the ground with some notes tied up in a corner of it (homespuns have no pockets). The last thing he had secreted there was gur, and a pleasant aroma still lingered about it. This

[1] *Pb. Bkg. Enqy. Rpt.*, 138.

[2] The enquiries made during my tour suggest that by March 1931 cattle prices had fallen from 20 to 30 per cent, but at the fair held at Jahazgarh (Rohtak) about that time the price of bullocks dropped 43 per cent, averaging Rs. 45 as against an average of Rs. 79 for the three previous years. Buffaloes dropped only 27 per cent, probably because with the lower cost of feeding, milch cattle are now in greater demand in the town (1931).

attracted the attention of a passing cow, and that was the end of the notes. I can well believe the tale since the same fate once befell a statistical fragment (in manuscript) of *The Punjab Peasant*, which I had imprudently left in a tent pitched in the grounds of the Secretariat at Lahore.[1]

### 13 *February.—Beri to Jajjar* (9 *miles*)

**Peasant traders**

Half the day—ten to two—was spent with forty-five Jats of Beri, all Hindus and eighteen of them ex-soldiers. We met in a large upper room of the town hall—Beri has 8,000 inhabitants—and amongst those sitting on chairs on either side of me were a veteran Honorary Captain, a Risaldar, and a Subedar, all retired officers. In the verandah outside was a little fleet of country-made shoes left by the many who squatted on the floor. Fourteen of the latter were literate, and amongst them was a Jat who had become a trader. He had been a Quartermaster-Sergeant in the army, and the introduction of the ration system during the war gave him an insight into business. In 1917, when prices went up with a rush, he opened a small shop and set up in the grain market as a commission agent. He has been engaged in it ever since, and one could see from his erect attitude as he sat on the ground and his lean resolute face that he had both capacity and energy: and though his only education was a smattering of Hindi picked up in the army, he had made good, and with the help of a soldier brother was cultivating his land as well. Seven more have followed his example, and all agreed that they were better off than those who only cultivated. To prove this the Captain got up, and advancing upon one of them seized his hand and pointed, amid general laughter, to the gold rings on one of his fingers. Others also trade and go off with their carts to big towns like Meerut and bring back gur, cotton, and seed, which they sell to the shopkeepers at a small profit. It is the old story of the small holder who cannot live on his land. Land is unirrigated and from 20 to 25 acres are required to engage a plough and a yoke of bullocks fully and support a family of four or five.[2] Many have less than this; the Risaldar, for example, 12½, and the Quartermaster only 11 acres. Such men by combining trading with farming are often better off than those with larger holdings, and I cannot recollect ever coming across a peasant trader who was not tolerably well-to-do.[3]

[1] The cow was accustomed to graze there, and this perhaps accounts for her curious taste!

[2] All I asked in Rohtak and Gurgaon said much the same: most put the area at about 21 acres (100 kachha bighas).

[3] Compare, for instance, Buchhal Kalán (p. 44).

Although so much trading is done and three officers were present, no one keeps a cheque book or even understands its use.

**Accounts**

Two, however, sometimes use drafts (*hundis*) for remittance, and the Quartermaster keeps accounts of his business on the three-book system, though not of his household expenditure. Only the Captain and the Risaldar do this. More cultivators keep accounts than one would suppose. Near Tarn Taran I came upon a Sikh Jat who had kept them for his 120 acres ever since he left the Khalsa College in 1916, and yesterday two retired soldiers, a sergeant and a sepoy, told me they had regular accounting years and balanced their accounts yearly.[1] The sepoy has been doing this for the last fifteen years and said that whereas just after the war he made a profit of Rs. 800, in each of the last three years he has lost sums varying from Rs. 32 to 95. The Sergeant also spoke of loss, amounting last year to Rs. 152-9.

Beri has suffered so severely from the drought that its land revenue has had to be suspended in five out of the last six harvests.

**The drought and its effects**

Fortunately about 100 of its younger men are soldiers, and 100 of its older men military pensioners. We saw in the Salt Range that the army could bring prosperity: here it has been a shield against adversity and has saved the people from acute distress. The fodder largesse of the Banias has also helped, and jewellery has been sold, though to little advantage, since in the south-east most of it is in silver and silver has fallen heavily in price. Much carting, too, has been done, and unemployed members of the family have gone off to the grain markets to load and unload carts. 'Then Jats do not mind working as coolies,' I said. This was too much for the old Captain, to whom the traditions of his race are dear. 'Those who do that,' he exclaimed with warlike fire, 'are not Jats. Even at his last breath a Jat will not do coolie work.' 'They will not do this near their homes,' said a pacifying voice, 'but they may if they are far away.' The old war-horse gave another snort—'To us there is great hatred of coolie work.' And so would the true Jat say all over the province. It is only north of the Jhelum that the small peasant proprietor will work freely in this way, and he, too, naturally likes his village to be out of sight. This adaptability is one of the reasons why the small holder is less indebted in the north than anywhere else.[2]

In prolonged drought great economies must obviously be practised, and where men depend for most of their food on what their fields produce, the stomach feels the pinch at once. Muslims,

[1] Cf. pp. 168, 169, 222 and *Rusticus*, 241, 252-3, 269.

[2] *Peasant*, 79-80.

to some extent, can make up a shortage of grain by an increased ration of meat, which the inevitable slaughter of cattle makes cheap and abundant.[1] But the Hindu Jat is a strict vegetarian and will not touch even eggs. In spite of this—he would say because of it—in courage, endurance, and grit he is the equal of any meat-loving Muslim, and I doubt whether in the whole world could be found a better advertisement for vegetarianism. He derives his great strength almost entirely from the sacred cow, and in listening to the details of his daily diet one understood why the cow was sacred. The Subedar, a sturdy broad-chested fellow of 43, said that the ration that suited him best was 1½[2] seers of milk a day with four ounces of ghi and eight of cream. But the Subedar is better off than most, and the ordinary Jat's diet was said to be half a seer of curds when he gets up; another half-seer in the fields at ten o'clock; three ounces of ghi at mid-day, and from three-quarters to a seer of milk in the evening; *plus*, of course, bread (of millet in winter, and wheat in summer), vegetables, sugar, and rice. But now buttermilk and porridge (*rebri*) do duty for the morning curds, and the ration of ghi is reduced to half an ounce, and of milk to half a pound. No one goes hungry, and as much is eaten as before—more bread, for instance, now that less milk is available—but there is neither quality nor variety. 'The belly is filled, but the body is not nourished.'[3]

**Food and vegetarianism**

Then there are the economies in dress. Shirts are a few inches shorter, dhoties less voluminous, and for important occasions people borrow each other's plumes. And much more spinning is done. In the Captain's house the spinning wheels are whirring again after ten years' silence, and four maunds of yarn are awaiting the weaver's loom. Few families had given up spinning, but, as we have found elsewhere,[4] most are working their wheels harder than before. In more prosperous times, the clothes required for the bride and the mother-in-law were obtained from the bazaar, but many now cannot afford to get anything in this way. Cotton, too, is cheaper than it has been for years, and women are taking advantage of this and of their holiday from field work to spin yarn for their daughter's trousseau. It is one of the

**Clothes**

[1] See *Rusticus*, 142.

[2] Nearly 2½ pints: a seer is 1⅝ pints (32 oz.). Not everyone in the East is fond of milk: cf. 'One intelligent Malay . . . explained that the idea of drinking fresh milk was to him and many other people rather disgusting. It was too near the cow' (C. F. Strickland, *Contrasts of the Indian and Malayan Countryside*, lecture to Central Asian Society, 1929).

[3] Cf. the Hissar Jats, 135.

[4] Cf. p. 34.

few happy effects of the drought that their marriages are being deferred. With boys this is difficult: in the Punjab the shortage of women is so great[1] that no father dare postpone the marriage of a son once a suitable bride is found; but much less is being spent. This process began after the war. During the war many from Beri served abroad and saw and heard many new things. When they came back they called a panchayat, and it was decided that there should be no more funeral feasts, that dowries should not exceed Rs. 100, that the village servants should get only Rs. 11 instead of the customary Rs. 75, and that Jats should no longer sell their daughters.[2] 'Many speeches were made,' said the old Captain, now feeling well up-to-date, 'and we told the people that to sell their daughters was as bad as being dacoits.'

**The army and the zenána**

The influence of the army upon the peasant has been one of the things that have interested me most on this tour, and wondering whether it extended to the zenána, I said cautiously: 'It is well known that your women work harder than any other women in the Punjab, perhaps harder than any in the world.'

'Yes, they work very hard; but they are not as strong as they were. Before the drought they could lift two pitchers of water on to their heads unaided: now they want help.'

'Those who do not live in Rohtak say you work your women like slaves, and that they have no time to look after their children.'

'No, not like slaves,' said the Captain deprecatingly; 'but it is true there is no one to look after the children except the old men, and all they do is to pat and pet them when they cry. But we are trying to change this. Yet, if in a house there are only man and wife, she must help him in everything, or the work will not be done.'

'Does a woman do all a man does?'

'Yes, a woman does all a man does except plough, sow and thresh—for these there is no custom—, and she becomes very strong. Those who have much care taken of them cannot reach the standard of our women. However, since the war we have been trying to give them less work. Some give the work of manure to the sweeperess; and the cutting of the thorn bushes for fuel and for hedges has been forbidden by the panchayat. That is a matter of izzat: it is not well that a woman should go out into the 'jangal' alone.'

'Who made these changes first?'

[1] According to the census of 1931 males in the Punjab exceeded females by 2·18 millions (total population 23½ millions).

[2] Cf. the Bágri Jats on pp. 162, 163.

'The soldiers. They have more care for these things, and their homes are cleaner and better arranged than those of others. Before the war women had no izzat and men beat them with shoes (general laughter), but now much light has spread, and beating is stopped, and a woman has two annas' worth of izzat. That is because we went to Europe.'

I had gained the information I wanted and we now slithered into politics. The mass of the members had withdrawn, and only those who sat on chairs were left. Amongst the Jats driven forth by the drought was one who had found a living by serving Congress. They shook their heads over this, and when I asked whether the ordinary villager knew anything about the political events of the day, they said they all knew even about the Round Table Conference. I asked what they thought of the Conference. 'We cannot talk about that here,' said the Captain in mysterious tones. And he added significantly: 'Will you be free for interviews to-day?' Unfortunately it was after two, and I had still nine miles to ride and much work to do. The officers accompanied me on foot to the edge of the open plain, and when I got on to my horse, the dear old Captain Sahib, raising his white puggaree and lifting it high over his grizzled head, called out in an eager high-pitched voice almost cracking with loyalty: 'Hip, hip, hurrah; Hip, hip, hurrah'; and his wrinkled bearded face shone with boyish glee. The two others responded with middle-aged decorum.

सत्यमेव जयते

## CHAPTER XI

# ROHTAK, DELHI, AND GURGAON

### JAT AND RAJPUT WOMEN—GOVERNMENT LOANS—CONSOLIDATION OF HOLDINGS

WE rode on talking, and observing nothing, because there was nothing to observe. The brown plain lay around us and the west wind followed us and gritty dust enveloped us. It was a country of 'thorns and briers and nigh unto cursing'.[1] A Rohtak Jat official on leave was with me, and apropos of what we had just heard, I asked him about the life of the Jatni.[2] He thought that 90 per cent were happy in their homes and that hardly 1 per cent were of bad character (*badchalan*), and he attributed this to the system of early marriage, which prevails in this Hindu tract.[3] He himself was married at eleven, and many Hindu peasants believe themselves obliged by their religion to marry their daughters before, or as soon as they reach the age of puberty.[4] The Sarda Act in making it illegal for a girl to be married under the age of fourteen is trying to stop this,[5] but last year in India, when it was on the point of coming into force, children in their thousands, even babes in arms, were formally married. Continuing, my companion said: 'But what I will say is the greatest reason why men and women live happily together in Rohtak is that they look upon themselves as the slaves of their husbands and think it their duty to do their bidding in everything. They know, and claim no rights. And a great reason why they are virtuous is that they work so hard.' No one who has worked hard will dispute this. I asked him when his wife got up.

'She rises at four and grinds for one or two hours. When we are all at home, she does ten seers a day, which takes about two hours. And if she has no grinding to do, she says:—"I have had no exercise to-day: I cannot digest." After the grinding she heats the water for the bath, milks the buffaloes, cleans the house—the sweeperess does the byre—and prepares the morning meal.

[1] Hebrews vi, 8.
[2] Jat woman.
[3] Cf. *Rusticus*, 40.
[4] Cf. ibid., 40, 103, 110.
[5] For boys it forbids marriage under 18.

And at different times during the day she spins, draws the water from the well and brings it in on her head, one pot set upon another.'

'And does she help in the field work as well?'

'She helps in everything except ploughing and sowing. With us it is a shame for a married woman to sow, for it would mean that you have no man to do it for you: "go and sow"—is therefore a term of abuse, and only widows do it. If a woman's husband is away, she employs a Chamár to do it for her.'

'With so much to do, how can she look after her children?'

'She has too much work for that. She does not look after hers.'

'When does she go to bed?'

'At ten. Six hours' sleep is enough for her. She is very strong. She used to make the dung-cakes, but six or seven years ago, as we were all educated, we said it was not good, and now the sweeper's wife does it.'

'Is your wife then educated?'

'No. It is a matter of regret. If she were educated, she would insist on living with me, and it would be much better. Now I leave her at home to look after the family household. Most men in Rohtak are against the education of girls, fearing it will make them less dependent. In the central Punjab (he is serving there) the women have some education, and they are the masters of their husbands. What is bad about an uneducated wife is that she cannot train or educate her children. Nor can she make good arrangements (*intizam*) for her house, or keep accounts of the expenses. Nor does she keep things in order. An educated woman will see that clothes are kept clean and the vessels spotless. And she will give some training to her children. At present they receive none—none whatever. They are allowed to relieve themselves how and when they please, and on one occasion a boy in my village fouled his bed after his bride came to live with him, and when they heard of it the village laughed.'

### 14 *February.—Jhajjar to Zahidpur* (9 *miles*)

At Jhajjar, a townlet of 12,000 inhabitants, we were lodged in the old fortified bungalow of a Nawab who took the wrong side in the Mutiny and paid for it with his neck. I was awakened by the pleasant sound of water swishing on to the ground from the roof. The rain had come at last; but it soon thought better of it, and all it gave was a bare quarter of an inch.

We left Jhajjar at three, and thanks to the rain were free at last of the dust which has enveloped us since Sirsa. We also

**A depressed village**

saw hills, very low but clearly hills and promising an end to the endless plain. We stopped at a village called Sailána and found things in a bad way. About a hundred were present, and most of them were Jats, but they were very different from the Jats of the last fortnight. Though still in Rohtak, we had suddenly passed into the atmosphere of Gurgaon—dirty, feckless, and unhealthy. Eight ex-soldiers were present, and looking at their physique one wondered how any of them had got into the army. Even the most alert amongst them was thin and narrow-chested. All the evils of an unhealthy situation have been accentuated by a succession of bad harvests. This time the complaint was not of too little water, but of too much; for in the rains floods come sweeping down from the neighbouring hills and wash away the crops or make sowing impossible. And when the monsoon passes, no more rain comes for months and the spring harvest fails. There was much soreness because their last revenue instalment had not been suspended like Sailáni's, a village only a stone's throw away. We called the patwari, and when he said that the villagers could pay, they all fell upon him. 'Were you asleep when the crops were drowned?' His registers showed that half the crop had matured, but he admitted that conditions in Sailána and Sailáni were identical. Sailáni however had another patwari!

Amongst the village servants, all but the weak and the aged have left the village: half the Chamárs have gone, and fifteen out of seventeen families of sweepers have migrated to Jind, 65 miles away. The Jats still hold their barren ground: a few went to Delhi in search of work but came back disappointed. They have got through in the usual way, by selling cattle, jewellery, and fodder, and by borrowing. The two villages sent 110 cattle to this week's fair at Dujána, but only two were sold. Though they are Hindus, bullock and buffalo are freely sold,[1] but 'only one or half a one' will sell a cow. When there is not enough for them to eat 'they die at their pegs'.

**A Jat household**

Yesterday's talk about the Jat woman set me wondering whether it would not be possible to hear from her own lips what she thought about life, and when a very discreet middle-aged Indian colleague offered to help me, I decided to make the attempt. The house selected was that of a former headman who had fallen on evil days. Fifteen of his sixteen acres were mortgaged, and unable either to pay or to collect the land revenue, he had had to make way for another. His house betrayed his poverty. The porch was just large enough

[1] Cf. *Rusticus*, 19, 97, 119.

to hold a trough and a pair of bullocks; the courtyard corresponded, and the verandah opening on to it was blocked with three beds on which he, his wife, and five children sleep under three quilts. Through the verandah was their one room, the usual cave of darkness. The bins were empty, and they have to buy barley for food. They make it into chapatis and eat it dry with boiled greens made from gram leaves, but without either butter or ghi; and they have no milk, for their two cows have died during the drought and no one has any milk for sale in the village.[1]

The poverty was extreme, and small wonder. There have been eight children, of whom five survive. The eldest was born when the mother was only 14. He is dead, so too the boy that came after him, and the last to be born, a twin, died five months after birth. His brother remains, but it can hardly be for long. His mother said he was in his second year, but he looked barely four months old and at most 10 lb. in weight. She is still nursing him—she has nursed all her children two to two-and-a-half years—but how can a mother nurse who drinks no milk? Even as we talked, the little shrunken mite reached its tiny head down to the parched breast and groped about it vainly with hand and mouth. It was a sight to draw tears from stone. Yet why these eight children? That was the first cause of poverty.

The second was like unto it. The eldest daughter was married two years ago at the age of nine, and though the village was already pinched with drought, Rs. 500 were spent upon the wedding. Rs. 200 were borrowed from the bank at 12½ per cent, and because the bank would give no more, another Rs. 200 were taken from the money-lender at 18¾ per cent. Needless to say, not an anna has been repaid. Much the same was done when a son was married, and now the ex-headman owes Rs. 848, most of which (Rs. 635) bears interest at 18¾ per cent. He cannot blame his father for his misfortunes, for he left no debts. Nor has he anything very material to show for his daughter's wedding: no ornaments were bought, the bridegroom was given Rs. 100 in cash, and one hundred guests were entertained for two days.

So far we had been talking almost entirely to the husband. We now turned to the wife. Married at the age of four—her husband was nine—she had her first child at fourteen, and when she was nursing her second daughter, they both got plague, and her daughter still bears its mark, for her waist is only half the size of her sister's. In spite of their poverty both girls (aged 11 and 8) were wearing small gold nose rings. The mother gets up in the

[1] 'Even well-to-do families do without milk if they have no milch cattle' (*Punjab Village Survey*, No. 3).

twilight to grind the barley, then washes herself and her infant, nurses the infant, cleans the compound, draws the water, cooks the breakfast, and takes out her husband's portion to the fields. On her way back she brings in some fuel, spins for an hour or two, draws more water, cooks the evening meal, and so on. 'Do you not feel tired at the end of all this?'

'One is used to it.'

'And do you never sleep by day?'

'For half an hour—only when it is hot.' In the cold weather the infant is washed every day and the other children every three or four days; in the hot, all wash twice a day. Clothes are washed twice a week. Despite all her poverty and care, the mother had a certain air of refinement and beauty, and—most surprising—not a wrinkle in her young oval face. Head and shoulders were gracefully draped in a red flowered shawl, and below she wore a heavy pleated skirt. Her little feckless husband was in soiled homespun, and standing bare-foot side by side the two looked at us with the innocence and helplessness of children who have lost their way but have barely realized the fact. No fault of theirs is it that they have taken so many wrong turnings; for who has been there to guide them, and who is there now to lead them back to security? Born in the darkness of the cave, they seem doomed to live all their lives in darkness, until the light of the funeral pyre guides them who knows where?

We rode on in silence, and the cloudy day drew to a close in lowering sunset fire.

15 *February.—Halt*

Sunday, and spent in clearing off arrears of work. In the afternoon we had a look at our surroundings. Within a ring of low hills lies a broad shallow valley, and from the middle of this rises a hillock which has sprouted into the little village of Zahidpur. Anxious to repeat yesterday's experiment, my colleague and I approached the newest house, a fine building of well pointed red brick. Passing through the gateway, we found ourselves in a spacious vestibule divided in two by a colonnade of three arches rising, almost soaring to their points from three short pillars of stone with rudely moulded capitals. Beyond was the usual courtyard with verandah and windowless rooms. The house belonged to a family of Hindu Jats, and its history was given us by two widows, the joint mistresses of the household. At first they concealed their faces behind ragged shawls, but becoming animated by their narrative, they drew them aside and talked to us as freely as any peasant women in Europe.

**Another Jat household**

In this house had once lived four brothers, who like Job had greatly prospered. Inheriting only twelve acres, they took more on rent, and in time, being frugal and hard-working and spending little on their marriages, they accumulated several thousand rupees and took 200 acres on mortgage. Then came 'the disease of Khattak', as the terrible influenza outbreak of 1918 is called after the month in which it came, and three of the four brothers died. Four years later the fourth died also, and there remained these two widows and six children. The building of the house was begun after the war and took five years. The architect was a mason from Jhajjar, and he and the carpenter were the only two men employed. The timber for the roof was bought, but both bricks and lime were made by the family, and they also supplied the labour. Even so the house cost nearly Rs. 4,000 and absorbed the savings of fifteen years: 'with hand and foot we earned it.' Then came the drought, and now things are difficult, though not nearly as difficult as in yesterday's house. There are two buffaloes to keep the children in milk, and they even provide ghi for sale. For flour they are using barley harvested two years ago—not very fresh or appetizing but at least of their own sowing. Out of it they make chapatis, which they generally eat with a flavouring of gram leaves but sometimes only with pepper and salt.

The widows both wore clothes of the coarsest homespun, as ragged and dirty as old clouts. We asked the more talkative whether she had any better. 'These are my silks,' she replied proffering the folds of her shawl; 'and they do not protect me from the cold.' She was forty-three, and entirely lacked the refinement of yesterday's Jatni,[1] but through her coarse features shone a vigour proclaiming the worker rather than the woman. Yesterday's Jatni gets up at dawn, which seems early enough, but this one rises two hours before daylight to grind, and since her husband died she even sows.[2] I asked whether she ever slept in the afternoon 'Since I came to your Honour's district (here she salaamed) I have never once slept by day.' She came from beyond the hills and was married so young that she could not remember her coming. She had her first child at fifteen, and seven more followed, but only four survive. She nursed each in turn till the next came. After birth she rested from ten to twenty days. (Yesterday's Jatni rested a month.) I asked her whether she made any difference between boy and girl. 'No,' she replied and her vigorous voice suddenly melted into the gentle caressing tones of the mother: 'In the eyes of the mother and father boy and girl are one.' In summer she washes almost every day; in winter, every

[1] Jat woman. [2] Cf. p. 188.

three or four days. Her daughter was married at fifteen, and all they gave the bridegroom was Rs. 25 in cash and two suits of clothes; and only twenty came with the marriage party. How different from yesterday, and the two cases throw a flood of light upon the causes of poverty. This family, to start with, had less land, but it has the two qualities that everywhere make for prosperity—vigour and thrift. The result is, neither pestilence nor drought has crushed it.

But the two families have one thing in common, and in greater or less degree they have it in common with millions of other families in India, and also, it would seem, in Russia.[1] Each has had eight children and lost several: of the sixteen only nine survive. This suggested an obvious train of thought and led to a remarkable conversation between the Jatni and my colleague.

**How many children should a woman have?**

'How many children do you think a woman should have?' he asked.

'Mother earth is not satisfied with the amount of her rain, nor is mother woman with the number of her children. A barren field and a barren woman, who will take them?'[2]

'But cannot a woman have too many children?'

'Without children how can we have men, and without men who will look after God's creatures, and who will dig the tanks that they may have water to drink?'

'But if there are many children, will they not be poor?'

'To run the world both rich and poor are needed. If all are rich like you, who will cut the grass for your horse?'

'How will you feed many children?'

'It is not a mother's work to do this. Her work is to bear them and to rear them. Other things God will provide.'

'Can a woman, then, not have too many children?'

'No number is too great. In four days the disease of Khattak took away three men from my family.'

'In Europe people would have few children, for they have anxiety how they shall live and what they shall eat.'

'They are fools (*murakh*) to think like this. God has given them to rule over other countries, and we have lost this country because we killed our daughters.'

[1] 'There was hardly a mother in the village who was spared the agony of a child's untimely death. They succumbed so easily, these peasant children, to the onslaught of smallpox, croup and all manner of fevers and spasms. It could not be otherwise so long as people lived in ill-smelling, unventilated one-room huts and shared these with their pigs and chickens and calves' (Hindus, op. cit., 25).

[2] Cf. the remark on p. 181.

'Gandhi-ji also wants people to control the number of their children.'

'How many has he got?'

'I am not sure, but I think he has four.'

'That is what I have got; and who will listen to me after I have given birth to so many' (meaning, why then listen to Gandhi-ji?).

'One more question—What did you take to get you well after giving birth to a child?'

'Dried ginger, sugar, ghi, and flour of wheat, all mixed together.'

'That is very rich.'

'It is like giving manure to the earth after the crop is cut.'

Here indeed was the voice of the earth itself. But, said my colleague, such woman are rare. They are rare anywhere.

**Another depressed village**

Unhappily, this household is not typical of the village. Those who gathered for our bank meeting had not a happy look. There were all the outward and visible signs of poverty and bad health—sunken cheeks, sallow complexions, perplexed and disillusioned looks, narrow chests, discoloured loosely-folded puggarees, and old home-spun clothes. One soldier was present, and he was the only one who could read. In two out of the last four harvests the land revenue has had to be suspended, and the census just taken shows only 51 houses inhabited against 72 ten years ago. The interest of the bank is 2½ years in arrears, and debt averages Rs. 845 a head. Holdings are larger than usual and average 32 acres,[1] but harvests are so precarious that a family of four or five requires over 20 acres to support it. There has been no marriage since June 1929, and since then no loan has been given by either money-lender or bank. Started in 1927, the bank has been paralysed by adversity. Yet when we suggested that it should be closed, there was strong protest. In the central Punjab it is rare to find cultivators reduced to a single bullock, but in this area, since the drought, it is not uncommon, and here there are said to be ten in this case, and all had more than one bullock before the drought. Now when they want to plough, they must join forces with each other.[2] Pressed by

[1] Excluding two large owners, 25 acres.

[2] In a village seen a few days later near Delhi I found fifteen cultivators with only one bullock each, and five with none at all. Curiously, in Gurdaspur at a meeting of the Lakhan Banking Union (p. 239) the possibility that a cultivator should have only one bullock was treated as absurd, but in Sialkot at the meeting of the Chawinda Union (p. 251) some were said to be in this case, and touring in the north in the autumn of 1932, I found that an appreciable number had been reduced to it by the depression.

necessity nine servants have left the village and taken their families with them, and only four remain. Twenty Jats have also gone, but without their families.

Remembering yesterday's talk about politics and the interest said to be taken in them by the Jat,[1] I said :—

'Why do you think prices have fallen ? '

**Politics**

'Because of Cangress-Mangress, Australia, and Japan,' said the Treasurer, an intelligent but illiterate man squatting in front of us.

'Who told you this ? '

'I heard it in Delhi.'

'And what has Congress done ? '

'They have done us great harm. They got a lease of a well here from a man who has land in our village but lives in another, and said they would make salt[2] and give him a tenth of what they made. In the old days, fifty years ago or more, we used to make salt : the water is brackish. Five or seven men came ; the zaildar told us to turn them out ; we took our staffs, the whole village, and drove them out : they did not stay more than a day.'

When I asked them whether they had heard of those who have been to Europe for a conference, they replied : 'We are like cattle and have no knowledge.' And such, in one form or another, is the peasant reply almost wherever I go.

### 16 *February.—Zahidpur to Farukhanagar* (9 *miles*)

We rode away through green fields, and so unfamiliar have they become that it seemed a land of plenty. Yet there was little promise of abundance : wheat and barley stood barely two feet high and were palpably stunted by the drought. As ever the sky was overcast, but the half-hour splash at Jhajjar is all that has come of it. A few miles brought us to Kutáni, a village which belongs to a family of Hindu Rajputs. Like many others in this once unruly tract, they live in a semi-fortress. During the Mutiny it was attacked by the Nawab of Jhajjar's men, who blew up the gate, as may still be seen. Believing all was lost, the grandfather of him who told us the tale took his sword and with his own hand slew the twelve purdah ladies of his zenana to save them from dishonour, and then escaped.

**Purdah**

The true Rajput, whether Hindu or Muslim, always keeps his ladies in purdah, and here it is the grim affair of four walls. I was surprised, therefore, to find four or

[1] p. 186.
[2] By evaporation.

five girls attending the boys' school; but, like many others,[1] the people see no harm in this up to a certain age. The age they named was eight, as purdah begins at nine. The four-walled purdah is so repugnant to the western mind that, whenever one meets it, one wonders how people justify it. I could not help, therefore, remarking :—

'The other day, Muslim Rajputs told us they kept purdah because it was the order of their religion. Why do you Hindus keep it ?'

'It is a matter of custom.'

'Do your ladies grind ?'

'No, our house is an old one : we are born of Rájas : we cannot therefore let them grind. But they spin, and some make socks and gloves.'

'Then they get no exercise ?'

'That is a matter for God.'

'Do they never go out ?'

'No, they do not even know the lanes of the village. Very rarely they go to the town. Then they wear a chaddar,[2] not a burqa[3]—that is worn by Muslims.'

'You are educated men. Does the thought ever come to you that purdah should be made weaker ?'

'The thought comes into our heart, but we put it far from us. The women, too, are against it. They say they would have to draw the water and work in the fields. It is the custom of our fathers and our grandfathers, and we cannot change it.'

The Muslim Rajputs referred to above were those of Gaddi Balála.[4] There our discussion about purdah was enlivened by the presence of a Hindu Jat from a non-purdah village. Hearing a Rajput tell me that their womenfolk never went outside, he remarked ironically : 'A man ploughs all the morning, and in the evening he has to bring in fuel that he may have something to eat.' This mild sally provoked lively remonstrance. 'We do not want our women to go out into the lanes,' said one. 'We don't want to live on the earnings of the women,' said another. And a third : 'We do not think that a woman is a thing to go out (*nikalnwali chiz*), nor a thing to look at (*dekhanwali chiz*), nor a thing to take service from.'

'But how (I asked) can they remain strong if they do not go out ?'

[1] Cf. pp. 32, 79, 119 ; but see also p. 61.
[2] Cotton shawl.
[3] Cotton cloak with hood.
[4] p. 178.

'Without doubt they are growing weaker, but their spirit is still strong.'

'Then you will grow weaker, too.'

'Set us to any work and we will do it straight,' was the stout-hearted reply. A little later we learnt that the outcast sweeperess was the midwife. 'A matter for laughing,' was my foolish comment on the pitiful contrast. Wiser was my colleague's word—'A matter for crying.'

**Purdah and health**

How women get through the day jailed inside the not very large village houses one can only guess. At Kutani they do no milking or washing, and their only exercise is to churn the milk, and this is said to be the case in fifteen or twenty villages in this tahsil. At Gaddi Balála the women can at least grind, and that this is good for their health is shown by what two Rajputs, one a Hindu and the other a Muslim, tell me. The Hindu says that a Rajput neighbour of his once consulted a doctor about his wife, who was ailing. The doctor, who was evidently something of a psychologist, told her to grind a seer of flour every day and give it to the cow. She followed his advice and got well in no time, and as a pious Hindu attributed her recovery to the daily act of charity to the sacred cow! The Muslim Rajput tells me that when his uncle returned after many years in Australia, observing the unhealthy looks of the purdah ladies of his family and believing that it was due to their having given up grinding—in his absence an oil engine had been set up in the village—he sent for them and said: 'I do not wish to save what is spent upon the engine—I have plenty of money—but you will all be healthier if you grind, and the flour will be better.'[1] Now all get up early and grind for an hour or two and are much the better for it. It may safely be said that when a purdah lady gives up grinding, it is time she came out of purdah. I hear of another Rajput, for instance, a gazetted officer, who kept his wife in such seclusion that, even when she went from her room to the kitchen, which was in the courtyard, she had to be completely cloaked. She was gradually losing the use of her legs, when a non-purdah friend, realizing this, started taking her out for strolls after sunset, and this saved her.

In Kutáni the tenant Rajputs cannot afford to be so strict as the landlords, and their women not only grind but slip out into the fields morning and evening; but even they do no field work. As I rode away, even as when I arrived, an aged waterman emptied a skin of water on the ground before me. He did not go unrewarded

[1] Cf. *Rusticus*, 163.

for this immemorial compliment paid to those whom the lord of the castle delights to honour.

We now entered a country of low sandy hills commanding a fine view of the district of Gurgaon, which lay before us, clear and radiant. But there was no radiance in the faces that met us. We came to a village where the land revenue had been suspended for the last five harvests and the villagers now do nothing but plait the sarkhanda grass into well ropes or thatching to cover carts. Yakubpur, as the village is called, has a bank, but it has lent nothing for two years, and for a year the money-lender has lent nothing either. I asked an old man, who was sitting listlessly in front of his house, whether things were as bad in the famine of 1900, which was particularly severe. 'Then we got money, now we get none; but wheat was then eight seers.'[1] That is the only mitigation: those who have to buy food (and most are doing this) can at least buy it cheap. The 1901 famine lasted only two years, and for two years the money-lender will go on advancing: it is the third year that empties or closes his money bags, and here we are entering the fourth year. People say, therefore, that past famines were of bread but this is of cash; and they feel it the more because the standard of living is higher than it was a generation ago and requires more money to meet its varied wants, and even money-lending is now upon a cash basis.[2] As a red-shawled matron passionately exclaimed: 'There are bad times—there is great trouble (*dukh*) in the world.'

**This famine and the last**

With this true but depressing word in our ears we entered Gurgaon, and the plight of Gurgaon is as bad as that of Rohtak. There was the usual array of dismounted horsemen awaiting us, and behind them a cluster of peasants in homespun shirt and dhoti, who had tramped a mile or two cross country in the hope of a word with the Sahib about themselves and their bank. We sat down by a roadside well to hear their tale. It was a little less sorrowful than that of Yakubpur, because their village had wells. 'Our lot is bad,' they said, 'but theirs is worse: they have nothing.' Whereat a hunger-bitten voice from behind exclaimed—'There the children eat nothing for three days.' The account the villagers gave us recalled Zahidpur.[3] The water level is much the same—12 to 18 feet—and there are fifty wells in working order, but the drought has made the water brackish, and only twenty can be used. The number of wells is sufficient evidence of the industry and enterprise of the village. And this is the main difference between the two villages: the Jats

**Character and finance**

[1] To the rupee, i.e. Rs. 5 a maund: for current prices, see p. 2.

[2] See p. 148.

[3] See p. 194.

of Zahidpur are lethargic and feckless, but here we had the ant-like Ahir, one of the most frugal and industrious tribes in the province,[1] and consequently money still flows between them and their bank. Once more the link between character and finance was evident, and here the crucial test of character is famine.

The members of one more village bank waylaid us—a dozen men drawn up on the roadside bank in timid wavering line. 'Will they stop and speak to us?' their uncertain faces seemed to say. We did, and once more we heard a tale of fruitless seasons and 'long patience'. For three years these men have waited 'for the precious fruit of the earth', and this year they received 'the early rain', but 'the latter', which for long has seemed about to fall, never falls and the wheat withers.

Cantering on, our ponies got excited and a Sub-Inspector was carried past us. In this crisis his saddle girths failed him and off he came in the neatest somersault. At Farukhanagar we came upon the railway (last seen at Hansi) and found the most dilapidated rest house yet encountered. Its thatched roof smelt so powerfully of stale mushrooms that I gladly took shelter in a tent.

*17 February.—Farukhangar to Gurgaon via Raota* (15 *miles*)

The last and longest day of this trek. We left at mid-day and did not get in till seven. The next morning was taken up with callers, amongst them a zemindar who had recently been made an *Inamdar*.[2] 'God (*Parmeshwar*) is pleased with me,' he said cheerfully. 'Eleven years ago my father was murdered—he did money-lending and this caused enmity; then my three brothers died—one was B.A., LL.B.—and now I am made Inamdar, and my credit (*bharm*) is great.' There were many references to the 'uplift' campaign of three years ago.[3] Little now survives except the manure pit and the Persian wheel, and these only where conditions are favourable. In Jhelum many complained that the ground is too hard for pits.[4] Here the ground is often so soft that the sides fall in, and the people are too lazy to dig them out again. One visitor assured me that the pit was established in his village; but when we passed the village later, all we saw was a pit which had become a nursery for

**The Gurgaon experiment**

[1] See *Peasant*, 94.

[2] Assistant to a zaildar.

[3] Described in *Rusticus*, chapter v.

[4] Cf. pp. 38 and 43.

the poisonous *ak*.[1] One thing, the Gurgaon plough, had been a complete failure, and Rs. 28,000, advanced by Government for its purchase, has had to be remitted.[2]

**Government loans**

In a country crying out for development and half paralysed by high interest rates, Government loans for agricultural improvements are indispensable. The money-lender is reluctant to lend for long term purposes,[3] and the village bank with only short term money and unlimited liability is unfitted to do so; and only nine out of twenty-nine districts have mortgage banks. Unless, therefore, an owner is prepared to mortgage part of his land with possession, it is only through Government that he can secure a development loan at a moderate rate of interest, and a loan of this kind often enables a man to sink a well or make an embankment.[4] But there are dangers, and one of them is that loans may be imprudently given. The Gurgaon plough is an example of this, and passing through Rohtak, I came upon two more, very similar to it though on a smaller scale. Both relate to the Persian wheel and occurred two or three years ago, when it was supposed by some that for a well the Persian wheel was much better than the charsa or leather bucket. And so it is under certain circumstances (as the Hissar bull is better than the Dhanni), but by no means under all. Overlooking this, a Revenue official visited two villages, where the charsa had been in use for generations, with an optimistic account of the Persian wheel and the offer of a Government loan at 6 per cent or so[5] to anyone who would buy one. Rs. 200, or a little more with interest, would cover the cost, and the loan need not be repaid for five years. A highly attractive offer it seemed, and in Sailána,[6] one of the villages in question, it was accepted by twenty-one cultivators. But now there is much bemoaning. With water 48 feet down bullocks must be strong, and in this area they are relatively no stronger than the men; and when a wheel gets out of order, as no one understands it, a smith has to be fetched from Najafgarh, eighteen miles away, and he is not always available. Several wheels are out of use on this account, and two have been

[1] *Caloiropis procera*.

[2] See *Rusticus*, 127.

[3] Cf. p. 101.

[4] In 1931-2, 3½ lakhs were advanced, and out of 3,168 wells sunk during the year, 608 were constructed with the help of a Government loan (*Land Rev. Admin. Rpt.*).

[5] The rate varies with Government's borrowing rate: it is now 5½ per cent. In England the Agricultural Mortgage Corporation have recently reduced their rate for long-term mortgages to 4½ per cent, and for improvement loans to 4 per cent (*The Times*, dated 14 April 1934).

[6] See p. 189.

definitely discarded for the charsa. One is reminded of the tractor in Russia,[1] and the case shows once more[2] how necessary it is that all attempts at rural improvement should be preceded by careful enquiry.

Another danger is that loans may be mis-spent. This frequently happens, and the Rs. 50,000 given for wells near Sirsa which were never made are a good instance of it.[3] And there is yet another, of which I got a hint yesterday. An ex-officer told me that he had just sunk a well at a cost of Rs. 2,500, most of which was advanced by Government.[4] When I enquired whether he had had to pay anything more, he replied euphemistically: 'There was confusion (*gharbar*) about five or six rupees.' That he escaped so easily was probably due to his position. The ordinary peasant generally fares worse,[5] and on one occasion when I chanced to inspect a new well I found that, though only Rs. 300 had been borrowed, there was 'confusion' over Rs. 30. On this occasion one of the offenders was brought to account and dismissed. This is much the best remedy for 'confusion', but our elaborate western procedure too often renders departmental action abortive. To guard against the other dangers, Tahsildars and their assistants should be given some training in the elements of rural credit, and those who inspect tahsils should insist upon a due observance of the rules, which are often neglected.

**In the shadow of Delhi**

To-day the east wind was in our faces, and it was a welcome change from the following wind of the last fortnight; and, even better, the 400 miles of plain which divide us from the Jhelum were at an end. We were now upon an upland, and the day being crystal clear we saw before us a wide sweep of country stretching away to blue hills. The beauty of the Punjab lies in its wide spaces and in its perpetual contrast of yellow and green, or green and gold—of gram, wheat, or rice against rape, sugar-cane, or river grass, a contrast ever changing in tone and shade as the sun is high or low. To-day it was merely of fodder stacks islanded in wheat: yet, such enchantment has the sun when the air is clear, the effect was sheer loveliness. A few miles brought us to Raota, and there we entered the Delhi Province. It is only half the size of an ordinary district, but it contains the new capital, upon which over £12 millions have been

[1] In a speech made in Moscow in January 1932 Stalin is reported to have stated that out of 140,000 tractors in commission 100,000 were awaiting repair (*Izvestia*, 17 January 1933).

[2] See p. 157.

[3] p. 133.

[4] The well was 9 feet in diameter, and the water 63 feet down.

[5] Cf. *Pb. Bkg. Enqy. Rpt.*, 28.

spent. This was only twenty-four miles away, but a whole age lay between.

Three villages had gathered to meet us and about 200 peasants were present, but hardly one of them was able to sign his name. Each village has a bank, and each bank has had to be provided with a secretary from outside: yet between them the three villages have 286 houses. Things are, however, improving and schools are being started. One Ahir has even matriculated, but like many other peasants who have done this, he cannot find a job and holds aloof from his ancestral fields, which he cannot even plough. Although we were so near Delhi, questions about the administration produced the usual results. The people knew that they were governed by a Chief Commissioner and that above him was the Viceroy, but they had no idea who came between; and as no one had a vote for any body except the District Board, they naturally knew nothing of Assemblies, Councils, and Round Table Conferences. 'Below the lamp all is dark.'

**Consolidation of holdings**

But what they did know and rejoiced in was that through Co-operation their holdings had been consolidated. Raota is the first village in the Delhi province to submit itself to this life-giving process, with which Mr. Calvert's name must ever be associated;[1] and the vast village map laid before us showed that 3,738 fields or plots had been reduced to 747; in other words, that every five had been converted into one. Over 700 acres have been consolidated, and it was a task of the greatest difficulty, for the village lands lie both high and low and all wanted a share of both as an insurance against excessive or insufficient rain. This desire led to fields being divided into strips 900 to 1,200 yards long and only a yard or two wide. About 200 of these had to be consolidated, and some were so narrow that they could not be shown on the map; and the same is the case in many villages of the neighbourhood.[2] Under such conditions everyone wishes to be the last to sow, lest a neighbour overstep his boundaries and plough up his seed; and at harvest time the reapers must cut in line with a rod stretched across the strip to mark its width, and well-irrigation is impossible. But now many wells are planned. The benefits are so obvious that a neighbouring village sent a deputation to beg us come and help them too. 'Our children will live now,' exclaimed someone from Raota. Following

[1] For some account of the process, see *Peasant*, 252; also p. 245 *infra*.

[2] The same feature may be found amongst the Pathans of Attock (*Peasant*, 84) and Peshawar. In a village in the Swabi tahsil (Peshawar), where holdings were consolidated, there were 394 fields in narrow strips about 11 feet wide; most of them could not be indicated on the village map.

a useful suggestion made by Mr. Brayne, the best part of an acre has been set apart for school, playground, and garden. Most humanely, too, a piece of land has been given to the Chamárs of the village for a well. At present they have no well of their own, and being ' untouchable ' they are not allowed to draw from the village well and must wait till others are obliging enough to draw for them. The whole cost of consolidation is borne by Government and in this case is only a rupee an acre, which is roughly a year's land revenue on the land. What makes it an astonishing achievement is that, notwithstanding the infinite complexities of the work, the final settlement was accepted by all : a single dissentient voice would have been sufficient to negative it ; and this is always the case.

The next village we visited, Daulatabad, had achieved the same miracle, and the immediate effect was the sinking of twenty-six wells. A water-diviner was summoned from Alwar and was paid the modest but auspicious sum of Re. 1-4[1] for every well for which he found water. So pleased were the womenfolk at no longer having to search here and there for their husbands when they took them their morning meal, as was necessary when everyone's fields lay scattered round the village, that in a song composed in honour of the occasion they proclaimed the Sub-Inspector concerned to be an ' autár ' or incarnation of God. Agricultural progress is now possible. Six Persian wheels have been installed, selected seed (Punjab 8 A) distributed, and two acres put under vegetables, and five more under tobacco. And, as at Raota, an acre has been set aside for school, playground, and drinking well.[2]

**A new chowpal**

When we rode up to Daulatabad the sun had almost set. Yet we found waiting for us another large concourse of villagers headed by the local headmaster and a score of boys, who lay upon the ground curving themselves into impossible positions in order that my name and such words as ' welcome ' might appear. The meeting took place in one of the village chowpáls, a large portico with a triple colonnade of highly decorated arches. Finished just before the drought began, it cost Rs. 4,000, all of which was subscribed by the thirty-odd families living in the quarter (*panni*) which erected it. Every male was assessed at Rs. 30, and the richer gave more, a Bania money-lender, for instance, Rs. 125. He also gave loans free of interest to those who could not pay their share, and another Bania did the

[1] See p. 4.

[2] In 1930, no vegetables were grown : in 1932, there were 15 acres under them, and all grown by Jats. Their scruples have been dissolved by economic necessity, so much so that even one of the headmen now markets his vegetables in Gurgaon. The village has found in consolidation a powerful bulwark against both depression and drought.

same. This evening the chowpál was crammed from end to end, and we had such lively talk that it was difficult to tear ourselves away. But when a lantern was brought and had to be extinguished because it smoked, there was no choice. A surging mass accompanied us to our horses, and we rode on through the twilight of a storm-laden sky. For the last three miles our only light was the lightning that flickered in the west. We had hardly reached the rest house when the storm burst and lashed, nay stoned, the poor parched earth with hail.[1]

## Note on the Scarcity (1934)

Readers outside the Punjab may wonder how long the scarcity, which is the main theme of the last two chapters, continued. Beginning with the autumn harvest of 1928, it has hardly broken yet. Last summer it seemed as if the end had come. The monsoon started well, and by September there was promise of an excellent autumn harvest. Then came rain and flood, and all was spoilt.[2] Bad enough in Rohtak, the scarcity has almost crushed Gurgaon, and the district is virtually bankrupt. Government came early to the rescue and in the first three years spent 7½ lakhs (£56,000) on relief and advanced another 24 lakhs (£180,000) on favourable terms. It has also remitted 7 of the 19 lakhs too lavishly advanced in the six years before the drought began. Co-operative societies, too, have done what they could, but their resources are almost exhausted. Their advances fell from Rs. 885 per society in 1928–9 to Rs. 63 in 1932–3, and in that year they recovered only 2½ per cent of the amount on loan at the beginning of the year, and at the end of it they were owed 2½ years' interest.

The loans that the peasant has received from Government and co-operative societies, and also from the money-lender, have helped materially to keep him afloat, but they have had to be re-inforced by drastic reductions in his scale of living. Detailed enquiries were made by the Co-operative staff in thirty societies

[1] Of the distance from Lahore to Gurgaon 274 miles were covered on horseback.

[2] The following is a brief summary of the harvests that followed my tour:

| | Spring harvest | Autumn harvest |
|---|---|---|
| 1931 | Damaged by rust. | An average crop but damaged by rain in October. |
| 1932 | Total failure. | Extensive sowings, but seriously affected by lack of rain in July and August. |
| 1933 | Extensive sowings, but the winter rains failed. | Crop ruined by rain and flood. |

scattered over the district, and although the figures that follow may not be statistically accurate, they give some idea of how the situation has been met. The yearly budget was found to have been reduced from Rs. 330 (before the scarcity) to Rs. 175, and the greatest reductions were as follows :—

| | Per cent |
|---|---|
| Ceremonies .. .. .. .. .. | 57 |
| Clothing .. .. .. .. .. | 44 |
| Food .. .. .. .. .. | 35 |

In judging these figures, the effect of the slump must not be forgotten ; but a significant point is that 30 per cent of the expenditure is estimated to have been met by borrowing and by the sale and mortgage of land and ornaments. So far as food is concerned, it appears that a large number of peasants have had to eat less than they needed and the poorer grains rather than the better, which, together with their ghi, they have been forced to sell to meet their obligations and requirements. Up to the date of my tour marriages were being postponed in the hope of better days, but this could not be done indefinitely, and in the last two years many have been celebrated, though at much less cost than usual. Migration might have been expected on a large scale, and my journal contains several references to it, especially amongst village servants ; but taking the rural population as a whole, the local Assistant Registrar estimated last year that not more than 10 to 15 per cent had gone. The peasant in the south-east (like his fellow in the south-west) is slow to leave his village.[1]

As to the money-lender, it seems that the attitude described in the diary has continued. It is generally agreed, writes the Assistant Registrar, that he is 'very compromising and marking time'. Unwilling to alienate the allegiance of his clients, he accepts whatever he can get even at inflated valuations. Failing this, he tries to get expiring accounts renewed, and when as a last resort he goes to court, he does not attempt to execute a decree if there seems nothing to recover. Some money-lenders have even allowed their accounts to become time-barred rather than incur the expenses of a suit, believing that when good harvests come their clients will follow tradition and discharge their liabilities.

In reading this note and the last two chapters the reader will do well to remember what a five years' scarcity would have meant 100 years ago, and what, with a rapidly increasing population,[2] it may mean again, if the machinery of government were to break down, as it did in the great Russian famine of 1921.[3]

[1] Cf. *Rusticus*, 262.
[2] See p. 310.
[3] Cf. *Peasant*, 85.

# PART III: SOUTH WEST

## CHAPTER XII

## THE NILI BÁR[1]

### A NEW CANAL COLONY AND THE FALL IN PRICES

5 *March.—Pakpattan to Arifwala* (19 *miles*)

**The Nili Bár colony**

ONE of the most striking features of the Punjab to-day is its canal colonies, which in the last forty years have brought about 5½ million acres of virgin soil under cultivation. I have attempted a general description of them elsewhere,[2] and a more detailed description of two of them on this tour and the last.[3] But these two are now in their second generation of colonists, and I was anxious to see one in the making to learn how a great enterprise of this kind is built up. Yesterday, therefore, I left Lahore and, travelling south-west, came 100 miles by rail and 30 by car, and about 10 miles from here I entered the colony of the Nili Bár, or Blue Fairy (*Nili Pari*), as it is called on account of the fertility of its land. The colony is watered from the Sutlej, which forms its eastern boundary, and when the whole project, of which it forms only a part,[4] is completed, every year it will irrigate a little over 2 million acres in the Punjab.[5] About half of this was originally crown waste,[6] and to colonize it cultivators have been drawn from all parts of the province. After old Roman fashion 86,000 acres have been allotted to some of those who did well in the Great War, and to meet part of the 10 crores (£7½ millions)

[1] Rainfall 7 to 8 inches.

[2] *Peasant*, chapter vii.

[3] *Rusticus*, chapters vii and viii and chapter ii *sutra*.

[4] The scheme is part of what is known as the Sutlej Valley project, which will irrigate over 5 million acres, i.e. 2 million in the Punjab, 2·8 million in Bahawalpur State, and 300,000 acres in Bikaner (*India in* 1924–5, p. 201).

[5] According to an estimate made in 1926, it was anticipated that every year 515,336 acres would be irrigated perennially, and 1,544,655 non-perennially (i.e. only during the hot weather when the Sutlej is in flood). The perennial irrigation is entirely new, and the same applies to 806,707 acres of the non-perennial.

[6] viz. 777,143 acres under perennial irrigation, and 260,400 under non-perennial.

A CANAL

CANAL HEADWORKS ON THE SUTLEJ

[*face p.* 206

that the scheme will cost,[1] nearly 400,000 acres have been reserved for auction.[2] Water began to run in 1926, and colonization started about the same time and is not yet concluded. The colony is thus the youngest of the Punjab's colonies. And it is also its Cinderella. Born in the days of prosperity and all its ways and means planned accordingly, it has come under the step-motherly influence of the slump, and it badly needs the fairy godmother of higher prices to set it upon its feet. One cannot be a day in the colony without realizing this.

**A new market**

Of the drive to Arifwala, which was done in a car, there is nothing to relate. From a car, road and roadside become almost a blank, and in it even connected talk is difficult. The country was dead flat but green enough when we entered the sphere of the Canal, the high earthen embankment of which at our side shut out everything to the west. In the afternoon we visited the market to inspect the commission shop, and although I have already described a market,[3] I shall say something about this one as it is new and the other was old. We sat in the arched verandah of its godown, and at first only a dozen directors, many of them ex-officers, were present, but before we left (two hours later) the place was packed, and there was not even standing room under the three arches. The draw was a discussion about marketing and money-lending, which, however, must go unrecorded.

Started in 1927, the market consists of four lines of shops built in a square round a large open, and almost treeless, space. A broad masonry plinth runs the whole way round in front of the shops, and upon it is deposited the grain to be weighed, examined, and sold. Here and there were golden heaps of wheat, golden only in appearance, for the price is still hardly more than Rs. 2 a maund. There are thirty-six commission agents, but only two of them, a Sikh Jat and an Arora landowner, have any connexion with agriculture.[4] As usual, the market's radius is about fifteen miles, but the lorry is extending it, and the offer of more favourable prices

[1] In 1926 the capital cost of the whole project was estimated at 23·32 crores (£17½ millions), of which 10 crores is the cost of the British portion.

[2] The exact area reserved is 385,250 acres (perennial). When I rode through the colony, about 43,000 acres had been auctioned at prices which averaged over Rs. 400 an acre; but owing to the slump most of this had to be resumed, at a cost to Government of 62½ lakhs (nearly £500,000), *Punjab Colonies Report*, 1932, p. 3. In 1930–3 there were no sales owing to the economic depression, and at a small sale held in March 1934 the average price obtained was only Rs. 252 per acre. The figures given in the notes above, except where other authority is stated, have kindly been supplied by the Senior Secretary to the Financial Commissioners, Punjab (1934).

[3] p. 126.

[4] At Burewala (p. 213) only two out of thirty-seven commission agents are agriculturists.

will draw cotton thirty miles or more. In the older colonies the roads were made last, but in this one they have wisely been made first, and as many are metalled, the lorry is already active.[1] Metalled roads also help the bullock cart, and carters charge an anna or two less a maund for each stage along them.[2] This is an advantage to the grower and the justification of the great cost of road-making. Apart from lorry and cart, there are two other means of transport—camel and donkey; and comparing the efficiency of the four, an Arora put the bullock cart first, the lorry second, and the donkey last.

**Market finance**

There is no bank, but a year ago the Imperial Bank (without opening a branch) started advancing against produce at 7 to 7½ per cent.[3] A commission agent said this had been very bad for them: 'It has tempted us to store beyond our strength, and we have lost a lakh of rupees.' In other markets I have heard the same tale, and it is due to the heavy fall in the price of grain.[4] The loss is a heavy one, and that it should have to be borne much more by the grain dealer than by the producer—all my informants agree in this—is a point to be remembered by those who revile the middleman. In the past many have preached to the peasant, plausibly enough, that he should hold up his produce, but actually in only two out of the last eight years would it have paid him to hold either wheat or cotton for any length of time.[5]

But for the backing of the Imperial Bank, both here and elsewhere, less would have been stored and less lost. Credit facilities have their dangers for Bania as well as zemindar, for, though the Bania is businesslike, he is easily tempted to speculate. As at Kot Kapura, the more prosperous dealers advance money at 9 to 12 per cent, but, unlike commercial banks, they do not insist upon taking physical possession of the produce; nor, when prices fall, do they oblige old clients to maintain a definite margin between the amount advanced and the value of the grain. 'It is a matter of trust,' they said. It would be difficult to exaggerate the part played by trust in indigenous systems of business in India, and a reason sometimes assigned for their decay is that people trust

[1] In 1928, in the case of six important colony markets, of the 598 miles of road serving them only ninety-five were metalled, and 'of the unmetalled roads only one was in fair condition' (*Pb. Bkg. Enqy. Rpt.*, 49, 199).

[2] In the course of an enquiry made into the marketing of wheat in 1930, it was found that round Ferozepore the cartage rate per maund was 2·93 pies per mile along an unmetalled road, and only 1·62 along a metalled.

[3] For a description of their system, see ibid., 65.

[4] When I passed through Sargodha (p. 23), over 100,000 maunds of wheat were lying in the market godowns, and at Bhalwál (p. 26) there were about 75,000 maunds. For the fall in prices, see p. 2.

[5] Ibid., 58.

each other less than they did. The complaint on this point is universal and can hardly be groundless.[1]

When we finally emerged on to the open spaces of the market, the evening sky behind the square brick-built shops was shot with green and rose. Passing by the station we counted thirty large lorries waiting for the next train. In a colony, the age-old isolation of the Indian village is a thing of the past.

*6 March.—Arifwala to Rasulpur via Chak* 147 (10 *miles*)

My mare having arrived here from Gurgaon by train, I took to the saddle again, and once more the road became alive and human. One of the first persons we met was a little Arora shopkeeper on a little brown pony, his shirt splashed all purple and red. Holi and its saturnalia were just past, and he had evidently kept it with zest. He was on his way to market to replenish his store of gur and pulse. A little way on we met another brown pony, this time almost hidden by three bags bulging with cotton, atop of which sat a small boy. Village women had given his father the cotton in exchange for oil and salt, and he was taking it in to Arifwala to be sold. This form of barter is common and does the peasant no good: it tempts him to buy more than he needs, and the bania to manipulate prices against him.

By this we had come to Chak 742, to give the village its unromantic official designation.[2] The village is one of the many colonies of ex-soldiers who have been rewarded with land for their services in the war. String beds had been set out for us to sit on in the shadeless centre of the village square. As the sun was hot, I asked the soldiers whether they would mind sitting in the shade. 'Sun or shade, it is all the same to us: we can bear them both. Have we not served on the Frontier?' Which made me feel a very effeminate civilian. The soldiers were all Sikhs, but not all Jats: eleven were Khatris, mostly from Rawalpindi and Jhelum, and one even a Brahmin. In accordance with colony custom the Officers were given 1½ rectangles each and the N.C.O.s one.[3] They came from seven districts, and so did the village servants. The latter included five sweepers, seven tanners (chamárs), a carpenter and blacksmith from as far east as Ambala, and a priest, potter, shoemaker, watchman, and barber. One would think that Sikhs would not need a barber,

**A colony of soldiers**

[1] Cf. pp. 42, 102, 132.

[2] All colony villages are numbered but throughout I have given fictitious numbers.

[3] In the Nili Bár and Montgomery colonies a rectangle (25 acres) is the unit of area; in other colonies a square (27·8 acres) see p. 3, n. 2.

but he pares their nails and shaves his fellow servants. When I laughed at them for this and told them of our English custom, an ex-soldier broke in: 'Yes, our Commanding Officer used to shave himself in France, and he even repaired his boots.' This last was said because one day he had seen him knocking out a nail. I asked how they got on without a washerman. 'We all wash our clothes except the "gentelman" who sends his clothes to Montgomery.' The 'gentelman' turned out to be an Honorary Lieutenant. A Risaldar also sent his clothes away, but being of somewhat lower rank he sent them no further than Arifwala! There had once been a water-carrier, but he had gone, and now all draw their water from the well in the middle of the village square—no light task as it has to be drawn fifty feet. As one serving away from home, I was interested to find that the village servants were paid at higher rates than in their home villages. Altogether there are ninety-four houses with a population of 319.

The colonists arrived here in 1926 and now have a fairly well built village of sun-dried bricks plastered with mud. So much was saved from the good pay earned during the war and the pensions which followed retirement[1] that no borrowing was done till prices fell. Then men turned to the bank, and recently a dozen borrowed Rs. 1,700 to pay their Government dues. They affirmed with righteous emphasis that they had borrowed only from the strictest necessity. Yet when I asked whether they had sold their jewellery first, one admitted candidly that he had ornaments worth Rs. 3,000 in his house, and that had there not been a bank he must have sold some of them. 'It is our custom to borrow,' he said in self-defence. As many of them had been in France, I spoke of the French peasant's horror of debt. They replied courteously: 'We have much to learn.'

On one point even the educated zemindar has everything to learn. It is most rare to find one with a cheque book. At Beri[2] no one had one, and the same was the case here. Yet it would greatly facilitate the payment of Government dues. At present, whenever revenue charges have to be paid, the colonist must journey three miles to Arifwala, sell some produce there and bring back cash, which the headman then takes to the headquarters of the tahsil. And the whole process might be done by cheque upon the central bank at Pakpattan. But these old-fashioned methods are not confined to zemindars. Recently, I was inspecting a bank of Hindu shopkeepers in a town of 6,000 inhabitants, and though it included six Income-tax payers, no one

**Cheque books**

[1] The eighteen soldier members of the bank get Rs. 5,482 per annum.
[2] p. 183.

had a cheque book; and this seems to be the case in all the smaller towns, and it is an opportunity for the central co-operative banks, which is being taken.

**Khatri versus Jat**

The Khatris claimed to be as much agriculturists as the Jats, but inquiry showed this was not the case. Only one cultivates his land, but nearly all the Jats do so. There was much complaint about the difficulty of living on their grants now that prices have fallen. 'If we had not our pensions, we should be naked,' said a Khatri officer: 'gladly will we give up our land in return for service that would give us bread and clothes.' 'In ten years,' remarked another Khatri, 'if things do not change, we shall all go.' 'Even if a Jat were dying,' murmured one of that tribe, 'he will never leave his land.' And another from Jullundur added: 'If necessary we will sink wells.' To which a Khatri replied amid general mirth: 'Well, give us the water of the canal, and you take the water of the wells.'

**How much land does a soldier need?**

A point that distinguishes Commissioned from Non-Commissioned Officer is that the former is too dignified to plough. 'But,' said a Risaldar, 'the seasons change and our circumstances are becoming so straitened that our custom may change too.' Some said that an officer now required 3 rectangles for his support, and an N.C.O. 1½; but for the latter a Jullundur Jat thought 1 rectangle sufficient, provided he cultivated it himself. I had just met an Arain who said that a family could maintain itself on half a rectangle (12½ acres), and when I told them this, one of them said: 'Your Honour no doubt sees the whole Punjab and are much wiser than we are. But we cannot do this. Our expenses are very heavy. I have a boy at the High School at Okára, and he costs Rs. 20 a month—Rs. 15 for his fees and board and Rs. 5 for other expenses, oil, books, etc.—and my pension is only Rs. 15 a month.' And an officer added—'I have a boy at college and he costs me Rs. 80 a month.'[1] In these days, as we saw in Rohtak,[2] even primary education presses heavily upon the peasant, and when it comes to secondary schools, bigger men feel the pinch. The dissatisfaction was general, though it was most respectfully expressed, and some spoke enviously of officers in another colony who received 5 squares.[2] 'That,' said one, 'is enough for three generations.'

**Limitation of families**

This raised an important question, the question that not long ago we were discussing with the Játni of Zahidpur. Clearly one rectangle of 25 acres did not go very well with a large family. Had they ever thought

[1] The high school costs a boarder Rs. 200 a year; the university from Rs. 250 to 750 according to stage and college. [2] p. 173.

of limitation? The N.C.O.s were puzzled and made a laughing reference to its being 'nature's affair'. But the officers were more knowledgeable, and one said:—

'Our people are not so civilized that they can think of this.' Then another remarked: 'I have two daughters and one boy; it is enough for me. I have spent Rs. 40,000 upon their education, and if I had only one daughter, it would be enough. Too many children spoil the life of the mother—and of the father too (he added with a smile). I am 62 and look at this arm (he bared his right arm): see how strong it is. If there were many in my family, we should all be hungry and the children would wander about like dogs.' It was agreed that it would be a good step to defer marriage, and the officers said the educated were beginning to think of this. Someone quoted with approval an Englishman who told him that he would not marry till he could support his wife and was old enough for marriage not to interfere with his work. The Risaldar declared that he would not marry his remaining daughter till she was over 25, but he had married the first at 17. Even so, this is much better than what is usual amongst zemindars, and far better than the tanners of Hansi,[1] one of whom told me last month that he had recently married two daughters of 6 and 4 to bridegrooms only a year or two older. But Hinduism is strong there.

We subsequently visited a village of Muslim ex-soldiers, and there the people said unhesitatingly that they would like to have as many children as possible. 'We should like them every six months,' said an old Subedar Major with a smile into his red beard. From these two examples it might be supposed that things are always left to nature; but this is not the case as I found on my last tour,[2] and only recently an Indian lady, whose official duties used to take her from village to village, told me that the peasant woman was beginning to enquire whether it was necessary to have so many children, and more than once she had been asked why English women had so few. All naturally want a son or two, but the large families of the past are no longer always desired. The wife of one of her servants once announced that she was going to leave her husband and return to her parents, and the reason she gave was: 'I have borne him fourteen children: I cannot bear him another.' She also mentioned a midwife of her acquaintance who helped a mother to get rid of an unwanted ninth child, and another who advises women who want no more children to drink a cup of hot ghi[3] immediately after delivery. In the town, limitation is spreading fast amongst the educated, and there are now many families

[1] p. 167. [2] *Rusticus*, 38. [3] Clarified butter.

with only two or three children. Some achieve their end by abstention, and amongst these is a Muslim of my acquaintance. Contrasting himself with his brother who leaves everything to chance, he observed: 'I have one son and two daughters, and I shall manage to bring them up properly. But how can my brother do this when he has a child every other year?'[1]

*7 March.—Rasulpur to Burewala via Chak* 513 (17 *miles*)

**The colonist's hardships**

We were out for seven hours to-day, half of which we spent at another village of soldier colonists. The village dates from 1928, and all round it the once hard unfruitful earth was green with rising wheat. We entered it by the usual broad open lane, and the bank inspection took place under a thatched shelter in the middle of the headman's courtyard. This was the first structure to be put up in the village, and for some weeks the colonists clustered in little tents (*sholdaris*) under and around it seeking shelter from sun and rain. They were eloquent about their hardships. 'Such hardships,' said an old Subedar Major who had served in France, 'as I had never endured before. When we arrived to take possession, we had to camp out in the open and we drank the water of the canal, and when the canal was closed, we drank the stagnant water of the pools, and the buffaloes drank it too and added to it their own water.' The colonists arrived in March, and all through the fiery hot weather most of them had to live in the open or under canvas and get their supplies from Arifwala, eleven miles away. Only the Subedar Major managed to get quarters, and this he did in a Jangli village close by, where he was made welcome because he was something of a doctor.

**The colony money-lender**

The colonists consist of eighteen officers, six N.C.O.s, three sepoys, and six clerks from Army Headquarters, who were perhaps fortunate to be sharing in rewards given primarily for hardship and valour. But Simla, no doubt, has its hardships too! The colonists hale from seven districts, and are all Muslims. And so are the three shopkeepers, who, curiously, are a Rajput, an Arain, and a tailor. 'We are afraid of the sahukar[2] and don't let him settle here,' was the explanation. Actually, relations in the colony between money-lender and peasant are generally friendly. Like the peasant, the money-lender is usually an immigrant and comes from many districts, generally from those in the west and from some as distant as Mianwali and Attock. To meet the heavy demands for loans, natural in a young

[1] He has had no child since, but his brother has had one (1934).
[2] Hindu money-lender.

colony, he borrows a good part of his trading capital from the market commission agents at 9 to 12 per cent and lends it out at 18¾ to 25 per cent; and (unlike his fellow in Hissar and Rohtak)[1] he still lends, relying upon the canal for his security. And it is because he still lends that he is much better kept at arm's length.

On the figures given us, about half a lakh (£3,750) must have been spent by these thirty-three colonists on their settlement.

**Cost of settlement**

Yet, such a gold mine is the army to those who do well in it, that very little appears to have been borrowed. The headman spent Rs. 6,000 and borrowed nothing; a Subedar Major spent Rs. 4,000 and borrowed Rs. 800, but only when prices fell. More than half the headman's expenditure (Rs. 3,500) went on a 15-room house for himself and his tenants. But few go in for mansions on this scale, and most colonists are content with two or three rooms, and many have only one. An enquiry made by an Inspector in 1928 showed that in seven villages the cost of settlement then averaged about Rs. 1,100. The following figures given us by a Sergeant may therefore be regarded as typical of what a well-to-do colonist spends, but nothing has been included on account of transport from the home village :—

| | | Rs. |
|---|---|---|
| (i) | House (three rooms) .. .. .. .. | 800 |
| (ii) | Clearing and levelling the land .. .. .. | 90 |
| (iii) | Acreage rate, i.e. Government's charge for making water courses, etc. (Rs. 3 an acre) .. .. .. | 75 |
| (iv) | Cost of completing water courses, etc. .. .. | 150 |
| (v) | Share of :— | |
| | (*a*) drinking well .. .. .. .. .. | 50 |
| | (*b*) mosque (kachha) .. .. .. .. | 10 |
| | (*c*) common guest house (*daira*) for travellers, etc. | 5 |
| | Total .. .. .. .. .. | 1,180 |

Items (iii) and (iv) require a word of explanation. They refer to the watercourses by which the water from the canal is distributed over the village fields. These channels are made by Government on behalf of the colonists, who are charged Rs. 3 an acre to cover the cost of survey, digging, and constructing culverts. Hence item (iii); and when the work is properly done, there is no need for item (iv). But this is an imperfect world, and in the early days of the colony, when no doubt a thousand matters pressed, petty officials often scamped their work, and with hard-earned rupees and the sweat of his brow the colonist had to make it good. In one case a bright official, who evidently did not believe in going to the spot, assumed that the area to be irrigated was perfectly flat, as indeed appears from

**The price of inefficiency**

[1] See p. 176.

the office window, and decided that it was a waste of time and money to prepare separate designs and estimates for each watercourse, when they could very well be made upon a standard plan. Since, however, the whole area was not flat, it ended (so I am informed by a reliable witness) in scores of watercourses being carried over the tops of mounds and sandhills and across unbridged depressions![1] To prevent this kind of thing happening again, the Colonization Officer secured that in future no watercourse need be paid for until water had actually reached its tail, and to indemnify those who had suffered most, Government remitted an extra harvest's revenue charges.[2]

The incident shows how much the peasant may suffer from lazy or unscrupulous petty officials. I have alluded to this already in connexion with Government loans,[3] and I must reluctantly allude to it again, because this journal deals with village life, and village life is moth-eaten with it. This is particularly so in canal colonies, since the very flow and circulation of their life-blood is necessarily under official control; in the past, too, money there has been unusually abundant.

**Corruption**

One of the difficulties of the struggling cultivator is that when his crops fail, he often cannot get the exemption from land revenue and water rate admissible under the rules[4] without a substantial fee to one or two more or less petty officials.[5] More than one co-operator tells me that half the allowance has to be made over to

[1] A distinguished retired officer of the Irrigation Branch informs me that he suggested that an officer should be appointed solely to see that the watercourses were properly dug and the culverts made; but, with what now appears false economy, the proposal was rejected.

[2] All charges are remitted for the first two harvests to give the colonists a start.

[3] p. 201.

[4] In the colonies remission is admissible only if the yield is 25 per cent or less of the standard outturn taken by the revenue authorities as their basis for the assessment of land revenue. Since a very low standard is taken (in the interests of the cultivator), remission is admissible only in the case of almost total failure. This is often misunderstood by the cultivator, and misunderstanding is apt to breed a sense of injustice, which expresses itself in vehement complaint to touring officers not connected with the Canal Department.

[5] The officer just quoted says that many villages are in the habit of putting in frivolous claims for every field 'on the off chance that something will happen', and he adds that if this practice were abandoned, it would be possible to have almost every case examined by a gazetted officer, which would mean much less latitude for the zilladar (see p. 216, note 1). It must be remembered that in any case the final decision in regard to remission rests not with the zilladar, who merely submits a recommendation, but with a gazetted officer to whom the cultivator can, if necessary, appeal against the recommendation. The cultivator is therefore not without his remedy, but believing in the bird in the hand, he often prefers to short-circuit the whole system by a bribe.

them, and my enquiries on this tour, and from colonists of position met elsewhere, suggest that this is no great exaggeration. One of the latter, an ex-officer, says that last harvest, which was a bad one, his fellow-villagers agreed amongst themselves to pay nothing, but when it came to the point, fear or distrust got the better of them and the usual payments were made. Another, a man of some position in the province, tells me that recently, when he went to see his canal colony land, he found the zilladar[1] had come to the village to look at the cotton, which a flood had ' ruined '. A large exemption seemed clearly due, but Rs. 3 an acre was demanded for the necessary recommendation. Unwilling to have a hand in the transaction of this kind, yet hesitating to advise his tenants to pay nothing, he slipped away from the village under cover of dark. Afterwards he heard that the matter had been settled for Rs. 500. Canal outlets provide another means of extortion. If they are to give a village the right amount of water, they must be exact in size : an inch or two more or less may materially affect the supply, and it is that inch or two that gives greed its chance, and an officer who has land in another colony tells me that not long ago his village had to pay Rs. 465 (Rs. 7-8 per square) to get a masonry outlet of the right size.

If only the gentlemen who tell one such things in private would be willing to repeat them in public, it would be much easier to bring them under control. That it is possible to suppress them altogether no one who has lived in a hot climate for over twenty years would think of suggesting. Still less should it be supposed that corruption is peculiar to a particular department. Generally, but not always, it is in close ratio to opportunity. In a canal colony, since Government supplies the water, opportunity is naturally great, and, to counter it, the strictest possible supervision is necessary. As a step in this direction it would be well if Canal Sub-Divisional Officers were *obliged* to keep a horse or camel instead of the beloved motor bicycle, which merely raises the dust, at considerable cost to Government but with little advantage to the cultivator.[2] There might also be a simpler and more summary

[1] A subordinate canal official on Rs. 60 to 150 p.m.

[2] Under rule every Canal Sub-Divisional Officer is required to keep a horse, and not long ago the rule was re-affirmed. In my experience a rule of this kind is obeyed only if those concerned are periodically questioned and their superior officers themselves tour on horseback. I am, moreover, convinced that, if (as many think) the efficiency of the administration has declined since the war, the widespread use of the motor instead of the horse has had a good deal to do with it.

I have alluded to this in my journal (p. 154), and the officer of the Irrigation Branch already quoted confirms my view, so far as his Branch is concerned (1934).

procedure for bringing offenders to book. How many zealous officials have rued the day when they started proceedings against a corrupt or dishonest subordinate! Their inevitable result is heavy extra work, which is only too likely to end fruitlessly in the *status quo ante*. The worst offenders are often too clever to be caught, but few are so clever that their misdoings are not generally known. And what is generally known can be ascertained. Some dispute this, but although it is difficult to be certain of the truth in the case of those who keep within customary limits, I hold it undoubtedly possible for an experienced officer who tours widely and enquires judiciously to discover those who are *notoriously* corrupt; just as it is possible to discover those who are scrupulously honest, of whom happily there is a leavening to be found in every department, even in the humblest spheres. And I hold further that in the one case promotion should be stopped, and in the other accelerated. I believe that all who know the peasant well would subscribe to this principle, and that its general application would do much to mitigate the evil, as it already has in the case of gazetted officers.[1]

In regard to the latter, since the war the Punjab Government has shown great vigour and, after due enquiry, has dismissed a number of responsible officials who were too acquisitive, and this has had an excellent effect upon those to whom promotion to high office is open. The spread of University education has also done something to quicken self-respect amongst gazetted officers, and my enquiries throughout the province suggest that in most, but perhaps not all, departments the number of the latter who give cause for suspicion is diminishing. So far as the lower ranks are concerned, much of the responsibility lies with the people themselves, who are quick to bribe when there is anything they specially fear or desire. This is one of the many features that the Indian peasant has in common with the Russian. 'A fiery young Communist' describes how during the war, when the Germans occupied part of Russia, the peasants, 'to escape tasks that they didn't like, resorted to their ancient trick—bribery,' and 'began to bring "gifts" to the Germans—eggs, butter, pork, fruit and other things.' And he adds that 'bribery was as much a part of the old régime as were uniforms', and that 'in the early days of the Revolution the peasant was as prodigal with bribes as he ever was under the Czar.'[2] Where this attitude prevails, the evil can be kept in

[1] According to *The Statesman* (21 June 1934) the Chief Justice, Lahore High Court, recently expressed himself 'satisfied that a small number of the Judicial officers and a large proportion of the ministerial staff of the courts of this province are corrupt' and that he proposed taking suitable action to stop it.

[2] Hindus, op. cit., 323-5-6. Cf. also Wicksteed, op. cit., 63.

check by vigilance and drastic penalties, but the only permanent remedy is education.[1]

Although the supply of water is officially controlled, its distribution over the village lands is done by the colonists themselves.

**Distribution of water**

To-day's village has two supply channels (*kal*), and for each the colonists select one of their number to regulate the distribution and decide all disputes. He must be a man with either clock or watch, so that he can inform all who enquire when their turn begins. If a person's land lies one rectangle away, he is allowed five minutes to get there, and another five minutes for every extra rectangle he has to cross. The work is not very onerous, for each man's turn is twelve hours, and, as someone said in Shahpur, where arrangements are very similar: 'Those who have watches on their wrists look at them: as to the rest of us, if it is night, we look at the stars, and if it is day, we look at the sun.' The time-keeper holds his office during the good pleasure of those who elect him, and his reward is an extra allowance of water. Practice is not the same in every village, and in some an informal panchayat is in control.

But not all disputes can be settled by a panchayat. One day (in another colony) when I was working, a young Sikh with a goat's beard appeared at the door. He took off his puggaree deferentially, and, nervously putting it on again, entered with folded hands. Bowing so low that his forehead almost touched the table and looking first to the left and then to the right as if seeking assistance for the loosening of his tongue, he burst into speech: 'My brother stopped my water-course. I went to the tahsil and made my complaint: no one listened: I was not allowed into the court. I came back and heard that the King had come to the neighbourhood' and so on. When I told him that I was shortly going to see the Deputy Commissioner and would speak to him about it, all the anxiety of his agitated face melted away into wrinkling smiles. In the Punjab, to the 90 per cent who live in villages the Deputy Commissioner[2] is the real king, the one high official who is readily accessible to all (the Commissioner with five or six districts lives too far away), who is prepared to hear the poorest man's grievance, and who can often prevent, and sometimes redress a wrong. To the peasant he is of more importance than the whole galaxy of stars above him and some defence against the locust army of petty officials below him.

**The Deputy Commissioner**

[1] I am informed on good authority that owing to the depression corruption in this colony has decreased, but 'not to any appreciable extent' (1934).

[2] In most provinces the head of the district is called the Collector.

It was half-past two when we continued our march, and we had still fifteen miles to do under a hot sun. The tarred road stretched away into the void, and as it neared the horizon suddenly dipped into a blue and glassy lake; which, however, vanished at our approach. The day was almost spent when we entered Burewala; and as we did so, a train appeared from the west in a cloud of dust, which the setting sun turned to gold, and the engine that drew it, black and portentous, seemed a symbol of the new age that is entering this once empty world.

8 *March (Sunday).—Rasulpur to Machian Wala via Chak* 354 (14 *miles*)

**The troubles of settlement**

To avoid the heat of the afternoon, which now has a presage of hot weather fire, we made an early start and after some miles came to what looked like a gipsy encampment in the middle of a vast heap of rubbish. This was the temporary settlement of the colonists whose bank we had come to see. They were all Sikh Jats from Sialkot and had come here in the hot weather of 1928, and the first thing they did was to build themselves this encampment of mud hovels thatched with grass. That they are still living in this way is due to a prolonged quarrel with the authorities as to where they should build their village.[1]

When the news came to them in Sialkot that they had been given land in the Nili Bár in place of their waterlogged fields at home,[2] there was great rejoicing. 'You will all be chowdhris,'[3] said their envious neighbours, and a wife hearing of her husband's good fortune pressed for more jewellery. 'We all got up and ran,' they said. Actually what they did was to put wife, child, and kit into their carts and go off on foot. The journey took fifteen days, and it must have been hot work, for they arrived here in June, when even the lizard is glad of shade. They quickly ran up shelters of mud and grass, but life was far from pleasant. 'The mosquitoes devoured us, and food and fodder had to be fetched from Burewala (four miles away). We lived on flour, pulse, salt, pepper, and onions. There is no strength in onions, but we were so pleased that we grew strong on them, and every hardship we endured gladly. We knew how prosperous men had become in the Sandal Bár[4] and the Ganji Bár,[5] and we believed we should become

[1] Since settled (1931).
[2] Cf. p. 9.
[3] Villagers entitled to special respect.
[4] The Lyallpur colony.
[5] The Montgomery colony.

prosperous too. The land, too, was good. But since then we have had only trouble.'

We settled down in the shade of a tamarix tree[1]—the only bit of shade within sight—to hear their tale of woe, and about thirty colonists sat in front of us on durries, their shoes gathered in little fleets round the outer edges. There were two main troubles—the site of their village and the lack of water. 'No one hears us,' they repeated again and again; yet the complaint was flatly contradicted by the headman's official book. 'No chak,' wrote the Assistant Colonization Officer, 'has given me more trouble.' The complaint about water, without which nothing can be done, was that it was capricious and insufficient. One person said that in the last six harvests his land had been irrigated only twice. Yet after the first three harvests, for which Government made no charge,[2] he had to pay Rs. 75 a rectangle. He had not, however, applied for any remission under the harvest failure rules, apparently because he thought it was useless. Another colonist in the same plight was said to have gone off to his home to raise money for Government dues by mortgaging ancestral acres. Doubtless these were special cases, but what seemed common enough was the failure of many to secure enough water to mature their cotton crop. Those near the outlet had nothing to complain of, and several admitted that they had got the excellent yield of 8 or 10 maunds of unginned cotton per acre. But member after member spoke of only a maund or two, and one said that he had got a total of only five maunds from nine acres. Hearing this, I took fifteen cases at random, and in ten the cotton yield was about one maund per acre. Low, almost unbelievably low, as this figure is, I doubt whether it is very far from the mark, for the headman corrected a number of them and he and some others admitted having done well enough themselves.

**Shortage of water**

Every great scheme has its difficulties, and the Nili Bár is no exception. This area in particular has suffered, because its levels proved unexpectedly irregular, its soil was so loose and sandy that the canal banks were frequently breached, and a bridge required to carry the canal across the railway took a very long time to build. These Sialkotis therefore had real ground for complaint (by no means always the case in a canal colony), and one of them said: 'If there were not a bank, we should all run away: with its help we have paid the land revenue. Where there is no bank, some have run away'—a fact that an official subsequently corroborated.

[1] Farásh (*tamarix articulata*.)

[2] In cases of special hardship Government dues are remitted for the first three, instead of the first two, harvests (see p. 215, n.2).

And another said: 'Let Government take half of all we produce instead of what it takes now, and we shall be pleased.' And a third: 'If this state continues, there will be no children.'

**Cost of settlement**

The loss from harvest to harvest would be less felt, had not the move from Sialkot exhausted reserves, despite the more careful economy. Many cleared their land themselves, and others spent well under Rs. 100 on this. Rs. 50 or so went in transporting goods and chattels, and few families can have spent less than Rs. 100 in maintaining themselves till their first harvest. Then there were the usual charges, official and otherwise, for the village watercourses,[1] and now new houses are being built at the very moderate cost of Rs. 200 to 400. Thus each colonist has required from Rs. 600 to 800 for initial expenses, which is much less than what yesterday's soldiers spent; less, too, than the Inspector's estimate (Rs. 1,100) for the average colonist.[2] Most of it (as with the soldiers) has been met from savings, but yields have hitherto proved so disappointing and prices fallen so low that twenty-eight out of the thirty-four members have had to borrow from the bank, ten of them for the payment of Government charges.

On leaving the village we traversed a bit of the old Bár, threading our way between dishevelled bushes that were half trees and still more dishevelled trees that were half bushes. The earth was alternately hard and soft, hard where the clay has been baked for centuries by the hot sun and soft where a spongy salty efflorescence lay like half-thawed snow, and the chief sign of life was an occasional sprinkling of camel dung. No country could be uglier or seem more entirely forgotten of its Maker, yet morning and evening, at dawn and at sunset, the grace of heaven descends upon it and east and west flush with a marvellous beauty. It was hot, and for the first time this year European clothes felt too thick. In time we rejoined the Multan road, which ran ever onwards until it disappeared into the distant mirage.

*9 March.—Machianwala to Vihari via Chak 421* (10 *miles*)

**Too thick upon the ground**

In a settled tract villages have a pleasant irregularity of line and level rising ever higher as the debris of the years accumulates round them. In a colony they rise straight from the level plain, and at this time of year their white mud-plastered walls stand four-square amidst smiling crops of wheat. But however smiling things look outside, within

[1] See p. 214: a contractor was given Rs. 600 for making the watercourses of four rectangles serviceable.

[2] p. 214.

all is gloom, and this morning when I gave those who were waiting for us the usual greeting—'Are you well?'—they shook their heads sombrely. I noticed that there was not the usual drinking well in the village square. 'We were too poor,' they said, 'to sink it before this: it is 69 feet to the water and it will cost Rs. 1,300; but we shall make it now, and the contract is given.' The only shade we could find for our meeting was that of an aged jand tree,[1] and there we sat packed together for three hours, the outer rows overflowing into the hot sun.

The colonists were mostly Muslim or Sikh Virks, and had come here in 1928 from thirteen waterlogged villages in Gujranwala. No one except the headman got more than one rectangle, and in all but ten cases a rectangle was given to two or even three brothers. There were, in fact, twenty-six cases of the last, and loud was the complaint that a living (*guzára*) was impossible.[2] And indeed it is under existing conditions. At present it is probably just possible for a single family to live on a rectangle (25 acres), provided it cultivates the land itself. But when two, and even three, families have to be maintained, the 25 acres simply cannot do it. But they might have done it once, when prices were high, and it must be remembered that these grants were made before the slump. Such, too, is the hunger for land that the Deputy Commissioners who had to choose the colonists were naturally anxious to provide for as many of their excellent peasants as possible, and one of them tells me that once four brothers applied for a single rectangle.

The president of the bank had an unusual point to his credit: after serving in the army he managed to matriculate. As he keeps accounts, he was able to tell us how he fared last year, and the figures he gave us may be summarized thus:—

| | Rs. |
|---|---|
| Gross receipts .. .. .. .. | 250 |
| (plus ten maunds of wheat, worth Rs. 15, kept for home consumption) | |
| Government dues .. .. .. | 238 |
| Balance .. .. .. .. | 12[3] |

This modest balance is in no sense a net profit, since nothing has been included on account of seed and depreciation on implements and cattle, etc. How, then, had he lived? He saved Rs. 600 from

[1] *Prosopis spicigera.*

[2] In yesterday's village forty families had only twenty-six rectangles to support them.

[3] His 10 acres of wheat gave 70 maunds, 60 of which he sold at Re. 1-8 (he held it for a rise), and 10½ acres under cotton gave 40 maunds, which he sold in the village for Rs. 160. The gross receipts do not include his fodder crops (2 acres) as they were fed to his cattle. He was allowed some remission of Government dues on account of partial harvest failure.

the first two harvests, which were revenue free and fetched good prices, and, after spending Rs. 400 on a house, had Rs. 200 over: he also borrowed Rs. 50. All last year he worked single-handed on his rectangle, and only twice or thrice, when work pressed, did he obtain the services of a neighbour with his plough for a day. As headman of the village, he has now been given another 12½ acres, and with that he should be able to live.

**Is one rectangle sufficient ?**

But can a man and his family live on one rectangle ? This is a vital question, for in this colony the ordinary peasant has no more. I have therefore been at pains to collect figures that would answer it. Those given me by the Manager of the Government Seed Farm at Vihári are the most illuminating. Seven tenants cultivate the 8½ rectangles of the Farm, and last year, after deducting the bare costs of production[1] but nothing on account of food or labour, they had an average surplus (per tenant) of Rs. 160 per rectangle to live on. This is about Rs. 13 a month, or 7 annas a day, which is no more than a coolie earns. What makes it so significant is that they are cultivating under the most favourable circumstances. The land is good, the seed used is of the best, and the supervision is expert. Yields of 15 maunds an acre were obtained for wheat and of 10 or 12 for cotton, whereas in the tract we have just come through (so the Manager said) only 10 or 12 can be expected for wheat, and 5 or 6 for cotton. There is yet another point in their favour. A distinctive feature of the colony is that the amount of water supplied is sufficient of itself to irrigate only 51 per cent of the area allotted as against 75 per cent in Lyallpur.[2] This is done deliberately to encourage its careful use and avoid the reckless waste common in other colonies. But it does not mean that only 51 per cent can be cultivated; for a certain amount of rain can be expected,[3] and with its help, provided the full supply of water is given and the channels run well, the area can be considerably extended, and in this case it was 60 per cent of the whole. Unfortunately, however, in a large part of the colony the supply has

[1] Seed, implements, upkeep of cattle (i.e. fodder and depreciation on two pairs of bullocks per rectangle), and all Government dues.

[2] The two percentages are not strictly comparable, since the Lyallpur percentage is of the culturable commanded area and the Nili Bár is of the gross area, which includes the village site, etc. It was subsequently found that if only the cultivated commanded area were considered, an intensity of 60 per cent would be possible without sending any more water down the canal, and this percentage has now been adopted. In the Shahpur (Lower Jhelum) colony the corresponding percentage is 75 (except in some riverain villages), and in the Montgomery colony (Lower Bari Doab) it is 66·6, except on the Gugera Branch, where it is 50 (1934).

[3] The rainfall is 8 inches.

been deficient, partly for the reasons already given,[1] but mainly because the Sutlej has not fulfilled the expectations based on its previous records.[2]

Let us, however, assume for the colony as a whole an average cultivated area of 60 per cent, yields of 6½ and 10 maunds per acre for unginned cotton and wheat, and *village* prices of Rs. 6 and Rs. 2 per maund for each of them, respectively. Even on these assumptions, which are a little optimistic,[3] a family with one rectangle will have only about Rs. 121, or about Rs. 10 a month, to meet all their household and miscellaneous expenses for a year, and the estimate makes no allowance for either implements or depreciation, as was done in the case of the Farm tenants.[4] Incidentally, it is hardly as much as what an ordinary agricultural labourer earns in the colony.[5]

Twice on the road I have met Arain tenants who said they had been able to live on half a rectangle, but this was before the heavy fall in prices and each cultivated 1 to 1½ acres with chillies, tobacco, and vegetables. We saw at Hansi what a difference intensive cropping makes, and if this remedy were open to the colonist, his whole position would be different. But in the greater part of the colony vegetables and the like are impossible without a well—the Sutlej is too capricious—and with water 60 feet or more below the surface, irrigation wells are not practicable. In the village visited

[1] p. 220.

[2] Unhappily, since the Sutlej Valley canals were opened, the Sutlej has beaten its own record, and less water has come down it than has ever been recorded (1934).

[3] For current market prices see p. 2, n.1. Village prices would be 4 to 6 annas less. As to yield, figures kindly supplied by the Senior Secretary to the Financial Commissioners show that in each of the two years ending 1932-3 the area matured was less than 50 per cent of the allotted area (all culturable), i.e. 44 per cent the first year and 47½ per cent the second. In the two years a little over 6 per cent of the crop failed.

[4] The basis of the calculation is an area of 100 acres (4 rectangles) cultivated thus :—

| | acres |
|---|---|
| Wheat .. .. .. .. .. | 32 |
| Cotton .. .. .. .. .. | 20 |
| Fodder .. .. .. .. .. | 8 |
| Total .. .. .. | 60 |

The following deductions have been made : (*a*) Government dues (excluding acreage rate) as specified on p. 225, n.2 ; (*b*) Rs. 5 (per rectangle) for village servants ; (*c*) seed at the rate of 24 seers per acre for wheat, 6 seers per acre for cotton, and 12 annas per acre for fodder. The changes in *malikana* and water rate mentioned on p. 225, n.2, raise the return from Rs. 121 to Rs. 163.

[5] Cf. p. 278.

two days ago experiments with potatoes had failed, and a colonist who tried to grow vegetables lost much of his crop for want of water at a critical moment. In time, as water percolates through from the canal, the water table will doubtless rise to well level;[1] but that lies too far ahead to be a remedy for present troubles. Meanwhile, except where conditions are unusually favourable, a family can expect only the barest subsistence from a single rectangle, and where the rectangle has to be shared with others, even subsistence is impossible. In one way, however, the wind can be tempered to the shorn lamb: Government is the landlord and it can reduce its dues. And there is a further reason for doing this. In this colony, owing to the great cost of the scheme, the dues are higher than in any other.[2]

**Government dues**

Before the slump Government dues were everywhere paid with reasonable ease, but now in canal-irrigated tracts, where water rate as well as land revenue has to be paid, they have become a burden and many can pay them only by borrowing.[3] This has been the refrain all along our route in canal areas,[4] and in this village twelve members have borrowed Rs. 1,000 from the bank to pay their last instalment. Nine others have borrowed sums varying from Rs. 40 to 100 from the money-lender, seven of them at 18¾ per cent and two at 37½ per cent; and in almost every case an anna in the rupee was deducted

[1] Cf. p. 24.

[2] Assuming 60 per cent cultivated, and cropping as above, these dues amount to Rs. 212-8 a year per rectangle (including acreage rate, to Rs. 287-8), thus:—

| | Rs. | |
|---|---|---|
| Land revenue .. .. | 3-8 | per *matured* acre. |
| *Malikana* (i.e. economic rent less land revenue) .. | 3 | per allotted acre per annum. |
| Water rate—wheat .. | 5-4 | per matured acre. |
| cotton .. | 6-4 | |
| fodder .. | 1-8 | |
| Acreage rate (see p. 214) | 3 | per allotted acre (Rs. 4-4 if paid in instalments). |
| Rates and cesses .. .. | 0-2-10 | per rupee of land revenue. |

When the facts were represented to Government, it was decided to charge *malikana* on matured instead of allotted area. A further concession has been made since: for the three years ending with the spring harvest of 1936 only Rs. 1-8 will be charged per acre matured in the case of land perennially irrigated; and in the same case the water rates on wheat and cotton given above have been temporarily reduced by Re. 1 each, the fodder rate being raised correspondingly.

The colony has also shared liberally in the general remissions of land revenue and water rate given during the slump (see next note).

[3] Recognizing this difficulty, the Punjab Government has remitted 243 lakhs (£1,822,500), of land revenue (147 lakhs) and water rate (96 lakhs). In May 1934 water rates were also reduced by 36 lakhs.

[4] See pp. 19, 124.

by way of discount. In one of the two cases, 37½ per cent was charged because the headman did not accompany the borrower: he generally went with a borrower, not to stand surety, but to give the money-lender an assurance that, if necessary, he would help him to recover his loan.[1] In the other case, a Virk went to a fellow Virk and was charged 37½ per cent for Rs. 40 *plus* the usual cut. Another, a Muslim with a wife and two sons, who shared a rectangle with a brother, stood up and said :—

'I have paid the lambardar[2] Rs. 66: Rs. 20 are still due. Where shall I get this? I have been to Vihári, but no one will lend to me, and I have sold all my cotton to pay the Rs. 66.'

'Can you not sell a bullock?'

'I have only two, and one is sick, and the other is bad, and no one will look at it.'

'And jewellery?'

'How could I have jewellery? Your lot (kismet) is good, mine is bad. I have bound my belly and paid Rs. 66. I cannot do more.'

I turned to the president of the bank. Would it be wise to make him a member and advance him the Rs. 20? He shook his head, and I was not surprised; for he had the dishevelled look of the typical defaulter, with a face wrinkled, sunken, and feckless. But it was not easy to turn him down in this way.

**Village women**

We rounded off our inspection by a talk with two women, who stood timidly side by side against the clean mud-plastered wall of a house. One was very shy, and during most of the talk all that could be seen of her face was a large nose edged with shawl. The other, who was a Muslim, was more talkative. She wore a long black smock and the usual dirty grey cotton shawl over her head, and at first across her face; but she soon let it drop, revealing the pleasant homespun features of a healthy light-coloured woman of 35. She had been married at the age of 11 and thought 11 or 12 the best age for this. Marriage was sometimes deferred till 17, but her own daughter was married at 11, and Rs. 300 were spent on the feasting and entertainment of the guests, and something further on ornaments. Ornaments must be given, whether there is money in the house or not.[3] Otherwise, when a girl goes to the house of her mother-in-law, no one will pay her any respect. For the same reason she must have a proper trousseau. Those who can afford it give twenty-one suits (*trewar*), others eleven, and no one less than three.

[1] A common practice: cf. *Rusticus*, 142.
[2] Headman.
[3] Cf. p. 163.

A question about work made the more talkative almost eloquent. The grinding must be begun before dawn, for when the sun rises they have to churn and, as there is no well, water must be fetched from the channels in the fields. Then comes the cooking, and the taking out of the husband's meal. Now that there is no money, clothes cannot be bought and two or three hours' spinning has to be done every day. More grinding, too, is done to save the cost of the bullock mill. 'My eyes become blind with fatigue, and only in the hot weather do I get one or two hours' rest in the middle of the day.' Even this is better than what we were told in Rohtak.[1] On one point custom is merciful: child-birth is followed by forty days' rest. As ever amongst peasants, babes are nursed for long periods, boys for two and a half years and girls for two. A girl begins work at 6 or 7, and the first thing she learns is to wash the vessels and play with the younger children. Then she is given a broom to clean the house, and she is taught to knead and cook. Ginning the cotton and spinning follow, and finally at 9 or 10 she helps her mother to grind. This is the severest task of all, but at first she does no more than lay a half-idle hand on the grindstone handle, and the full task is not done till 16 or 17. 'There is not strength before this,' said a woman in Hissar last month; 'also, when a girl comes to live with her husband, for a year or two she is given only light work.'[2] I could not help exclaiming at a system which spared a girl the labour of grinding until of full age but not the labour of child-bearing.

Yesterday, too, we had some talk with a village woman, a Sikh Jatni of about 45. She was sitting on the ground under a wild caper tree.[3] Clad in thick dirty homespun, out of the skirt of which appeared five virile toes widely spread, she had well-cut features and a pointed chin, and looked at us out of frank but unromantic eyes. She answered all our questions without hesitation or embarrassment and spoke as one accustomed to the hard realities of village life. She was married at 12 and had the first of her six children at 16. All had survived except one, and the first four were boys of 30 to 18. Curiously, none of them was married. The family was too poor, and was doubtless waiting until a girl of 10 was old enough to be exchanged for a bride for one of her brothers. Her mother did not propose to marry her till she was 15 or 16, which, amongst her people, was now the age of marriage. In her youth it had been two or three years younger. This change is characteristic of the central Punjab and particularly of the Sikhs,

[1] pp. 196, 197.
[2] Cf. *Rusticus*, 193.
[3] *Capparis aphylla*.

who lead in all such matters.[1] What is perhaps less characteristic is that she thought education spoilt girls for work. To the difficult question whether any material change had taken place in regard to women in the last thirty years she replied that the chief one was food, which was now better.

The sun was a little past its meridian when we left the village, and shone hotly upon us and upon the country round. We passed through a tract of the old Bár, and the blue tarred road was in hard contrast to the arid wastes that glittered on either side. It was almost deserted, and for some miles the only traffic we passed was a string of camels, who superciliously ignored the road as a superfluous innovation. Towards Vihári irrigation began again, and green wheat appeared flooding round bush and tree like an incoming tide. It was nearly three when I sat down to my first meal. 'With some, time gallops withal.'[2]

10 *March.—To Chak* 532 *and back* (8 *miles*)

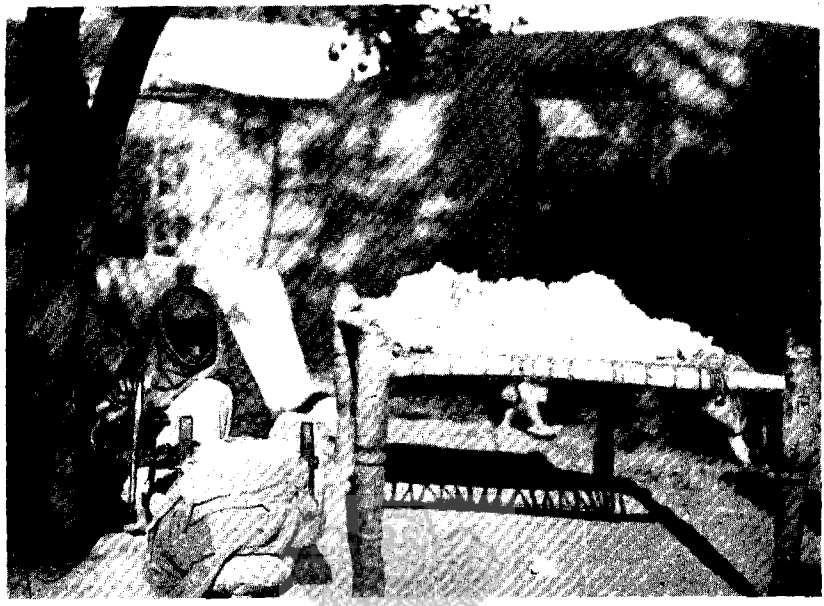
Is anyone happy in this colony? Certainly the Janglis[3] amongst whom we were to-day, morning and evening, were not.

**A Jangli village**

'What is your state?' I asked a large gathering this morning, greeting them in more guarded terms than yesterday. 'We have no state,' was the reply. 'Our land has been taken away, and we have nowhere to sit.' Two stalwart women pressed forward and, prostrating themselves, clung to my embarrassed feet. With difficulty I got them to assume a more convenient attitude, and we all sat down on the rubbish-littered edge of the hamlet, a cluster of eleven semi-nomad dwellings. A few years ago, when the country was a desert, it passed for a village. Now it would attract no notice at all but that, being old, it stands a little above the surrounding plain.

The two matrons squatted in front and at once embarked upon a high-pitched duet, as unintelligible and melodramatic as if it had been opera, but far less melodious. With difficulty I turned the duet into a solo, which would be well described as 'appassionata'. I can give only the gist of her theme. 'We came here before the English, before even the days of Sáwan Mal.[4] Seven generations have we lived here. We sank two wells, and cultivated the 'jangal' wherever there was water from rain, and our camels grazed where they pleased. Then were we lords of the 'jangal'. But now our land has been stolen (here two impassioned arms were flung out

[1] See p. 111.
[2] *As You Like It*, iii, 2, 329.
[3] See p. 14.
[4] A well-known Governor of Multan and the south-west Punjab (1821-44).



HANDGINNING—COTTON ON CHARPOY

HAIRDRESSING

| *face p.* 229

in my direction), and we may no longer go here and there with our camels, but must work for a wage and pick cotton, and our men must hire themselves out with their camels. Many have left the village and gone to seek work in the chaks.[1] We used to drink our fill of the milk of our goats and camels; but now our milch camels are few: there is no grazing for them. Some have died, and the others are weak.'[2] I managed at last to stop the flow of her eloquence with questions about herself. She had three sons, aged 26, 22 and 12, and only the eldest was married. She would marry the next when her daughter was old enough to marry and an exchange of brides would be arranged. Unlike the Gujranwala women of yesterday, she had nursed her sons for two years and her daughter for two and a half, obeying, so she said, Muslim law (*Shariat*[3]).

'Why this difference?' I asked.

'A girl is the lowlier, and God pities her.'

'Then do mothers love their girls more than their boys?'

'How could that be so? Both are of the womb.'

But those around agreed that a father was fonder of his sons and a mother of her daughters, since a son lightened his father's work and a daughter her mother's. I asked when a girl began to help her mother. 'At 5 or 6, she learns to bring things. Then she picks the lice out of her mother's hair;' and so on, as in yesterday's talk.

'Weak and beggarly elements' were these people, but how clean their houses were. Houses I say, but really they were dwellings in the intermediate stage between tent and house: the usual mud-plastered walls, of course, but the roof thatched with riverain grass and supported by short crooked undressed tree trunks. In one case large holes had been torn in the riverain grass; yet the room below was spotless, and all its simple possessions, lacquered chests, many-coloured baskets, earthenware pots, were exquisitely arranged. Some were protected from the dust by a blanket woven out of the wool of camel and goat, and on the wall was a long strip of tapestried cloth embroidered with comic animals. This had been worked by one of the girls, and it was her duty twice a day to dust everything

**Jangli dwellings**

[1] Villages.

[2] Cf. p. 22.

[3] I understand that the custom of nursing a son for two, and a daughter for two and a half years, which some follow (e.g. in Mianwali), is not based on the *Shariat*. The Koranic injunction is as follows:—'And we have enjoined upon man concerning his parents—His mother beareth him in weakness upon weakness, and his weaning is in two years' (*Surah* 31, para. 14).

in the room. 'Even if we have to go without our food, it may be for two meals, we still keep everything clean and in its place: it is a matter of izzat.'[1] (Here indeed was izzat at its proper task.[2]) Yet, according to the police, all in the village are cattle-thieves. But amongst Janglis cattle-thieving is an honourable sport.[3]

On the way back we talked of the Janglis and their tale of woe. It is an old complaint and whenever I meet them I hear it;[4] but it is none the less human for that. One is reminded of the tragedy of the Red Indians, and one realizes with sadness the inexorable modern law which demands that he who produces little shall give way to him who produces much. All that can be done is to make the adjustment as bearable as possible and to give the best of the new age in return. In the Nili Bár the problem presented peculiar difficulties, because it was the last of the Punjab Bars to be colonized and Janglis who had failed to get land elsewhere came here to try their luck. The Colonization Officer, who has throughout fought a good fight for both colonist and Jangli, spent months traversing the desert on a camel in order to examine all claims on the spot, and even doubtful ones were admitted. The gathering of the Janglis into village settlements inevitably involved hardship and discontent. Many of the claims were to isolated spots, and many more touched widely scattered areas. As Jangli and colonist could not be mixed like wheat and gram, some concentration was necessary, and this was done with the most tender consideration for old associations. Here and there, in response to fervent appeal, isolated groups were left where they had always been, but eventually all in turn asked to be re-settled amongst their kith and kin. In short, it may be said that in this colony, as in every other, the Colonization Officer has taken the Jangli under his special protection, and one of them felt so keenly for them that one evening, in drafting his annual report, he found his pen writing as follows:—

**The nomad pegged**

'The year has been one of real progress. The open spaces of the desert have everywhere been parcelled out in meticulous rectangles: jungal trees have been felled, and the wandering camel tracks of the waste have given place to the durable macadam of public roads, running for miles without a curve or a gradient. The goat-herd's pipe and the quavering love-song of the camel-driver are mute, and in their place we hear the klaxon of the lorry and the

[1] This cleanliness is entirely characteristic of the Jangli, and only less so of the western Punjab, see p. 144, n. 5.

[2] Cf. p. 50.

[3] Cf. p. 14.

[4] Cf. p. 22, *Peasant*, 128-9, and *Rusticus*, 214-15, 236.

folding harmonium of the peripatetic preacher. The reed encampments of the nomads, open to sun and wind and clean as a dancing floor, have been replaced by the dark midden-infested mud houses of the central Punjab. The nomad himself, once free of the Bár and of his neighbour's cattle, has been pegged out, Prometheus-like, on his 25 killas,[1] while the vultures of progress (who shall be nameless) bury their obscene beaks in his vitals. . . .

*" O fortunatos nimium sua si bona novint,*
*Pastores."* "[2]

But there is another side to this, and it was put to us unconsciously by a Jat whom we met on the road. Small, thickset, and 65 years old, he was walking to Khánewal (fifty miles away) to rejoin a brother, who in the days of high prices had bought 6¼ acres for Rs. 3,500. With the help of a well, in addition to the canal, he is still able to support himself and his family. ' Nothing is saved, but he can live.' This Jat, too, has a family—a wife and three sons—and to support them he has been walking about the Nili Bár to find land he could lease. But his labour has been in vain, and his failure and his great need made him eloquent.

' Why does the Sirkar not give me land ? Our work is cultivation. What else can we do ? Where else can we go ? We must have land.'

' The Sirkar cannot give everyone land. Jats are many, and the land is limited.'

' Then why does it give land to the great and not to the poor ? '

' It has given it to many who are poor, especially to those who have done it service.'

' But I have committed no fault. I have not stolen, I have done no crime. Why cannot I be given land too ? I have a wife and two children and only three *ghumaon*.'[3]

Simple words these, but spoken with such force that they seemed to express the very soul of the Jat and the peasant's age-old hunger for land. And this is the justification for depriving the Jangli of his freedom.

## Note on the Nili Bár Colony

The Colonization Officer, Mr. F. B. Wace, I.C.S., who has kindly read the substance of this chapter, considers that for the

[1] A rectangle contains 25 killas : there is a play on the word, which in Punjabi also means ' peg ' (in Urdu *kela*).

[2] ' Shepherds, happy, too happy, did they their blessings know ' (Vergil, *Georgic*, ii, 458). ' Pastores ' has been substituted for ' Agricolae '.

[3] In this tract and all along the Ravi a *ghumaon* is equal to an acre : between the Ravi and the Sutlej it is a little less, either ·826 or ·759 of an acre.

time to which it relates it gives ' a fair average ' view of the colony as a whole. That it should be so gloomy is due to three main factors. Firstly, there was ' a series of unexpectedly short supplies ' of water in the Sutlej.[1] Secondly, to meet the high cost of the scheme, charges were pitched higher than in former colonies ; and thirdly, prices suddenly collapsed. It can be understood that, in the peculiar circumstances, the position of the Colonization Officer was a very difficult one, torn as he was between the desire to make things easier for the settler and the fear of jeopardizing the finance of the project. Fortunately the colony was in good hands, and the high standard set by Mr. Wace has been maintained by his successor, Mr. H. D. Bhanot, I.C.S. Mr. Bhanot has been assisted in his task by Government's financial concessions to the colonist[2] and by the efficient control exercised by the Canal Department over the water supplies.[3] The low prices, however, remain, and they cast a deep shadow over the colony. In spite of this, the Colonization Officer, writing in 1932, is able to report that ' although the Nili Bár may not be what it promised to be in 1927, . . . it will yet be the home of the careful cultivator, tilling his land with sagacity, and using his water to the fullest advantage ; ' and he adds that ' no other colony has taught the cultivator the economical use of water better than the Nili Bár '—a lesson sorely needed in other colonies as well (1934).

सत्यमेव जयते

[1] *Punjab Colonies Rpt.* (1932), 16.
[2] p. 225, n.2.
[3] Ibid., 16.
[4] Ibid., 6.

# PART IV: NORTH EAST

## CHAPTER XIII

## GURDASPUR AND SIALKOT

### JAT WIFE AND MOTHER—SERVICE—THE PEASANT WITH ONE PLOUGH

*Sunday, 15 March.—Ram Das to Dera Baba Nanak (8 miles)*

A LITTLE over two years ago I started off on my first tour from Gurdaspur.[1] I thought I would complete the circuit of my wanderings by ending my second in its neighbourhood. Every story should have a peaceful, if not a happy, ending, and in the Punjab peace can best be had in the shadow of the great hills. These are still fifty miles away, but yesterday when I rode my first march from Fatehgarh the vast shadowy form of the Daulah Dhar[2] was in sight. The district—Gurdaspur—requires little description, as I have already described the tract in which it lies in *The Punjab Peasant*.[3] It is essentially submontane, which means that the rainfall is good,[4] that holdings are small, and vegetation rich. I confess to a particular weakness for it, as it was amongst its simple and not very prudent peasantry that I learnt the rudiments of Co-operation. It is characteristic of its old-fashioned ways that this morning when I held the chick[5] back for one of my older visitors on the conclusion of his visit, he at once took a step back into the middle of the room, exclaiming: 'No, no—I am a man of the old ideas.'

**Self-taxation and sanitation**

On my way here, after attending a meeting of the local Banking Union at Singhpura, I had a look at the village, which consists of about 150 houses. In 1929, inspired by the zaildar, who lives there, the village created a panchayat to keep the village clean. Not being formed under the Act, it is on truly representative lines[6] and consists of three Jats, the local headmaster, a doctor, an oil-presser, and a sweeper,

1 *Rusticus*, 1.
2 See ibid., 7.
3 p. 24.
4 About 36 inches.
5 A blind of split reeds.
6 Cf. pp. 138 ff.

A sweeper is paid Rs. 5 a month to keep the lanes clean (his wife does the work); the drinking wells are disinfected; ponds and depressions are being filled up, and people are encouraged to use metal vessels for drawing water instead of earthenware, which get broken and choke the well. Money has been raised by a grant of Rs. 50 from the village fund (trees are sold) and of Rs. 40 from the village bank, by levying an anna on each basket of vegetables brought into the village,[1] and by doubling the cess (Rs. 144) for the village watchman: this last was felt to be a little severe. Self-taxation for more traditional ends, generally religious, is common and I have given many examples of it, but for sanitation it is rare, and on this tour I can recall only the sixteen Moga villages mentioned on page 116 and a village in Amritsar, which spent Rs. 500 on paving its lanes. On my last tour, too, I came across only one or two examples.[2] That, however, there should be any examples at all indicates a possibility.

**A Jat interior**

The pleasantest feature of a very pleasant day was a talk with the wife of a retired cavalry sergeant, a Sikh Jat. We found her spinning in her small but spotless courtyard with her grown-up married daughter at her side. The mother wore homespun and kept her face almost completely concealed, but the daughter, who wore pyjama trousers, was unveiled, and after the first moments looked at us without embarrassment. She was a good-looking buxom lass with plump well-rounded features—the kind that Eastern poets compare to the full moon—and a gently resolute face. She was one of eight children, of whom three were dead. She herself was already a mother and was paying her parents a visit to show them her first-born, an infant of four months. She was happy, therefore, and free of all a mother-in-law's restraints.[3] She was married at 17, but her mother not till she was 21. The mother thought 17 or 18 the best age for marriage, and thanks to the teaching of the zaildar's grandfather, of whom something will be said presently, this is now the custom. Though her husband was 54, he did not look a day older than 40. He had a frank kindly look, and as we talked of his domestic life, his virile bearded face filled with a woman's tenderness.

It is the village custom for women to rest for forty days after the birth of a child and do no work at all, and both mother and daughter had done this.[4] When I asked the daughter about her first-born, she jumped up and, climbing on to a low wall dividing

[1] The collection of this tax for a year was auctioned and fetched Rs. 20.
[2] *Rusticus*, 168.
[3] Cf. p. 286.
[4] Cf. p. 227.

the courtyard in two, stretched out two graceful arms towards the girls and boys that thronged the roof of the neighbouring house, and down came the gayest little mite I have ever seen of his age. At a snap of the fingers, he became all smiles and his eyes danced with delight. It was a singularly picturesque and homely scene: the mother spinning the snowy cotton thread, and the daughter dandling her merry first-born in her arms; at their back, the high clean mud-plastered wall of the small courtyard, and cresting its top, fifty boys and girls in many-coloured garments, some twittering with excitement, others in rapt attention, and many leaning upon the rampart of dung-cakes which were drying in the sun. Neither mother nor daughter had suffered much in childbirth—a matter of two to four hours: it rarely lasts more than that, and the village midwife was there to help. She cannot do much during the crisis, but she knows what to do afterwards. The mother nursed her boys for two and a quarter years and her daughters for one and three quarters. 'Why this difference?' I asked. 'A boy is dearer,' and the sergeant said this was because a boy would become master of the land.[1] This, however, was the only difference made. I asked the mother how many children she thought sufficient. 'Two,' she replied: 'care can then be taken of them.' 'And what do *you* think?' I said, turning to the daughter. 'One,' was her monosyllabic reply, and she danced her gay half-naked first-born before her.[2]

The mother rises at five, and the first thing she does is to set the chopped fodder before the two cows and the buffalo that share the courtyard with the household—the byre was beautifully swept. Then follow ablutions (a servant brings the water), and an hour or two are spent in churning the butter, and so on all day with one task or another, and when there is nothing else to be done, she spins. There is no end to this, for there are two more daughters to be married and their clothes have to be prepared. Each will get five suits, of which three will be made at home and two bought, and the three will take six months to prepare.[3] The eldest daughter's marriage did not cost much. Nothing was spent upon jewellery; for, in accordance with the new ideas, it was neither given nor taken. The chief expense was the entertainment of the guests, and the only borrowing was in kind—ghi and so forth—from neighbours, who were repaid later. The sergeant is a thrifty fellow and, owning only 25 acres of not very good land, he has need to be careful. The mother did not educate her eldest girls, but she means

[1] Cf. pp. 227, 229.
[2] Cf. pp. 211, 212.
[3] Cf. p. 227.

to educate her youngest—a significant sign of the times. 'New ideas have come,' she said; but this was the only change she admitted, and she declared that her daughter was no freer than she was and had the same ideas and worked as hard. They do very little work outside the house, but inside keep everything scrupulously clean, and all the sweeper does is to remove the rubbish, which every day is piled in a corner. The mother controls the grain consumed in the house, and though the sergeant sells the rest, he consults her before selling. The house was delightful—every room well plastered, simply furnished and, what is more, well windowed; and all the pots and pans were arranged in shining rows above the well-ordered chests below. Throughout there was a fragrance of simplicity and affection, and whether one looked at the sergeant or listened to the shy gentle tones of his wife, one felt that here was the marriage of true minds.

**The old light and service**

I rode on accompanied by the zaildar, who, despite his 74 years, held himself as erect as when over fifty years ago he rode with Lord Roberts to Kabul. He is a Sikh and comes of virile Jat stock, and both his father and grandfather were admirable examples of the type produced by the old light.[1] His grandfather in particular had a fearless sincerity of character, which the following story illustrates. He had a bent thumb, which he could not move freely, and one day he was asked how it had come about. 'When I was a young man,' he said, 'I did what was unlawful with a woman. My mother heard of it and asked me if it was true. I denied it, and she asked me to swear by touching her body that it was not true. I touched her with my thumb and swore, and since then it has been bent, for I had lied.' A brief enough tale, but it has left its mark upon the village: 'for four generations (writes a grandson) it has formed part of all good fathers' advice to sons who feel their hearts slipping to the left.'

When the Sardar's turn came to rule his family and the village, he banned three things—*bhathi*,[2] *hatti*,[3] and *chatti*—grain-roasting, shop-keeping, and bribe-giving: grain-roasting because it led to waste of time in casual snacks, and shop-keeping because it multiplied wants. Nor would he allow the young men to use antimony for their eyes (what would he say to the young women of to-day and their cosmetics?) or anyone in his household to lie abed after dawn. He himself got up for worship long before, and any bed he found in the courtyard after that would be confiscated for a night,

[1] Another member of the family is mentioned on p. 125, n.1.
[2] Oven for roasting grain.
[3] Shop.

and its occupier would have to lie on the floor. Twice a day his whole family—wife, sons, daughters and daughters-in-law, and any relative living under his roof—had to pay him the homage due in India from younger to elder, and in return to receive his blessing; and the mother whose child, or even infant, was absent was sure of rebuke. At the evening ceremony, all squatted reverently on the ground before his charpoy,[1] and after the evening prayer had been said he would tell them tales of the past—'stories by which men's hearts are pleased'.[2] But it was not enough that stories should please, and in telling them he would analyse the causes of fortune or misfortune in family or State. He was a despot, but his despotism was benevolent and inspired by the Hindu feeling for service. Near the village the main road crossed a depression, which the monsoon turned into a slough. Noticing how often carts got stuck there, he kept a man and a pair of buffaloes there during the monsoon (July to September) to help them through. Most characteristic was his passion for trees. It is said that he never visited a village without planting a new one or setting a young one straight, and that when he died his trees exceeded a lakh.[3] The figure may be legendary, but I am assured by his grandson that he found Singhpura 'barren as brass' and left it a garden of kikar,[4] phuláhi, and shisham.[5]

So good a landlord could not be indifferent to debt, and if he found any of his people seriously involved, he would not rest until accounts had been satisfactorily settled. He would allow the creditor to claim only what was fair, but would also oblige the debtor to sell what he could, even his cattle, and if this did not suffice to settle the account he paid the balance himself. Then there was health. He kept a list of all the village boys from 5 years old to 20, and during the monsoon he would have them all up before him once a day and give them a dose of gur, ghi, and onions to protect them from fever. His accounts show that this cost him 12 to 16 canisters of ghi a year and some 20 maunds of gur. In another respect he was ahead of his times: he thought so ill of early marriage that he would have nothing to do with the marriage of a boy under 17 or a girl under 14 and would not even send a word of congratulation.

But his most endearing trait was his feeling for the servant. Whenever he paid a visit, his first care on arriving was to see that

[1] Bed.
[2] p. 68.
[3] 100,000.
[4] *Acacia arabica.*
[5] *Dalbergia sissoo.*

his servant was comfortably housed—even now a necessary precaution[1]—and at meals he would make him sit by his side and pass him his own dish (*thal*) that there might be no distinction between them. The man who walks, he would say, requires more and better food than the man who rides. Amongst servants he ranked washerman and sweeper highest for their share in keeping man and his dwelling place clean, and when either came to see him he would greet them first.[2] One at least of the village sweepers deserved this unusual compliment. He had done so well with his land and was so respected that his neighbours called him Chowdhry.[3] One day the Sardar found him collecting and removing manure. He asked him why he did this when there was no need, and he received the reply: 'If I do not do this work, which is my work, I should not obtain salvation (*mukti*).' In the same spirit the wife of Ranjit Singh's[4] waterman, who lived in the village, though well off used to carry a skin of water to one or other house every day. In all this, Sardar, waterman, and sweeper were fulfilling the old Hindu idea that caste is based not upon privilege but upon duty and that all should do the work that their fathers have done before them and do it in a spirit of service. This is the very essence of the old light, and the new light has nothing better.

16 *March.—Dera Baba Nanak to Kalanaur* (8 *miles*)

Approaching Kalanaur in the late afternoon, I was waylaid by the members of one of the six co-operative societies there and asked to open a small library they had just started. I could not refuse so unusual a request, touching, too, a matter akin to my own tastes. It was dusk before the ceremony could take place, but this did not prevent a long address of welcome followed by a poem, which made great play of my too susceptible name. We finally repaired to the library itself, a room in the bazaar 10 feet by 6, and in token of its now being really open—it had been temporarily closed for the ceremony—I suspended a large board, inscribed with the library's name, on hooks, which refused to support it. However, by now it was too dark for a defect of this kind to signify. This is the fourth village library I have come across on my two tours,[5] and they are one of the best signs of the new light.

**The opening of a village library**

[1] Cf. p. 275.
[2] In India the inferior in station pays the first greeting.
[3] See p. 219, n.3.
[4] Former ruler of the Punjab, died 1839.
[5] *Rusticus*, 60, 88, 260.

*17 March.—Kalanaur to Trimmu via Shahur* (16 *miles*)

A long hot day starting before nine and not ending till after four. It began with a visit to the spot where in 1556, at the age of 13, the illiterate Akbar, descendant of Jinghiz Khan and Tamerlane, was crowned ' Emperor of Hindustan '—a simple enough place for so great an event. There is but a broad plinth 3 feet high, supporting at one end a long solid seat made of plastered brick. This was the Emperor's throne, and in front of it, sunk in the plinth, is a deep bath 4 feet square. Close by, a few mango trees stand sentinel, and beneath their shade is a well large enough, it was said, to accommodate twelve Persian wheels.

We stopped at a village to inspect the Lakhan Khurd Banking Union.[1] Eighty-eight co-operators were present, including eighteen presidents of village banks. Having just read in the paper a statement made in the House of Commons by a well-known politician that ' the movement for self-government had now touched the most rural parts ', I thought I would see how far this was so with these parts. Two of those present, the president and an educated Hindu money-lender, were sufficiently well acquainted with the Reform scheme. But when I asked the eighty-six others what they knew about the Legislative Council at Lahore, one, and one only, said it was for making laws. Of the others who ventured an opinion one said it was ' for security ' (*hifazat*), another ' for the work of the country ' (*mulk ka kam*), a third ' for the betterment of the agriculturist ', and a fourth, coming nearer the mark, ' to discuss whatever work had to be done by Government '. ' So much do we understand ' (*itni samajh*), he added. No one, except the president and the money-lender, had the least idea how many the Council consisted of, and the only guess hazarded was four. There was much laughter when I admitted that I did not know either.[2] Anyone hearing these replies might well have supposed that no one had a vote for the Council, but when voters were asked to raise their hands, twenty-six shot up. Only three could vote for the Assembly or the Council of State, and one of them merely knew that the Assembly made ' the big laws '. No one else knew anything about either: ' We are zemindars, and know nothing,' said one in excuse. When it came to questions about the Ministers, there was the same almost universal

**' Self-government '**

[1] A Banking Union, of which there are sixteen in this district and sixty-five in the Punjab, is very like a small Central Co-operative Bank, but differs from it in certain important respects; e.g. all its shareholders are societies, its radius is only ten or fifteen miles, and it distributes no dividend (1933).

[2] The number is ninety.

ignorance. A director of the Union (he has a brother employed in the High Court) knew there were three, and the Treasurer said that their work was ' to make known whatever order came from above '. At this point the president, evidently feeling that the zemindars required a word of apologia, got up and said : ' Those whose bellies are full may know these things, but not those whose lot it is to fast.'

The significance of this account is that it relates to one of the best Banking Unions in the Punjab (it was seen by members of the Simon Commission three years ago), and that the gathering consisted almost entirely of presidents of village banks and members of their committees.

**A pioneer of co-operation**

The Union was founded by its president, Ch. Allah Rakha, one of the men who have made, and been made, by Co-operation in the Punjab. He is the typical small peasant proprietor, and though small in stature, his wrinkled face, reddish complexion, and shining eyes would be noticed anywhere. Born in 1870, he lost his father at the age of 16, and having to support the rest of his family he left school forthwith. Having been there only three years, he was barely literate ; but, determined to get on, he educated himself and did this so successfully that for many years he kept the accounts of his village bank and of the Union. He inherited only 3½ acres from his father, but took more on rent, and by dint of hard work and great economy he was able to save about Rs. 100 a year and in 1903 to buy 12 acres for Rs. 1,300. His great piece of luck (he said) was getting twelve years' work out of his only pair of bullocks ; but even so it was a great achievement, for he had to support an aged mother and a sick sister as well as a wife and son. In 1905, he was made headman of his village, and this brought him into touch with the co-operative movement, which started in 1906. That year, he and nine others (the minimum membership is ten) agreed to form a village bank, but when it came to the point the nine backed out, fearing—an almost universal fear in those days—that ' the Sirkar will loot our money '. At this juncture he was repaid a mortgage loan of Rs. 350, and he offered to deposit the whole amount with the bank, and also to pay the first share instalments of those who would join it. Inspired by this, others took the place of the backsliders and the bank was launched. Next year they got a Government loan of Rs. 350 at 4 per cent, and a year later Allah Rakha deposited a further sum, the fruits of another mortgage loan, and so, little by little, the bank grew. In the mornings he busied himself with his land, but after the mid-day meal, when others took their rest, he went about preaching the gospel of Co-operation, and such was his zeal that his neighbours said—' Co-operation has

cast a spell upon him.' In 1914, the village banks of the neighbourhood were grouped into a Banking Union to act as a balancing centre and financial link with the outside world, and now there are forty-one member societies and the Union's deposits amount to nearly a lakh, much of which comes from the societies themselves. But best of all, within the Union's five mile radius, 85 per cent of the householders are co-operators. Allah Rakha is now president of five co-operative societies of different kinds and a director of two important provincial co-operative institutions. He is also head of a local panchayat. It would be difficult to find a better and more enthusiastic co-operator in the province.

It was very hot when we remounted our patient horses. The fields were deserted, but the Persian wheels were at work; unmelodiously, for the earthenware pot is here replaced by the economical but ugly iron bucket. Melody, however, there was from a magpie robin, and scent, too, from the mimosa bushes by the wayside. Everywhere stretched the wheat, its rich green shot with rivulets of blue where the flax was in flower. Lying under the all-embracing sun the whole earth seemed pregnant with fruition. The heat was great, and I envied the almost naked young men bathing by the wells, whose light brown bodies shone as they dripped in the sunlight. Huge banyan trees gave deep shade to those who would rest and be cool, and in the courtyards of the many villages we passed women were at work spinning. At four we sighted our snowy tents on the banks of the Ravi, at a ford where in 1857, after marching all night, Nicholson defeated a large party of mutineers, who were making their way to Delhi after bloody deeds at Sialkot. At sunset I bathed, and as I did so, a herd of buffaloes came towards the river in a soft white mist of sandy dust, and plunging in moved majestically through the shallow blue water, their great barrels black and shining against the evening sky. At that moment Devi[1]—so I have always called her for her goddess-like form—appeared large, shadowy, and snowy white out of the cloud that had hidden her all day.

18 *March.—Trimmu to Kot Nainan* (7 *miles*)

When we set out this morning at eight the goddess had withdrawn into her mysterious depths. Threading our way through the dew-drenched wheat we quickly came to the river, and our ponies splashed through water hardly up to their knees. But when we came to its tributary, the Ujh, which no canal has tapped, we

[1] Goddess.

had to heel up our legs behind us to keep them dry. Midway I heard a heavy splash and, looking back, saw one of my train on his back in the turbid red water and his pony rolling at his side.

We were now in the Shakargarh tahsil, and a few miles through rich wheat lands brought us to the headquarters of another Banking Union. We found some forty co-operators gathered together in the president's garden. And a very pleasant garden it was. A peach tree was still in blossom; the pomegranates were just coming into leaf, and the mango tree under which we sat was on the point of bursting into flower. The surroundings were perfect and the air cool, and everything designed for friendly converse rather than formal inspection. The result was four hours' talk. We first touched on their marriage customs. Most of those present were Hindu Rajputs, a tribe that is divided into many carefully graded clans. It is everyone's ambition to give his daughter in marriage to one of a higher clan, but for this he has to pay a bride price of Rs. 1,000 to 2,000, now reduced, owing to the fall in prices, to Rs. 750 to 1,500.[1] So large a sum must usually be borrowed, anyhow in part. Contrariwise, one who would make money sells his daughter—no other words can be used—to one of a lower clan. All but 5 per cent (it was said) do one or the other. This was admittedly a matter for shame, but the individual was powerless to change it. Action must come from the whole tribe, and this is difficult with members scattered over an area wide enough to include the neighbouring state of Jammu. Another bad custom, female infanticide, was once common, but five years ago the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir took vigorous action, and now (it is said) it hardly exists.[2]

**Rajput brides**

The president had much to say about the heavy burden of taxation on the peasant. I asked how he would cut it down. In the old days, he replied, the Punjab had only a Lieutenant Governor and one Financial Commissioner. Now there are a Governor, two Members, three Ministers, and two Financial Commissioners. 'And are things better or are they worse?' he asked ironically, and he added, 'The Ministers' salaries should be cut and land revenue reduced.' I pointed out, obviously enough, that though their salaries were Rs. 5,000 a month (£4,500 a year, which is more than most English

**A zemindar's grievances**

[1] Over 80 per cent of the Gujars of Shakargarh are said to do much the same.

[2] Cf.: 'It is believed that female infanticide still occurs amongst the best born families of Rajputs who cannot marry their girls into their own families and will not marry them into families less well born' (Calvert, *An Economic Survey of the Haripur and Mangarh Taluqas of the Kangra District, Bd. of Econ. Enqy. Publication No.* 9 (1933), p. 3).

Cabinet Ministers get), to cut them would not help very much towards a reduction of land revenue and water rate, which amounted to about 8¾ crores (£6½ millions) a year. Someone (not for the first time on this tour) suggested the much more effective remedy of a general salary cut. I said that I had already suggested it to a high official and that he, too, was willing ; and I think most would be willing if they saw what I have seen of the peasant's difficulties during the last three months.[1] We passed on to another grievance, the difficulty that zemindars have in finding employment for sons they have educated at great expense. 'The other evening,' said the president, 'I was sitting here and heard a great noise, as of a riot. A boy, entrance-passed,[2] was beating his father because he had not got him employment, and people were trying to separate them. The entrance-passed zemindar is like the dhobi's dog—neither of the ghát[3] nor of the house. The zemindars are poor and get nothing, but those who have plenty in their houses, even though they may be fools, they are regarded as wise.'

In the evening a spruce little bright-eyed Khatri showed me his garden, and he is by no means the first Khatri I have met on this tour who has had something of this kind to show.[4]

**An enterprising Khatri**

The son of a Canal Officer, after passing his B.A. in 1917 he became Private Secretary to the late Sir Pertab Singh and did not come here till 1924. Till then he had hardly given a thought to his 300 acres, but now he farms 40 of them himself with the help of five labourers. Owing to the low price of wheat he is putting more land under tobacco and toria.[5] He had just planted the tobacco, some of it with his own hand. His pleasantest possession is a large garden full of fruit trees with a glorious view of the goddess, who appeared again in the evening light, though dimly. The headmaster of the local Middle school was with us and, hearing he belonged to the neighbourhood, I asked him what the goddess was called. 'The Himalayas (*Koh Himâlya*)' was the best he could do,[6] but someone else with a more inquisitive mind volunteered—'*Devi Máta*', the Divine Mother. And indeed the name suits her well, for, rising straight from the plain, with snowy arms outstretched she broods lovingly over the earth at her feet.

[1] A general 10 per cent cut was made in 1932 : in 1933, 5 per cent was restored.

[2] i.e. who had matriculated.

[3] The steps down to tank or river where bathing and washing are done.

[4] Cf. pp. 10, 25.

[5] *Brassica campestrid.*

[6] Cf. *Rusticus*, 9.

19 *March.—Kot Nainan to Shakargarh (7 miles)*

A radiant morning with a light breeze. The mango groves stood out like dark islands in the sea of wheat, and the pied wagtails shone white and black against the clear sky. In the fields some were taking their 'lassi-wela'[1] snack, brought out to them in shining brass vessels by their wives, who squatted on the ground in front of them while they ate. Others were ploughing the fallow lands for cotton or cane or, it might be, for an early sowing of millet (*chari*), and an hour earlier, before the sun was up, their cattle-rousing shouts had wakened me from sleep. The ploughman has to start early, for in this tract buffalo is yoked with bullock, and the buffalo flags when the mid-day heat begins. That and his slowness of foot are against him. His advantage is his price, 30 to 40 rupees instead of the 70 or 80 required for a bullock, and his common use is a sign of the low standard of living produced by small holdings and a dense population.

**The buffalo at the plough**

The dense population was reflected in the traffic on the road. In the Nili Bár one may ride for miles without meeting a soul, but here hardly a furlong. Amongst those we met was a family of Chamárs, who expected to cover the twenty miles to Gurdaspur by the evening, although the mother had a babe in her arms and the father was carrying a boy of four on one side, a huqqa on the other, and a bundle of clothes on his back. The boy kept his balance by leaning his arms upon his father's puggarree, over which his head looked at us cheerfully. This family live on the proceeds of 10 acres, half of which they have to give their landlord. Then came a woman journeying to Gurdaspur on foot, to see the son she had educated by the sweat of her brow. Her husband died when he was a few months old. Landless and friendless, she not only brought him up but educated him, and now he is a clerk at Gurdaspur. 'How did you do this, Mother?' 'I earned money by working for others; I cooked their food, scoured their vessels, and washed their clothes.' Many of those we met seemed bound for the courts. One was a village money-lender, as thin and scraggy as the little brown pony that bore him. Twelve years ago he got a decree for Rs. 200 against a Gujar and, having recovered nothing, was on his way to court to get it renewed for another twelve years. He is typical of the large class of creditors who recover with infinite difficulty only part of what the courts award them.[2] A very different type was a Muslim

**Wayfarers**

[1] Literally 'butter-milk time'.

[2] 'Of the amount decreed and sued for recovery each year not more than 26 per cent is recovered through the courts' (*Pb. Bkg. Enqy. Rpt.*, 120); but before the slump another 25 to 50 per cent was probably recovered out of court (ibid., 121).

barber with wife and child. The child was withering—one had already withered and died—and they were taking him to a Hindu village to have his back fomented with cow's dung and *ak*.[1] 'Why not do this at home?' 'Because the village is blessed (*mutabarrak*).' Why it is blessed no one knew, but some holy man must have lived there once.

We came at length to the Bein, barely a stream at this time of year, but in the rains capable of devouring those who attempt to ford it.[2] A money-lender bound for the courts was its last victim. Looking up its broad sandy bed the eye travelled straight to the hills, where Devi stood in all her snowy splendour. I turned to those with me. 'Do you not feel its beauty, too?' 'Yes,' said a Muslim Rajput, 'it is beautiful: it is a green country, and there is much rain.' And all we could see was a giant figure, grey below and snowy above. But he had been to the hills in the rains when all is green, and memory was stronger than sight. A Hindu Rajput's attitude was not very different. 'It is beautiful,' he said, 'because our kith and kin live there.' The Muslim then quoted aptly from Saadi. 'The earth was trembling with fear: God made pegs of the mountains and held her fixed.'[3]

**What is beauty?**

The most original achievement of Co-operation in the Punjab is the consolidation of holdings. We saw its effects near Delhi,[4] and to-day we had a glimpse of how they are produced. The members of a new society had gathered by the roadside to meet us, and the work being actually in progress I asked them to continue as if we were not there. Some found this difficult at first, notably the president, a voluble fellow, who kept cocking an eye at us. But they soon warmed to their task, and in the end got so excited that only one or two of the many bearded heads ever looked our way at all. They all sat on the ground wedged together in a thick mass cheek by jowl, elbow to elbow, leg to leg. In a flash I saw the meaning of untouchability, which is still strong amongst the Hindu Rajputs of this area. Who could bear to sit so close to anyone of very different ways? In the centre of the semi-circle were the village records and the handkerchief map with all the village's 2,392 fields clearly marked upon it. Already 1,120 fields had been reduced to 150

**How holdings are consolidated**

[1] *Calotropis procera*.

[2] On my two tours I crossed nine rivers by boat or horse, viz. Indus, Chenab, Ravi, Sutlej, Beas, Jhelum, Ghaggar, Ujh and Bein, the first four twice. The last three are of little importance.

[3] *Zamin az tape larza amad satah*
*Bar o koft bar damanash mekh koh.*

[4] pp. 202, 203.

The president now asked Godra, an elderly zemindar with a large square wrinkled face, whether he would take a certain set of fields in place of his many scattered plots. He refused: neighbours pressed, but he was obstinate. An uncomplimentary remark was made about his land. 'How can my land be bad when I have mortgaged it for Rs. 400?' He rose indignant and would have left, but friendly hands brought him back to his place amidst soothing cries of—'With good will (*saluk nal*)'—'With justice,' meaning, he could count on both. The argument was resumed, one neighbour holding him gently by the arm, and another by the wrist. 'Will you take this, then? It is good land, not uneven like yours.' Another spurt of indignation. 'My land is not as uneven as other people's. I have made many ridges. Look at my hand (he threw it out palm upwards) and see how many hard places (*chandian*) it has. While you others are sitting at the "daira"[1] smoking, I am making these ridges. The ups and downs (*khohen*) of your fields are not sown with gram like mine.' 'Hold your peace,' said a sarcastic critic: 'we all know how easily your crops are laid' (meaning they were too light to be laid at all). Godra would have got up again, but a man behind got him firmly by the waist. 'Why do you seize me?' he spurted angrily. 'Don't be angry—don't be angry (*russo mat*),' said several soothing voices, and a neighbour added playfully: 'Godra, drink a little cold water; then you will agree with what your brothers say.' 'I am already cool,' he retorted. But his voice, and also the sour look on his face, betrayed a heated, obstinate spirit, and, though other schemes were proposed, all further persuasion was in vain; and at last with the words—'I want land I can see from my door'—he got up and went. The next case also produced a certain amount of point and counterpoint—'My land is near the village, this is far: I won't go across the road,' etc.—but in a short time he had agreed to what was proposed, and each of the twelve members of the committee signified his assent in turn. 'There is no injustice to anyone?' inquired the president with a final glance round the bearded throng; and with this clinching word twenty-seven plots were compacted into a single 11 acre field. The discussion had lasted an hour.

But things rarely move as fast as this. As a rule it takes a patwari a year to consolidate 600 acres, and if he has to deal with all the complications of well lands, he may do barely 400. Consolidation was going on in a village we stopped at another day, and anyone looking at its map would have said that an impossible task was being attempted. An area of 930 acres was divided into 1,913 blocks of fields and over two-thirds of it (674 acres) was watered

[1] Village meeting place.

by forty-one wells, belonging to 256 owners, all of whose rights had to be carefully adjusted. One of them with only 3½ acres of his own had sunk two wells because he had gained possession, by usufructuary mortgage, of a large number of neighbouring fields (30 acres in all) belonging to different owners. Now he was being asked to forgo his rights over some of these fields in order that their owners might get their land elsewhere all in one place. Part of the adjustment had already been made. 'I have agreed to it,' he said, 'but I have fear for the future.' As everyone's consent, including that of every mortgagee, has to be obtained, no injustice can be done, but it can be imagined what skill, tact, and goodwill are needed to achieve this, and where they are not combined, or where mulishness and greed are encountered, the proceedings may be interminable and ultimately fruitless. So far only 280 acres have been consolidated and the grumblings from several quarters suggested that even here the settlement may not be final. The land has been divided into five classes according to quality, three of irrigated land and two of unirrigated. In the case of unirrigated land, the ratio of exchange for good and bad is 2 : 5. Anyone who gives up a share in a well is to be compensated in cash: so, too, with fruit trees. Other trees may be cut before exchange. This is the common rule and involves a good deal of felling, but young trees soon spring up round the wells that nearly always follow consolidation.

### 21 *March.—Shakargarh to Zafarwal* (17 *miles*)

**Cultivation**

With many miles to travel and a hot sun to encounter we were off at half-past six. The air was fresh and the wheat fields shone in the slanting sunlight, and far away, almost withdrawn from mortal gaze, Devi stood shrouded in early morning mist. Countless ploughs—in one 12 acre stretch we counted twenty-six—were already at work preparing the fallow lands for cane or cotton, and where the cane had been planted, the soft reddish-brown earth was being rolled to the smoothness of surf-beaten sand. In one field five teams of oxen, four to each team, followed each other round drawing the levelling beam, on which stood two men erect as charioteers, with a whip in one hand and a bullock's tail (for guidance) in the other. The wheat fields were full of unweeded wild onion and the ridges between them low and crooked. But for cotton and cane the soil is well prepared and well manured. Only farmyard manure is employed, and more would be used were it not burnt as fuel. There is plenty of timber about, but it is jealously kept for house, plough, and well. Those who have not got enough manure of their own draw upon the village

servants who keep milch cattle, and no charge is made in view of the various things that the servants are allowed to help themselves to—fuel, fodder, *ság*, and, maybe, even tobacco.[1] The wise have movable fodder troughs, which they wheel from one part of a field to another so that the whole can be manured with the precious urine of the cattle as they feed. A village we visited near Zafarwal had only one, and when I asked why, we got the now familiar answer: 'There was no thought: the people are poor.' Yet in the adjoining Daska tahsil they are in general use, and in one village we found thirty. As they cost only Rs. 10 to 15, they could be easily bought but for the dearth of money.

The same difficulty prevents the replacement of the wooden Persian wheel by the iron. Personally I cannot regret this, as the iron is utterly unmelodious and the melody of the wooden is the most characteristic note of the central Punjab.[2] But the iron is certainly more durable, and the potter has no longer to be paid for replacing the earthenware vessels of the wooden. Moreover, it costs only Rs. 100. When this was pointed out in the Zafarwal village, a Jat said in almost pleading tones: 'We can't pay so large a sum at once: the potter we pay bit by bit.' 'But,' we said, 'the wooden cane crusher has everywhere been replaced by the iron: why should not this change be made too?' 'Some sit on chairs,' retorted the Jat, 'and wear good clothes; others are poor and sit on the ground: where can we get Rs. 100?'

**The rupee famine**

Where indeed? And I say this because of what I found in two other villages of the neighbourhood. At a Union meeting a Jat had remarked that the zemindar was now hard put to it to find even Rs. 5 in cash and that many houses had hardly a rupee. As all seemed to agree, I thought I would see for myself. In two villages, therefore, I asked those present how much money they had on their persons or at their houses at that moment. In the first only four out of twenty-three had more than Rs. 5, and no one had more than Rs. 20. Yet they owned on an average 21 acres each: they were, however, heavily in debt. The second village was more prosperous, and only one out of twenty-two had less than Rs. 5, and five had Rs. 50 or more, but no one more than Rs. 80.[3] My staff were inclined to think these figures correct, and in the first village I was impressed by the fact that six mentioned annas as well as rupees,

[1] Cf. p. 274.

[2] See p. 13.

[3] In the first village all were landowners; in the second, fourteen had an average of 36 acres each, seven were village servants, and one a schoolmaster. In both villages holdings were much above the average in size.

and one even pies. One recalls the remark made to us near Delhi—this is a rupee famine.[1]

Yet although rupees are so scarce, most along our track have managed to pay their recent instalment of land revenue without borrowing. We have seen how difficult this has been where there is a canal and water to pay for as well as land.[2] Here there is no canal, and the present revenue demand was fixed before the war when prices were not much higher than they are now. Most have therefore made a shift to pay their dues, many adding to their resources by selling milk, ghi, fodder, and even trees. Yet an appreciable number, perhaps 10 to 20 per cent,[3] have had to borrow, and they have had to pay the usual high rates.

**Payment of land revenue**

Most borrowing must now be done on the security of either land or jewellery, and in the case of land (owing to the Land Alienation Act) a member of an agriculturist tribe with spare cash must be found. This is much less easy than it was, and the likeliest are those in service.[4] The usufructuary mortgage is the cheapest way of raising money and involves a charge of only 6 to 9 per cent,[5] whereas on jewellery 15 or 18¾ per cent has now to be paid.[6] When marching northwards I made many enquiries as to the amount of jewellery still left with the cultivator (not the landlord),[7] and I have done the same at the Union meetings attended this week. Estimates vary considerably and must naturally be accepted with the greatest caution, but my impression is that in these two districts at least half, perhaps even two-thirds, remains unsold and unpledged.[8] At a bank meeting a dealer in bullion (*saraf*) said that most of the jewellery sold had gone to Bombay and other large towns such as Lahore, Amritsar,

**Jewellery**

[1] p. 198. "A census of the actual cash possessed by 300 peasant families in different parts of Yugoslavia revealed a figure fractionally less than one shilling per family" (Tiltman, *Peasant Europe* (1934), 50). There seems to be a widespread money famine amongst peasants in eastern Europe (ibid., 45).

[2] pp. 19, 124, 225. It is significant that in 1932-3 of the total amount advanced during the year by co-operative societies in the following districts, which depend largely upon canal irrigation, the percentage borrowed for land revenue was :—

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Montgomery .. | 39 | Lyallpur .. .. | 34 |
| Multan .. .. | 38 | Shahpur and Gujrat | 21 |

whereas in Sialkot, the percentage was only 1½ (*Co-op. Soc. Rpt.*, 30).

[3] The percentages given me at Union meetings were substantially higher, but a natural bias has to be discounted.

[4] A military surgeon who does a considerable mortgage business in these parts said that mortgage values had fallen from 40 to 60 per cent, and the same was said at the meeting of the Lakhan Union. If so, the fall is roughly equivalent to the fall in prices (1931).

[5] *Peasant*, 190. [6] Everywhere I have found this (1931) : cf. pp. 30, 104.

[7] p. 30. [8] The local estimates varied from 25 to 50 per cent.

and Delhi, where it has been bought mainly by people in service. Here, as elsewhere, much less is spent upon jewellery at marriage, and it is as well if only because of what a goldsmith said at one of our meetings. He had borrowed Rs. 500 at 24 per cent for a wedding and, when asked how he would repay so large a sum, replied: 'I will put more alloy into the ornaments.'

**General effects of the fall in prices**

Of the same type was the reply made by a Chamár, an old man with a long thin nose, whom we met on the road to-day. He cultivates 20 acres as a tenant, and when asked how he did, he said: 'My landlord keeps watch over me and won't let me steal the grain.' Like all who live on other people's surplus, the landlord is finding it difficult to recover his dues, especially if they are in cash. One who owns four squares near Lyallpur says he has just had to reduce his rent from Rs. 500 to Rs. 250 a square, and another is allowing his tenants to cultivate on payment of land revenue only. 'Some day they may pay the rest.' In worse case are the village money-lenders, and one of them tells me that he has recently transferred a quarter of his invested capital from money-lending to trade. Many others are doing the same, and the depression is strengthening the tendency of the village money-lender to migrate to city and market.[1] Some are even content to deposit part of their funds with co-operative societies, and one recently told me that he found the steady 7 per cent he got in this way much more satisfactory than the larger but very fluctuating return he had before. Among poorer folk the effect of the depression may be illustrated by a firework vendor, whom I came across in a co-operative society of shopkeepers at Pakpattan. He was an old man with a beard like a red scrubbing brush, and a large swollen nose not unworthy of Dürer's brush. Till three years ago, no Hindu of any consequence thought a marriage complete without a good display of fireworks. Then came reform in the guise of a panchayat, and it was agreed that in future no one should spend more than a few rupees, enough to let off a few squibs and cannon crashers, and that if any marriage party from elsewhere wanted more than this, they must bring their own fireworks with them. This was bad enough, but then came the slump, and now father and son together earn a bare Rs. 10 a month. 'But how do you manage?' I asked. 'God gives us our livelihood,' was the resigned reply, and those around commented: 'He can very well live on that now that prices have fallen.' At the time I thought this optimistic, but I had not then worked out the income of the small holder.

[1] *Pb. Bkg. Enqy. Rpt.*, 134.

*Sunday, 22 March.—Zafarwal to Chawinda (12 miles)*

Another long morning—from seven to one—but full of interest and beauty. The beauty came first, with the early morning light on the wide open wheat fields, the dark mango groves, the golden sarkhanda grass, which for a time bordered our road, and far away the misty line of the snows. Devi was left behind us, but new peaks, amongst them the great Pir Panjál,[1] swam into our ken. As before, the fallow lands were alive with ploughs drawn by buffalo and bullock, and the air resounded with the loud-voiced staccato 'Ha-Ha-Ha-Ha-Ha-s' of the ploughmen encouraging their teams.

We were now in Sialkot but there was no indication of change, and in its general features the district is little different from Gurdaspur. The village we stopped at (Dugrian Harian) surprised me in one respect. The 210 owners, mostly Muslim Jats, were living with their families on an average of not quite 4½ acres of cultivated (not owned) land per owner.[2] What took me by surprise was not the lowness of this average, which is characteristic of the central Punjab, but the fact that the village has so little else to live upon. No land of any other village is leased. One man owns three camels, and another sometimes trades in sheep and goats. But there are 211 cows (mostly buffaloes) an average of one per owner, and many families earn Rs. 3 to 5 a month from the sale of ghi. The only other important source of income is service in the army: twenty-nine are serving in it, and two are military pensioners. There is also one civil pensioner. The system of farming is not particularly intensive. The usual crops are grown—wheat, cane, cotton, fodder, and maize. A mere 5 acres are under tobacco, and the vegetables grown are of the simplest kind, and only one grower sells them. Finally, two zemindars keep a hen each.

**The small peasant proprietor's resources**

Yet the people manage somehow to live, and though there was nothing to suggest abundance or luxury—only their puggarees were not of homespun cotton—there was no sign in face or physique of positive want. How much can be done with a few acres was shown by an old grey-beard who told us he supported eighteen souls on 16 acres, only 3 of which were his. For 13 he has to give one-third of the produce to the owner.[3] The only circumstance in his

[1] p. 76.

[2] The total cultivated area of the village is 921 acres (244 unirrigated) of which 158 are owned by two men. Actually there are 256 owners, of whom thirteen disappeared long ago and thirty-one are absentee. Nineteen owners are Sikh Jats and eight Hindu Jats.

[3] For unirrigated land in the village the proportion is one-half.

favour is that all 16 are irrigated. Of the eighteen souls ten are minors, four women, and the other four able-bodied ploughmen. Three ploughs are kept—in this area a plough is needed for 6 acres of well land or 8 of unirrigated[1]—and two milch buffaloes keep the household in milk and provide some ghi for sale.

**What a small holding produces**

Now for a few figures to show what a struggle life must be at present with so little land. Let us take the case of a man with one plough—most cultivators in the Punjab have no more[2]—and assume that all his land is irrigated. This means a holding of 6 acres, from which 7 acres of crops can be obtained,[3] thus :—

| | Acres | | Acres |
|---|---|---|---|
| Wheat .. .. | 4 | Maize .. .. | 1 |
| Sugar cane .. | ½ | Fodder (*chari*) and | |
| Cotton .. .. | ½ | tobacco (1 kanal) | 1 |

Gross receipts at present prices will be as follows :—

| | Yield per acre[4] maunds | *Village* price per maund, Rs. | Value of crop Rs. |
|---|---|---|---|
| Wheat .. .. | 12 | 1-8 | 72 |
| Gur (from sugar-cane) | 25 | 3-4 | 40-10 (½ acre) |
| Maize (grain) .. .. | 25 | 1 | 25 |
| Tobacco[5] .. .. | — | 20 | 20 |
| Ghi (at Rs. 4 p.m.) .. | — | — | 48 |
| Total .. .. | .. | .. | 205-10[6] |

Gross receipts are thus only Rs. 17 a month. Net receipts will be much less, for all the costs of production (except fodder) have to be met as well as Government dues. When these have been deducted, my 6-acre peasant proprietor will hardly be better off than coolie

[1] Cf. p. 182.

[2] Mr. Calvert estimates that 83 per cent of the cultivators in the Punjab cultivate less than 15 acres and deduces from this that ' the Punjab cultivator is essentially the man with one plough ' (*Pb. Bd. of Econ. Enqy., The Size and Distribution of Cultivators' Holdings* (1928), p. 4).

[3] The acre under maize can bear a second crop.

[4] The yields given me locally were substantially less. For maize I have followed Milne, *Handbook of Field and Garden Crops of the Punjab*, 5, where it is stated that ' an ordinary crop yields from 20 to 30 maunds per acre ', and for gur my authority is Roberts and Faulkner, *A Text Book of Punjab Agriculture*, p. 147.

[5] One kanal should produce a maund, half of which will be kept for home consumption. I have included the whole in gross income.

[6] The cotton and fodder are ignored, as the cotton is kept for the house and the fodder for the cattle. A point to be noted is that no allowance has been made for crop failure. For the province as a whole Mr. Calvert estimates over a number of years that on the average 16 per cent of the crops fail to mature.

or labourer.[1] In spite of this, the village is said to be in better case than most of those round, thanks to the two qualities which everywhere keep a man solvent—industry and thrift. An indication that these qualities are present is the rates at which the villagers borrow. Of the thirty-eight present, eight said they could get money at 12, and thirteen at 18¾ per cent, as against a common rate, for the tract we have been coming through, of about 25 per cent.[2] There is no better single test of a peasant's general character than the rate at which he borrows.

**How does a man with one plough live?**

But for the moment even more important than the rate of interest is the amount borrowed. The fall in prices has doubled the burden of debt, and at the same time it has made most wish to borrow more yet unable to repay as much. Here indeed is a problem, and when aggravated by prolonged drought as in Rohtak and Gurgaon,[3] or by large capital and revenue charges as in the Nili Bár,[4] or by heavy indebtedness as in most of the submontane tract,[5] it seems insoluble. It touches village banks closely, for their very existence depends upon members not borrowing more than they can repay. To secure this, a limit based upon character and resources is fixed for each member and revised every year. Since agricultural resources are little more than half what they were a year ago, it seemed to me obvious that these limits should be drastically reduced, and at all the Union meetings attended this week I have proposed that this should be done; but in every case the proposal was met with the objection, vehemently expressed, that money is now so scarce that people require to borrow more, not less. To convince the Union directors that the only prudent course was the other way round, I worked out with their help how much a peasant with one plough and an unirrigated holding of 10 acres—a typical peasant unit in the Punjab—would have to meet a year's charges if he lived entirely by his land. Ignoring fodder and cotton as before,[6] but making no deduction on account of Government dues or any other item of expenditure, I calculate that his gross income

[1] Cf. the Gurgaon budget figure given on p. 205 and the figures for Government's Nili Bár tenants on p. 268. The deductions made in connexion with the latter should be remembered.

[2] Amongst the Muslim Dogars and Rajputs on the Amritsar border, where this chapter starts, common rates are 24 and 30 per cent, and the old semi-feudal dues of fodder, ghi, fuel etc. continue. As with the Meos of Gurgaon (see note on p. 174, n. 4) this is the penalty of fecklessness.

[3] See chapters x and xi.

[4] See chapter xii.

[5] Ten years ago, in three out of the four submontane districts between the Chenab and the Jamna, 90 per cent of the zemindars were in debt (*Peasant*, 24-5).

[6] See p. 252, n. 7.

would be no more than Rs. 126 or not much more than Rs. 10 a month.[1] In a general way this shows how difficult it is at present for the one-plough man to support a family on an unirrigated holding, even when he owns it, and broadly this applies to the whole province. With a holding that is entirely irrigated, a man does better, as the figures on page 252 show, but few men with only one plough are in this fortunate position. In Shakargarh the average holding is only 5 acres, and that the peasant is able to live at all is because some member of his family is usually in military or civil employment. And what is true of Shakargarh applies in greater or less degree to the whole submontane tract from Rawalpindi to the Jumna, and to much of the central Punjab as well; while in the hills themselves, whether in Kangra or on the borders of Kashmir, holdings are so small that agriculture has become almost a subsidiary industry to service.[2]

*24 March.—Chawinda to Pasrur via Mundeki Berian (8 miles)*

The blessed cold weather is now approaching its end, and by the time the sun has reached the height of a paper kite the freshness of the morning is past and heat and glare begin. In the middle of the day the house has to be shut up, and in the morning the long leg rests of the easy chairs are no longer to be spurned. But the nights are still cold enough for a third blanket before dawn—for one at least sleeping in the verandah—and the first hour of daylight is a thing of freshness and beauty. The bearded stalks of the wheat shimmer in the sunlight; the fern-like gram is silvered with dew; the air is full of the cooings of the doves; the ha, ha, ha-s and the ho, ho, ho-s of the ploughman echo from the fields, and every horse

[1] By common consent the holding taken was 10 acres of unirrigated land (all owned), of which six would be cultivated at the spring, and four at the autumn harvest.

*Cropping:*

| Spring harvest | Acres | Autumn harvest | Acres |
|---|---|---|---|
| Wheat .. .. | 5 | Maize .. .. | 2 |
| Fodder .. .. | 1 | Fodder .. .. | 1 |
| | | Cotton and cane .. | 1 |

The same prices have been taken as before, but lower yields, as the land is unirrigated, thus:—

| | Yield per acre maunds | Value Rs. |
|---|---|---|
| Wheat .. .. .. .. .. | 8 | 60 |
| Maize .. .. .. .. .. | 20 | 40 |
| Sugar cane (½ acre) .. .. .. .. | 16 | 26 |
| Total .. .. .. .. .. .. | | 126 |

As before, no allowance has been made for crop failure, see p. 252, n.7.

[2] *Rusticus*, 14. See also Appendix (p. 349).

is agog. Wheat everywhere and, whether thick and high or poor and stunted, it overflows the plain in a sea of green unbroken by wood or hedge. Here and there in its midst the last flowers of the flax open blue eyes to a sky almost as blue, and where the earth has lain fallow for a season, the first two-leaved shoots of this year's cotton begin to appear. The shishams,[1] too, are waking from winter sleep. For miles our road has been bordered by their shadeless branches still freighted (like the beech hedge in England) with last year's dried-up leaves; but to-day it was as if spring, till then in purdah, had burst through autumn's rusty trellises.

**Woman's point of view**

The village woman's point of view is such an important factor in village life that I thought I would try to sound it once more before concluding this tour. Accordingly, after the usual bank inspection, I was conducted to a courtyard where I expected, as before, to find one or at most two matrons. Instead I found a dozen. Was courage ever more needed? but flight was impossible, so I faced the music, which proved most melodious, and even moving. Moreover, in the village information on general topics can be more accurately obtained from a group than from individuals, for if a mis-statement is made, it is generally corrected by someone else. All the women were Jats except the wife of a village servant, who proved the most intelligent of them all. And no wonder, for she was a minstrel (Mirasi) by caste. They squatted on the ground close together in a wavering line against the wall of the house. All wore homespun, and most of them half hid their faces, but bright eyes shone through the drab coloured folds of their shawls; only a few made no attempt to conceal their features. None had either beauty or grace, but the Mirási's wife had vitality and eyes full of light. As at Singhpura, an eager throng of the younger generation gathered on the roof of the neighbouring house to watch the proceedings, and in the same curious spirit bearded faces filled the doorway of the courtyard. The courtyard was spotless. 'I smear it with dry dung every eight watches,' said one of the women.

'And when does your work begin?'

'When the morning star appears we get up;[2] and if there is grinding to be done—we do not grind every day—we do that: then we churn the butter, and milk the cattle, and prepare the meal for *chhahwela*.[3] There is great anxiety and our breath remains dry

[1] *Dalbergia sissoo.*

[2] I once asked an old peasant in the south of France when he got up. His reply was almost identical: 'Quand je vois la belle étoile.' Nature makes the peasants everywhere akin.

[3] Early morning meal.

until that is taken out to the field and given to our men. Then we return, and before that we must cook the mid-day meal. We may not eat till they have eaten—never. We must always wait, and if they do not come, we take their bread to them in the fields. In the afternoon, and whenever we have nothing else to do, we spin. Since prices fell, we spin much more: no strength (himmat) is left for buying things. Fifty yards of cloth are required for a man in a year, and every year each one of us must spin one *máni*[1] of cotton into thread.'

'Do you rest in the middle of the day?'

'When the days are long, we get some rest after the second watch, but not when they are short. Then we work all day and half the night.'

'Do *you* work harder, or do the men?'

'We work hard and they work hard, but on our work there is no blessing. On the work of men there is great blessing: from it comes much produce (paidawar); but from women's work comes nothing that can be exchanged.' 'Yet,' interposed a zemindar, 'if a man has no wife, he cannot cultivate. For who then will cook for him and prepare the fodder and lay it before the cattle?'

'With so much work (I continued) how can you look after your children?'

'We put them in our lap (and the woman who was speaking spread out her skirt) and grind or spin with them thus, or we lay them at our side and send them to sleep.'

'For how long does your work stop when you have borne a child?'

'It depends on a woman's state. If there is someone to cook and do her work, she will rest for forty days. But if she is alone, she will rest for eleven days and then begin to work again; but she will not do full work for some time after.'[2]

'And how long do you nurse your children?'

'We give them milk for two years,' said one; 'for three years,' said another. 'How can this be?' interposed the Mirasi, showing some very prominent front teeth; 'in three years, three children will come.' There was loud laughter at this; and also at the answering sally—'Speak for yourself (*apni gal karo*),' for she was the mother of five sons.

'Do you make any difference between boy and girl?'

'There is no difference: both come from the same womb.' But another added: 'For all that we love the boy best.'

[1] Five maunds.

[2] Cf. *Rusticus*, 275. In Scotland an agricultural labourer's wife does not expect more than ten days.

'And how many children do you think a woman should have?'

'As many as God gives us.' But the Mirasi's wife did not agree. 'It is good to have four—two boys and two girls. If there are more, we cannot give them proper care (parvarish); they can't get shirt and shoes, and they run about naked just as the *dhaulah* (a river fish) darts here and there.'

'When do your children begin to learn their work?'

'A boy goes out with the cattle when he is six, and at seven a girl begins to scour the vessels, to arrange them in their order and to move them here and there; a little later she begins to spin (several girls under ten were pointed out who could do this) and takes her father's meal out to him in the fields; and last of all she learns to grind. That is the hardest work of all. There is great trouble in it.'

'Is there any change in the times?'

'There is great change. A new wind blows, and now the children will not heed what their parents bid them. Their eyes are lifted up, and no shame remains.'

'How has this happened?'

'An elder brother abuses his father, and the younger hears him and does the same.'

'Why do you not punish them?'

'They have come out of us and we love them.'

25 *March.—Pasrur to Nidhoke via D——* (12 *miles*)[1]

The world, Primavera's world, grows in loveliness: the road, all grass and bordered with shishams in the very act of exchanging brown liveries for green; on either side the ripening wheat, stretching away to clear horizons and sweeping past scattered trees and village islets, and behind us Devi's snowy crest, floating like a cloud in a summer sky—'an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens'.[2] Rich would be the peasant's reward for his great toil if he could but see and feel all this. But perhaps he does unconsciously.

**'Progress' in dress and thought**

We came to a village, outside which a score of children of all ages from three upwards were busy stripping cane (and chewing it, too) to be sliced into two-eyed sticks for sowing. The village, a large one with 500 houses, has two banks, and thirty or forty of their members were waiting on the road to be 'inspected'. We sat down in the welcome shade of a black-trunked kikar tree,[3] and found

[1] Rainfall 30 inches.
[2] 2 Corinthians v, 1.
[3] *Acacia Arabica.*

ourselves in an unusually progressive atmosphere; so progressive, indeed, that one of the village schoolmasters appeared wearing a puggaree at one end and pumps at the other and, in between, lilac-coloured socks strapped to bare legs by leather suspenders, above which came a pair of khaki shorts and a not very white shirt hanging loosely Indian fashion—'a most lovely, gentleman-like man'.[1] The secretary was a complete contrast, a loquacious sharp-witted Mahájan,[2] who after several years in the Mechanical Transport had returned to his hereditary calling of shop-keeping. A number read the newspaper, and for the first time on this tour of many hundred miles when the Round Table Conference was mentioned, those sitting on the ground understood the allusion at once. When, too, we got talking about the position of the village servant, someone said, and others appeared to agree, that he was not a necessity, nor, properly considered, even an advantage. 'It is not right that we should do the good work, and others the bad. Everyone should do their own work.' I asked what their women thought of this. 'They think the same, for their opinions change with ours.' This is much ahead of common thought, but it is true that as men's minds change, women's do too. Only yesterday the women were saying (p. 257)—'a new wind blows'.

**The Christian convert**

This conversation arose from the presence of a Christian tanner. Seven per cent of the district are Christian,[3] and a generation or two ago nearly all were outcastes, outcastes less for their work—most were sweepers—than their habits. 'They used to eat the flesh of animals that died, and we would not let them sit amongst us as this man is doing now. In those days he would have had to sit far away (and a hand was raised to indicate a great distance), and we would not even let them use this road'—pointing to the high road at our side. Wherever I have inquired about the results of conversion, the report has been good. In Shahpur I came upon a colony of Christians from Sialkot, whom all praised for their virtues as tenants. At yesterday's village, where there were forty or fifty families, the people said: 'Intelligence (*mat*) has come to them, and they give it to their children; and their children give it to their parents, for they go to school. Before this they were as animals, and even poisoned the cattle of their enemies; now they have become men.' The motives that lead to conversion are not always religious. A

[1] *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, i, 2.

[2] The submontane Hindu trader and money-lender.

[3] The percentage is the same in the adjoining districts of Gujranwala and Sheikhupura. In the ten years ending 1931 the number of Indian Christians in the Punjab increased by 29 per cent to 395,639 (*Punjab Census Rpt.*).

Muslim official tells me that his sweeper came to him the other day and announced that he was going to become a Christian, in order to get his daughter married. He belonged to this district and said that so few of them now stick to the old ways that it was difficult to find a suitable bridegroom. One can imagine the peasant of the Roman Empire saying the same when conversion to Christianity became general. The converts mostly continue to work as agricultural labourers, and the women remove the refuse from the houses of the zemindars and make the dung cakes, but in the second generation they generally refuse to handle night-soil. The more intelligent and enterprising are taking seriously to education and becoming clerks.

We rode on under an archway of spring green and came to our last halting place, a rest house set in the midst of wide wheat lands and rich in the scent of the ripening wheat. Many and diverse are the rest houses that have sheltered us during our 719 miles[1] of marching—some with gardens, most without, all with a watchman (in this case a medalled veteran), many with a sweeper, the most decrepit of their kind, and a few with a waterman. All have a stable or two, but since the era of horses passed, the stable has sometimes sunk to a godown. The buildings themselves are solidly built, but I can remember none with the least touch of character or beauty. Yet inside they are comfortable enough, and the newest in the Nili Bár with their curtains, towel horses, brick-faced fireplaces, and perhaps a marble slab for jug and basin, are almost luxurious. All have cotton durries, and nearly all the durries portentous inkstains. The walls of most are white and adorned with nothing more decorative than a notice about fees or distances or a map of the district. A few are more ambitious, and this one has over the fireplace a brightly painted bit of Japanese matting leading up to an oleograph of the King. Quite a number have an assortment of magazines and picture papers, far the best of which are old numbers of *Punch*. A few even have books. A small but important difference to all but the most austere is the wine glass. In many there is a deplorable tendency towards prohibition. Lamps are a variable quantity, and the wise nomad takes with him his own. The two most distressing features one can encounter are, in the cold weather, the smoking chimney, and in the hot, the barking dog—far more frequent, and the murderer of sleep. All, or nearly all, have easy chairs of wood and cane, but most of them are too easy for anyone who does not want to go to sleep at once. The furniture is of the simplest, and the beds, in my experience, never infested.

**Rest houses**

[1] Excluding rail but including forty-six miles done by car.

*26 March.—Nidhoke to Raya* (9 *miles*)

Last night was so warm—the temperature in the afternoon shade touched nearly 100—that I slept out under the open sky; and a pleasant sight it was, as the lamp went out, to see, as by a miracle, the stars appear, with the Great Bear heading boldly northwards and the young moon sailing her silver boat across his path. And still pleasanter to waken to a reddening dawn and to the cooing of doves, and to feel that what I had set out to do nearly four months ago was almost accomplished.

**The sower**

We had been riding through wheat fields, just beginning to pass from green to gold, when we came upon a field alive with men and boys, nineteen of them, and in their midst a tall black-bearded white-robed figure, as it might have been a priest engaged in some sacrificial rite. And priest he almost was, for he was a Jat performing the immemorial rite of sowing his land, this time with the sweet sugar cane. Around him in wide circle three ploughmen, each with a yoke of oxen, passed up and down preparing the earth for her work of generation. And in their wake followed man and boy deftly throwing six-inch stalks of cane into the shallow furrows, one at each step (a man's step), to lie there open to the sky until, with the coming of the levelling beam, the earth closes over them and receives them into her womb; and pacing to and fro, they invoked the Giver of all good things with the joyful cry—*Allah-Ho-Allah*—God is God.

These men were Muslims, but it is not only Muslims that invoke the name of Allah upon their sowing. Later we came upon Sikh and Hindu Jats who told us they did so too, and when I asked them why, this was their reply: 'Allah and God (*Khuda*)—it is the same. He made us all, Hindu, Muslim, Christian, and Sikh, and we do everything in His name. When we sow the wheat, we touch Mother Earth with folded hands, and when we sow the cane we call out—"God is God."'

Who will say that the town has more to teach the village than the village the town?

# PART V: ASPECTS OF VILLAGE LIFE

## CHAPTER XIV

## THE VILLAGE SERVANT

ON both my tours, on the road and in field and courtyard, I frequently came across the village servant, and as he is an integral part of the village community, he must have a chapter to himself.[1]

**The different classes**

In India caste and occupation are closely allied, and the alliance has produced a division of labour, which is seen at its simplest in the village. Broadly, the zemindars or village 'masters' own and cultivate the land, and the *kamín*[2] or menials, as they are commonly called, do everything else. In the central Punjab a village of any size will have its carpenter, blacksmith, potter, shoemaker, oil-presser, weaver, tailor, dyer, and perhaps a goldsmith. These are the artisans. And for servants pure and simple it will have a barber, waterman, washerman, drummer or bard, leather-worker or tanner, watchman, and sweeper. Finally, there will be the mullah or priest. On my first tour I came across two villages in the making, where zemindar settlers had gathered round them small communities of village servants including in one case even an astrologer;[3] and in Chapter XII we saw how artisan and servant followed the colonist to his new home in the Nili Bár.[4] All who serve the village and its needs from Brahmin to tanner have their regular clients (*sepi*), and such is the respect for equity in the village community that when any servant dies, his clients are divided amongst his sons as surely as a zemindar's land is amongst his sons. Thus, if priest or barber serves 100 families and leaves two sons, each will get 50 clients. In this the servant has the advantage over his master, for land does not increase, but in time the 50 families may become a hundred.[5]

The number and type of those who serve a village depend upon its size and situation. A small village will not have enough work for a man of each class, and in parts of the province certain categories are not found at all. For example, the Chamár or leather-worker is

[1] In five villages surveyed by the Punjab Board of Economic Enquiry, each in a different district, they formed 45 per cent of the total population (3,065 out of 6,779).

[2] Literally menial, commonly applied to the village servant.

[3] *Rusticus*, 240, 252.

[4] p. 209.

[5] Cf. ibid., 302.

numbered by the tens of thousand in each district south of the Beas, and a few thousand can still be found in those between the Beas and the Chenab ; but north and west of this they are hardly found at all,[1] and the skinning of dead animals, one of the tanner's most important tasks, is done by the sweeper or, it may be, by the shoemaker. Similarly, in the western Punjab both waterman and washerman are rarely found. Yet elsewhere the waterman is regarded as essential and given a leading place amongst village servants. To some extent, too, their number varies with the chief tribe of the village. Rajputs with their purdah rigours and high caste ways will have more servants than Jats, and Arains or Sainis with their high standard of industry and frugality fewest of all.

**The barber**

In the elaborately contrived structure of Indian society everyone has his niche, and it is rare for two niches to be on exactly the same level. The tanners we met at Hansi who handled the skins of sheep and goats were reckoned a little above those who handled hides, doubtless because hides include the hide of the sacred cow ; and there are similar gradations amongst the untouchables of Kangra. In the village amongst secular servants, first and foremost comes the barber, not in income but in popular respect, and this position he owes less to his skill with scissors and razor than to the part he plays in the all-important business of marriage. Welcome in all houses, since no man shaves himself or even pares his nails,[2] he is the ideal go-between, and throughout the Punjab he still plays the part that he once played from Seville to Baghdad. Nor does his role end with the betrothal. At a wedding he helps to attend upon the guests and often acts as cook,[3] and his wife dresses the hair of the ladies and sometimes decorates the face of the house with paintings. He also performs the rite of circumcision and may even act as surgeon, and on the road he is frequently to be met bearing some message or invitation to a patron's relative or friend.[4] All of which brings him into closer touch with the zenána than any other servant. But his position is threatened by the times. Throughout the province the economic depression has greatly reduced the expenditure on marriages, and he is the first to suffer from this. ' A wedding for the barber, a wrestling match for the drummer,' says the proverb.[5] Fewer guests are now invited,

[1] The six districts of the Lahore Division contain only 23,000 as against 339,000 in the five districts of the Jullundur Division. Lyallpur (Multan Division) has 27,000, no doubt because it has drawn many of its colonists from the Jullundur Division.

[2] Cf. p. 94.

[3] In a Hindu village a Brahmin generally does this, if one is available.

[4] See pp. 94, 162.

[5] *Biah naian, chhinj bharaian* (quoted *Bd. of Econ. Enqy., Publication No.* 9, 13).

and those who come stay a shorter time; and largesse is reduced. Even as a matchmaker he is not in quite such universal demand. With the spread of education, the relation between husband and wife is becoming more intimate and equal, and bride and bridegroom have to be chosen with greater care. 'People (says a correspondent) have become wise and begin to think this too important a matter to be entrusted to the whims and knaveries of a barber.' In short, he is in danger of being left with scissors and razor as his only means of support.

Next in popular respect, and usually a little superior in income, come carpenter and blacksmith.[1] Lovers of Shakespeare will remember that it was Quince the carpenter who led the 'hempen homespuns' of Athens in their play. The carpenter is responsible for his patrons' ploughs, beds, spinning wheels, milk churns, and yoke pegs, and also for the repair of their carts and of the doors and roofs of their houses. The blacksmith makes the ploughshares, sickles, axes, mattocks, trowels, and spindles, and does any other metal work that may be required. If the barber's position is weakening, the carpenter's has improved since the war, and he has gained much from the great influx of wealth which accompanied high prices and led to the rebuilding of innumerable village houses wherever military service, emigration, or large holdings made men prosperous. The servant who has suffered most since the war is the potter. A generation ago almost everywhere he ranked amongst the first five, and this is still so south of the Sutlej, where Hindu custom demands an abundant supply of earthenware vessels;[2] also west of the Chenab and Jhelum, where the well is all important and the Persian wheel has earthen pots, and the pipkin is kept as much for show as for use.[3] But in the canal colonies, where the well is little used, and in the central Punjab, where the iron bucket has largely displaced the earthen pot, both waterman and washerman come before him, and to gain a living he must generally keep a donkey or two for transporting produce to market.[4] Only one artisan has gained by the slump—the weaver. As we have seen,[5] one of the economies forced on the peasant is fewer purchases in the bazaar, and more spinning at home. This has given the weaver

**Blacksmith, carpenter, potter and weaver**

[1] In some areas, e.g. in the Mianwali Thal (*Bhakkar Assess. Rpt.*, 1925) the carpenter is more respected than any other servant. Cf. also the Amritsar village of Gagga Bhana (*Survey No.* 1, 22).

[2] Cf. p. 248 and *Rusticus*, 152.

[3] Ibid., 220, 225.

[4] In Rawalpindi, where wells are few and roads stony, the shoemaker is also more important than the potter. He is important, too, in some of the eastern districts.

[5] pp. 35, 256.

more to do ; and much he needs it, for before the slump no class of labour in the province earned less, in fact a mere 5 or 6 annas a day.[1]

**Mullah and priest**

Following the Revenue Department and the Punjab Board of Economic Enquiry, I have included mullah and priest amongst the village servants.[2] Some may think that this is not correct, and this was the view of a member of my staff, himself a villager, when I expressed surprise that a bank in a Sikh village, which contained one or two Brahmin members, should be called ' The Village Servants' Credit Society '. A misnomer, he said, but the Jats who were present did not agree. They insisted that the Brahmins were *kamin* and not zemindars like themselves ; and though Sikhism is closely allied to Hinduism, this is the view that Jat Sikhs generally take. ' The Brahmin (writes a Sikh correspondent) is both regarded and treated as a servant, of gazetted rank if you like, but a servant and nothing more.' His chief task is to receive his patron's guests, attend to their lodging, see to their service, and have the huqqa ready for those who smoke, and his wife does the same for the women guests. Now and then (like the barber) he is used as a messenger, and he is often consulted about arrangements and purchases for any social ceremony. But he no longer functions as priest, and if it is a question of ceremonial observance, the Granthi[3] is called in, and he it is who announces such things as when the moon will be full or under eclipse. In Hindu villages, which are mostly to be found south of the Sutlej, or up to the Chenab in and along the Himalayas, the position is different and the Brahmin plays his traditional part as temple or family priest. As such he is treated by the zemindars as an equal, and in the Hindu district of Kangra he shares with the Rajput a superiority over all others and is greeted with the salutation —*matha tekna*—I bow the forehead. The mullah, on the other hand, is everywhere definitely amongst the village servants, unless he is a maulvi and learned in the scriptures. So far as education goes, there is little to choose between him and the Brahmin : in nine cases out of ten both are illiterate. But the Brahmin belongs to the highest caste in India, and the mullah often to one of the lower. In the western Punjab he is usually a weaver,[4] and elsewhere, if he is a zemindar, it is frequently because some infirmity makes him unfit for the plough.[5]

[1] *Pb. Bkg. Enqy. Rpt.*, 79.

[2] In 1931 there were about 64,000 priests and ministers of religion in the Punjab (*Census Rpt.*).

[3] Sikh priest.

[4] *Rusticus*, 280, 302.

[5] Ibid., 84-5.

At the other end of the scale from Brahmin and barber are sweeper and Chamár. The sweeper is the village scavenger and where purdah is in force, he has a further necessary duty.[1] The Chamár is both tanner and leather-worker and not only skins his patron's cattle and live-stock when they die but also supplies him with shoes, ox-goads, and thongs. One thing Chamár and sweeper have in common. When a pair of shoulders are required to bear some burden, it may be the revenue records from field to field or a petty official's kit from one village to another, either may be commandeered by the headman, as a 'lower' boy at school may be fagged by an 'upper'. And when agricultural work is heavy, they must help their patrons with it and lend a hand with reaping and threshing the corn and preparing the gur.[2] They are also the chief agricultural labourers of the province,[3] and when, as has occurred with large numbers, they become Christian, Muslim, or Sikh, or join the Hindu Arya Samáj, this tends to become their main function.

**Chamár and sweeper**

In orthodox Hindu eyes both sweeper and Chamár are untouchable. What this means I tried to show on my first tour,[4] and it is due to a combination of function and habit. In a hot country men are naturally more sensitive to each other's habits than in a cold, and this is doubly so where they squat on the ground; for, as we saw in the last chapter,[5] that may bring them into much closer contact than if they sat on chairs. Once, after inspecting a new Better Living Society of Chamárs, I remarked to the Inspector that, though they had sat all round me, I had suffered no discomfort. 'That would not have been so two months ago,' he said; 'since then the society has taught them to brush their teeth once a day and wash their clothes once a week.' But the most unpleasant habit of all was that of eating dead animals. Many, however, have given it up, and where this has been done, untouchability disappears or survives only as a form; nor is it very strong when master and servant work side by side in the field and are linked together by the kinship of a common task.[6] Once the Beas is crossed and Hindustan left behind, untouchability is found only in and near the Hindu hills. In

**Untouch-ability**

[1] In 1931 there were over 900,000 sweepers in the province excluding those converted to Christianity (*Census Rpt.*).

[2] Cf. p. 24.

[3] In the five villages which have been surveyed by the Board of Economic Enquiry 80 per cent (654 out of 831) of the sweepers and tanners belong to this category.

[4] *Rusticus*, 93, 144.

[5] p. 245.

[6] Ibid., 135, 139.

Amritsar, where there are 32,000 sweepers,[1] they are frequently taken into cultivating partnership by both Jat and Arain, and provided they do not handle night-soil, for which there is little occasion except here and there where purdah is observed, they may touch their kind and their womenfolk may enter other people's houses. North of the Ravi, the great majority have become either Christian or Muslim, and this has given them a new status and a new outlook.[2] At the end of the last chapter we saw what a difference this has made to those who have become Christians;[3] and much the same applies to the Musalli, as the Muslim convert is called,[4] and to the thousands of Chamárs and sweepers who have adopted Sikhism.[5] Not long ago Mr. Gandhi wrote 'that no penance that caste Hindus can do can in any way compensate for the calculated degradation that has followed from untouchability.'[6] The Punjab may congratulate itself that under the influence of education and new ideals this evil is gradually disappearing.

**Remuneration**

Village custom is so variable that generalizations about village servants can have only the broadest application, and this applies particularly to their remuneration. Oil-presser, weaver, tailor, and dyer are generally (not always) paid by the piece, in cash or in grain according to circumstances.[7] Technically they are not village servants, for the true servant is one who performs certain fixed services periodically in return for a share of his patron's harvest. The share is a matter of custom and record and is either a specific measure of grain or a fixed proportion of the harvest, or a combination of both. The services to be rendered are also subject to fixed limits—in some villages the carpenter's limit for repairs is a day's work—and anything over and above these limits must be separately paid for, also at customary rates, which are often in kind. Thus in a Jullundur village the blacksmith receives from each of his patrons :—

1¼ per cent of his wheat and maize crops.
2 seers of wheat or maize whenever either is sown.

[1] *Census Rpt.*, 1931.

[2] Those who tour in rural areas in the north should remember this and take their sweeper with them; otherwise some Musalli will have to be 'bribed' to perform a task which, if discovered, may lead to his social boycott.

[3] p. 258.

[4] In 1931 there were 385,000 Musallis in the Punjab, nearly all in the north and west of the province (*Census Rpt.*).

[5] Chamárs and sweepers who become Sikhs are called Ramdásia and Mazhabi, respectively.

[6] Letter dated 11 March 1932 to the Secretary of State for India threatening 'a fast unto death'.

[7] Payments to the oil-presser vary considerably, see *Village Surveys*.

one of the last two pickings of cotton.
4 bundles of fodder.
5 seers of cane juice.
4 stalks of sugar-cane whenever the cane-crusher requires attention.
Rs. 2 and ¼ seer of gur when the wooden frame of a new well is sunk, and at a marriage,
1 seer of gur, food for two, and a small present in cash.[1]

And in a colony village of Sikh Jats the Brahmin's dues are :—

2 seers or more of grain each time he visits a patron's house on certain fixed occasions.
Re. 1 on the birth of an eldest son (the well-to-do give up to Rs. 5 or even a cow).
Rs. 10 on the marriage of a son.
Re. 1 when a sacred spot is visited to distribute charity in memory of the dead.
Rs. 2 sent by the bridegroom's parents when they acknowledge information about a marriage.
Rs. 5 at certain ceremonies.
Re. 1-4 for writing a sacred text on the ground with flour, and at marriages, free meals for himself and his family during the three days that the ceremonies usually last.[2]

**Income**

It is difficult to assess the earnings of a village servant when he is paid in so many different ways and for such uncertain occasions as birth, marriage, and death. In the colony village the Brahmin's earnings were estimated at no more than Rs. 112 a year, but the waterman's were put at Rs. 448 or an average of Rs. 37 a month.[3] This was before the depression, and that solid incomes could be earned then by even the humblest is shown by the Rs. 4,000 saved by the three Chamár brothers of Hansi,[4] and in 1930, when I inspected a society of sweepers in Amritsar city, I found that some of their families were earning over Rs. 40 a month. But these are abnormal figures, certainly for days of economic depression, and for village servants generally my enquiries suggest that the better placed among them now do not earn more than Rs. 200 to 300 a year, and the humbler from Rs. 100 to 200.[5] The figures of the lower scale are roughly on a level with those given on pages 223-24 for the colonist with one rectangle and on pages 252 and 254 for the peasant proprietor with one plough. If colonist and small proprietor are better off, in most cases it will only be because they have some source of income apart from their land, such as military service. Even so it may be

[1] *Village Survey*, No. 3, 9.
[2] Ibid., No. 4, 19.
[3] Ibid., 21, 2. In the same village the blacksmith earned Rs. 210 and the barber Rs. 167.
[4] p. 167.
[5] Compare the tanners of Hansi (p. 168). For the poorer and remoter tracts, such as Mianwali, the scale would be Rs. 50 less, subject to a minimum of about Rs. 100.

doubted whether in general they are better off than the higher grade of village servant.

**Agricultural wages**

The scale for the lower grade may be compared with the wages paid to the agricultural labourer, and the comparison is relevant because, as has already been explained, Chamár and sweeper provide most of the agricultural labour of the province. During my tour I asked a number of zemindars how much they paid their permanent labourers. The results are tabulated in a note at the end of this chapter.[1] They show wide variations but suggest that under ordinary conditions a labourer may expect from Rs. 100 to 130 a year.[2] The minimum would seem to be about Rs. 90 and the maximum (ignoring the exceptional case of an Arain at Sangla) nearly Rs. 200, but the higher rates are paid only for long service, or for service under the special conditions of the Nili Bár, or for skill in market-gardening. Here again there seems little to choose between the small proprietor and the skilled labourer, and in comparing the two we must remember that other grown-up members of the labourer's family are free to earn as well, whereas the small proprietor, to earn his modest Rs. 150 to 200, requires the assistance of a wife, perhaps even of a son.[3]

**Income of village servants and return of land compared**

The figures given or referred to in the last two paragraphs will be clearer if they are tabulated. This may be done thus :—

| | Rs. *per annum* | |
|---|---|---|
| *Nili Bár Colony* | | |
| (*a*) Government Farm tenants at Vihari—return per rectangle in 1934 (p. 223). | 160 | (gross return *less* cost of seed, implements, upkeep of cattle including depreciation, and all Government dues). |
| (*b*) estimated return of one rectangle, with wheat and unginned cotton selling in the village at Rs. 2 and 6 per maund respectively (p. 224). | 163 | (gross return *less* all costs specified above except implements and depreciation on cattle). |
| *One plough holdings in Gurdaspur and Sialkot* | | |
| (*a*) well-irrigated (6 acres), at prices current in March 1931[4] (p. 252). | 205 | (gross return *less* value of fodder for cattle and cotton for domestic use). |
| (*b*) unirrigated (10 acres), with prices as above (p. 254). | 126 | (gross return *less* value of fodder and cotton as above). |
| *Estimated income of village servants* (1933) | | |
| (*a*) higher grades. | 200 to 300. | |
| (*b*) lower grades. | 120 to 200. | |

[1] p. 277.
[2] Cf. *Rusticus*, 277, 334.
[3] Cf. p. 256-7.
[4] For prices prevailing at different dates, see p. 350.

*Wages of agricultural labourers permanently employed* (1931)

| | |
|---|---|
| (*a*) under ordinary conditions. | 100 to 130. |
| (*b*) if conditions or skill special. | 130 to 192. |

To this we may add the figures given on p. 349 for the farms whose accounts have been kept under the auspices of the Punjab Board of Economic Enquiry.

Average return *per acre* (after deducting all out-of-pocket costs of production but nothing on account of the cultivator's own labour)

| | Canal-irrigated land Rs. | Well-irrigated land Rs. |
|---|---|---|
| 1928-9 and 1929-30 .. | 28-15 | 25-5 |
| 1930-1 to 1932-3 .. | 13-14 | 13-2 |

On these figures it is clear that the small proprietor, whether cultivating at home with one plough or in the Nili Bár colony with two ploughs,[1] is no better off than the artisan or higher grade village servant.

**The village bakehouse**

Water is the first essential of life, more important even than bread, which cannot be grown without it. It is appropriate, therefore, that the waterman should have an honourable, sometimes the most honourable, place amongst village servants; and it is doubly appropriate if his wife bakes the village bread. Here we come upon one of those differences of custom, which are a feature of Punjab village life and derive their boundaries from its rivers.[2] South of the Ravi[3] and north of the Jhelum most women do their own baking, but between the two (as amongst the Arabs in Palestine) most villages have a common bakehouse,[4] served by the waterman's wife.[5] Like everything else it has both advantage and disadvantage. The disadvantage is that time is spent in coming and going and sometimes wasted in too long tarrying at the bakehouse, and village quarrels occasionally arise from the tittle tattle inseparable from the meeting together of uneducated or not very busy women. The

[1] Two ploughs with a yoke of oxen are required for one rectangle or square.

[2] Cf. pp. 73, 111.

[3] Hoshiarpur appears to be an exception.

[4] In large villages each quarter has its own bakehouse.

[5] The difference on the two sides of the Jhelum is striking: in Shahpur 80 to 90 per cent of the villages have a bakehouse, in Chakwal (north of the Salt Range) only 20 to 25 per cent. The bakehouse is generally confined to Muslim villages, and it is more used in the hot weather than in the cold. In Gujranwala and Sheikhupura the oven of one house is sometimes used by 4 or 5 neighbouring houses without charge, each housewife bringing her own fuel. Co-operation takes many forms in the village.

advantage is that it saves fuel, and as the commonest fuel is the dung-cake, the saving means more manure for the land. Furthermore, in a large oven any kind of brushwood can be used.

The village baking is one of the pleasantest sights that the village offers, how pleasant I did not realize until one Sunday morning I chanced to look into the courtyard of a waterman's house in a Gujrat village. There were the usual mud walls, and seated on the ground near the oven, a mud-plastered barrel-shaped hole in the ground, was the waterman's wife with half a dozen women about her, all busy, some with the kneading, others with the pat-a-cake (*pira*). Pour the flour into a shallow brass dish, moisten it with water, soften it with butter, then knead it with both hands; so might the simple recipe run. But these women needed no recipe as they moulded the dough into cakes with great squeezings of their fingers and clenchings of large-knuckled fists; nor for the more delicate business of flattening out the cake between the palms of the hand. Thinner and thinner becomes the dough, and more and more spreading the cake, until at last it is as large as hungry man could wish. Then it is lovingly placed in a shallow basket, and one by one 19 others are placed upon it. Now is the moment to rouse the fire, which slumbers in the oven, and up gets Mistress Waterman and thrusts in an armful of long bushy stems. The flames leap high, and for a bright crackling minute the tranquil faces of the women redden in the firelight. Then all is quiet and the barrel glows. Down she sits again, and chatting gaily, takes up a cake, damps it with a touch of wet fingers, and flattens it against the oven wall. And so on with cake after cake until the water at her side is white as milk and the oven white with bread. Now and then a cake unsticks and slips into the fire, but in a moment it is speared and put back in its place. The wheaten ones are ready first, the thicker millet ones last. These are so solid that one taken with a glass of buttermilk and a dish of greens gives a man a meal.

The baker provides oven, fuel, and labour, and in return receives not cash, but, after sound village custom, one cake in eight.[1] In silks she would be all delight, but even in her dark homespun she has more quickness, intelligence, and grace than all the zemindar wives who sit stolidly about her. I twitted her with not being as cleanly dressed as such work required. 'My dress above cannot be clean,' she replied; 'it becomes white with flour; but the dress below (and she lifted her black ankle-long apron) is clean.' I then remarked, with I fear less than village courtesy, that the baskets which received the cakes of dough might be cleaner. 'But,' she

[1] In Gujranwala and Sheikhupura she receives one cake per family, which is also roughly one in eight.

said with a merry smile, ' the baskets are cleaned every four or five days.' At this moment there entered with laughing eye a woman bearing in her hand a brass vessel full of moistened wheat, which she wanted parched. Her face with its bold but gently-rounded cheek bones and tapering chin was alive with the gaiety of her mind. She answered each question we put to her with quick unembarrassed humour, and only when asked of what caste she was, did she hesitate a moment and then she answered softly, ' I am a Musalli.'[1] But at this point—I was unconsciously blocking the doorway—a deferential voice said : ' There are others waiting who cannot get in.' The oven serves the village morning and evening, and as six can only knead at once, some must wait, and that there may be no favour each woman as she arrives is given a number.

**The servant's versatility**

That the servant is often quicker witted than his master is a matter of common observation, and literature is full of examples, for instance, Figaro, Sancho Panza, and Scapin. It was no accident that made the waterman's wife and the Musalli stand out amongst their fellows, or the minstrel's wife appear the most intelligent in the group of women met in Sialkot.[2] The peasant lives by his land, but the servant who would prosper by his wits. The peasant hesitates to turn his hand to anything but plough, pen and sword,[3] and even his ploughshare is blunted by his izzat-dictated taboos ;[4] but the servant scorns nothing that will add to his substance. On my tour I met men who doubled the parts of washerman and tailor ; a father and son who worked together as blacksmith and carpenter, and earning, too, over Rs. 500 a year ; washermen and tanners who were weavers ; barbers and carpenters who were money-lenders ; and, strangest of all, dyers (rangrez) employed to sink a well 100 feet deep.[5] In so caste-ridden a country as India this fluidity of occupation is surprising, but the Punjab north of the Sutlej (apart from the Himalayas) is much less influenced by Hinduism than the rest of India, and occupation and tribe are more important than caste, with which, however, they are often co-ordinated. If, in these changing times, the peasant does not wish to be outstripped by his servant, he must either develop his agriculture or undertake other activities. And

[1] See p. 266.

[2] p. 255.

[3] pp. 88, 183.

[4] Cf. pp. 50, 88, 137, 179.

[5] In a Jullundur village which recently came under survey, it was found that 6 shoemakers and 3 potters were working as weavers, 2 washermen as tailors, a waterman as money-lender and mason, 2 more as watermen and tailors, and a weaver as both weaver and dyer (*Village Survey*, No. 3, 6-8).

he should also note the servant's keenness for education, which is often greater than his own.[1]

**Relation of zemindar and servant**

In the old days village servants were in complete subjection to their 'masters', and this is still largely the case in the feudal north and west. There the fear of ejection from the village is a yoke which keeps the head bowed, and only those who own their own house and courtyard dare assert themselves. But this does not mean that the servant is ill treated. If the zemindar is master, he is also patron, and if he stands above, he also stands behind, his servant. He will help him when he comes into conflict with others and may even make his cause his own; and if he illtreats him, other zemindars may quite possibly come to his rescue. It is only in big villages, where there is a large number of servants and artisans with independent means of income, that there is any tendency towards strained relations. As a rule, there is a friendly spirit of give and take, which is well illustrated by a zemindar's reply, when I asked him (on my first tour) whether he took any rent from the barber, weaver, and cobbler who had settled round a new homestead he had built in the open country. 'God forbid,' he exclaimed. 'When a man has enough, he should help the poor.'[2] The exchange of services, which is the condition of all friendly human relationships, is most evident at a wedding. If the wedding is in a patron's house, the servant may have to work hard in ministering to a large gathering of guests, but there will be generous feasting, in which he has his part, though (like the women) he must wait until the zemindars have had their fill.[3] And if the wedding is in his own house, his patron will lend him beds and gear; possibly, too, money without interest.

**Feudal dues**

Even in the north, however, a new wind blows and, as in the days before the French Revolution, dues that had their origin in benefit and service and that have been paid for generations begin to be questioned. In one village there has recently been prolonged litigation over the landlord's right to charge non-proprietary families Re. 1-4 per 'door' for watch and ward and Rs. 2 to 10, according to station, on the marriage of a daughter for the general protection given them in their

[1] Is it possible that Christ's family may have been carpenter by caste and not by occupation? If, as writers frequently assume, He was brought up in a carpenter's house, it is surprising that He should have drawn from carpentering none of the images and illustrations which make His recorded utterances so redolent of observation and experience. The nearest approach is the 'saying' found at Oxyrrhyncus in Egypt—'Lift the stone and thou shalt find me, cleave the wood and there am I' (I am indebted to the Rev. Robert Quirk for this saying).

[2] *Rusticus*, 240.

[3] Cf. p. 21.

daily life. More questionable from the modern standpoint, though perhaps understandable when we remember the dashing type of puggaree worn in Shahpur,[1] was the levy by the landlords of a village in that district of one rupee a year from every village servant for the privilege of wearing a puggaree. Some years ago the servants refused to pay it any longer. The levy was found to be legal in a court of law; but more than the law was at stake, and the servants persisted in recusance; and, when a certain sum was decreed against some of their number, all subscribed to pay it. Then common sense and a feeling for the times prevailed and the landlords gave up their claim in return for their costs.[2]

**Tension**

In the more modern and democratic atmosphere of the central Punjab relations are both less fixed and less friendly. In a large Amritsar village,[3] finding separate banks for zemindars and servants, I suggested to the servants that they should join forces with the zemindars. Whereat their president exclaimed: 'God has saved us from their power (*hakumat*). We would rather get thirty rupees from our own bank than fifty from theirs.' This was an echo of an economic and social struggle which broke out in the general unrest that followed the war. It is not confined to Amritsar, and on my first tour I came across it in Hoshiarpur,[4] and now (1934) I am informed that the districts of Lahore, Gurdaspur, and Sialkot are all more or less affected by it. The tension, which it is important not to exaggerate, is due to four causes—the rise in prices after the war; the great increase in population; the rapid growth of the larger towns and the spread of education. These causes are closely connected. When prices rose, many Chamárs in Hoshiarpur said they would not shoulder the bridal palanquins or carry the revenue records from one place to another without payment. Similarly, in many Amritsar villages the sweepers said the same about the records. Government, they argued, no longer expects unpaid service: why then should zemindars? In Amritsar, where these difficulties were most acute, they would probably have been soon adjusted, had not the increase in population made many zemindars feel less dependent on the services of others in the field and tempted them sometimes to withhold harvest dues. The servant replied by going off to the town, and with Amritsar and Lahore so near, this presented little difficulty, and as the towns were developing rapidly, work was easily found.

[1] p. 20.

[2] Cf. Kangra, in parts of which those who were not either Brahmins or Rajputs used not to be allowed 'to erect a slate-roofed house or to beat the drum at weddings' (*Bd. of Econ. Enq., No. 9*, op. cit., 123).

[3] Manan, a village of 275 houses (see p. 84).

[4] *Rusticus*, 23.

The spread of education did not mend matters, for in these days the merest smattering of learning is enough to set a man thinking of his rights, especially when the services required of him smack of subjection.

**Begár**

The services that are most resented are those that are commonly called *begár*, a word, which like its French equivalent 'corvée', democratic lips generally mouth with an accent of scorn or disgust. Actually there is no reason why the word should inspire either. There is nothing degrading in the services it covers, and they have their *quid pro quo*. A message or an invitation may have to be taken from a patron to a relative—on the road we met many employed in this way—or word of some crime may have to be sent to the police station, or a load carried from one village to another, or women escorted on a journey, or help given to a patron in his fields when hard pressed. In return for these services servants are allowed to lop their patrons' trees for fuel, to pick their rape leaves for greens, to collect dung and stack it on their land, and to graze cattle, sheep, and goats on their fallow or stubble fields. Near Tarn Taran we found a watchman grazing fifteen goats on the land of those whose messages he carried, and not far away a waterman's boy in yellow shirt and black puggaree (the gift of his patron) was gathering fodder for the family buffalo in his patron's field of rape. And recently when a Jullundur village was surveyed, it was found that twenty-five Chamárs were keeping nineteen cows for not one of which did they either grow or purchase fodder.[1] There is an underlying equity in unsophisticated village life which the modern industrial town might envy.

**Is the village servant necessary?**

On almost the last day of my tour the question was raised whether the village servant was necessary.[2] His existence is commonly taken for granted; yet, as we have seen, the Chamár does not exist north of the Chenab, waterman and washerman are rare west of the Jhelum, and the sweeper is only used for domestic sanitation where purdah is in force, that is to say amongst Rajputs, landlords, and men of position. The barber, too, whom all employ, is not, from the western standpoint, indispensable.[3] Some reduction, therefore, would seem possible, and it would be of economic advantage to the zemindar, for at present 10 to 15 per cent of his gross produce goes in customary dues to the village servant.[4]

[1] *Village Survey*, No. 3, 14.

[2] p. 258.

[3] Cf. p. 210.

[4] In the Shahpur tahsil the percentage is actually 17 (*Assess. Rpt.*, 1924, appendix). On unirrigated land it may be less than 10, e.g. in Kharian (Gujrat) it is 8 (ibid., 1914), and in the Jhelum tahsil it varies from 8½ to 14½ per cent (ibid., 1899).

On the other hand, the present system gives employment to men who might otherwise find it difficult to make a living, and Chamár and sweeper play an important part in the agricultural economy of the province, and as a correspondent writes, ' shaving and skinning are jobs either too advanced or too low to appeal to the average villager.' For the moment, more feasible, and perhaps more important than reduction is the removal of the social disabilities attaching to village service, especially to those who perform the less considered tasks. In the more Hindu parts of the province untouchability survives, and nowhere is either artisan or servant eligible to serve on a panchayat under the Act unless he owns as much land as would almost make him a peasant proprietor,[1] and everywhere he is termed ' kamín ' or menial. This last at least is an anachronism, and surely the time has come to discontinue its use in official reports and publications.[2] The days are past when artisan and servant could be looked upon as ' a crew of patches, rude mechanicals '.[3]

**Attitude towards servants**

And educated as well as uneducated have something to learn in this matter. On one occasion on my tour my three house servants complained that there was no accommodation for them at the rest house. It was the middle of the cold weather, and all they had been offered was an open verandah for the night. Everything else was said to be occupied by an Indian official, who lived there with his servants and clerks. I went to see him, and he courteously offered me a room in his servants' quarters. But when the door was opened, all I could see was a heap of charcoal, broken charpoys, and rubbish. ' Impossible (I said) to put servants into such a place.' Hearing this, those with him said there was a room in the stables which might do. Again a door opened, and this time fowls of all ages fluttered excitedly. Eventually a large airy room which had been converted into an office was placed at my disposal. I mention the incident, trivial enough in itself, because it is typical of the way the Indian servant, who is often as good as any in the world, is expected to live. One of the things that the average house proprietor is most reluctant to do is to provide the servants' quarters attached to a bungalow, which may be highly rented, with the elementary decencies of cleanliness, ventilation, and space.

There is one village servant of questionable character, noisy habits, and ill favoured appearance, who has not been mentioned

[1] p. 142.

[2] The term is, I think, used only once in my Journal, and there deliberately to mark a most menial habit (p. 3).

[3] *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, iii, 2, 9.

and who yet has a definite place in the village community. I refer to the ubiquitous pi dog. Just as every barber, waterman, sweeper, and tanner has his group of patrons, so in countless villages dogs have their groups of houses whose exits and entrances they guard, in return for which they are allowed to 'eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table';[1] and if dogs from other houses come foraging round, they hound them away as trespassers. I have come across this as far south as Gurgaon and as far north as Jhelum, but it does not involve any tie between man and dog such as we are familiar with in the west. The whole attitude to the dog is different in the east. To the orthodox Muslim he is definitely unclean and untouchable, and in European households it is the untouchable sweeper who must be employed to look after him. The attitude of the Sikh is not very different, and if the Hindu is more indulgent, it is due to his belief in transmigration and the fear that the spirit of some ancestor may have passed into a dog in punishment for misdeeds committeed as a man. Actually, closer ties are more often found amongst Muslims than Hindus. One reason for this is that the Muslim goes in much more for sport than the Hindu, who is commonly a vegetarian, and every true sportsman has his dog. Another is that in the Muslim north[2] and west the peasant often lives on an isolated well or in a lonely moorland homestead (*dhok*) and requires a good watchdog to guard him and his cattle at night, for, as we know, 'there are thieves'.[3] But in the east and south-east of the province men live in villages and the looser 'patron' system prevails. For humans, as we have seen, this system works well enough, but it is the worst possible for dogs and gives them the barest means of subsistence. Ignored and ownerless, they lead the scorned half-starved life of the outcaste, living almost literally upon crumbs, thankful for any scrap, preying upon the filthiest garbage, and avenging themselves upon man by making night hideous with their senseless barking.

**The dog**

'I respect dogs much in the domestic circle,' says Stevenson, 'but on the highway, or sleeping afield, I both detest and fear them.'[4] There is no need to fear the Indian pi dog, but it is difficult not to detest him. In the hot weather there is no greater tormentor to those who sleep under the stars, and on nights when the moon is nearly full and seems almost to burn its way into closed but sleepless eyes, half a dozen dogs will sometimes bay and bark at each other by the hour murdering sleep. Yet what an invaluable servant the

[1] Matthew xv, 27.
[2] Cf. p. 66.
[3] p. 233.
[4] *Travels with a Donkey* (Edinburgh edit.), 300.

dog is to the peasant and shepherd of the west, and how lovable he can be when treated as companion and friend. Even in the north and west there is little lavishing of care and affection. Once seeing a dog lying in the sun near two women who were spinning, I asked its owner whether he brushed him. '*Toba!*[1] If we don't brush ourselves, how should we brush our dogs?' And so, too, to the further question whether he ever washed him. 'If we wash ourselves only once a month, how should we wash them?' A dog costs something to feed and tend, and remembering the figures given above,[2] one can understand that the ordinary peasant cannot afford any extra expenditure however small. It follows, therefore, that his standard of living must be raised before the village dog can fare any better. And in lesser degree the same applies to the village servant.[3]

NOTE.—Wages of the Agricultural Labourer. During my tour I enquired from a number of zemindars what they paid their permanent labourers. The information given me is summarized below:—

| *District* | *Tahsil or area* | *Wages*[3] |
|---|---|---|
| Sheikhupura | Colony | Rs. 8 to 10 a month plus 2 cotton shawls and shoes: before the fall in prices the money wage was Rs. 10 to 12. |
| | Sangla (market gardening) | Rs. 15 and 16 per mensem: one Arain employed on Rs. 30 *plus* 3 annas a day for food—an exceptional case. |
| Shahpur | Colony | 20 maunds of wheat[4] or Rs. 4 (before the slump Rs. 7 to 8) per mensem *plus* 2 meals a day, clothes, shoes and tobacco. |
| Jhelum | Lilla | Rs. 4 or 5 per mensem } *plus* meals and clothes. |
| | Salt Range (Buchhal Kalán) | Rs. 4 to 7 per mensem } *plus* meals and clothes. |
| | Riverain | Rs. 4 to 6 per mensem } *plus* meals and clothes. |
| Ferozepore | Moga | Rs. 100 per annum *plus* 2 meals a day, but more usually one-fifth of the produce; one zemindar said he paid his man Rs. 15 a month, but he had been 10 years in his employ. |
| Hissar | Hansi tahsil | A zaildar paid his 3 household servants Rs. 50 *plus* food and clothes and gave his 3 labourers one-sixth of the produce of the land they cultivated. |

[1] Heaven forbid!

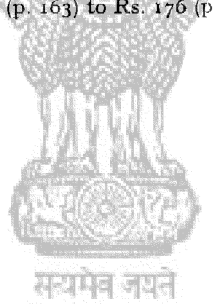
[2] p. 268.

[3] For wages ascertained on my first tour, see *Rusticus*, index under 'Agricultural labourer'.

[4] For price of wheat, see pp. 254, 350.

| *District* | *Tahsil or area* | *Wages* |
|---|---|---|
| Montgomery | Nili Bar Colony | Rs. 7-8 or at most Rs. 10 (before the slump the maximum was Rs. 13) *plus* food and clothes; but in the village visited on March 7 the military grantees said they paid from Rs. 130 to 180 per annum *plus* food and clothes. One said he paid Rs. 180 but was trying to find a cheaper man; and it was also said that a labourer had just left the village because his employer would not give him more than Rs. 130. |
| Gurdaspur | Shakargarh (Kot Nainan) | A Khatri paid his 5 labourers Rs. 7 a month *plus* food and clothes.[1] |

With these figures may be compared the wages given in *Farm Accounts in the Punjab*, 1932-3 (see p. 349), all relating to 1932-3 and affecting nine different districts. The wages of eleven permanent labourers are mentioned, six of them paid in cash and in kind, and five paid, in part at least, by a fixed proportion of the produce. In the case of the six, the cash value of the year's wages varied from Rs. 66 (p. 163), or, omitting this apparently exceptional case, from Rs. 94 (p. 132) to Rs. 147 (p. 163). In the case of the five, it ran from Rs. 109 (p. 163) to Rs. 176 (p. 32).




[1] The value of food and clothes at present prices may be roughly put at Rs. 40 a year; owing to economic depression there has been a marked tendency to substitute wages in kind for wages in cash, and for the landowner to dispense with the employment of agricultural labour. Earnings are, therefore, much reduced, and in one colony it is said that men who used to get 12 annas a day are now content with from 4 to 6 annas. The labourer has one definite advantage over the zemindar: he is usually not much in debt (1934).

The valuations given in *Farm Accounts in the Punjab*, 1932-3, vary considerably: in the case of food, from Rs. 24 (pp. 10, 163) to Rs. 36 (pp. 138, 210); and when clothes are added, from Rs. 31 (p. 10) to Rs. 47 (p. 85).

## CHAPTER XV

# THE VILLAGE WOMAN

## PART I

## CUSTOM

ON my first tour I described in some detail the part the village woman plays as man's helpmate in the fields. On my last, I attempted the much more difficult task of finding out the part she plays in the home; and, believing that people should always be allowed to speak for themselves, I ventured to penetrate into the home for the purpose. The result was a series of conversations, which I have reproduced in my journal as faithfully as I could. I propose now to consider very briefly what woman's position is in the village and how far it is changing with the times. If I seem to rush in where only angels might dare to tread, my excuse is that little information is available on the subject, and some treatment of it seems required to complete my survey of the Punjab village. On my tour, and in the two years that followed, I collected what information I could, and during the last six months Indian friends in close touch with village life, and together representing all the more typical areas of the province, have most kindly made further enquiries for me. What follows is the result of all this, but the views expressed are of the broadest and most tentative character.

**The age of marriage**

Let us start with marriage. General, but not universal, custom prescribes that girls shall be married in childhood, and that marriage shall be consummated when nature makes this possible or not long after. For centuries Brahmins have declared that if a girl were not married before puberty, 'the most terrible punishment' would fall upon all concerned,[1] and so deeply ingrained is this idea that in 1928 I was informed that in the eyes of most an unmarried daughter of 16 'indicated some defect in the brain of the parents or their financial position.'[2] The result of this attitude is the existence in India to-day of about 12,000,000 wives and 300,000 widows under the age of 15.[3] On my first tour, in one high school, I met

[1] Frieda Hauswirth, *Purdah* (1932), 53.

[2] *Rusticus*, 40.

[3] *Census of India*, 1931, vol. i, pt. 2, p. 120. In the Punjab, the number of wives and widows under 14 in 1931 was 288,662 and 4,148, respectively (*Census Rpt.*, p. 173).

a Hindu boy of 13 who was living with a wife only 12 years old, and a Sikh boy of 16 who had already lost both wife and child;[1] and in another, I found that out of 198 boys in the four upper classes 66 were married and 26 had started living with their wives.[2] On my last tour the first woman interviewed, a Hindu Jatni, was married at the age of 4 and her husband was only 9,[3] an age at which she had recently married her eldest daughter.[4] The second woman, also a Hindu Jatni, was married so young that she could not remember coming to her husband's home.[5] A Muslim woman met later on the borders of Kashmir said the same. The two women interviewed in the Nili Bár had fared a little better. One, a Muslim, was married at 11, and so was her daughter ;[6] the other, a Sikh Jatni, was married at 12.[7] The submontane Hindu Rajputs usually betroth their girls at 5 or 6, and in the eastern Punjab, where Hindu influence or tradition is strong, marriages are generally consummated at 13 or 14. In the barren north and west, where 90 per cent are Muslim, they take place three or four years later ; and in the sandy wastes bordering on the Indus girls are not married till 20 or even 25. So too was it among the Janglis, till the canal gave them the means of supporting larger families. Now they marry their girls at 14 or 15.[8] There has also been a drop of a year or two in the Salt Range where the army has brought prosperity. 'Before we were poor,' said an old man when we were discussing this. Elsewhere I have said that an increase of prosperity leads to an increase of population,[9] and it would seem that, where the former is not accompanied by education, it may also lead to earlier marriage.

Early marriage is naturally followed by early birth. The first Hindu Jatni I met became a mother at 14, the second at 15, and the Muslim at 16. This is typical, and from it springs all the wastage of a birth and death rate which are higher in the Punjab than in any other province except the Central Provinces.[10] Each of the two Hindu Jatnis had had eight children, and of the 16 only 9 had survived, and it was pathetically clear that another was doomed.

**Early child-birth and early death**

[1] *Rusticus*, 58.
[2] Ibid., 182.
[3] p. 190.
[4] p. 190.
[5] p. 192.
[6] p. 226.
[7] p. 227.
[8] p. 16.
[9] *Peasant*, 273-4.
[10] *Public Health Admin. Rpt.* (Punjab) 1932, (published 1934), 11. In 1932 the rural birth rate of the province was 42 per mille, and the rural death rate 25 (ibid., 4, 5, 7).

Similarly, the Sergeant's wife in Gurdaspur had lost 3 out of 8. Only the Sikh Jatni of the Nili Bar had lost no more than one out of 6. Early marriage is, of course, not the only cause of all this loss. As long as village midwives are uneducated, untrained, and often half outcaste,[1] there must be heavy losses at childbirth. In only one area did we come across the trained midwife, and there, in the twenty villages concerned, 600 children were brought into the world at a cost of only three lives as against a Census average of 8.[2] Even if a child survives birth, its chance of growing up is very uncertain, and in 1932, a healthy year, for every 1,000 children born 179 died under the age of one.[3] The corresponding rate in England and Wales for the same year was only 65, which shows what is possible. But in some European countries, for example Hungary (184) and Roumania (197), it was even higher. The position in the Punjab, therefore, though capable of great improvement, is not desperate.[4]

**Son versus daughter**

In one respect village custom is merciful. After childbirth a mother is allowed a fair spell of rest. The shortest period mentioned by any of the women I saw was 10 to 20 days, and in most cases it was 20 to 40. More than 20 days is probably only possible if there is someone in the house to cook and do the housework, and during part of it light work will be done. But even if only ten days' rest is taken, that is as much as a village woman expects in Scotland. As to nursing, a daughter is nursed for about two years (Juliet was nursed for nearly three), and a son for six months longer. Sometimes, but rarely it would seem, it is the other way round.[5] The women of Sialkot said they made no difference between boy and girl, for 'both come from the same womb.' But one of them added: 'For all that we love the boy best.'[6] The Sergeant's wife in Gurdaspur thought the same, and her husband's explanation was typical of the peasant mind: a boy, he said, will become 'master of the land'.[7] To the Hindu there is a mystical significance in the

[1] See *Rusticus*, 349.

[2] This figure was given me locally, see p. 79.

[3] *Health Admin. Rpt.*, 9. The corresponding figure for India in 1930 was 181 (*Census Rpt.*, vol. i, pt. 1, 97).

[4] The following figures (obtained with those given above from the Ministry of Health) may also be compared:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Scotland | 86 | Japan (1931) | 132 |
| Italy | 106 | Russia in Europe (1928) | 168 |
| Poland | 143 | | |

The Russian figures are approximate and relate to only part of Russia in Europe. The other figures (except Japan) relate to 1932.

[5] Cf. p. 229.

[6] p. 256.

[7] p. 235.

birth of a son, the very word for which in Punjabi means deliverance from hell ;[1] and there is the fundamental consideration that 'girls are the fuel of another man's house'.[2] The possibility of a substantial bride price should sweeten a daughter's welcome, and no doubt it makes her more considered, but there is always the uncomfortable thought that she costs more than a son. When she is married, she must have not only an adequate trousseau but also a handsome allowance of jewellery in order that she may be able to hold up her head in her husband's house and maintain her father's izzat.[3] It is true that money must also be spent upon a son's marriage, but 'on the work of men there is great blessing, and from it comes great produce.'[4] With a daughter, expenditure never ceases. Whenever she pays a visit to her parents, she and her children have to be given a present of clothes. In the central Punjab this must also be done when she stays with a brother, and it does not always make a sister's visit more acceptable. In many families she must have her first child at her mother's house, and this is another source of expense.

The difference made between boy and girl is particularly marked at birth. The midwife receives a rupee for a boy, but only 8 annas for a girl, and sometimes nothing at all. In the south-east the birth of a boy is announced by the beating of a brass dish, and the birth of a girl by beating a common iron girdle (*tawi*).[5] In the west only the women congratulate, and of the north we read in *Trousers of Taffeta*, which contains a remarkable study of purdah life :—'If it had been a boy that was born to Bilkis at the time of the feast two other lambs were to have been sacrificed in thanksgiving. But it was a daughter. . . The noseless servant said that the Raja swore when he heard it was a girl. But the Rani said that in his heart he was very happy about it. For a man, she explained, is always happy . . . if even a calf is born in his house.'[6] This puts the position well : a girl is welcome, but a boy is the subject of pride and rejoicing. 'Feed son and bullock well : both are breadwinners' is a Punjab saying, and, in most households, though perhaps not in Sikh,[7] a boy is a little more indulged than a girl. His dress will be a trifle better than his sister's, and if there is not enough milk or butter for both, she has

[1] *Peasant*, 50.
[2] *Parai ghar ka indhan*.
[3] Cf. p. 226.
[4] p. 256.
[5] In a village in Malwa (Central India) I was told last year that a winnowing basket is struck.
[6] Margaret Wilson, *Trousers of Taffeta* (1929), 145: compare also the curious example of inequality given on p. 149.
[7] Cf. p. 112.

to go without. The soldier's view, given me in the north, is that his son must be strong in case he wants to go into the army, and *mutatis mutandis* a ploughman must feel the same. Even in England boys were more considered than girls until woman became a breadwinner too; while amongst the Jews, to whom both Englishman and Muslim owe so much, boys in orthodox families are still taught to thank God that they are not girls.[1] Actually woman's position under Islamic law is high, higher in some respects than that enjoyed by the women of any Christian country till recent times,[2] but her rights, especially in regard to land, have been seriously curtailed by village custom, which in the Punjab has legal force.

**Training**

In one bad respect boy and girl are treated exactly alike. Amongst mothers 'only one or half a one' (to quote a correspondent) gives her children any house-training at all, and it is not until they are of an age to observe others that they learn the rudiments of self-control.[3] A twice or thrice folded cloth is placed under a babe at night and stains are washed away in the morning, but the cloth will not be changed for 10 or 15 days. It is an advantage of education that a woman who has been to school may change it every 2 or 3 days, but it is only the well educated townswoman who will have a supply of napkins, and indeed they are hardly compatible with the figures given on p. 268. The difference that early training makes in after life is so great that an Indian lady once remarked to the writer: 'You cannot live with a person for seven days without discovering whether he was trained or not as a child.'

**Religious teaching**

The first six or seven years, boys and girls all run wild in the village, the boys until they are old enough to help with the cattle or go to school, the girls until they can look after a younger child or lend a hand with the household tasks. The first of these is to wash the vessels. Then come lessons in kneading and cooking, and, amongst those who are still semi-nomad, picking the lice out of the mother's hair,[4] and at 9 or 10 a girl learns to spin and sew. The last and hardest task, corresponding with ploughing for a boy, is grinding. This may begin at 10 or 11, but the full task is not done until 16

[1] The prayer, which occurs in the orthodox Jewish prayer book, runs: 'Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who hast not made me a woman.' Since 1842 these words have been omitted by the 'Reform' Synagogue in London. Now they are also omitted by the Liberal Synagogue there (information kindly supplied by a Jewish friend).

[2] Hauswirth, op. cit., 67.

[3] Cf. pp. 70, 188.

[4] p. 229.

or 17.[1] Of systematic religious teaching there is almost none. Amongst Hindus, knowledge of one's *dharm* or duty to God passes 'from breast to breast', mainly through the medium of stories told at the witching hour of bedtime. Muslim mothers teach their daughters the customary forms of prayer, and occasionally, where the village mullah is trusted, send them to the mosque to be taught the Koran along with the boys. A few mothers teach them this themselves,[2] but a Rajput tells me that high-born Rajput matrons think it derogatory to do what they regard as the mullah's work. All that is learnt at the mosque is to read the Koran in Arabic, and, though a few doubt it, most believe this to be helpful;[3] yet how much more helpful it would be, if the mullah could expound, as well as read the scriptures. Of the importance of this I wrote on both my tours,[4] and all I need add is that, however little fully educated men may need the assistance of organized religion, the experience of peasant Europe suggests that the children of the uneducated require it as much as daily bread; but it must be the religion of the spirit as well as of the letter.

**Daughter-in-law and mother-in-law**

Every sensible mother takes pains in teaching her daughter the household tasks, lest her ignorance bring shame upon her in the mother-in-law's house. Serious education, however, does not begin until this is entered. The change then is as great as when with us a girl goes to her boarding school; and not very unlike, with the mother-in-law in the role of headmistress. Till then the girl has been free of the village and an object of indulgence and affection. But in her husband's home she finds herself at first almost an alien; her liberty restricted, even though there may be no purdah; her spirit repressed, and her whole life and being at the beck and call of critical elders. Even if the atmosphere is friendly, as no doubt it often is, it must still be completely strange; and, cut off from every former tie and every familiar sight and sound, a young sensitive creature may well feel the despair of utter loneliness. If, on the other hand, the atmosphere is unsympathetic, as must frequently happen in a country where marriage often follows a hard driven bargain, a young bride of 12 or 13 may wilt like a transplanted and unwatered flower. The authoress of *Purdah*, who writes with a peculiar knowledge of Hindu households, describes how often 'the first weeks and months' of married life are passed 'in passionate homesickness, an intense feeling of forlornness, bewildered shyness, and agonizing self-consciousness.'[5] All who

[1] See p. 227.
[2] Cf. *Rusticus*, 210.
[3] See p. 60.
[4] Ibid., 338-40 and p. 119 *supra*.
[5] Hauswirth, op. cit., 105.

have been unhappy at school will realize what torture this must mean. And the feelings are of all time. Nearly 1,600 years ago, in north Africa, St. Augustine's mother, who was married very young, suffered from them. Her mother-in-law was unsympathetic, if not hostile, but gradually yielded to her daughter-in-law's 'persevering endurance and meekness' and in the end made her son chastise those who had misled her by their 'whisperings'.[1]

**The joint family system**

Where people of both sexes and of all ages live together in a common hive, there must be a ruler, and in the east, till recently, rulers were always despotic. 'They all do as I bid them,' said a Hissar zaildar who was the head of a household of forty persons, only six of whom were servants. And a soldier of the north, speaking of his father's house, said: 'Every morning we rose as at the sound of the bugle.' Living in a large group, says the authoress of *Purdah*, 'involves enormous self-discipline on the part of all younger men; whatever their personal dislikes, or particular interests may be, they must be . . . made subservient to the general interests of the entire family.'[2] If this is so with the young men, it is doubly so with the girls. 'In the joint family, the mother, or in her absence the wife of the oldest male member, holds the post of honour. . . . Even grown sons will rarely go against her will or express wish in any matter. . . . and for a little daughter-in-law to defy her is almost unthinkable.'[3] It is as with a novice entering a convent: her will must be utterly subdued. This despotic atmosphere, whether benevolent or the reverse, has profoundly affected the relationship of husband and wife and made any real companionship between them impossible. To quote *Purdah* again, 'the child wife never opens her mouth save to answer a direct question, and then twists in discomfort if it has to be more than a mere yes or no.' In the morning she is the first to rise and, having taken the dust of her husband's feet,[4] awaits the bidding of her elders. If during the day she is sitting with others and her husband's footstep is heard outside, she must at once retire and would be 'sharply reprimanded if she lingered for a moment.[5] She is expected to cook his food but may not serve it: that is the mother-in-law's prerogative, and one jealously guarded. Harshest rule of all, she may not converse with her husband before an elder, and

[1] *Confessions*, bk. ix, 20 (trs. Pusey).
[2] Op. cit., 99.
[3] Ibid., 101.
[4] Not all do this, e.g. the Jats in Hissar. Custom, too, varies in different parts of India. I understand, for example, that it is commoner in Bengal than Madras.
[5] Ibid., 105.

in the close-quarter life of a large household there is nearly always an elder present.

Such, broadly, is the position under the Hindu joint family system, and its rules and principles influence most village households in the eastern Punjab, as the following account, which I owe to a Muslim in the south east, suggests. 'When a bride first visits her husband's home, everybody shows affection to her and she is treated as a guest. Her mother-in-law does not speak ill of her, and her father-in-law tells everyone to treat her gently and give her only light work.' After about a month she returns to her parents and sings the praises of her new home. But on her next visit she finds everyone, except her husband, a little changed—the mother-in-law less affectionate and more critical, the father-in-law indifferent, and the children inclined to tell tales against her. There is also more work to do, but her husband's love continues unabated, 'and she bears all criticism, indifference, and coldness silently until she gets an opportunity of talking with him.' Once more, after two months or so, she returns to her parents, and this time she is much less inclined to leave them, and when someone comes from her mother-in-law to escort her back, one excuse after another is made to put off the evil day. But go at last she must, and then begins the most trying time of her life. The mother-in-law now begins to nag at her, for not doing this or not knowing that, for eating too much or doing too little; the father-in-law abuses her parents, the children teaze her, and to please his mother her husband may even beat her. After this, visits to her old home have all the glamour that holidays have to a home-sick English girl at a boarding school. Once more she is petted and indulged and free to do what she likes, a sign of which in the south east is the return to the comfortable pyjamas of maidenhood in place of the heavy full-skirted ghaggra of wedlock. If she becomes a mother her position improves, but if she remains childless, she is eyed superciliously by her elders and there will be whispers of a second marriage; and to the young childless wife this is a secret terror.[1]

It can be understood that in the atmosphere just described a young wife is rarely at ease when her husband is present, and when he comes in from his work, even a wife who has been married for years cannot rest until she has ministered to all his wants. 'There is great anxiety,' said the woman of Sialkot, 'and our breath remains dry until the mid-day meal is taken out to the fields.' And they added: 'We

**Husband and wife**

[1] Cf. Margaret Wilson, op. cit., 160.

may not eat till they have eaten—never: we must always wait.'[1] This is the general Indian rule, and even a sweeper or a chamar would consider it a sin to eat first. Husband and wife, therefore, never eat together, not even in the west, where men and women often meet as equals.[2] I heard of a soldier couple in Jhelum who did it, but the village laughed and said—'they are making themselves Nawabs.' I hear, too, of soldier couples in the south east who do it secretly; but it was a soldier of the north who assured me (erroneously) that the Koran forbade man and wife eating together, 'because woman is weak and has less religious faith (*iman*) than a man and might make him weak if he ate with her.' In village India, customs are of such antiquity that what starts as *vox populi* tends sooner or later to become *vox dei*. If a wife is free from other duties and has a house of her own, with no mother-in-law about, she may sit with her husband while he eats; but, if she does this, it is probably to keep off the flies, and more often she is too busy serving him or feeding the children. It is only when both husband and children are satisfied that she can eat herself, and she must then be content with whatever scraps remain, and if unexpected guests come in, there may be not even this.[3] In other ways her inferiority is marked. She must not sit on a charpoy[4] if her husband is sitting on the floor, and if he is sitting on a charpoy, she will rarely be seen sharing it with him. In village life, woman is certainly much above the level of chattel or beast, though in treatment there are points of resemblance, but her position is definitely subordinate.

**Woman's power**

Yet, in spite of this, woman rules the home. Speaking of the Hindu woman, Mr. Sarda, father of the Sarda Act,[5] says: 'The influence she exercises in domestic matters is almost supreme.'[6] And that this has long been so is shown by the following tale. One afternoon Jehangir was wondering sombrely whether everyone was as completely ruled by his wife as he was himself. To find out, he summoned his Wazir and ordered him to visit 100 houses with 100 brown horses and one white and enquire from each husband who was master there. If he said, his wife, he was to be presented with a brown horse, but if he said, himself, he was to be given the white. When the

[1] p. 256.

[2] In Mianwali, when a bride is brought home, husband and wife eat together while they are entertaining their relatives.

[3] *Purdah*, 105; for northern India, see Lady Wilson, *Letters from India*, 105.

[4] String bed used as much for both sitting and lying, see illustration p. 229.

[5] See pp. 187, 298.

[6] *Presidential Address*, Indian National Social Conference, Lahore (1929), 10.

Wazir reached the hundredth house, he still had the white horse with him, and one brown. The man who lived there on being questioned said at once—'I am master.' Hearing this, the Wazir gave him the white horse. Now the brown horse was the better of the two, and this had been noticed in the zenana, whence came an imperative voice—'Take the brown horse.' 'Please, may I have the brown horse?' said the man. In the village it is ever said that woman rules, and the reason given is, she has so many more ways than a man of making herself disagreeable. She can bring him his mid-day meal late with the excuse, plausible enough when his fields are scattered round the village,[1] that she could not find him; she can spoil his food in the cooking, put in too much salt or none at all; when he returns weary with heat and toil, she can slap a child and make it cry at the very moment that he longs to smoke his huqqa in peace; and at anytime she can raise a noisy quarrel with a neighbour. Worst of all perhaps, for one who regards his izzat, if an unexpected guest appears, she can pretend there is nothing in the house fit to set before him. 'O Sirs,' said one who knew women's power, 'how can it be but women should be strong, seeing they do thus?'[2] It is even said that it is the women who determine their husband's votes, and that if a married daughter goes to her father and asks him to vote for so and so, stressing the distance she has come from her husband's home to make the request, 'no power on earth will persuade him to vote differently.'

## PART II

## CHANGE

ENOUGH has perhaps been said to give the reader some idea, however superficial, of woman's customary position in a village home, and we must now consider what signs there are of change. It is commonly stated that in the days of the Vedas the Hindu woman was as free as she is now in subjection, and that the change was due to obscurantist Brahminical lawgivers.[3] However this may be, the contrary process is certainly taking place today, and if the manner of her subjection is lost in the mists of time, her gradual emancipation can at least be watched and recorded.

[1] Cf. p. 203.
[2] *Esdras* v, 32.
[3] See, for example, Hauswirth, op. cit., ch. 3 and p. 62.

What follows is, so far as the writer knows, the first attempt to do this for the Punjab village.

Such change as has occurred is most marked in the canal colonies and the central Punjab, but its extent in any area will, broadly, be in proportion to the amount of education there and the rise in the standard of living. The Sikh Jatni of the Nili Bár colony thought that the chief change of the last thirty years was an improvement in food,[1] and this agrees with what I have said elsewhere.[2] An analogous change reported from various districts is an improvement in dress, which is shown by a greater demand for silks, especially the cheap silks of Japan. This is marked in Rawalpindi, a district greatly enriched by the army. Ten or fifteen years ago its women used to clothe themselves in voluminous trousers (*salwár*) of thick homespun cloth—10 yards to a pair,— and now they use 5 yards of fine mill-made cloth instead. Sleeves, once worn to the wrist to conceal the whole arm, now stop at the elbow, and here and there even high heels are finding their way into the village. The words 'fashion' and 'suit' are passing into the feminine vocabulary, and the more fashionable like shirt, trousers, and scarf (*dopatta*) to be all of the same colour. At marriage only one or two silk garments used to be included in the trousseau, but now there must be silks to wear every day. How different from the thrifty hard-bitten Jatni of Rohtak who, holding out her old homespun shawl, said—'these are my silks.' In most districts simple tastes still prevail, and a Rajput official who lives in Sialkot tells me that this is one reason why his wife prefers the town to the village. In the village it is still bad form to wear bright raiment, and a dress with any sparkle in it puts the wearer almost on a level with the disreputable nautch girl. But where a village has come under the influence of the town, fashion sets respectable ladies wearing clothes once confined to prostitutes. So is it with cosmetics in the west. How deeply conservative the village is in matters of dress, and yet how susceptible to change, is shown by the experience of another official, who told me that in 1918 when he was reading for his B.A. he bought a pair of ordinary black slippers. When he appeared in them in his village, he was called to account by the elders. 'Such shoes', he was told, 'are worn only by those of ill repute.' Five years later he found one of his critics wearing a pair himself. 'They are very comfortable', he said, apologetically. Comfort is the key to most of the changes of the age.

**Dress**

[1] p. 227.

[2] See *Peasant*, chapter viii.

There is one part of the Punjab where woman has no comfort at all. In the south-east her life is one of almost unmitigated drudgery. The Rohtak Jat's account of his wife's daily task is typical. 'She rises at four and grinds for one or two hours. . . . After the grinding she heats the water for the bath, milks the buffaloes, cleans the house and prepares the morning meal. At different times during the day she spins, draws the water from the well, and brings it in on her head.' In addition she does most kinds of field work and after cooking and serving the evening meal, and putting the children to bed, she goes to bed herself at ten for a six-hour night.[1] What makes this account so significant is that it is of the wife of an official, and not all the usual tasks are done. For instance, a sweeperess is employed to clean the byres and make the dung-cakes. Till ten years ago his wife did this too and only gave it up because, as the Jat said, 'we were educated and said it was not good.' The education of men is women's best ally, and the army is a help too. 'Since the war we have been trying to give them less to do,' said the soldiers of Beri, and they added: 'Some give the work of manure to the sweeperess; and cutting of the thorn bushes for fuel and for hedges has been forbidden by the panchayat.'[2] Even in so stagnant a district as Gurgaon less field work begins to be done. But in the province as a whole there is no great change, and north of the Beas, where much less is expected of women,[3] there is little scope for it. Even this little, however, is sometimes curtailed, and in Shahpur, in the days of prosperity, certain colony wives would no longer fetch the water or take out the midday meal.[4] In the south-east far too much is expected of woman, but this is to go to the other extreme, and though a leisured way of life may be possible for those with large acres, the experience of peasant Europe shows that on small holdings man and wife must work side by side, if they are to maintain anything approaching a modern standard of living.

**Field-work**

Within the house the change is more marked, and it is mainly due to the rise in the standard of living and to the appearance of the machine in the village; and in lesser degree to the influence of education and the town. In countless houses, the hiccuping oil engine has silenced the murmur of the grindstones at dawn, and in many the lure of mill-made fabrics has led to the spinning-wheel being half put aside.[5] It is a blessing

**Housework**

[1] p. 187-8. Cf. *Rusticus*, 103.
[2] p. 185.
[3] p. 111.
[4] p. 20.
[5] Where cotton is not grown and it has to be bought, e.g. in Mianwali and the Murree hills, its high price after the war had the same effect.

of the slump that the almost universal shortage of cash has brought both grindstone and spinning-wheel into fuller use. In well-to-do families there is a tendency on the part of the younger generation to eschew the severer tasks for the lighter, and some think that women in general are becoming less capable of hard work. In the old days, says an experienced Sikh Jat, a woman would be at work from four to seven days after child-birth, but now she rests for twenty. If this is so, it is a change for the better. A more doubtful innovation is card-playing, which he has come across amongst more or less educated women in two or three villages. Here one may clearly discern the influence of the town. The better side of all this change was noted on my first tour. I then wrote that in the central Punjab 'many women now make not only the webbing for their beds and durries for their floors, but also such refinements as tablecloths, pillow cases, and bedspreads.'[1] This is all to the good provided no essential task is given up and that articles of daily use have priority over those that can only adorn some state occasion, unless it is the beautiful phulkári.[2] Here the schools have an important responsibility.[2]

I come now to a much more important change than any yet mentioned, and one that is likely to have far-reaching consequences.

**Daughter-in-law and mother-in-law**

The mother-in-law is no longer secure on her throne, and, as with other ancient autocracies in the last twenty years, her authority is challenged. The two props of her despotism are the joint family system and child marriage, and they are held together by the absolutism of the east. Western influence is now modifying all three. Large joint families are becoming a thing of the past,[3] the age of marriage is perceptibly rising,[4] and respect for authority is everywhere declining. With smaller families and older brides, there is no longer the same need for a ruler whose word is law, nor for a mistress to guide and instruct. And if, as may well happen, the bride is educated and the mother-in-law is not, she may feel more disposed to give than to receive instruction, and she will certainly not be willing to yield her mother-in-law the unquestioning obedience of the past. In the old days, and not such very old days either, she would not sit on a charpoy in her presence and, if she ventured to open her mouth before her, it would be only to ask a question or acquiesce in what was said. But nowadays she will argue and even criticize and, as an old Subedar Major of the north observed,

[1] *Rusticus*, 176.
[2] Cf. p. 109 and ibid., 222.
[3] Cf. ibid., 12.
[4] Cf. ibid., 343.

'she takes her mother-in-law by the ears, and her husband looks on and says nothing.' The change naturally produces tension, and a correspondent writes that there are very few husbands 'who manage things so efficiently that there is no strain.'

The best way of easing or avoiding this strain, without breaking entirely with tradition, is for a young married couple to have their own apartments with a separate kitchen but to continue sharing the courtyard of the house and the family life. This gives the daughter-in-law some measure of independence and privacy, yet does not prevent her helping in the common tasks of the household. In families with no strong tradition, education may lead to an altogether separate establishment, but in the hive-like village of the Punjab it is easier to arrange for a separate cell than a separate house. In most families the old joint arrangements continue, but all my informants agree that the daughter-in-law is more regarded than she was. She is better clothed and fed—this is doubtless due to the rise in the standard of living—and when newly wed is often indulgently treated.[1] In family matters, too, she begins to be consulted. In one form or another this change is discernible throughout the province, except in Gurgaon and the extreme south west, and it is certainly a change for the better. At the same time, it is only fair to say that the old rigorous system, with its unceasing insistence upon duty and complete subjection of the individual will to the interests of the family, developed in a high degree qualities that the world will always need—endurance, patience, loyalty, affection and a selfless devotion. Modern educationists will be taxed to the uttermost to put anything as good in their place. Actually their object should be to fuse the new with the old, and no one who has the privilege of acquaintance with educated Indian ladies of the best type will doubt that this is possible.

**Husband and wife**

Deriving from the same causes as the change just described and in part arising from it, a new relationship is springing up between husband and wife. In Hindu households, child marriage and the joint family system have combined to make the tie between mother and son supreme in domestic life, and its corollary is the complete subjection of the daughter to the mother-in-law, of the wife to the husband. At present woman plays her part as mother, housewife, or drudge, or as an amalgam of all three, and for a few uncertain years she may also be regarded as desirable. As mother, she may be put on a pedestal by her son, but before she can reach this

[1] Cf. p. 227 and *Rusticus*, 193.

state of grace, she must undergo a long novitiate as servant, housewife, and farm-hand, and in this stage she is neither regarded nor treated as an equal; and in the south east she has to work so hard that she may never cease to be a drudge. Where, too, she is bought and sold, she passes for little more than an expensive chattel or high-priced investment. Thus the village woman, in regard to man, plays every part from queen to slave, but rarely that of comrade and companion. Now, however, there are signs that this is the role she is destined to play in the village of the future. If so, it will be the profoundest change of all. Family life will no longer revolve round mother and son, master and servant, but round husband and wife, companion and helpmate, bound together by different tasks but equal ties,

> Two heads in council, two beside the hearth,
> Two in the tangled business of the world.[1]

**Wife-beating**

While emphasizing the importance of the change, we must be careful not to exaggerate its extent. Amongst the intelligentsia of the town, who are quick to respond to the influence of European ideas, it has already gone far, but in most villages it does not go beyond wives being treated a little more considerately than before. Even this, however, has produced one significant change. To quote a correspondent: 'Wife is not so ruthlessly handled as before.' By this he meant that beating had gone out of fashion. A decade or two ago it was common throughout the province, and a Mianwali Pathan says that in his part of the world almost everyone used to beat their wives occasionally with whatever came handy, from a shoe to a pestle. But this was not necessarily a sign of bad understanding; generally only of anger and quick temper. Things are not very different in Russia. As I write, I read of a peasant woman who was afraid that her son-in-law did not love her daughter because he never beat her. 'I could not live,' she said, 'if my man did not beat me.'[2] In India, beating has the sanction of so august a lawgiver as Manu. He allowed a husband 'to strike his wife with a cord or a bamboo cane,' but stipulated 'that she is not to be struck "on any noble part"'. A contemporary, however, thought otherwise and said: 'Strike not your wife even with a flower.'[3] Hitherto the village has followed Manu rather than the contemporary, but thanks to the humaner influences of the time it looks as if the contemporary would win in the end. 'Stick and shoe stand buried,' writes a Sikh, and a Subedar Major, met in the Nili Bár,

[1] Tennyson, *The Princess*.
[2] Ella Winter, *Red Virtue* (1933), 96.
[3] Hauswirth, op. cit., 33, 37, 275.

remarked with a smile: 'Now if anything it is the other way.' Everywhere there seems to be much less beating than before, and in most parts it is confined to the few. Yet, that there is still room for improvement is shown by the poignant remark of a Shahpur landowner: 'Now it is only the childless wife who is beaten.'

Childlessness is more dreaded by woman than anything else. The story of Hannah and her 'bitterness of soul' and of the rival wife who 'made her fret because the Lord had shut up her womb'[1] might almost be an Indian tale. One reason for the dread is the secret terror of which I have spoken, that a husband may take a second wife.[2] Amongst Hindus, this is rarely done unless the first wife is childless, and amongst Hindu Jats there may be the further reason that a brother or near relative has left a widow whom it is a duty to wed. Amongst Muslims, polygamy is more frequent, but it is only in much evidence in landlord tracts, where standards do not usually err on the side of austerity. In the Punjab as a whole it could not be prominent, since it is a province of small proprietors and the small proprietor can rarely either accommodate or support a second wife. The new light, too, is against it, and amongst educated men the practice is regarded with increasing distaste, and by some as 'positively harmful'.[3] Moreover, however compatible it may be with the view that woman is primarily a mother, servant, or drudge, it is quite incompatible with the view that she is man's companion and equal.

**Polygamy**

In the village, woman is still far from being regarded as an equal, but her stock is rising and amongst the more educated it has risen almost to par. The Sikhs lead in this,[4] and what a middle-aged Sikh told me on my tour is worth recalling in this connexion. In accordance with old custom, his wife always touches his feet when he returns from work but his daughter-in-law, who is educated, does not touch her husband's feet. And there is the same subtle change in the generations in regard to meals. His mother would never eat before her husband, however long she might have to wait; his wife waits too, but not indefinitely; while his daughter-in-law will not wait at all. A Hindu Rajput of the eastern Punjab, whose tradition in regard to women is represented by the 'four-walled purdah', says that a wife is now heard in all family matters and, when she

**Equality**

[1] 1 Samuel i, 6, 10.
[2] p. 286.
[3] Sarda, op. cit., 10. Cf. *Rusticus*, 209 and *Punjab Census Rpt.* (1931), 177.
[4] p. 111.

acts, can count more upon her husband's support: in food and dress she is no longer treated as an inferior, and her health and well-being are more cared for. From the hills of the north comes similar testimony. One of the finest old veterans in the province, a Muslim of Rajput stock, who can look back over seventy years, said to me in 1932 :[1] 'Man and wife (*Mian* and *Bibi*), each honours the other more than when I was young: they take counsel together, and woman is no longer looked down upon.' In the west too, there is change, though woman there is far freer than in the east.[2] A Pathan from the banks of the Indus told me on my tour that in Mianwali a man is no longer called *zanmureed*—woman's disciple—if he obliges his wife. And even in Gurgaon, where change is least perceptible, 'young men of the new light now dare to talk with their wives in the daytime when others are present.'

**Infanticide**

To guard against over-statement, I should perhaps add that a Hindu B.A. told me that, though his wife has been through the high school, he does not consult her often. 'I have not excessive confidence in her understanding,' he explained. He admitted, however, that he left all domestic concerns to her, but only to save himself trouble. The Hindu Rajput mentioned above stated, in further proof that woman's position had improved, that female infanticide, to which Hindu Rajputs and Sikh Jats were once greatly addicted, was no longer practised by them.[3] And the Hindu B.A., an Arora, gave me a concrete instance of a similar change in his own family. His grandmother had four sons and thirteen daughters, but allowed only one of the thirteen to survive birth: the others were given an overdose of opium. His mother got rid of one of her two daughters in the same way, but her husband compelled her to do penance for two years. This kind of thing is now unheard of in his part of the province (in almost any part, indeed) and he himself loves his daughters best. The case illustrates a momentous turning point in the emancipation of women.

**Comradeship**

An unmistakable sign that wives are beginning to be treated more as companions than servants is the growing habit amongst village-bred officials of taking their wives about with them instead of leaving them at home. 'If my wife were educated,' said the Rohtak Jat, 'she would insist on living with me, and it would be much better.'[4] A Pathan of the

[1] I give the date here and elsewhere, since in tracing social changes dates are sometimes of importance.

[2] *Rusticus*, 343-4, 352.

[3] Cf. p. 242.

[4] p. 188.

central Punjab tells me that he was the first in his village to take his wife about with him, and he was soundly rated by his uncle for doing so. Yet now his uncle (as in the case of the black slippers) does the same himself. Sharing each other's fortunes in this way, husband and wife become united in a new intimacy, and this naturally leads the husband to consult his wife more freely about their common affairs. Now almost everywhere—Gurgaon is an exception—the wife is in general control of the internal economy of the house and of the grain supplies set aside for family consumption, and she may even have a say in the disposal of what is sold. She does not do the shopping in the bazaar, unless she belongs to one of the humbler castes or lives in the west, but the recurring purchases of food and clothes are done at her bidding, and everywhere, it would seem, the sale of ghi is her concern and perquisite. Where too cotton is grown, she arranges for its picking, and some think that the spread of cotton cultivation has helped to give her a more responsible position. In all matters of social ceremonial, whether it is a betrothal, a marriage, or a circumcision, she is consulted as to who should be invited and what presents given. A Better Living Society has little chance of success if it does not enlist the sympathies of the members' wives. Elsewhere I have related how Sikh women would not agree to a smaller allowance of jewellery unless their bibulous husbands consented to a smaller allowance of drink.[1] In short, as a correspondent from the north puts it, the wife is now 'manager, cashier, and disbursing officer' of the home.

**The frugal housewife**

The housewife is seen at her best in the north—in the district of Rawalpindi. The holdings there tend to be as small as any in the province; yet the people have achieved a definite standard of living.[2] For this soldiering is largely responsible, but in most cases—there are exceptions[3]—it would not suffice without the exercise of the greatest prudence and frugality on the part of the housewife. One who knows both areas well says that where the wife of the Shahpur colonist spends 200 rupees, the Rawalpindi housewife spends only 100.[4] She watches over her husband's expenditure and does not let him touch the grain once it comes into the house; she knows exactly how much is required to feed her household and measures out the flour accordingly. She makes her own clothes and prolongs their

[1] *Peasant*, 253-4.
[2] See ibid., 78.
[3] p. 289.
[4] Cf. p. 19.

life by mending them at once and washing them before they get too dirty. To prevent waste, she cooks for her guests instead of calling in barber or bard,[1] as many do elsewhere. And for the same reason her chapatis are smaller than usual. I know of a family in the Murree hills which owns 3,000 acres yet makes all its clothes except, as the head of it said, 'one two coats' kept for visiting 'officers'. Far fewer would be poor if they were willing to make the necessary effort to escape from poverty.

**Marriage by arrangement**

Marriage assumes a new importance when based upon companionship. We have seen that polygamy is fundamentally incompatible with this relationship, and if there is to be only one wife, she must be chosen with care. This is doubly necessary if she is to accompany him everywhere and be his comrade. In the village, amongst the young, such a thing as a love match is unknown. Marriages are invariably arranged by the parents—what else is possible with child marriage? and the go-between is usually the barber. A tiny sign of the times is that some parents now take the matter in hand themselves,[2] and as the age of marriage advances from childhood to adolescence, bride and bridegroom are not quite as docile as they were. According to strict custom, they may not see each other until the day of their wedding, and even highly educated townsmen, married since the war, have told me that they saw their wives for the first time on their wedding day. The rule is still almost universally applied in the village, but young men are beginning to question it, and one hears of stolen glimpses or even furtive meetings. One young official of 22 told me in 1932 that, despite the obstacles of purdah, he had managed to see his betrothed twice. He was unusual in another respect; he had decided not to marry until in a position to support his wife. This is a novel attitude, and if the peasant could be induced to adopt it, it would mean an economic change of the first importance. There is more hope of this in the Muslim north and west, where men often do not marry till 18 or 20, than in the east and south east, where the Hindu tradition of early marriage still persists. The Hindu point of view was put to me expressively by my B.A. friend of page 295, who said: 'Somehow or other, I do not know how, it is dinned into our heads and gets into our blood that we must all marry; otherwise there would be shame in this life and hell in the next.'[3] The removal of so grave a risk brooks no delay.

[1] The Mirasi cooks as well as sings.

[2] Cf. p. 263.

[3] Cf. p. 281.

Englishmen must naturally not judge the age of marriage in India by their own customs, which are more suited to urban than to rural conditions, to a cold than to a warm climate. To the peasant a wife is more essential than to a factory hand,[1] and in a warm country bud and blossom come earlier than in a cold. In southern Europe, which has a hot sun, the age of marriage for girls is below rather than above 20, and not so long ago it approximated to Indian conditions if we may judge by Juliet, who at the age of 13 was told to ' think of marriage ', for ' younger than you, ladies of esteem, are made already mothers.'[2] But those were days when little education in letters was considered necessary for girls. Now that a certain number go beyond the primary school, and some even to college, marriage is often deferred by the educated, and uneducated relatives and neighbours are influenced by their example. I have spoken elsewhere of a ' tendency to defer the consummation of marriage till well after the age of puberty has been reached,'[3] and in this respect much more is to be hoped from education than from the Sarda Act, which makes marriage illegal for a girl under 14.[4] This Act was inspired by the highest motives and directed to a real evil, but so far it does little more than illustrate the futility of legislation unsupported by public opinion. In the Punjab village it counts for almost nothing against custom, and in the town some think it more an instrument of persecution than reform.

**The age of marriage**

Seeing how much more effective education is likely to be than legislation, it is matter for deep regret that not 2 per cent of the females of the province (5 years and over) are literate.[5] Even in 1933 the number of girls at school was hardly more than 2 per cent of the female population as against 8 per cent for boys. Although the education of a girl is likely to affect her children as well as herself,[6] there is only one girl to every five boys at school, and such progress as takes place ' is mainly confined to urban areas '.[7] Yet I cannot doubt, after my last tour and my enquiries since, that there is now some desire in the village, particularly in the colonies, that girls should at least be taught to read and write, and it is an encouraging sign that, whereas the

**Education**

[1] Cf. the remark made by a Russian peasant woman in *Red Bread*, 155 : ' Peasants have to marry young to have children and get on in the world.'

[2] Act. I, Scene iii, 69-71.

[3] *Peasant*, 273.

[4] See p. 187.

[5] *Punjab Census Rpt.*, 1931 : the corresponding percentage for males is 10.

[6] Cf. *Rusticus*, 122.

[7] *Pb. Educ. Rpt.* (1932-3), 8, 13.

number of boys at school has fallen in consequence of the slump, the number of girls has increased.[1] With the Sikhs, education is mainly a matter of schools and teachers, and many amongst them, as Moga shows,[2] are not content with primary education. A Sikh friend tells me that he recently enquired into the circumstances of ten families of middle standing and found that every girl of school-going age was at school—amongst them one who was nursing an infant. He also mentioned the case of a Jat Sikh, whose three daughters have all taken their degree, and one her M.A., and yet he owns no more than 40 acres. In the field of female education, the Muslims unfortunately lag behind. Yet it was in the Muslim Salt Range that 50 girls followed the zaildar's daughter to school when a school was opened in their village,[3] and I believe that this would happen in many other places if schools were opened and men of influence led the way.

**Obstacles**

The slow rate of progress in female education is officially ascribed 'to the paucity of qualified teachers' and to 'the indifference of district boards'. With a few exceptions the latter, with middle-aged outlook, regard education 'as only a means of earning a living' and 'concentrate their resources on the education of the boys'.[4] This may be in keeping with the traditional view that son and bullock should be well fed, but it entirely overlooks the crying need of the Indian village for more educated women as teachers, doctors, health-workers, and co-operators; also the fact that it is becoming increasingly difficult for an uneducated girl to secure an educated husband. But in judging the progress of female education, it must not be forgotten that ten years ago objection to it was rooted and widespread, and that what is possible now was not possible then.[5] Nor can a sudden demand be satisfied at once. The financial stringency is a serious obstacle to the provision of funds, teachers have to be trained, and well trained too if precious money is not to be wasted, and suitable village women must be found for the purpose. Most of the available teachers are of urban origin, and in nine cases out of ten it is useless to send a town-bred to live and work in the village: she will be homesick, her heart will not be in her work, her teaching will have an urban bias, and she will be regarded as an alien. Even if a sufficient number of qualified village teachers could be found, there remains the immense difficulty of their accommodation

[1] Ibid., 8. [2] p. 108. [3] p. 57.

[4] *Pb. Educ. Rpt.*, 13. Even so progressive a district board as that of Rawalpindi in 1931 spent less than 5 per cent of its expenditure (5½ lakhs) on female education.

[5] Cf. p. 32, and *Rusticus*, 13-14.

and protection under conditions which in no way allow for women living alone.

**Co-education**

A partial solution of these difficulties, and one strongly advocated by Mr. Brayne,[1] would be a wide extension of co-education; but on my tour I found opinion unanimously against it after the age of puberty and much divided about it before then.[2] In Mianwali, a western district where in most villages there is hardly even the semblance of purdah, about 2,700 girls are reading with boys or being taught under the same roof, but there are few districts where there are even 1,000.[3] Broadly it may be stated that the country is not yet ripe for co-education; nor in Europe is it every country that believes in it.[4] At the same time, in a poor country like India with a vast population to be educated it is eminently desirable in the primary stage, and I am inclined to think that with persuasion many might be brought to support it, but only in schools where the staff has been carefully selected. In the village almost anything is possible if the right person leads.[5]

**Influence of education**

The most potent factor working in favour of education for women is the growing desire amongst educated men for educated wives. Before the war this desire was felt by few, but with the new view of marriage there has come an important change, for no educated man wants an uneducated companion. Nor, if he is really educated, does he want untrained children or a dirty house. As our Rohtak Jat says: 'An educated woman will see that clothes are kept clean and the vessels spotless, and she will give some training to her children.'[6] This last is badly needed everywhere, and the eastern districts have also much to learn in regard to the ordering of their houses. If the western districts are better off in this respect, the women there need education to balance their freedom, the need for education being always in proportion to liberty. North-west of the Jhelum, murders are strangely common,[7] and in one way or another woman is at the bottom of most of them. The police are hard put to it to keep them from increasing, and in my opinion this will continue,

[1] Ibid., 122.

[2] Cf. pp. 32, 60, 119, 195-6, and *Rusticus*, 154, 219.

[3] In the six districts of the Ambala Division there were only 2,668 in 1933 (*Pb. Educ. Rpt.*, 13), and in the whole province about 26,000.

[4] e.g. France.

[5] The *Punjab Education Report* for 1932-3 speaks (p. 75) of 'the increasing interest which parents are taking in the education of their daughters', and also of girls having to be turned away from school 'for want of accommodation'.

[6] p. 188.

[7] Cf. p. 37.

despite the most vigorous measures, until woman is educated. The humanizing effect of education is unmistakable. It is most evident in the great decline of wife-beating, and in a minor way in the falling out of fashion of a certain type of song at wedding and fair. At a marriage in the north west, men and women used to sing them in antiphon, but now, if sung at all, it is mostly done by the men when no women are present; not that even in the past there was much to shock the western ear if the few examples given me are at all typical.[1]

**Thrift**

One more effect of education must be mentioned. It is developing a new sense of the value of money. A certain number of women, mostly Sikhs, have sold their jewellery and deposited the proceeds with co-operative societies.[2] A Sikh Sardar met on my tour told me how he had bought jewellery for Rs. 1,000 at his marriage and later on, in agreement with his wife, sold it for Rs. 900. Adding Rs. 100 from his savings, he deposited Rs. 1,000 in his village bank. 'When I bought the jewellery,' he explained, 'there was no bank: when the bank came, it taught me much.' The number of those who sell their jewellery, except from necessity, is doubtless small, but many spend far less upon it at marriage than was once customary, and the process had begun before the slump. So far as it means a reduction in total expenditure, it is an advantage, but if, as often happens, it leads to more being spent upon clothes, the advantage is more questionable, since clothes wear out and jewellery lasts. As such, jewellery has an emergency value, and without it the peasant could not have tided over the lean years of the depression as well as he has. In the canal-irrigated areas large quantities have been sold for the payment of Government dues;[3] and for this the women of the Punjab deserve the greatest credit, for most of the jewellery belongs to them, and they have willingly surrendered it to help their husbands through a great difficulty. The important point, however, in all this is not so much whether jewellery should be bought or not, as that the peasantry should learn to spend their money wisely. This is the greatest and most difficult lesson that Co-operation has to teach, and it is only in the last few years that it has begun to teach it to women. In 1933, there were 189 societies with about 3,400 members, who have accumulated nearly 2 lakhs (£15,000) of

[1] For instance: 'Take my spinning wheel to where thou art ploughing'; and again: 'The bridegroom is the trunk of the phulâhi and we are the buds of the champak. Why, O bridegroom, do you feel ashamed? How long have we stood waiting for you?'

[2] Cf. pp. 4, 71, 113.

[3] See pp. 30, 249.

savings.[1] This is a good beginning, and development would have been more rapid but for the lack of funds. Wherever money is concerned, man comes first, and these 190 societies have a very dovelike appearance against the elephantine proportions of the 20,000 societies for men. In the field of education it is the same: in 1933, only 29 lakhs were spent upon girls as against 214 on boys.[2]

What training and education of the right kind can achieve with the roughest material is shown by a Pathan woman whom I met a year ago at a missionary settlement just across the Punjab border. Of small stature but with a lithe active body and dark brown eyes, which shone like spear-points, with hands too that moved with much of India's grace, she wore a red india-rubber cap over her nose. Her story was this. She was married to a soldier and when the war came, her husband went off with his regiment. One night a tap at her door was followed by a voice which claimed to be her husband's. Suspecting the tones, she took a sword and opening the door saw that the voice had lied. Instantly she made a sign as if there were someone behind the intruder. He looked round and as he did so the sword fell, and a single blow sufficed. Her neighbours buried him and there was no enquiry. Time passed and the war continued. Another man tried his fortune but was set upon by her two dogs and did not come again. Then troubles about her thickened, and one day she appeared at the settlement and begged to be made a Christian. She looked so unpromising a convert that she was sent back to her village; but she came back again and again until her request was granted. She then proved so untameable that she was sent to a settlement in the Punjab, and finally to one further south still. There she was once so angered by a missionary that she seized a knife and danced about the courtyard threatening her with death. In time the war ended and her husband returned. Finding her gone, Frontier Pathan that he was, he concluded that there could be only one reason for her absence. He tracked her down to her settlement and, after the custom of his race, cut off her nose. And her only comment was: 'He did this because he loved me.' The Russian peasant woman who loved to be beaten by her man would sympathize.[3] She was put into hospital to grow a new nose with skin taken from her arm, and the process was almost complete when someone put fear into her heart and she fled. Hence the rubber cap, which is her solution of the problem. Now at last she is tamed, and,

**A Pathan wife**

[1] *Co-op. Soc. Rpt.* (1933), p. 9. Cf. pp. 79, 85.
[2] *Pb. Educ. Rpt.*, op. cit., 4.
[3] p. 293.

her husband being dead, she makes her living by selling pyjama cords. At one time she got one rupee for eight, but now, since the slump, she gets one for 40. These she can make in a day, but her net profit is only 6 to 8 annas. On this she supports herself, her boy, a servant, and his two dependents. I could hardly have believed this possible but for the remark made about the firework vendor on p. 250. To sell her cords she must be continually on the move, and she is known to all as ' the pyjama-cord mother ' (*narawali mai*) ; and so well known is she that a certain political organization once offered her Rs. 100 a month to propagate their subversive ideas amongst village women, but in vain.[1]

**Religion**

This Pathani lived across the Punjab border, but there are plenty of her type within. We have only to recall the Salt Range and some of the tales told in Chapter III. There the opinion was expressed that the education of women was the best means of freeing the tract from the curse of the vendetta[2] and its brutal deeds of vengeance. But the education must be something more than the idle repetition of text-book knowledge. What tamed the Pathani was the loving-kindness of those who taught and trained her and the mysterious power that shines through all genuine religion, whatever its form and name. Without religion, said an Austrian peasant woman to me last year, our children would be like the wild beasts (*wie die wilden*). Without it, too, the old joint family system could not have produced its remarkable type of womanhood, nor the village its standard of morality. The new education, therefore, will lack a vital element if it is entirely secular ; and for this purpose it is advisable that the school should not displace the home.

**Village morality**

I have mentioned the standard of village morality. What is this standard ? it may be asked. This is a most difficult question to answer in terms of a province, especially for one not born and bred in it. Some answer must, however, be attempted, as the question touches a vital point in village life. I have had occasion more than once to praise the west of the Punjab at the expense of the east,[3] but this time it must be the other way round. In the west standards are definitely lower, and the chief reason for this appears to be the greater freedom enjoyed by woman there. The climate, too, is exceptionally hot and dry—the rainfall is everywhere less than 10 inches—and with a virile people this makes for hot blood. But it is only in

[1] I owe this story and my meeting with the Pathani to Miss Robertson and the Misses Ashby, who are doing striking missionary work of the most practical kind at Haripur in Hazára.

[2] p. 47.

[3] Cf. *Rusticus*, 344.

parts of the south-west that there seems to be any general laxity, and these are areas where the landlord is at his worst and the people have been demoralized by their poverty.[1] In both east and west, woman is protected by the powerful shield of religion and a strong village public opinion; but in the east she has the further protection of purdah or hard work. The importance of work was emphasized on my first tour,[2] and it is significant that standards appear to be highest of all in the south-east, where women work harder than anywhere else. They are also high along the hills where 'four-walled purdah' is common, and in both tracts they are probably as high as in any country in Europe. In the central Punjab the great shortage of women[3] is a difficulty and leads to considerable trafficking in women, and occasionally amongst Sikhs to polyandry.[4] But on the whole a tolerably good standard appears to be maintained, and it is according to many of my informants higher than that which prevails in the town.

The village in this respect has two advantages over the town. Its life is more public, and its public opinion more effective. A friend relates how in his youth he saw his grandfather, who ruled the village, give a young Pathan a severe shoe-beating in public for paying too much attention to a Brahmin girl. In the south-east public opinion can still make itself felt through the panchayat, and I am informed that if a Meo continues an intrigue after being warned and is then murdered, no one will give evidence against the murderers 'though every man, woman, and child knows them.' Old-fashioned methods are sometimes the best way of dealing with primitive passions, but with every decade they become more difficult to apply. Meanwhile the emancipation of woman has begun, and if the old standards are to be maintained under freer conditions, she will require a new shield, forged of the *aes triplex*—the triple brass—of education, work, and religion.[5]

**Married happiness**

Morality and married happiness are closely connected, and most couples would appear to live happily together. Only intelligent guessing is possible, but a Sikh Jat who knows the central Punjab exceptionally well estimates that 60 per cent are reasonably happy and not more than 10 per cent at serious loggerheads. Even in the lawless Manjha, wives are said to be well looked after and most couples to live

[1] Cf. *Peasant*, 113.

[2] *Rusticus*, 103.

[3] In December 1932 males numbered 13·18 millions, and females 11 millions (*Health Admin. Rpt.*, 1932, 4).

[4] *Peasant*, 52 and *Rusticus*, 7, 31, 40, 209.

[5] It is to the credit of the Punjab village that it knows very little of unnatural vice.

contentedly together.[1] Hardly anyone consulted puts the percentage of definitely unhappy marriages higher than 15, except for the laxer tracts. For them estimates run up to 20 or 25 per cent. The percentage of contented couples would seem to be highest in the south-east, and our Rohtak Jat's explanation of this is significant: 'The greatest reason why men and women live happily together in Rohtak is that they look upon themselves as the slaves of their husbands and think it their duty to do their bidding in everything.'[2] This is perhaps to secure contentment at too great a price, and it is certainly opposed to the new idea of marriage. If those who come under the influence of the latter achieve an equal degree of harmony, there will be gain, for it will be on a higher level of happiness. But domestic harmony is more easily secured when one partner has to submit to the other than when each claims to speak with equal weight and act with equal freedom. Here again the educationist has a great responsibility, and already (says the Sikh Jat) there are signs amongst the educated of tension and more frequent quarrels owing to educated girls having less disciplined minds and more expensive tastes; and he adds: 'One could hardly expect better results where school supersedes the home, as is inevitable in the hostel school, where, as often happens, the teachers are ill-educated and low bred.' What may be achieved where women of personality are in charge we saw both at Asrapur[3] and at Moga,[4] and it is this type of woman, intelligent, capable, devoted, that the Punjab, indeed all India, needs as much as anything else. Some countries have been saved by their men, but India must be saved by her women.

**Purdah and the burqa[5]**

One of the evils from which north-east India requires to be saved is the four-walled purdah, of which I spoke a little way back. I referred to it repeatedly on my first tour[6] and touched upon it again in my second.[7] I can therefore deal with it briefly here. What it means may be shown by a single illustration. The Rani's family in *Trousers of Taffeta* lived in a house with a tower, which commanded one of those superb views that the Punjab offers to those who live in sight of the Himalayas. But neither she nor her daughters-in-law had ever 'thought of asking for the impossible permission to go up there,

[1] pp. 80-1.
[2] p. 187.
[3] p. 78.
[4] p. 109.
[5] A white cotton cloak with a hood worn by Muslim ladies to conceal them from head to foot: the hood has eye-holes.
[6] *Rusticus*, 349-50.
[7] pp. 110, 195ff.

even veiled,' to see it.[1] The true Rajput, whether Hindu or Muslim, practises this form of purdah everywhere, and many who claim Rajput origin. Otherwise, it is confined to the higher Muslim tribes—Seyyed, Moghul, and Pathan—and to men of any caste who think purdah essential to their position. Fortunately, as with polygamy, only men of substance can afford the necessary accommodation and service. On the small holding, it soon comes into conflict with the economics of the family farm. In Ferozepore, we came upon a village of Arains who were doing their best to observe it, but they were like men who had lost an arm.[2] Accordingly, once the hills are out of sight and the Rajput country left behind, it is little met with in ordinary village life. Amongst Rajputs, too, it is weakening. It may not be literally true what a Rajput official writes that ' now all think of doing away with it ', but it is certainly the case that ladies who never left their houses except in closely curtained palanquins now visit each other on foot concealed in burqa or shawl and accompany their husbands on short evening strolls. On the other hand, a Muslim Rajput official, who lives in Hoshiarpur, told me on my tour that the ladies of his household were criticized for going out at dusk to see a house he was building on his land near the village, and a year later an educated Jat met in Gujrat declared that ' if woman is to run no risk of loss of honour, she is best kept in purdah '. The strength of the new current may, therefore, easily be exaggerated.

Apart from Rajputs, the four-walled system is almost entirely a Muslim institution, and in their ignorance many defend it on religious grounds. According to Lady Abdul Qadir it goes ' far beyond anything enjoined by Islam ', and it is not even ' sanctioned by the practice of other Islamic countries '.[3] In the Punjab it derives its hold less from religion than custom, for custom has wedded it in the popular mind to position and izzat, and few things are dearer to a man than his izzat.[4] It happens, therefore, that while here and there chinks and cracks are beginning to appear in the four walls of the Rajput zenana, new walls are going up in many Muslim villages to mark some freshly acquired position or wealth. In a Muslim village only five miles from Lahore, visited in 1930, it was said that since the war over 50 families had gone into purdah—all apparently to increase their izzat. About the same time a case occurred in my own compound. The waterman

[1] Op. cit., 266-7.

[2] See p. 110.

[3] *Presidential Address*, All-India Women's Educational Conference, 1931, 6.

[4] Cf. p. 50.

was promoted to the not very highly paid post of under-butler, and at once a screen of old matting began going up round his modest quarters. As waterman he had beaten his wife without shame almost in public, but as under-butler he would allow no one to see her!

It may be said that in the village, amongst Muslims,[1] any general rise in the standard of living leads to an increase in purdah. The Murree hills are a good example of this, and there the process has not been arrested by the slump, as the chief source of revenue is soldiering, and with an appreciated rupee the soldier does better than ever. In his youth, says the veteran mentioned on p. 295, the women would take out the midday meal, cut the grass, and help to reap the maize. But now amongst good families they stay at home, and if they have to go beyond the limits of the village they wear the burqa, a garment which in the old days was never seen. 'It is better so,' said the old soldier. 'There is cleanliness in the house; the children are better cared for, and needlework is done instead of cutting grass. There is modesty too. Before, anyone could see them, but now, only those of their own village. Before, we did not know the world, but we served in the army and saw other countries. Now we have civilization.' I asked whether purdah was really civilization. 'Without doubt it is, and it is what the holy Koran orders.'[2]

That housework should be substituted for fieldwork is an advantage when the fieldwork is excessive or when it can be dispensed with without impoverishment, and there may be no great harm if purdah goes no further than wearing a burqa beyond the limits of the village. But in its stricter forms it has little to recommend it. I have already described its baneful effect upon health.[3] Where no grinding is done, and few ladies are as sensible as those described on p. 197, the only possible exercise is kneading, ginning, and spinning, and this is not enough to keep women fit, as is shown by the case of the lady who nearly lost the use of her legs,[4] and even the Rajputs we met in Rohtak admitted that their women were growing weaker.[5] Such a life leads to a demand for purgatives, where (as a sensible health worker found) a skipping rope would be equally effective. There is a further difficulty. An ordinary village woman can seek the fields for her necessary occasions at any time of day, but a woman in purdah must wait

[1] The same process is apparently at work amongst Hindu Jats in the south east, if there are Rajputs in the neighbourhood.

[2] As to what Islam enjoins, see *Rusticus*, 254, 268.

[3] p. 197.

[4] p. 197.

[5] pp. 196-7.

till dusk, unless a sweeperess is employed, and north and west of the Chenab this is difficult.[1] If purdah has a bad effect upon the body, it seems also to have an unwholesome effect upon the mind. By concentrating it upon a few interests, not always the healthiest, it tends to make it ' peevish, irritable, and suspicious', and develops what may almost be called a purdah psychology. If only on this account, it seems of doubtful wisdom to carry on the education of village girls, as is commonly done at present, under purdah conditions. These conditions are foreign to the ordinary village girl, and many girls become acquainted with them for the first time when they go to school. An official tells me that this happened to his daughter, and that as long as she was at a purdah school she wanted to go into purdah, and it was only when she found herself in the freer conditions of a high school that she changed her mind.[2]

Human personality has such native vigour that the worst conditions will not stifle it. Even in the four-walled purdah remarkable women are found. One such has just died in Jhelum. Left a widow in 1904, till her death she managed half the family estate, which covered several thousand acres. She had no son, and would allow her son-in-law no say in the management. Part of the land she leased and part she farmed herself. She collected all her rents, was prompt with her land revenue payments, and never took a tenant to court. Her tenants feared her and would not dream of stealing even a handful of grain before division. She managed them through their wives, to whom she was always accessible for advice and assistance, and she endeared herself to their children by timely presents of sweets. I suspect that India has many such women.[3]

**Semi-purdah and the veil**

In the village real purdah is confined to the higher castes and the gentry, or to those who would pass as such. There is besides a much milder form which obtains in the eastern Punjab and is as characteristic of Hindu and Sikh as the other is of the Muslim. With his Hindu traditions[4] the Muslim practises it too, but in the Muslim west (and also in the Salt Range) it is not practised at all. It is typified by the *ghund* or veil, which in certain circumstances is drawn across the face, and may be called semi-purdah. The rigour of full purdah derives from the terrors of past invasions, but the more human veil owes its origin to the rules and restrictions of the joint family system.[5] These required that a woman should veil herself

[1] p. 266 n.2.
[2] Cf. p. 110.
[3] I owe the facts of this paragraph to Mr. J. C. W. Eustace, I.C.S.
[4] Cf. pp. 8, 74.
[5] See p. 285.

in the presence of an elder, superior, or stranger. They also forbade all intercourse between a daughter-in-law and a father-in-law and even between a wife and her husband's elder brother. A Sikh Jat relates how one night his sister's father-in-law arrived at her house unexpectedly when her husband was away and after all the servants had gone to bed. Not a word was exchanged between them, and he could no more ask her for food than she could offer it: so he went supperless to bed. A *reductio ad absurdum*, but Hindu custom has never been afraid of that. The story, however, belongs to an age that is passing, and now many daughters-in-law move about unveiled in the presence of their fathers-in-law. Clothes, too, begin to be designed more for comfort than concealment. Close-fitting sleeves take the place of loose. The voluminous ghaggra skirt is no longer always worn over the pyjama trousers, and even the veil is undergoing a subtle change. Once so thick that nothing could be seen through it, and so full that it could envelop the whole head, it is becoming semi-transparent and, if it is long enough to be drawn across the face, it is sufficient.

Where few are educated and the sun is hot, there is much to be said for the veil, and village women will perhaps be wise not to let it become too transparent. For the four-walled purdah all that can be said is that it is a powerful shield, but it is one that is liable to crush the bearer by its weight. It is dangerous to prophesy, but it would seem as if it were doomed. The trend of the times and of Islam outside India is against it. Ten years ago, in Central Asian cities like Tashkent and Samarcand, it was difficult to see a woman's face. Now, it is said, one must search them 'with candles' to find a woman in a veil.[1] Even in Lahore, Muslim ladies of position have begun to appear in public, while amongst educated Hindus and Sikhs hardly a vestige of purdah remains.

**Birth control**

There is one thing that the village woman of the future is likely to desire even more than freedom—a higher standard of living. With modern resources there is no reason why this should not be achieved on a wide scale, provided prices rise; but it will be most difficult to maintain it, if birth is not in some measure controlled. When prosperity was at its height and the standard of living was rising all over the province, I wrote that 'in this country every material blessing was ultimately neutralized by an increase in population',[2] and I ventured the prophecy that the canal colony districts would 'eventually become as indebted as any other part of the province'.[3] The last

[1] Wicksteed, op. cit., 173.
[2] *Peasant* (1st edn.), 286.
[3] Ibid., 253.

ten years have brought this prophecy very near to fulfilment. In the decade ending 1931, the population of Lyallpur increased by 18 per cent[1] and in 9 years (ending 1933) its mortgage debt rose by 240 lakhs,[2] and with the fall in prices it has had to make drastic changes in its standard of living. What is true of Lyallpur is true, in some degree, of every part of the province that was once prosperous. In ten years (1921-31) the population of the Punjab increased by 14 per cent,[3] and it is still increasing at the rate of over 300,000 a year.[4] Though the canals have brought more land under cultivation and in some parts cultivation is becoming more intense, production is not keeping pace with the increase ;[5] nor is industry capable of absorbing it.

The situation affects the town as well as the village, and it is being met there, as in Europe, by the adoption of birth control. On my first tour I noted that this had begun to be discussed ' in town and market ',[6] and since then it has passed with many from discussion to practice. It would have spread even faster were more women educated, for what is possible with an educated, is difficult with an uneducated woman. A Sikh tells me that when he married, his wife was barely literate and nothing was possible ; but since she matriculated, the position is different, and now after eight years he has only two children, whereas his brother, whose wife is uneducated, has ten. A Hindu, whose wife too is uneducated, says that when he found himself with three children and without a job he tried to persuade her to adopt certain measures, but she did not find them ' convenient ' and was too uneducated to understand their importance. They therefore keep much apart, which is not easy for young people. On the other hand, his younger brother—he himself is only 33—has followed nature and has eight children.

These few examples are typical of the educated townsman, and the well educated village-bred official is also beginning to be affected, an instance of which I have given on p. 213. The peasant attitude is much more primitive and was poetically expressed by the Rohtak Jatni on p. 193. ' Mother earth ' she said, ' is not satisfied with the amount of rain, nor is mother woman with the number of her children.' I doubt whether there is any part of India of which this is not typical. A year ago I

[1] *Peasant* (3rd edn.), 1925, 274.
[2] *Land Revenue Admin. Rpt.* (Statement XXIV), 1931.
[3] From 20·68 to 23·58 millions.
[4] *Health Admin. Rpt.* (Punjab, 1932), 3.
[5] In the last census decade the total area under the plough increased by only 4½ per cent. (*Punjab Census Rpt.*, p. 31) ; see also *Agricl. Rpt.* (Punjab, 1932-3), 1.
[6] *Rusticus*, 209.

asked the wife of a headman in Central India how many children a woman should have. Spreading out a fold of her dress, she replied : ' As many as God will put into our lap.' And two years earlier the woman of Sialkot had said the same. But amongst them was one, a Minstrel's wife, who thought four sufficient.[1] The Sergeant's wife in Gurdaspur went further and was in favour of only two, while her daughter, remembering perhaps recent pains, said one was enough.[2] This is a new voice in Indian village life, and it is inspired by two feelings. The first is profoundly human : there comes a point when woman feels she can bear no more. ' I have borne him 14 children,' said the servant's wife mentioned on p. 212 : ' I cannot bear him another.' Doubtless women have felt this from the beginning of time, and if this feeling begins to find expression now, it is partly because a long spell of peace has made the times more humane. The second feeling is entirely modern. ' If (said the Minstrel's wife) there are more than four, we cannot give them proper care : they can't get shirt and shoes, and they run about naked.'

Elsewhere I have said that sooner or later the question of birth control would have to be faced in the village.[3] In my judgement the time has now come. The fall in prices has lowered the standard of living and doubled the burden of debt.[4] And this coincides with the addition, in ten years, of 34,000,000 to India's population. Even if prices rise, no standard of living could long hold its own against such a swarming of new lives. And there is much more at stake than the standard of living. It is estimated that every year about 200,000 mothers die in child-birth. Is it surprising that in these humaner times the new voice begins to be heard ? Even before the slump, peasants in the central Punjab were resorting here and there to midwife and doctor for help ;[5] and now one who knows the country between the Beas and the Sutlej well writes that ' even the ignorant and the illiterate have begun to realize the necessity for some sort of check '. Moreover, the checks that 20 or 30 years ago used to be applied in good Hindu families are now less in use. In those days, young couples had to work hard by day and were not allowed separate rooms at night ; and they were forbidden stimulating food such as onions and garlic, and partook sparingly of meat and fish, and rarely of anything flavoured with spices. With the weakening of the joint family system, these restrictions are difficult to enforce. And another

[1] p. 257.
[2] p. 235.
[3] *Peasant*, 273.
[4] Ibid., 17.
[5] See p. 212, and *Rusticus*, 39.

point may be urged. Now that the town is becoming increasingly familiar with birth control, it is only a matter of time before the knowledge percolates through to the village—everywhere the lorry is bringing them closer together—and when such knowledge comes, the peasant should not be left without advice. Otherwise he is likely to resort increasingly to midwife and quack. Here a lesson may perhaps be learnt from Russia. There, too, a vast peasant population is increasing fast—in 1930 there were 20,000,000 more than in 1924[1]—and apparently women 'no longer want to bear as many children as in the old days'.[2] But they are not being left without guidance. 'Medical commissions' on their rounds discuss the matter with them, information is freely given at 'all clinics and consultation centres', and abortion is legalized.[3] This brings me to my one and only recommendation. The whole question, which is primarily one for the medical expert, should be carefully considered by a small committee of experienced doctors, some of whom should be women, and a policy formulated; so that those who are working for the improvement of village life and who care for the welfare of the village woman may know what advice to give the peasant on this most difficult and vital question.[4] At present all is darkness.

**Summary**

Ten years ago, in ending *The Punjab Peasant*, I spoke of 'the dawn of self-consciousness' in the village. I was then speaking of men. It is now almost time to speak of it amongst women. The changes we have sketched are due to three main factors—the rise in the standard of living, the spread of education, which affects many more than those who actually receive it, and the general trend of the times since the war. Most of them are due to the combination of two or more of these factors, and their extent in any part of the province—there is much variation—is in ratio to the strength of each factor operating there. Much the most important change is the re-orientation of family life to the relation between husband and wife instead of to that between mother and son. This is a tendency only, and often not very perceptible, but everywhere the power of the mother-in-law is shaken, and in educated households, especially amongst the Sikhs, there is arising in its place a closer and more equal tie between

[1] *The Economist* (*Russian Supplement*), 1 Nov. 1930. On 1 April 1930, the total population was 158 millions.

[2] Ibid., 344.

[3] Winter, *Red Virtue*, 142-3.

[4] How vital I have tried to show in *Peasant*, 17, 272-3. Cf. also the following from A. L. Bowley and D. H. Robertson's *Scheme for an Economic Census of India* (1934), 61: 'There are good reasons for regarding the problem of population as the gravest of India's problems.'

husband and wife. If settled government continues, this is likely to be the most far-reaching effect of British rule. With the new orientation, inequalities between the sexes are less marked, wives are better treated in the matter of food and dress and more freely consulted in household affairs, and education is no longer regarded as superfluous for girls. This in its turn is leading to somewhat later marriages and to a more careful choice of bride or bridegroom. Polygamy, too, is viewed with growing disfavour, and amongst those who have practised it for generations the four-walled purdah is weakening. So, too, is the system of semi-purdah, which is common amongst Hindus and Sikhs. On the other hand, amongst those who have risen on the tide of prosperity or fortune there are many, chiefly Muslims, who have marked their new position by putting their wives into purdah. On the whole, village morals are sound, and the general level of domestic happiness is high. Both, however, are threatened by the relaxing of various restraints, and it is important therefore that the education given to girls should not be of an entirely secular character, and that the school should not be allowed to supersede the home. Within the home, the greatest need is the more careful training of children in infancy and childhood, but this is difficult with constant childbearing, and impossible where field work is as heavy as it is in the south-east. There is some slight indication that the latter is not quite as severe as it was, and here and there there is the budding of a desire for fewer children. In a primitive agricultural country, where settled government prevails and people no longer die of famine, and disease is more and more systematically fought, population tends to increase so fast that no modern standard of living can long be maintained without some form of birth control. The last ten years suggest that this is likely to be true of the Punjab. It is time, therefore, that the whole question of control should be carefully considered by experts and a policy formulated.

Enough has been said to show that there are the stirrings of a new life in the village home. As the women of Sialkot remarked: 'There is great change; a new wind blows.'[1]

[1] p. 257.

## Chapter XVI

# RECAPITULATION AND RECONSTRUCTION

In this concluding chapter some recapitulation is necessary, if only because the facts of the journal relate to three years ago and the enquiries begun then have been continued since.[1] On certain questions, for example those relating to panchayats,[2] hoarding,[3] and poultry,[4]—to name three very different subjects—my opinion has already been stated and I have nothing fresh to add. But others require a few pages of discussion and summary, and the thread that runs through them is their bearing upon the vital question of reconstruction. I propose first of all to consider the fall in prices since, for the time being at least, it represents the frame to which any picture of the future must be fitted.

## *The Fall in Prices*

**General features**

The main features of the fall in prices are now only too well known. To quote a report of the Economic Committee of the League of Nations, in 1930 'a fall, sometimes catastrophic, spread with extreme violence to almost all agricultural produce. It was so rapid that at the end of the year [when my tour began], whilst some products reached the pre-war level of prices, others fell as low as one-quarter or one-half below the 1913 level.'[5] The cultivator was the first to suffer and has since suffered more than anyone else. For some time, while receiving much less for what he sold, he had to go on paying the old or slightly reduced prices for his purchases. And even when they fell, they fell less than agricultural prices.[6] This is reflected in India's trade returns, which show that her exports, 'which are mainly

[1] When I was Commissioner of Rawalpindi (July 1931 to March 1933), nearly 900 officials and non-officials called upon me, and many of them gave me useful information, not only about the Rawalpindi Division (six districts) but also about the canal colonies outside it, where many had land.

[2] p. 142.

[3] p. 152.

[4] pp. 179-80.

[5] *The Agricultural Crisis* (1931), i, 22.

[6] The greatest decline in price has been 'in purely agricultural products' (*The Economist*, 14 October 1933).

raw materials, have fallen out of all proportion to her imports, which are mainly manufactured goods.'[1] In the Punjab the fall is best gauged by its effect upon cotton and wheat, the two chief money crops of the province. In 1929, the wholesale price of wheat in Lahore averaged Rs. 5-3-5 per maund, but by the end of 1930 it had fallen to less than Rs. 2.[2] The same year the price of cotton also fell over 50 per cent, and neither has recovered much since. The effects of this have been felt everywhere though in very varying degree. Upon the canal colonies, which are the great exporting centres of the province, they have been shattering; and for a reason that will appear shortly, they have been severe in all canal-irrigated tracts. But in Rawalpindi and Kangra, where holdings are so small that agriculture is almost a subsidiary industry, they have been very lightly felt, and in certain areas, such as the Salt Range and the Murree Hills, where there is a steady inflow of cash from military service and grain has to be imported for food, the fall has brought benefit rather than disaster.[3] Even Jullundur has not been very hard hit, for its farming is still mainly for subsistence, and in the past emigrants from the district have remitted or brought back large sums, a considerable part of which a thrifty peasantry has invested or placed on deposit.[4] But these cases are exceptional, and of the province as a whole it may fairly be said that the fall in prices has destroyed its prosperity as suddenly as the sand storm of 1928 destroyed its wheat.

**Landlord and tenant**

The resulting burden would have been intolerable but for the fact that large payments are still made in kind and service. Forty or fifty years ago the zemindar or peasant proprietor might have been defined as one who produced as much as possible of what he needed himself and obtained everything else by barter. In those days cash was hardly seen in the village, and even now there is probably no district where more than 75 per cent of village dealings are in cash, and in some the proportion is less than 25 per cent.[5] In the past many western pundits have urged the superiority of a money economy over one based on service and kind, but fortunately the Punjab peasant has been slow to give up ancient usage, and when the slump came, ancient usage proved much more adaptable than modern.

[1] L. C. Jain, 'Economic Depression in India', *Indian Journal of Economics*, January 1933, 348.

[2] *Public Health Admin. Rpt.* (Punjab, 1930), 1, and p. 2 *supra*.

[3] In 1932-3 the percentage of recoveries by co-operative societies was highest in Kangra (*Co-op. Soc. Rpt.* (1932-3), 26).

[4] In 1930-1 and 1931-2 Jullundur received 50 lakhs from outside.

[5] See p. 17.

This has been most conspicuous in the matter of rents. In the United Provinces rents are mostly in cash and had to be reduced by 4 crores (£3 millions),[1] and it was only after great strain and friction that the adjustment could be made. In the Punjab, on the other hand—the south-east is a partial exception[2]—rents are nearly all in kind[3] and adjusted themselves automatically to the fall in price.[4] This operated on so large a scale—there are over 2 million tenants in the province[5]—that the landlords who receive their rents in cash found themselves obliged almost at once, by sheer force of example, to reduce or remit their dues. Owners who before the slump had let their colony squares at Rs. 20 an acre or more had not the face to insist upon payment in full when all round them rents in kind were falling. The very first day of my tour I found this influence at work, and as the tour proceeded, its effect became more and more marked. From the start, therefore, the landlord has shared to the full in the burden of the fall, some instances of which are given in the journal.[6] But the landlord's shoulders are stronger than those of the peasant, and how weak the peasant who owns only one plough has become is shown on pp. 252-54.[7]

**Zemindar, artisan and servant**

It is not only rents that are paid in kind. We saw in Chapter XIV[8] that the wages of the agricultural labourer and the services of the village servant were also largely paid in this way, and the effect upon cash wages and payments has been the same as upon cash rents. By increasing the purchasing power of the rupee, the fall in agricultural prices had the immediate effect of increasing all real wages paid in cash. At the same time it reduced the income of those who received their wages in kind, since some part of what they received had to be sold to meet miscellaneous purchases. It happened, therefore, that the income of the weaver, who is commonly paid in cash, rose, while that of the blacksmith, who is paid in kind and who might be living next door, fell. In the town, where few know their neighbours, the inequity of this might long have passed

1 *U.P. Land Revenue Admin. Rpts.*

2 Trevaskis, *The Punjab of To-day*, I, 218.

3 For instance, in the Upper Jhelum Colony only 8 per cent of the rents are in cash (*Gujrat Settlement Rpt.*, 1930).

4 Cf. p. 1.

5 *Punjab Census Rpt.* (1931), 223.

6 Cf. p. 169. The Sikh landowner mentioned on p. 104 informs me that his income, which from 1916 to 1928 had always exceeded Rs. 7000, fell in 1931 to Rs. 450. (In 1931 it recovered to Rs. 1040.) The fall in prices has led to a general abandonment of cash rents, as tenants won't pay them; cf. p. 106.

7 Cf. also pp. 349-50.

8 p. 266.

unnoticed, but in the village it became manifest at once. Before the end of 1930 landowner, artisan, and servant were getting together to discuss reduction, and before the end of my tour I had come across carpenters, masons, and agricultural labourers who had agreed to a 25 per cent cut, butchers and milk vendors who had reduced their prices correspondingly,[1] mullahs who were performing marriages for only Rs. 1-4—'as it used to be when I had no beard,' commented an old peasant—and even pirs who were glad to accept from their disciples 8 or 12 annas instead of the customary rupee.[2] Tailors, in some places, refused to make a change on the plea that they had to pay as much as ever for their sewing machines, and here and there weavers objected to reduction on the just ground that they had been underpaid in the past.[3] Broadly, however, it may be said that, as with landlord and tenant, the adjustments between zemindar, artisan and servant, were promptly and amicably made. All of which shows that, in the village at least, there is more to be said than is commonly supposed for medieval methods of business, and for a system of exchange directly based upon commodities and service instead of upon money, over which the world has lost control.

**Debtor and creditor**

The two most difficult adjustments have been those between debtor and creditor, and between landowner and Government; in both cases because payments have to be made in cash or in terms of cash. A hundred years ago, could a crisis of this kind have arisen, adjustment would have been easy, for everything was then on a grain basis; and fifty years ago it would not have been difficult as between debtor and creditor, for most dealings were still in kind and entered in the accounts accordingly.[4] But now, whatever form they take, and since the slump repayments in kind have much increased, it is only in a very few areas that they are not debited and credited in cash.[5] The effect of this has been roughly to double the burden of agricultural debt. Where, for instance, in 1929 a peasant could have cleared his debt by selling 100 maunds of produce, he must now sell 200 or more. The only exception to this is the interest paid upon the usufructuary mortgage. As explained on page 104, the fall in prices had the effect of halving the rate of interest on this type of mortgage, and as about half the proprietors' debt of the province

[1] From 8 to 6 annas a seer in the case of meat, and from 3½ to 2½ annas a seer in the case of milk.

[2] Cf. p. 106.

[3] Cf. pp. 106, 264.

[4] *Peasant*, 198.

[5] See p. 148.

was held in this way in 1930[1]—it does not apply to mortgages made since—the relief is considerable.

**Recoveries**

Although the money-lender has adopted more modern methods of accounting, fortunately he remains at heart a medievalist. On my tour I took every opportunity of discussing the situation with him, and three of the discussions have been briefly recorded.[2] These show his general attitude since the fall in prices. His policy is to snatch at any recovery, however small, and for the rest of his dues to wait patiently till prices rise. Nothing that the peasant offers is refused, and the most ill-favoured cattle are taken at the highest possible valuation. If a debtor has little to give and his bond is about to expire, every effort is made to persuade him to renew it, and the hook is usually baited with a substantial reduction of interest. In one area money-lenders were obliged by the collective action of the village temporarily to discontinue or reduce interest charges on old debts and to refer disputes to the village panchayat. Even in normal times they are most reluctant to take their clients to court, knowing well how tedious, expensive, and uncertain are the ways of the law. The depression has made the expense more burdensome and the chances of recovery more precarious. In general, therefore, unwilling to throw good money after bad, they have sued only the uncompromising, and even then they have made little attempt to execute their decrees unless they had good reason to believe there was something to be had. The result is a virtual moratorium of debt.

**Strain and settlement**

It was not to be expected that so great a storm could be weathered without some sign of strain between borrower and lender. We came across a hint of this occasionally,[3] but nowhere on any serious scale except perhaps in parts of Rohtak, where, however, relations were strained before the slump.[4] In some colony areas there was a little difficulty, but in colony villages the position is apt to be complicated by the absence of traditional ties. Where these exist, and still more where the village community retains some of its ancient cohesion or a tract of country is occupied by a single tribe, the money-lender rarely takes up an uncompromising attitude.[5] Panchayat and arbitration society have also been useful, not only in reducing claims but in arranging for payment by instalments, which have sometimes been spread over five or ten years.[6] The net result has naturally

[1] *Pb. Bkg. Enqy. Rpt.*, 164.
[2] pp. 100, 146, 174.
[3] pp. 16, 147-8.
[4] p. 175.
[5] Cf. pp. 54, 103.
[6] Cf. p. 139.

been a great reduction in the village money-lender's profits. Before the fall in prices, these were estimated at about 12 to 13 per cent,[1] but it may be doubted whether since then they have exceeded 5 per cent, and it is generally agreed that he has been almost as hard hit as the peasant.[2] In one respect, at first, he fared worse. Together with the commission agent, who too is often a money-lender, he stores most of the surplus wheat of the province, and in 1930, when the wheat market collapsed, he was involved in heavy loss.[3]

**Contraction of credit**

From the peasant's inability to repay his loans there ensued a severe contraction of credit. Recovering little, the money-lender had little to lend, and that little he hesitated to advance, so doubtful had recovery become. As far as possible he restricted his loans to clients he could trust, and to others he lent only so much as was necessary to keep them to heel. With most he insisted upon security and, even when jewellery was pawned, charged 15 or 18¾ instead of the customary 12 per cent.[4] Unsecured loans, so common in the past, he almost entirely refused, except to good clients or in small sums at high rates. Co-operative credit societies, though they have not put up their rates, have also been compelled to reduce their loans, and in 1932-3 advanced an average of only Rs. 16 per member. These restrictions were felt acutely by the peasant, since for a whole generation, with land ever rising in value, he had been able to borrow freely; so freely that the prosperity which should have made him independent of the money-lender has enormously increased his debt.[5]

**Revenue-payer and government**

Ultimately, the most difficult adjustment of all will be that between debtor and creditor, but more difficult at the outset was that between peasant and Government. Government could not, like the money-lender, rest content with a few annas in the rupee of its dues and wait for the rest till prices rose: its obligations are heavy and unceasing and must be met punctually. Nor yet could it expect to get a full 16 annas from an impoverished peasantry. Large remissions were therefore made, by 1933, totalling nearly £2 millions.[6] That the balance was collected with little more use of coercive processes than usual was due, on the one hand, to the tact and efficiency of the administration, at the head of which was a Governor who understood

[1] *Pb. Bkg. Enqy. Rpt.*, 137.
[2] Cf. p. 148.
[3] Cf. p. 208.
[4] p. 249.
[5] e.g. from 90 crores in 1921 to 140 in 1930 (*Peasant*, 16).
[6] p. 225, n.3.

the peasant well,[1] and on the other hand, to the fortitude and good sense of the people.

**Jewellery**

One of the ways in which this good sense was shown was by the sale of jewellery. In the days of high prices it was almost as if the five rivers of the Punjab had become six, the sixth a river of gold. Bullion poured into the province at an average rate of four to five crores a year, of which 3½ or more were converted into jewellery.[2] Most of this probably found its way into the colonies and Lyallpur alone is said to have spent over £200,000 (28 lakhs) a year on ornaments.[2] At the time, the colonist was generally condemned for hoarding, and in so far as he borrowed to buy jewellery, the reproach was amply deserved. But in so far as he bought it out of income, he showed a certain prudence. Doubtless he could have employed his surplus better, had he had more knowledge of the use of money, but most certainly he could have employed it worse; for instance, on litigation or such ephemeral things as clothes. In an emergency ornaments can be melted down, and after England went off the gold standard, they could even be sold at a profit; this, too, at a time when most investments could only be sold at a loss. The chief difficulty in utilizing this resource was woman's right to the jewellery; but though this must often have led to pawning rather than selling, large quantities were sold; which is further evidence of the goodwill generally subsisting in the village between husband and wife.[3] Nor was there any real injustice in Government's demand being paid in part from these reserves, since Government did not raise its charge for water till long after prices had risen, and all through the period of prosperity it took no more than 5 or 6 per cent of the gross produce in land revenue as against 30 or 40 per cent taken by the Sikhs.[4]

**Sale of gold**

Some have supposed that the peasant was only induced to part with his gold by the appreciation in its value when England gave up the gold standard. My journal shows that this is not the case and that it was already being sold in the cold weather of 1930-1 to meet Government dues. The following summer, the market price of wheat having fallen to Rs. 1-6 a maund, sale in canal irrigated tracts became very brisk, and it was estimated that in July and August of that year, when Government was collecting its summer dues, the shroffs of Amritsar bought gold in the central Punjab to the value of 64 lakhs as against only 17 lakhs twelve months earlier, and three-quarters of this is said to have come

[1] Sir Geoffrey de Montmorency, G.C.I.E., K.C.S.I., K.C.V.O., C.B.E.

[2] *Pb. Bkg. Enqy. Rpt.*, 149.

[3] See p. 304.

[4] *Peasant*, 231.

from village sources.[1] Even when the price of gold rose 50 per cent,[2] nearly all the gold that came upon the market from the village—and most of it came from this source—was distress gold,[3] and those who were not obliged to sell, for instance the larger landowners, did not do so. In the town, too, it is only the very modern-minded who are prepared to part with their ornaments for any other reason but necessity. So strong is this feeling amongst Hindus that one of them said to the writer that a wife would only part with her jewellery ' to save the life of her husband ', and a gazetted officer informed him that when he proposed to his wife that they should sell their jewellery as gold was so dear, she refused, saying they had enough for their living and should keep the jewellery for use as a last resource. Actually, it is the last resource but one: the last is the house.

**The standard of living**

We have now seen how the fall in prices was adjusted between landlord and tenant, zemindar and servant, debtor and creditor, revenue-payer and Government. One further adjustment was necessary—a reduction in the standard of living, which had risen all over the province.[4] This was most needed in the canal-irrigated tracts,[5] where the rise had been greatest and the demand for cash was strongest. It may be said that the depression was felt in ratio to the use previously made of cash. The rupee famine was so great that in many villages it became difficult to change a ten rupee note, and the position described on p. 248 applies far beyond the limits of Sialkot. In all canal-irrigated tracts large sums were required to pay water rate and land revenue. The colonist suffered from a further disadvantage. He relies for his living almost entirely upon his farming, whereas in unirrigated tracts the peasant usually has some supplementary source of income such as military service, trading,[6]

[1] The enquiry was kindly made on my behalf by the Commissioner of Income-tax, Punjab, through his local staff. Enquiries were also made in other centres, and almost everywhere a marked difference was reported between 1930 and 1931.

[2] At Bombay the price of gold per tola was Rs. 21·5 on 19 September 1931, and Rs. 34-4-6 on 19 July 1934.

[3] Only in the small tract of the Chhachh (see *Peasant*, 83) have I come across any appreciable village sales for profit. Of the 200 crores exported from India since 1 October 1931 (see p. 341) about 25 per cent, i.e. 50 crores, came from the Punjab (including the N.W. Frontier Province) and 20 per cent from Madras (information kindly supplied by the President, Bombay Shroffs' Association).

[4] See *Peasant*, viii.

[5] Embracing in 1930-1 12·2 million out of 30·3 million acres (*Census Rpt.*, 30, 35).

[6] p. 182.

cattle-dealing, cartage, or even labour. The depression has, therefore, been most severely felt in the colonies.

The finest colonists are to be found in Lyallpur, and they were the first to brace themselves to the painful process of adjustment.

**Economies**

Shahpur, with a more extravagant tradition,[1] was slower to move; but even there the process had begun before the close of 1930. Amongst the economies adopted, varying with the circumstances of proprietor and tenant, were the substitution of millet and maize for wheat, of homespun clothes for mill-made, and of the tonga for the motor; travelling third class instead of intermediate, walking on foot—perhaps shoes in hand—instead of going by lorry, the dismissal of servants, the re-starting of hand grinding, an increase in spinning, and even the flavouring of the morning cup of butter-milk with salt instead of sugar. One economy has been general throughout the province: much less is spent upon social ceremonial, especially upon marriages. And, less satisfactory, in 1933 there were over 42,000 fewer boys at school than in 1932.

**A blessing in disguise**

In 1931, in commenting upon the past and the fall in prices, I wrote that prosperity had 'added little to the peasant's real wealth, but greatly to his debt and alarmingly to his numbers. It may be that a spell of harder conditions is necessary to give him a juster sense of the value of money, and a clearer perception of its relation to well being. If so, what appears at present as a calamity may prove to be a blessing in disguise.'[2] This is the hope that rises out of the depression, and there are indications that it may be fulfilled. 'There is no doubt,' says a recent report, 'that as a result of the hard times through which the agriculturist is passing, he has developed a real sense of the burden of debt, and a determination to do what he can to lessen it by slow and painful repayment.'[3] Repayment would indeed be the *amende honorable* for the reckless borrowing of the past, and if it has been necessary more than once to comment severely upon this defect in the Punjab peasant's character, it is only fair to say that no one could have met the present crisis with stouter heart, more cheerful spirit, and greater sense.[4]

[1] p. 20.

[2] *Peasant*, chapters xi, xii.

[3] *Co-op. Soc. Rpt.* (1933), 29: cf. p. 163 *supra*. In Bengal, too, the depression is teaching thrift (*Bengal Co-op. Rpt.* (1933), 4).

[4] The features of the depression described above apply generally throughout India. Shortage of food is rare, but everywhere credit is severely restricted, reserves greatly reduced, and purchases mostly confined to necessaries. Cash rents are realized with great difficulty, and the money-lender's income is greatly contracted.

But if the crisis has much to teach the peasant, it has also a lesson for Government. In the opinion of the Economic Committee of the League of Nations it has tended almost everywhere 'to strengthen the view that the State ought to give the national agricultural interest effective support'.[1] In India this support is most needed in the field of credit. The slump has doubled the burden of debt, and if the contraction of credit has stopped the flow of indiscriminate borrowing, in most areas it has raised the rate of interest upon fresh loans; and upon old, owing to the difficulty of repayment, interest charges are accumulating and coming under the magnifying glass of compound interest. It may be too late to apply any remedy to the debts of the past and be necessary to leave their adjustment to the good sense of debtor and creditor, but provision should at least be made for the future. The best judges are, I think, agreed that in future peasant credit must be controlled, if not curtailed. Some would do this by legislation, and various experiments in this direction are being tried or considered in several provinces.[2] On surer ground are those who urge that the most satisfactory way of imposing control is through co-operative credit. The way this control is exercised is described elsewhere.[3] One of its merits is that it is done through the people themselves, and not through any external agency, and it has three other striking advantages: it lowers the rate of interest, it abolishes compound interest, and it gradually educates the peasant in the use of money.

**Co-operation**

Many speak or write as if the peasant were hampered by not having enough money to handle. No one who has seen the way he spends it when he gets a large sum into his hands will think this. What hampers him is his inability to use it to advantage. For long the co-operative movement in the Punjab has had more money at its disposal than it could prudently employ, because comparatively few could be trusted to employ any part of the surplus wisely. There is an intimate connexion between character and finance, and it has been repeatedly emphasized on my tours.[4] Accordingly, to teach the peasant how to handle money is the supreme economic need, and this can best, perhaps only, be done through the co-operative movement. It was this conviction that led the Punjab Banking Enquiry Committee of 1930 to make the extension of the co-operative credit movement its central recommendation, and it

[1] Op. cit., 52.

[2] In 1933, Bengal passed a Money-lenders' Bill to control interest rates, and now the United Provinces have five bills under consideration (1934).

[3] *Peasant*, chapter xiii.

[4] p. 103; *Rusticus* 326-7.

calculated that if its scheme were adopted, every suitable village in the province would have a credit society within fifteen years.[1] Unfortunately, owing to the financial stringency, four precious years have been lost and very little of the necessary extra staff has been provided.

### *Education*

If the supreme need of the peasant is Co-operation, that of his children is primary education. Till recently the inability to read and write was no bar to the full expression of capacity and character. Akbar remained illiterate to the end of his days, and one of the most remarkable Punjabis of the last generation, the late Nawab Bahram Khan, a Baloch chieftain whose word and counsel ran with authority from one end of Baluchistan to the other, could barely write his name. But, as already noted,[2] illiteracy is a handicap to those who have to face the new age. To take but a single example: in the old days the village community was strong, and Co-operation grew spontaneously out of the needs of the people; but this is not sufficient to satisfy the varied purposes and necessities of the modern world. For these, more complicated forms are required, and they are not possible with almost universal illiteracy. In 1931, less than 10 per cent of the population of the Punjab was literate, and in 1930 this was found to be the case with only 13 per cent of the members of our agricultural credit societies.[3] It is significant that in Jullundur, where the percentage (50) was highest, Co-operation is most advanced, and that in Mianwali, where it was only 4 per cent, it makes but little headway. It is surprising that it should have made any headway at all, seeing that there are numerous villages where for miles round not a single literate man can be found to work as secretary to a bank.[4]

**Illiteracy**

It by no means follows that the goodness of a society is in proportion to the number of its literate members, but it is clear that even so simple an organization as a village bank requires a few who can read a pro-note and understand an account. The miracle is that it has been possible for years to lend out large sums without serious loss, sums now amounting to 7 crores (£5 millions) and advanced to about 500,000

**A bar to Co-operation**

[1] Op. cit., 107. In 1929, 40 per cent of the villages of the province had a credit society.

[2] p. 165.

[3] *Co-op. Soc. Rpt.* (1931), 29.

[4] Ibid., 30. In 1933, Mianwali had 437 societies with about 10,000 members, while Jullundur had over 1,000 societies with about 55,000 members.

men, of whom only one in seven can read and write. Some cannot even count. In 1931, an officer was inspecting a bank in a large village in Shahpur. He asked a member who owed the society Rs. 362 whether he knew how much 62 was. He was told it was 20 times 2 plus 5, and going on from member to member he found that only two out of the fourteen present knew it was '60 plus 2'. It can be understood that when it comes to co-operative purchase and sale, enterprise is severely limited by the general inability to read and write. Accordingly, to all the arguments commonly advanced in favour of primary education we may add the argument, which every co-operator will endorse and many have already put forward, that it is indispensable to the progress of Co-operation. And if anyone doubts the importance of this, let him remember the now familiar dictum of the Royal Commission on Agriculture that 'if Co-operation fails, then will fail the best hope of rural India'.[1]

**Russia**

And there is another argument which the times suggest. Since the war the world has definitely shrunk, and in many public matters common standards are emerging. In the field of education, the accepted standard for civilized countries is that all should be able to read and write, and if India looks beyond her borders, she can hardly ignore the example of Russia, the one country in Europe whose conditions are comparable with her own. Even before the war Russia was well ahead of her in education,[2] but as recently as 1920, 60 per cent of her male, and 70 per cent of her female population were still illiterate. Now, however, the percentage is said to be less than 10.[3] There may be exaggeration in this, and it is not clear what exactly literacy means: some things, too, are taught which would be repugnant to both English and Indian sentiment.[4] But it is credibly stated that now almost all children attend school for at least three or four years.[5] Compared with this, India with less than 10 per cent of her population literate, stands completely out-distanced. It is true that India's population is more than twice the size of Russia's,[6] but neither this nor climatic conditions account entirely for the difference. Russia has come to regard illiteracy as a disease and has set herself

[1] *Rpt. of the Royal Commission*, 450.

[2] In 1913, 40 per cent of the population were literate (Sherwood Eddy, *The Challenge of Russia* (1931), 124).

[3] Maurice Hindus, *The Great Offensive* (1933), 186.

[4] For instance, every teacher is obliged to give anti-religious instruction (W. H. Chamberlin, Notes published by Friends Service Council, January 1932).

[5] Hindus, op. cit.

[6] In 1931 the population of India was 353 millions: now (1934) it probably exceeds 360. The population of the U.S.S.R. is about 170 millions.

to remove it, at whatever cost, in the shortest possible space of time. But India continues to see it as an inherited weakness and is not too discontented if some small improvement is registered each decade. The last decade the improvement registered was a little over 1 per cent![1]

**The Punjab**

In the Punjab, in 1932, the population increased by over 300,000,[2] and in 1932-3 the number of boys at school decreased by over 42,000. The Punjab Government attributes this to two causes—the economic depression and 'the unshakable apathy of the average villager'.[3] There can be no question about the depression—in both Rohtak and the Nili Bár we found it at work[4]—but after my two tours, I cannot altogether subscribe to the latter. Apathy can of course be found, especially where the teaching is bad and the master holds aloof from the village. But the 1,400 miles I rode left me with the strong impression that the peasant now wants education for his boys; not simply that they may get Government service, though this is a powerful lure, but also that they may learn, as was often said, 'to rise and sit down' and 'to become human beings'.[5]

**Land and school**

Education, however, will be but a Greek gift if it continues, as at present, to estrange boys from fields and home. This again is a commonplace, and I repeat it only because my tours have brought it vividly home to me and suggest one or two possible remedies. Before mentioning these, it is only fair to point out that in the last ten years great efforts have been made by the Punjab Education Department to give a more rural character to village education. One of the first and best measures to be taken in this direction was to give a number of Secondary schools a small farm or garden plot for the boys to cultivate.[6] Though they vary in utility, they are often a valuable addition to school life, as was shown by the one we saw near Tarn Taran.[7] The latest development in the same direction is the teaching, in vernacular Middle schools, of agriculture, village sanitation, and rural economics, all in their simplest forms, under the general head of Rural Science.[8]

[1] From 8·2 to 9·5 per cent of the population aged five years or more. For the whole population the literacy percentage is only 8 (*Census of India*, vol. 1, pt. 1, 324-5).

[2] *Health Admin. Rpt.*, 1932.

[3] *Pb. Educ. Rpt.*, 2.

[4] pp. 173, 211.

[5] p. 31: cf. p. 174: we came upon apathy too (p. 82).

[6] In 1933 there were 87 farm and 104 garden plots (ibid., 16).

[7] p. 87.

[8] Ibid., 17.

In spite of farm and garden plot, I found a general consensus of opinion, shared in one case by schoolmasters,[1] that though the primary and vernacular middle course may have no bad effect, the Anglo-vernacular Middle school tends to dissociate boys from the land, and that the High school is 'the boycott of the land'.[2] My first conclusion, therefore, is that, though education is indispensable for the peasant, it should not, in the case of most, go beyond the vernacular Middle. Some good judges would go further. Believing that the process of disintegration begins in the sixth class, they would restore the five-class Primary school and make that the natural term for the ordinary village boy.[3]

**Mental slavery**

In a recent book Sir George Anderson and Dr. Whitehead speak of 'the enslavement' of the Indian student,[4] and they wonder why so many boys who once showed 'brightness, intelligence and initiative, have become shrouded' by it; why, too, 'they depend so much on the dictated notes and on memorized information, and why they have so limited and so material an outlook on life that an appointment to some minor post in Government service has become to the large majority the be-all and the end-all of university education.'[5] If a mere layman may judge, there are at least three reasons for this. The first, and perhaps the most important, is the one noted on p. 70—that English is used far too much as a medium of instruction. However well or ill this may suit the urban mind, it is utterly unappropriate to the peasant mind, as anyone who has tried to interpret it will understand. The second is one given by a witness before the Lindsay Commission in 1930-1. The poverty of the average student, so he said, makes him try to pass an examination in the shortest possible time.[6] Education in India is cheap enough, but the figures given on pages 173 and 211 read with those on pages 268-9 show the kind of pressure that peasant boys may be subject to, and it is a further argument for not encouraging them to go beyond the vernacular Middle unless unusually intelligent. The third reason requires special emphasis, for its importance is not perhaps sufficiently recognized. My journal shows that the average high school boy is often under-nourished and over-worked. To pass his examinations, he must do three or four hours' home-work a day, and holiday tasks tend to be so severe that a boy we met in Jhelum had

[1] p. 31.
[2] p. 31; cf. p. 88.
[3] The Primary school now has four classes.
[4] *Christian Education in India*, 1932, 36.
[5] Ibid., 20.
[6] Ibid., 17.

to do nearly fifty hours' work in a ten days' Christmas holiday.[1] And all this has to be endured at that most difficult time when boys are passing from childhood to adolescence. Can we wonder that they often bring a fagged or 'enslaved' brain to college, and that they have little time or inclination to lend a hand in courtyard or field, and that they rarely think it possible to return to the land. As to the last, it is not only that they are afraid, apparently with reason, of being regarded as failures,[2] but eight years of schooling and coddling at home leave them unable to endure laborious days under a hot sun.[3] 'When it is hot, they fear for their health and run off to Delhi,' was the ironic comment made in Rohtak.[4] Very differently are things managed in a peasant country like Austria, where holidays really are holidays and boys as a matter of course help their parents in the field.

**Education that leads nowhere**

The consequence of this divorce between the secondary school and the land is that districts in which such schools abound are full of unemployed half educated zemindars. This was mentioned on my first tour,[5] and a few more cases may perhaps be given. A landlord I met in 1932 told me that he had nine sons, to all of whom he had given some kind of education. Two had passed the middle standard, two more had matriculated, and one was a B.A. Only two out of the nine were employed, and of the rest only one was cultivating, though the father had 150 acres of colony land in addition to land in his own village. As the B.A. son said—'We are too ambitious.' Three days later, I met a B.A. student who told me that his father was a Subedar Major with 140 acres of good colony land, and that he was one of seven sons, all of whom were more or less educated. None of them had a job, and none of them cultivates. 'I have no tendency towards cultivation,' he said, and apparently his brothers had no 'tendency' either: they were too dignified. In result the Subedar Major has to support not only his seven sons but also their eight children. One more case. I was sipping an early morning cup of tea in the compound of a rest house near the Indus when I noticed at a little distance a servant of the rest house eyeing me uncertainly and holding something crumpled in his hand. Afraid to approach, he seemed rooted to the ground, until I made a motion with my hand, when he ran towards me. Heavily dressed, but all his clothes old, discoloured, crumpled, and worn, and his puggaree twisted loosely about an unbrushed head, he presented me with the

[1] p. 69: cf. p. 82.
[2] Cf. p. 88.
[3] pp. 31, 69.
[4] p. 174: cf. 165.
[5] *Rusticus*, 358: cf. p. 243 *supra*.

following petition in English: 'I am a poor water-carrier and in this poverty I got my son educated up to B.A. . . . I approach your goodness with the request for employment and hope you will be kind enough to do something for us poor people and thus lift us from the filthy life we are obliged to lead.' How human! Yet once more education had been no boon. These cases explain the remark made in a recent Education Report that the decline in the number of boys in middle and high schools is partly due 'to a growing consciousness among the peasantry that the education imparted in schools leads nowhere'.[1] It is some consolation for this decline that four-fifths of it has taken place in the secondary stage of education.[2]

If primary education is indispensable to the peasant and higher education 'leads nowhere', is it fair either to the many for whom there is no school near at hand or to the few who go through high school and college, at heavy cost to themselves and the State, to spend so much more upon secondary and collegiate education than upon primary? In 1933, 186 lakhs were spent upon the former, and only 38 upon the latter.[3] It is not suggested that the whole of the 186 lakhs should have been spent upon primary schools, but actually, had it been done, it would have been possible to educate nearly 2 million more boys, for the annual cost of educating a boy in a primary school is only Rs. 10. Compare this with Rs. 44 for the high school, Rs. 177 for an Arts College and Rs. 571 for a Professional College.[3] In a province where less than 10 per cent of the population is literate, such figures smack of disproportion. In Russia, the policy is now 'to raise the whole mass' as far as resources permit, and when this has been done, to 'try to find the resources to push the best of the masses to a higher level'.[4] Germany has gone even further. University students there rose from 63,000 in 1911 to 125,000 in 1931, and, as in India, the increase is attributed in part to 'the social ambitions of parents who made every sacrifice that their sons might rise to be officials or professional men and avoid the stigma of ordinary work'.[5] This year, therefore, admissions to the university have been limited to 15,000; and correspondingly, it is proposed to divert a large number of children 'from the secondary schools into practical trades'.[5] In this, India and Germany would seem to be on all fours, and if the German policy

**Reduction of secondary and collegiate education**

[1] Op. cit., 3.
[2] Ibid., 6.
[3] *Pb. Educ. Rpt.*, 4-5. Overhead and certain other charges amounting to 56 lakhs have not been taken into account.
[4] Wicksteed, op. cit., 169.
[5] *The Times*, 29 Dec. 1933.

were followed, a large sum would be available for the extension of primary education.

Its extension on a large scale is so necessary and yet, financially, presents so formidable a problem that every possible means of economy must be considered. One suggests itself at once. In a country where most build and repair their own houses, it seems unnecessary that Government should undertake the responsibility of providing and repairing school houses. In Palestine, if a village wants a school, it must provide both land and buildings, or their cost.[1] The same policy should surely be followed in India, and when one remembers the enormous sums spent by Rohtak villages upon mosque and club,[2] expenditure which has its parallel all over the Punjab, there seems nothing fantastic in the idea. Already amongst Sikhs, when a Khalsa school is to be built, the Sikhs living in the neighbourhood contribute part of the manual labour required, digging the earth, preparing and carrying the clay, and lifting the bricks. And very recently a Sikh correspondent wrote: 'Just at this time a hostel is being built, and I have seen parties of villagers from far and near doing every kind of labour at it, each village serving for three days and running their own free kitchen. Each party was complete in itself, comprising carpenters, builders, and hand labourers—workers of both sexes and of all ages.' This is the spirit to be harnessed to the education of the province.

**Other economies**

One minor economy suggested by my tours may also be mentioned. I have been surprised to find watermen employed by schools where water could be had close by. The explanation was that the drawing of water was considered inconsistent with the dignity of education! This, too, in a country where water is the first essential of life. One thinks of the days when one had to stagger up a steep flight of stairs with a tub of steaming hot water for some older boy's bath. One thinks, too, of the western Punjab where the village waterman hardly exists; and also of the Training School at Moga described on p. 107 where (apart from two gardeners) a single servant, a sweeper, is employed for 150 boys.[3]

**A minor economy**

*Influence of the Army*

In the village there are three important educational influences at work. With two of these, the co-operative society and the school, we have now dealt. The third is the army, and for the general purposes of life it is perhaps the most educative of the three.

[1] Ascertained locally.
[2] pp. 176-8.
[3] Anderson and Whitehead, op. cit., 109.

At most of our gatherings the livest and best informed minds were those of the soldiers. The soldier's horizon is not bound by his village, in many cases, since the war, not even by India; and now he is always taught to read and write. If all young men had to go through the army, there would soon be an end of illiteracy. But the army does much more than teach the peasant to read and write. It increases his self-respect and his sense of duty and truth; it teaches him to control his passions—soldiers are not often mixed up in murders—and to keep step with others; also such useful habits as bathing daily, wearing clean clothes and keeping fit. It has been said of the Russian army that it is 'the peasant's university',[1] and the same may almost be said of the Indian. On the material side its influence is equally striking, as we saw again and again on tour.[2] It has brought prosperity to whole tracts and in many areas has greatly mitigated the severity of the fall in prices. First and last, therefore, it is one of the Punjab's greatest advantages that two-thirds of the Indian Army are recruited within its borders.

**Izzat and thrift**

But nothing is perfect, and the influence of the army has its weak points. One is that in increasing self-respect it magnifies izzat, and in India izzat has an awkward way of making a man stand in his own light.[3] I can think of two neighbouring tribes, one of which has much closer ties with the army than the other. The men of the one will not put their hands to many forms of labour cheerfully undertaken by the men of the other; such as plying ponies for hire, working in the quarries, or going out as masons, and the difference is not simply one of necessity. On the other hand, the men of the more martial tribe are more straightforward and dependable, less inclined to extravagance and show, cleaner in their houses, and thriftier. Thrift is one of the lessons that the army is beginning to teach, and it provides both the opportunity and the need; the opportunity, because it pays its men so well; and the need because, to keep its men fit, it is obliged to give them a higher standard of living than most of them enjoy in their homes, and without thrift they cannot hope to maintain it on the expiry of their service. The best way of encouraging thrift in the peasant is to give him a co-operative society, and a certain number of regiments have started societies accordingly, with such satisfactory results that it is surprising that more have not followed their example.[4]

[1] Wicksteed, op. cit., 95.
[2] Cf. pp. 51, 84.
[3] Cf. p. 50.
[4] 'The small group of Army societies continue to do well, and considerable sums have been accumulated' (*Co-op. Soc. Rpt.* (1933), 47). Some regiments have compulsory savings funds, which serve the same purpose in part.

Another weak point is that when the soldier returns to his village, he cannot compete with the ordinary peasant in hard sustained work through the heat of a hot weather day. 'We work day and night, but he weeps at the work;' is the kind of thing that is freely said in the village,[1] not perhaps without a touch of envy by those who note the soldier's higher standard of living and his somewhat lower standard of work. In spite of the hardships that he has doubtless borne in tent and field, the soldier at the end of his seven years' service is sometimes tempted to employ another to work under him or, if he is an officer, to let out his land to tenants. I was at some pains to discover whether he took more readily to improved methods of cultivation than the ordinary peasant, and my conclusion is that, though there is nothing to choose between sepoy and peasant, there is a type of officer, energetic, intelligent, thrifty, and often much travelled, who is keen to improve his farming and ready to make experiments. My journal mentions three such, two of them Muslims, and the third a Sikh Jat, who is one of the best co-operators in the province and leads in all progressive enterprise.[2] Such men are the salt of the countryside. Of much the same type were a group of Jat Sikhs met near Tarn Taran, who were doing two things often considered derogatory by the zemindar—keeping poultry and growing vegetables. 'We saw very good men growing them in France, and the thought came to us—why is it shame to grow them here?'[3] The war killed many splendid men from the Punjab, but in widening the minds of those who served abroad and returned it gave the province something of value to balance its loss. It has even helped to introduce a new humanity into village life. 'Before the war,' said the grizzled Captain we met at Beri, 'women had no izzat and men beat them with shoes, but now beating is stopped and a woman has two annas' worth of izzat.'[4]

**Soldiering and farming**

The influence of the army for good might be almost as great with women as with men, if the opportunities offered by the existence of married quarters were used to the full. These are regularly inspected and those who live in them are obliged to keep them clean. For women who come from the eastern half of the Punjab, this is a useful lesson, but even more useful are the lessons to be learnt in regard to health. This work has begun, and soldiers' wives are realizing for the first time what clean midwifery means and how much they have to learn in the care of themselves and their children. That this is appreciated by their husbands is shown by two cases. In one Sikh regiment, the

**Influence upon women**

[1] p. 23: cf. p. 67.
[2] pp. 42, 71, 85.
[3] p. 87.
[4] p. 186.

sepoys began sending for their wives to have their babies in the regimental lines under expert medical aid instead of in the village with only the untrained midwife to look after them; and the ex-officers were so much impressed by what they saw, when they revisited the regiment, that of their own accord they subscribed Rs. 100 towards the work. In another cantonment, the Indian gunners refused at first to have a dispensary for their women, but hearing of its advantages from other units, they decided to subscribe regularly to its cost. Nearly all units now have provided some kind of medical aid for their women and children, and it generally takes the shape of a small dispensary served by a medically-trained woman, who is shared by all the units in the cantonment. Since, however, Government accepts no responsibility for the health of its soldiers' families, such funds as can be raised must be spent upon providing medical aid rather than on welfare work, and in 1932 only five cantonments had health workers. Two of them, Jhansi and Mardan, 'are enthusiastic as to the benefit,'[1] and this is easily understood, since, ultimately, welfare work is more important than curative.

**Finance**

But the work, like all village reconstruction work, cannot go on without funds, and where are they to come from? At present they are obtained from regimental funds and soldiers' contributions, and to a lesser extent from the Indian Red Cross Society,[2] but they are entirely inadequate for their purpose. Little can be expected from the Army Department, for it is always being pressed to reduce its budget. On the other hand, most Provincial Governments are anxious to improve rural conditions, and it is becoming increasingly clear that real improvement must begin with the home. But it is very difficult for any Government to penetrate the home. Education provides the best means, but it touches only the young, and if the older are left to themselves, there is danger of the young not being able to get their way with the old and of a gulf opening between the two, and even of the school displacing the home. The village Health worker provides another means, but she works at a disadvantage compared with a health worker in a cantonment. She has to deal with homes scattered over a whole tahsil or district, and must spend much time and money in getting from one place to another. In a cantonment, the families to be assisted live close together, and the atmosphere with its mixture of military discipline and novel ideas is more favourable to change than that of the village. Seed sown there is more likely to take root, and when the women go back to their homes they can

[1] *Indian Red Cross Society Rpt.* (1932), 38.
[2] Ibid., 37.

be relied upon to broadcast it amongst their neighbours in a way that no Health worker can do. I believe that money spent in this way would be twice as productive as money spent on more conventional lines. I suggest, therefore, that all Provincial Governments should subscribe to the welfare work of the Army in proportion to the number of men serving in it from their provinces; and to encourage the men themselves to subscribe more freely, the grants might well bear some proportion to the amount subscribed, subject to such maximum as may be necessary for budget purposes.

*Politics*

**The Punjab**

'The best laws,' says Aristotle, 'will be of no avail unless the young are trained by habit and education in the spirit of the constitution.' With less than 10 per cent literate it was not to be expected that the peasant would understand much about the constitution of government. My tours suggest that he understands very little indeed beyond the limits of his district.[1] Amongst those who at a village meeting normally squat on the ground only 'one or half a one' had any clear idea of the higher powers, and few could even differentiate between Governor and Viceroy. Hardly anyone had heard of anything so novel as a Minister, and no one had more than the haziest notions of his functions. 'They are made by our votes: we have no knowledge what they do,'[2] is about as far as anyone could go. And minds were equally blank about Council and Assembly. Yet when I made my second tour, the Reform scheme had been in operation for ten years. As to votes, they are commonly given on personal or tribal grounds, without reference to political questions, and, as we saw in the last chapter, woman's influence may be the deciding factor.[3] And since candidates must usually be men with long purses—a seat on the Legislative Council will often cost Rs. 10,000 or even 20,000 (£1,500)[4]—it follows that the peasant has little chance of election. A special obligation, therefore, rests with the larger landowner to guard his interests.[5]

[1] See 11, 13, 27-9, 52, 143, 239, and cf. *Rusticus*, 309, 314.

[2] p. 29.

[3] p. 288.

[4] A member of the Punjab Legislative Council is reported to have admitted in Council having spent Rs. 28,000 on his election (*Civil & Military Gazette*, 9 March 1932).

[5] The position would not appear to be very different in Bombay judging by a letter written by Mr. R. G. Gordon (I.C.S. retired) and published in *The Times* of 5 May 1934. In 1931 he examined 300 voters of all classes individually in a Bombay district, and found that only 50 knew of the existence of the Bombay Legislative Council, and only 10 knew anything of its functions. Compare the very similar experiment described on p. 239.

This was the position three years ago, and my recent enquiries do not suggest any great change. In the poorer tracts still almost no interest is taken, and this is even the case in the country round Delhi. One who knows it well says that the 90 per cent or more who wear dhotis[1] and seldom visit a town know nothing of politics, and that the few who occasionally 'put on trousers' to visit one know just enough 'to suit their requirements'. In the central Punjab, where high schools are much in evidence and communications good and there is often a large sprinkling of returned emigrants, people are beginning to listen to political talk, sometimes to their hurt, as we saw in Amritsar, where in 1930, when the civil disobedience movement was at its height, five or six Sikh villages got into trouble for not paying their land revenue.[2] Very few daily newspapers penetrate to the village—this need not be regretted[3]—but their contents are often read out to those who are unable to read, and as interest increases, this practice will no doubt spread. Meanwhile the motor bus, which sometimes penetrates further than the newspaper, is breaking down mental as well as physical barriers.

Though the peasant as a whole is indifferent to politics, if some question arises which touches his life at a sensitive point, interest may suddenly quicken, or even flare. Land revenue and water rate arouse universal interest, and the fall in prices has been the subject of constant discussion and often of strong feeling. An instance of this is given on p. 29, and a year later, when I asked a large gathering of zemindars on the banks of the Indus, whether they had heard of Mr. Gandhi, their replies came like a spatter of bullets. 'How should we not have heard?' 'He has ruined us.' 'It is he who prevents our grain being sold.' 'If we cannot pay back the money-lender's loans, it is his doing.' 'We want nothing from Gandhi-ji,'[4] and so forth. This is typical of the Muslim west and north. Elsewhere, too, there are many who genuinely believe that the economic depression is due to the civil disobedience movement, and it must be confessed that in 1930, when this deplorable movement was at its height, there was some justification for the view. Personally Mr. Gandhi is regarded by many Muslim peasants with respect, and in the east often with admiration, and by Hindu and Sikh he is revered (to quote a well-informed correspondent) 'in the remotest village and in the smallest household'. The general feeling was well expressed by the Hissar money-lender who said: 'Our wisdom cannot reach as high as his.'[5]

**Mr. Gandhi**

[1] Skirt worn by Hindus.
[2] p. 83.
[3] Cf. p. 8.
[4] See p. 83, n.4.
[5] p. 147.

But it is as Mahatma or saint, and not as a political leader, that he is revered or admired.

**India**

Judging from certain reports that came to the notice of the writer in 1932, conditions in other parts of India would not appear to differ much from those in the Punjab. In Madras, less than 10 per cent were reported to take any interest in the civil disobedience movement and in the measures taken to combat it, and in Bengal and the Central Provinces, the peasantry were described as completely indifferent to politics and wanting only to be left in peace. About the same time Sir Daniel Hamilton, who has shown his sympathy with the Bengal peasant in characteristically practical fashion by organizing an estate of many thousand acres on co-operative lines, wrote: 'I spend my winters among the paddy fields of Bengal, but among my 9,000 people I know not one who cares a paddy straw about votes.' There are two reasons for this indifference. One is that nearly all the questions agitated in newspapers and Council are remote from the peasant's daily life or touch it so indirectly that the connexion is not apparent to the uneducated mind. The other goes deeper. Writing in 1906, Lowes Dickinson said that his study of democracy 'had convinced him that it was a menace to the poor rather than to the rich, because the rich have the intelligence and the leisure to manipulate the political machine, whereas the poor are too inexperienced and too much occupied in the struggle for existence',[1] or, as the peasant puts it himself, in filling his belly. It is for the political scientist to say whether this view of democracy is true or not, but it is clearly one that should be pondered by all whose business it is to re-shape the constitution of India and who care for the peasant; and as one of the latter, I venture to urge that amongst the many who are at present competing for protection and safeguard, there is none with stronger claim than the peasant.

### *Reconstruction—Ways and Means*

**The peasant's claims**

It is the peasant's financial interest that requires special protection. In regard to this, three propositions may be laid down; firstly, that government should be carried on as economically as possible; secondly, that of the money raised by taxation the peasant should get the full share to which he is entitled by his numbers and his needs; and, thirdly, that until there is a substantial rise in prices, he should not be required, either directly or indirectly, to pay more than he has

[1] E. M. Forster, *Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson* (1934), 90.

paid in any of the last three years[1] for the general purposes of government.

No one is likely to dispute the first of these propositions. Yet who with any knowledge of village life could not point out some substantial economies that could be made to the peasant's advantage and without prejudice to the public good? One or two examples have already been given, and others could be added, but the conditions under which this book is necessarily written forbid this. One generally accepted fact may, however, be emphasized: democratic government on western lines is expensive government. If, therefore, it is to be introduced into a poor country like India, it is the bounden duty of all concerned to reduce the cost wherever possible and of the comparatively few who are fortunate enough to hold a public post, whether high or low, to be content with the market wage for their services, and in return to give full measure to those they serve. The idea of service for the common good is as much an Indian as an English ideal,[2] but there are many public servants who forget that they are the servants of the public. If only the majority would remember this and act accordingly, no one would gain more than the peasant.

One way in which he would gain is indicated in the journal.[3] Another may be suggested by the following conversation, which I had not long ago with a young Sub-Assistant Surgeon, who was in charge of a rural dispensary in the hills, and I repeat it because it illustrates a common mental attitude amongst officials (there are many exceptions), which prevents the peasant getting full value for the taxes that he now pays with such difficulty.

**Service**

'Do you tour much in these hills?' I asked.

'I never tour unless anyone sends for me.'

'And does that often happen?'

'Hardly ever: the people are too poor. Only one person is rich enough to pay the fees.'

'But do you only go when you are paid?'

'Yes, that is the rule.'

'Surely, there must be many in these hills who are too ill to come to the dispensary?'

'A true word, but in that case someone comes for medicine and brings a list of those who want it, and I send it to them.'

'But do you never go and see them in their villages?'

[1] In these years he has been granted substantial remissions of taxes, see p. 225, n. 3.

[2] Cf. p. 237.

[3] p. 215.

'There is no order.'

'Then do you attend only those who come to see you?

'Yes, that is the rule. No one ever tours.'

'But could you not do great good, if you visited the villages round? When we tour, many bring the Memsahib their sick.

'Yes, there are many sick, but there is no rule that one should see them.'

'In these things should you look to the codes for your rules? There must also be times when you are dull and have too little to do.'

'Yes, often. Last year I got leave, but this year I shall have to stay.'

'Then why not amuse yourself by visiting a village every day or every other day. You would get exercise—are you not getting a little fat?—and keep fit, and time would pass quickly, and your heart would be happy.'

'It is a good plan, and I will do it.'

'If you do, all the people will bless you and weep when you leave.'

The story requires only one comment. Though he did not tour, the Sub-Assistant Surgeon was popularly regarded as a good doctor. So little does the village expect of the ordinary Government servant.

The second proposition will also be readily accepted in theory, but there is even more danger of its being ignored in practice. One thinks of the enormous subsidies made in the past to the steel industry, at one time greater than the total amount spent by all Governments in India, Central and Provincial, on the agricultural development of the country,[1] and of the large sums spent upon secondary and collegiate education, from which the townsman has benefited much more than the peasant. The peasant's numbers alone would justify two-thirds[2] of the revenues of the country being spent upon him, and his needs, viewed from any modern standpoint, give the claim irresistible force. India might well adopt Turkey's new motto: 'The Master of this country is the Peasant.'[3]

**The peasant's share of the revenues**

If it did so, there would be no danger of the third proposition being violated; namely, that not one anna more should be taken from the peasant for the general purposes of government than has been taken in any of the last three years. If anyone doubts the truth of this, let him study the

**His limit of taxation**

[1] *Peasant* (second edition), 176.

[2] In India, 67 per cent of the population live by the 'exploitation of animals and vegetation' (*Census*, 276). In the Punjab, the corresponding percentage is 63½ (*Punjab Census*, 214).

[3] See article in *The Times*, dated 28 October 1933.

figures given on pp. 268-9 and 349. That the peasant has so far struggled through the economic depression without actual collapse is because, on the one hand, he has drawn upon his reserves and reduced his standard of living, and because, on the other, Government has remitted large sums of land revenue and water rate and the money-lender has not pressed him unduly for the repayment of his loans. But now his reserves are largely exhausted, and his standard of living cannot be reduced any further without impairing his energies. In considering fresh taxes, too, it must be remembered that in the field of taxation 'agriculturists are compelled to accept the conditions imposed on them: they cannot pass on to others the burden of the charges they have to carry'.[1]

**'The people's needs'**

Yet 'the people's needs, not their tongues, do loudly call'. In the Punjab, only 10 per cent of the males (aged five years and over) can read and write and less than 2 per cent of the females, and in the case of boys the number at school is not only not keeping pace with the increase in the population, but is actually declining. So, too, with members of agricultural credit societies.[2] In the field of agriculture, little progress can be expected until holdings are consolidated, and though, as we have seen,[3] almost miraculous results have been achieved through Co-operation, only about 500,000 acres have been consolidated since 1921, when the work began, and there are millions more to be done. In the sphere of health, one need only recall the 200,000 mothers in India who die every year in childbirth and the 179 infants out of every 1,000 who die in the Punjab before they complete their first year.[4] One of the country's most crying needs is more women doctors, yet in the Punjab accommodation for medical students is so limited that every year 'more and more women candidates find it difficult to secure admission'. The Punjab Government admits that a separate medical school for women should be established as soon as possible, but says nothing about the provision of funds; and in regard to another proposal, of equal importance to women, it writes:—'The scheme for the provision of a women's hospital at every district headquarters and of a section for women at most of the tahsil headquarters hospitals is unlikely for financial reasons, to be realized for a very long time.'[5]

[1] League of Nations, op. cit., vol. i., 62.

[2] *Co-op. Soc. Rpt.* (1933), 25.

[3] pp. 202, 245.

[4] pp. 281, 311. In British India, in 1930, the number was 181.

[5] *Hospitals Rpt.* (1932), 243. In India, in 1931, medical colleges contained only 235 women students (O'Malley, *India's Social Heritage* (1934), 165).

It is these 'financial reasons' which, since the fall in prices, have brought nearly all reconstruction processes to a standstill.

**Russia's challenge**

And considered in terms of Secretarial codes and orthodox finance, they oppose an insuperable obstacle to development on any scale. Yet development is essential, if only to bring India into line with post-war standards elsewhere, and with the great development that is being attempted in such different countries as Italy, Turkey, and Russia. The example of Russia is of particular moment, for in many ways its conditions resemble India's, and whatever one's political views, one must admit that an immense effort is being made, greater than any in history, to improve the conditions of life for over 100 million peasants. Whether the effort will succeed or fail is not yet clear, but meanwhile it is a challenge to all Governments that have to deal with the problem of ignorance, poverty, and waste on a large scale to bestir themselves to the utmost. In saying this, I intend no advocacy of Russian method and pace. No true co-operator will approve the strong element of compulsion so ruthlessly applied by the U.S.S.R. to those who would take a line of their own; nor will anyone who knows the peasant, or even human nature, believe too readily that men can be reformed in the mass by five-year plans. What India needs is, firstly, a twenty-five year plan, backed by men who have studied the village and are prepared to 'bring forth fruit with patience'; and secondly, a steady flow of money to finance the plan.

It is this last that concerns us here. The combination of prolonged depression with necessary, but far too expensive, political reform makes the financing of any plan commensurate with the people's needs a matter of exceptional difficulty. All ways, therefore, great and small, must be explored. In doing this, I shall confine myself mainly to the Punjab, since it is my theme and the sphere of my very limited knowledge. It will be for those who have knowledge of other provinces to say how far what follows can be applied elsewhere.

My first proposal is one suggested by my tours. Again and again we came across public works, costing sometimes over

**Self-help and self-taxation**

Rs. 10,000, which had been undertaken by villages on their own initiative and at their own expense: drinking wells, tanks, mosques, temples, clubs, and even village lanes which had been paved.[1] These things were being done by the peasant cheerfully for the simple reason that he wanted them. The lesson is, when the peasant wants a thing sufficiently, he is prepared to pay for it. If in the past he has not been prepared

[1] Cf. pp. 93, 165, 176, 178. In Jullundur 70 villages have paved their lanes.

to pay for most of the beneficent activities of Government, it is partly because Government has been willing to pay for them itself, and partly because they have not always been in keeping with the needs of the village.[1] Matters might be very different if, on the one side, Government refused to pay for certain things (e.g. school buildings) or bear more than part of their cost, and if, on the other, the village were asked to pay only for schemes it wanted. One of these is the consolidation of holdings. This work is of the utmost importance to the agricultural development of the country and till a year ago had been carried on at the expense of Government. When prices fell, Government found itself obliged to reduce its staff, and in time villages which wanted consolidation came to realize that they might have to wait indefinitely if they did not pay part of the cost. The result last year was the raising of Rs. 16,000.[2] The co-operative movement affords another and even better example. One-third of its total annual cost, 15½ lakhs, is borne by co-operators.[3] One more instance may be given. In 1932, the Junior Members of the Red Cross Society in the Punjab raised a lakh, 'mostly by sacrifice of their pocket money', to provide their poorer class-fellows with medicines and spread information about health.[4]

My second proposal is a tax, not for the general purposes of Government, but for the special purpose of village reconstruction.

**A cess on wheat, cotton, etc.**

The tax suggested is a small cess on all wheat, cotton, oilseeds, and gram despatched by rail from a Punjab market. An analogy for this may be found in the cess levied on cotton for the improvement of cotton cultivation. Even if the cess were only one anna per bag in the case of wheat, oilseed, and gram, and one anna a maund in the case of ginned cotton, it would probably yield over 10 lakhs a year. This amount, less the cost of collection, should be ear-marked for expenditure upon village reconstruction, and its allocation should be done by a board on which every important village interest, peasant as well as landowner, should be represented. The cess proposed is so small that it would probably be carried by the middleman, and even if he passed it on to the producer, the latter would scarcely feel it.

My third proposal is also a tax, but one that affects the whole of India. From 1 October 1931, to 30 June 1934, gold to the value of 200 crores was exported from India. Had this been subject to an export tax of only 1 per cent,

**A tax on gold**

[1] Cf. pp. 157, 200.

[2] *Co-op. Soc. Rpt.* (1933), 35.

[3] In 1932-33, Government contributed 10·39 lakhs, excluding the cost of its consolidating staff (ibid., 3).

[4] *Indian Red Cross Society Rpt.* (1932), 40.

the yield would have been two crores, and the whole of this might most properly have been set aside for village reconstruction, since, if the Punjab is any guide, most of it probably comes from the village. Is it now too late to tap the stream? It is still flowing strongly—58 crores went in the last twelve months—and it may well continue for another year or two. If so, a tax of 1 or 2 per cent might still yield a crore or two, and if this were distributed according to the origin of the gold,[1] the Punjab would get many lakhs. The tax would fall very lightly on the peasant, for, again judging by the Punjab, he can have little gold left to sell; and so far as the tax fell on the town-dweller, it could be regarded as a small set-off for the large sums spent upon him in the past.

**Reconstruction by loan**

My last proposal is more novel and can be explained only in the briefest terms. In 1931, I expressed the opinion that, if Government could not find the funds to extend Co-operation as recommended by the Punjab Banking Enquiry Committee, they should be borrowed.[2] This is not a proposal that is likely to commend itself to those who have been trained in the Victorian school of finance, but it is in line with the new school of economists led by Mr. J. M. Keynes. According to the orthodox, apart from the exigencies of war, borrowing by the State is legitimate only for productive objects which will bring in a direct and ascertainable return sufficient to cover the interest charges and repay the loan by a more or less fixed date. But according to the new school of economists, it is also legitimate to borrow for productive schemes which may be expected to increase the general wealth of the country by more than the amount borrowed *plus* the interest charges, even though the amount of the increase cannot be accurately determined at the time of borrowing. This view is based upon the general principle that no country's resources can be fully developed without considerable expenditure by Government, and that development expenditure should be met out of capital and not out of income. For the interest charges and for the repayment of the loan, if repayment by a fixed date is considered necessary,[3] it is sufficient to rely primarily upon the increased returns that existing taxes will yield under the operation of the new wealth created, and to a lesser extent upon the increased tax-paying capacity of the people. Whether a scheme for which borrowing is suggested is likely to produce sufficient wealth of the type indicated is a matter for expert judgement based upon careful enquiry into the prospects of the scheme.

[1] See p. 321.
[2] *Peasant*, 263.
[3] It is for consideration whether such a loan need be terminable.

We may now take a concrete example to show what is meant. Since the consolidation of holdings started in the Punjab, 1,741 new wells have been sunk and 352 rescued from disuse, and in one village the area under cultivation rose from 615 to 1,372 acres and the annual land revenue from Rs. 2,059 to Rs. 2,938.[1] For this village at least it would have been legitimate, even according to the orthodox, to borrow the sum required for consolidation. But in most cases the return is less obvious, and in judging it an economist of the new school would look much beyond the increase in land revenue. He would consider the financial effects of consolidation not only upon the village but upon the neighbourhood. He would note the rise in rents and wages, the income earned by those who sunk the wells, the increase in the local shopkeepers' sales due to the increased purchasing power of their customers, and the addition to the income-tax, and perhaps even to customs due to larger purchases of piece-goods. The benefit to the State from these different sources, in terms of a single village, would of course be microscopic; but it would be very different if 10 million acres were consolidated. The benefits of consolidation are now so widely appreciated that, granted the necessary funds, there is no reason why this area should not be consolidated in twenty-five years; and the whole might be done for a crore, part of which would be contributed by the villages concerned.[2] The result would probably be to put the east of the province on a different plane of living, perhaps even to change its face; for there would probably be an enormous increase in fruit-growing, for which this region is admirably suited.

The same arguments may be used in support of a loan for agricultural research. It is estimated that even at current prices the improved varieties of cane and wheat discovered by the Agricultural Department add 85 lakhs a year to the cultivator's income in the Punjab;[3] and if cotton were included, the amount would exceed a crore. In the case of Co-operation, it is less easy to prove statistically that there would be a sufficient increase of wealth to justify borrowing. But in the Punjab, where all good judges consider it a capital asset of the greatest value, the strongest possible case could be made out for it on general grounds. For, as we have seen, it is the only sure way by which interest rates, which are higher than ever, can be lowered, compound interest abolished, and credit controlled. And it is the best means of teaching the peasant the use of money,

[1] *Co-op. Soc. Rpt.* (1933), 35.

[2] In the three years ending 1932-33, 195,000 acres have been consolidated at a cost of Rs. 1-14 per acre: this means that well over 5 million acres could be consolidated for a crore. Actually, as the work proceeds, the cost per acre should diminish, especially if the legislation now contemplated is passed.

[3] *Agricl. Rpt.* (Punjab, 1932), 2, 5.

without which any return of prosperity is likely to be ephemeral. The present position is that, instead of following the recommendation of the Banking Enquiry Committee, which they described as the most important of all their recommendations, namely, that 'every effort should be made to establish co-operative credit in every village fit and willing to have a society within the shortest possible period compatible with safety',[1] Government has reduced its financial assistance to the movement by 20 per cent.[2] This is hardly the way to deal with the difficult question of debt.

The proposal to raise a reconstruction loan is likely to be condemned because it is novel and without precedent. But the situation in India is also without precedent: a population of 360 millions, of which less than 10 per cent are literate, is about to embark on the hazardous course of democracy and self-government, and meanwhile the depression has doubled the burden of debt and reduced the standard of living to the pre-war level. In a sense, precedent may almost be said to exist. In the perilous days of the war India contributed £100 millions to its cost without considering too carefully how and when the loan would be repaid. These days too are not without their peril, for the world is full of explosive forces and in the hearts of the people are yearnings such as have never been there before. A reconstruction loan would have several advantages over the war loan. First and foremost, it would be productive. Secondly, it would be an internal loan and be mainly spent in the country. Thirdly, it could probably be raised at less than 4 per cent,[3] and, finally, it would give employment to many idle matriculates and graduates. And one more point may be urged. The moment is particularly auspicious for a big constructive effort. The changes contemplated in the political sphere demand for their success a corresponding change in the social and economic spheres, and, if leadership is good, they might well provide the necessary momentum.

**General aspects of reconstruction**

On the general aspects of reconstruction little need be said. The salient points are now clear: for example, the necessity of treating the village as a whole, the need for a wide extension of primary education supported by welfare work in the home, and the importance of continuity in policy and effort. The lack of continuity is one reason why so little came of the effort made in Jhelum,[4] and if the effort made in Moga has been more fruitful, it is because it was on

[1] *Rpt.* (1930), 107.
[2] *Co-op. Soc. Rpt.*, 1933, 3.
[3] The last Government loan was floated (June 1934) at 3·65 per cent.
[4] See chapters iii and iv.

so modest a scale that each Sub-Divisional Officer in turn found it possible to continue it and do his ordinary work as well.[1] The appointment of a Commissioner for Rural Reconstruction should mitigate the difficulty. As to other points, the importance of Co-operation in the field of credit has been sufficiently emphasized. In other fields it is also important, for in the future, as in the past, some form of collectivism is likely to be needed to maintain the integrity of village life. This is also a reason for developing the panchayat, a measure which is strongly advocated in the journal.[2]

**Propaganda and teaching**

On two points the trend of the times suggests the need for a word of caution. On my first tour I wrote of the dangers of propaganda.[3] In a world that has seen the rise of a third great propagandist state, they are even greater to-day than they were then. More akin to advertisement than to teaching, propaganda should be used as sparingly as possible and never as ' dope '. The Risaldar of Lilla was right when he remarked that change ' will only last if it is in people's hearts '.[4] For this teaching is the only way, and to be effective it must be the teaching of the individual rather than of the mass. That time, and money too, may be spent as fruitfully as possible, the natural leaders of the people should be sought out in each tract and converted to the new light, and at the same time they should be consulted as to the old. I met many of them on my two tours, and to see their work was to realize the possibilities of the future. If instructed and encouraged, they will provide the yeast that is needed to make the new order rise out of the old. For in the long run it is personality, not authority, that tells. That is why the Army has an important part to play in village reconstruction. It is the best school the village has for the training and development of personality, and it is in its power, if it will only use it, to enlist every man that passes through its ranks in the new army required to fight the forces of ignorance, prejudice, and waste.

**Pace of reform**

The other point is pace. I have quoted the example of Russia more than once, and if I quote it again it is by way of warning. The pace there has been tremendous, and by all accounts it has led to the most appalling waste.[5] This is one reason why a twenty-five and not a five-year plan is suggested.

[1] See pp. 116-18. Mr. Brayne was only eighteen months in Jhelum and his successor, a very junior officer, was there only a year, and for various reasons—the Kashmir disturbances were a serious pre-occupation—he had to give his whole time to ordinary administrative work. The case shows how difficult it is to secure continuity of effort without some special organization.

[2] pp. 142-43.

[3] *Rusticus*, 157.

[4] p. 39.

[5] Wicksteed, op. cit., 50 ; also cf. p. 201, n.7.

It took the best part of twenty-five years to establish Co-operation in the Punjab,[1] and it will take another fifteen years to give effect to the proposals of the Banking Enquiry Committee. Such success as has been achieved would not have been possible had the pace been forced. More than once, indeed, it became too fast, and each time it involved a step backwards and much labour to set things right. In some parts of India there has not been the same discretion, and partial collapse followed. For reconstruction a long view is needed and great patience.[2]

**Town versus village**

On my last tour I asked many educated men of village origin whether they would rather live in the town or in the village. The more sophisticated preferred the town on account of its superior facilities for schools, doctors, and society; and the less sophisticated the village, claiming that it was healthier and that the people, though rougher, were simpler and more straightforward. Religion, too, was less communal so more genuine. 'In the village,' said one who loved his home, 'there is simplicity and good fellowship (*hamdardi*), and one lives with one's brotherhood. I have had to leave my children at home, and I can be certain that they will be cared for. I need not even have a watchman. In the town this would be impossible. There, only the police and the fire brigade look after you, and neighbours do not come to your marriages, and when you die, only the doctor knows. In the village, neighbours take part in everything.' This man understood the value of personal relationships, that they mean more than the mere social contacts of the town. As a well-known writer says, 'Towns are excrescences, grey fluxions, where men, hurrying to find one another, have lost themselves.'[3]

**Faction and dirt**

But there are two features which are apt to make village life insupportable to the educated, however unsophisticated he may be. These are faction and dirt. Villages vary greatly in both respects. In the east they are much dirtier than in the west, and sometimes their state suggests a vast dunghill.[4] On the other hand, in the west, when the cattle are

[1] The first society was registered in 1906.

[2] I have said nothing about the Rural Community Councils, for, with one or two exceptions, I heard little that was good about any of them. At that time they depended entirely upon such interest as the deputy commissioner was able to take in them, and few deputy commissioners could spare much time for them. They met very spasmodically and their proceedings were generally of the most perfunctory character. The appointment of Mr. Brayne as Commissioner for Rural Reconstruction will no doubt put life into them.

[3] E. M. Forster, *The Longest Journey*, 336.

[4] Cf. p. 89.

tethered outside,[1] they are often clean and sometimes spotless. In the east, too, clean villages are found side by side with dirty ones.[2] The problem, therefore, should not be insoluble.

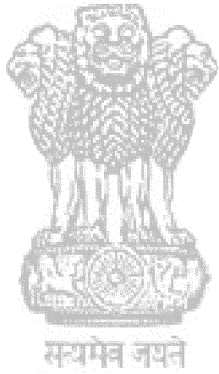
Faction is more difficult to cope with. To what lengths it may go we saw passing through Amritsar and the Salt Range.[3] There men will murder their enemies in broad daylight, as they sleep at their wells or plough in their fields. Fortunately, outside a few unhappy tracts, it is only in 5 to 10 per cent of the villages where men bite and devour each other openly and occasionally crack each other's skulls, and in 20 to 25 per cent there is no faction at all. In the remainder, it is as with most small societies where there is too little breeding or charity: there is much backbiting but little open quarrelling. The smaller villages fare better than the larger, where, to serve their own ends, ambitious rivals often form their neighbours into parties; and those fare best of all which belong to a good landlord, since it is an important function of the landlord everywhere to settle disputes. Much the worst are those where some old feud leads to repeated murder and a continual standing on guard. In considering how this should be dealt with in the Salt Range, I suggested that the best remedy was a wide extension of education, especially amongst girls.[4] But this will take time, and as the problem is urgent, it is further suggested that a small committee should be appointed to examine old feuds and fix such terms or compensation as would end them. This was recently done in Palestine, where feud and faction were even more destructive than in the Salt Range, and it is claimed that the number of feuds was greatly reduced.[5]

Throughout this chapter I have spoken of reconstruction. But what the village needs is less to be reconstructed than to be reconditioned. My journals will have been written in vain if they have not made it clear that in the Punjab the village is still a living organism, as full of wisdom as of waste and as much illuminated by the old light as any town is by the new. Like the pipal tree that often guards its approaches, this wisdom is deeply rooted in the soil of the past, and if it is not worm-eaten by custom or withered by faction, it is the best guardian of the village. By its side the wisdom of the new age is a mere sapling, which has still to show that it can take root and stand up against drought, dust-storm, and flood. Its weakness is that hitherto its

**The village a living organism**

[1] *Rusticus*, 219.
[2] Cf. pp. 52, 117, 151, 155.
[3] pp. 41, 45, 78, 80, 95.
[4] p. 47.
[5] Bentwick, op. cit., 176.

nursery has been the town, and the soil and ways of the town are very different from those of the village. It is to the village, therefore, that we must look for its regeneration, and to the peasant that we must go to ascertain its needs and desires. And it is the peasant, too, whom we must inspire to plan and lead. The townsman may be quicker, cleverer, smarter, richer, but the peasant has one advantage which outweighs all these. 'He has the unconscious depth of character of all who live and labour much in the open air, in constant fellowship with the great companions—with the earth and the sky and the fire in the sky.'[1]




[1] George Russell (A. E.), *The National Being*, 20.

# APPENDIX

## *Note on the One-Plough Holding* (1934)

For some years the Punjab Board of Economic Enquiry has been publishing the accounts of a number of farms in ten different districts in the province.[1] The publications are amongst the most interesting and valuable issued by the Board and contain carefully recorded figures for both canal and well-irrigated land. For purposes of comparison with those given for a rectangle of 25 acres in Chapter XII[2] and for a one-plough holding in Chapter XIII[3] the figures for the 3 years ending 1932-3 may be summarized as follows :—

Average estimated cash return *per acre*
(' on the assumption that the whole land belonged to the cultivators and no permanent labour was employed ').[4]

| | Gross | Net |
|---|---|---|
| | Rs. | Rs. |
| Canal-irrigated (178 acres held in 1933) .. .. | 33-15 | 13-14 |
| Well-irrigated (432 acres held in 1933) .. .. | 35-14 | 13-2 |

Net return has been calculated by deducting Government and local dues, customary payments to village servants, and out-of-pocket costs of production (i.e. seed, implements, manure, casual labour, and upkeep of bullocks), but nothing on account of the cultivator's own labour.

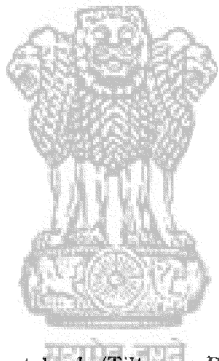
In comparing these figures with those given in the journal two points should be borne in mind : (a) the canal irrigated area does not include any land in the Nili Bár ; and (b) the figures given on pages 252-4 for gross income do not include fodder or cotton.[5] The three years taken are all years of economic depression. The figures for the two years before 1930-1 are much more favourable,[6] thus :—

*Net* income per acre

| | Rs. |
|---|---|
| Canal-irrigated land (156 acres) .. .. | 28-15 |
| Well-irrigated land (427 acres) .. .. | 25-5 |

[1] See more especially *Farm Accounts in the Punjab*, 1932-3, published in 1934.
[2] pp. 223-4.
[3] pp. 252-4.
[4] Ibid., p. xiii (figures for the Risalewala Farm excluded).
[5] p. 252, n.7.
[6] Ibid., xiii.

On this a family with a one-plough holding can just meet the most necessary demands; but with the income per acre given above a two-plough holding is needed, or some other source of income such as military service. The fall in prices, in fact, would appear to have made it impossible for the one-plough holding—a matter of only 6 or 7 acres in the case of well-irrigated land and of 12 or 13 in the case of canal land to meet anything beyond the barest necessities of a family, and it is doubtful whether it can do even this.[1] If correct, this is an important conclusion, since most of the cultivators in the province have only one-plough holdings,[2] and current prices are if anything lower than in 1931-2.[3]



[1] According to a recent book (Tiltman, *Peasant Europe*, 1934) peasant conditions in eastern and central Europe are as bad if not worse: for instance, in Poland and the Balkans 'the most popular form of negotiable currency' is eggs (p. 20). Even of Canada it was said in 1931: 'At the present level of prices . . . there is just available a bare subsistence for the western farmers' (*Economist*, 18 April 1931).

[2] p. 252, n. 2.

[3] Wholesale harvest prices per maund have ruled as follows (ibid., i):—

| | Wheat | Gur | Cotton | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | American | Country |
| | Rs. | Rs. | Rs. | Rs. |
| 1928-9 .. .. .. | 4-6 | 6-2 | 13-2 | 10 |
| 1929-30 .. .. .. | 3-2 | 6-5 | 8-15 | 6-15 |
| 1930-1 .. .. .. | 1-9 | 4-2 | 5-9 | 4-7 |
| 1931-2 .. .. .. | 2-1 | 3-13 | 6-10 | 5-7 |
| 1932-3 .. .. .. | 2-11 | 2-12 | 6-14 | 5-10 |
| 13 March, 1934 (at Lyallpur) | 2 | 3 | 7 | 4-10 |

# GLOSSARY

**Akáli** — the tenth Sikh Guru gave the name to his followers as being men who would not hesitate to give their lives for the service of religion. It is now used to signify the stricter and more ardent followers of the Sikh religion.

**Anna** — one-sixteenth of a rupee.

**Bajra** — spiked millet (*holcus spicatus*).

**Bania** — the most important trading caste in the southern Punjab : also applied generally to any Hindu shopkeeper, but in that case not spelt (in this book) with a capital.

**Bár** — table-land between two rivers.

**Báráni** — land entirely dependent upon rain.

**Barát** — the bridegroom's party when he escorts the bride to his house.

**Begár** — labour given in lieu of a cash payment, cf. *corvee*.

**Birádari** — literally brotherhood, but applied to all who have common family ties, however distant.

**Burqa** — white cotton cloak with hood worn by Muslim purdah-nishin ladies to conceal them from head to foot : the hood has eye-holes.

**Chaddar** — a cotton sheet worn like a plaid.

**Chahwela** — literally butter-milk time, i.e. the first meal, at which butter-milk is usually drunk.

**Chak** — canal colony village.

**Chamár** — a tanner.

**Chapati** — a girdle cake of unleavened bread.

**Charpoy** — a wooden bed covered with netted string or webbing (*newar*).

**Charsa** — a leather bucket (with rope) used for drawing up water.

**Chick** — blind of split reed to keep out flies.

**Chilkána** — the discount retained by a money-lender when making a loan.

**Chowpal** — meeting hall of the village or of part of it.

**Chula** — a fire-place made of mud-plastered earth.

**Crore** — 100 lahks, i.e. 10 million rupees ; at 1s. 6d. to the rupee, worth £750,000.

**Dál** — pulse boiled with spice.

**Dharmsala** — Hindu or Sikh place of worship.

**Dhoti** — a cloth tied round the waist and hanging down to the knees with the ends passed between the legs and fastened at the back.

**Durry** — cotton carpet.

**Fakir** — Muslim ascetic.

**Ghi** — clarified butter.

**Gowshala** — almshouse for aged or infirm cattle.

**Gram** — a pulse (*cicer arietinum*).

**Granthi** — Sikh priest.

**Granth Sahib** — the Sikh Bible.

**Gujar** — a semi-pastoral tribe, partly Hindu, partly Muslim.

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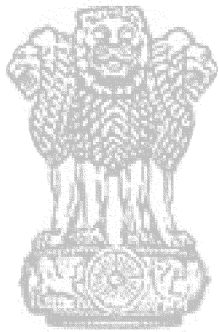
|---|---|
| **Gur** | unrefined sugar. |
| **Gurdwára** | a Sikh place of worship. |
| **Guru** | a religious teacher. |
| **Hakim** | a doctor practising the Yunani system of medicine : generally, but not always, a Muslim. |
| **Izzat** | a word for which there is no precise English equivalent denoting, objectively, social position, and subjectively, *amour propre*. |
| **Jal** | *Salvadora oleoides*. |
| **Jand** | *prosopis spicigera*. |
| **Jangal** | uncultivated land with vegetation not necessarily either thick or tropical 'jungle'. |
| **Jat** | the largest tribe in the Punjab, numbering about 5 millions. |
| **Jatni** | a Jat woman. |
| **Jawár** | great millet (*hoclus sorghum*). |
| **Kachha** | applied to a house not made of stone or burnt bricks ; the opposite of pukka. |
| **Kamin** | literally menial, commonly applied to the village servant. |
| **Kanál** | generally one-eighth of an acre, but in some districts one-ninth or less. |
| **Khaddar** | homespun cloth. |
| **Kharif** | the autumn harvest. |
| **Khatri** | the most important Hindu trading and banking caste in the Punjab. |
| **Kikar** | *Acacia arabica*. |
| **Lak** | 100,000 rupees ; at 1s. 6d. to the rupee, worth £7,500. |
| **Lambardar** | village headman. |
| **Malik** | a Muslim title of respect common amongst zemindars of position in certain districts, notably Shahpur. |
| **Maulvi** | one learned in the Muslim scriptures. |
| **Maund** | 82·28 lb. |
| **Mirási** | village minstrel and often cook. |
| **Mureed** | the follower of a pir. |
| **Musalli** | a sweeper whose family has been converted to Islam. |
| **Nautch** | dancing and singing. |
| **Nawáb** | a Muslim title of distinction implying both position and wealth. |
| **Nikah** | the marriage verse read at a Muslim marriage. |
| **Panch** | member of a panchayat. |
| **Panchayat** | a board for settling village questions or disputes. |
| **Pathan** | a Muslim tribe of great importance in the Frontier province and, though not very numerous in the Punjab, much considered. |
| **Patwari** | a village accountant. |
| **Phulkári** | embroidered hanging. |
| **Pice** | one-fourth of an anna. |
| **Pie** | 12 pies make one anna. |
| **Pipal** | *Ficus religiosa*. |
| **Pir** | a Muslim religious leader. |
| **Piri-mureedi** | literally to play the part of pir to mureeds ; i.e. to tour and collect alms from followers in return for charms. |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Pukka** | as applied to a road, metalled ; as applied to a house, made of stone or burnt bricks. |
| **Purdah** | literally a veil ; metaphorically, concealment. |
| **Rabi** | the spring harvest. |
| **Rectangle** | the unit of measurement in the later canal colonies and measuring 25 acres : cf. square. |
| **Roti** | literally bread, but includes everything that is eaten with it. |
| **Rupee** | valued throughout the book at 1s. 6d. |
| **Sadhu** | a Hindu who professes to be an ascetic. |
| **Ság** | boiled greens, made of the leaves of rape, gram, etc. |
| **Sahukar** | professional money-lender. |
| **Sardar** | a title of respect implying some position, very common amongst, but not confined to, Sikhs. |
| **Saree** | dress worn by Hindu ladies, like a narrow shawl, but long enough to envelop the whole figure and make any other dress unnecessary. |
| **Sarson** | rape, *Brassica campestris var. glauca.* |
| **Seer** | one-fortieth part of a maund, about 2 lb. |
| **Settlement** | the periodic revision of the land revenue assessment, made district by district. |
| **Seyyed** | a Muslim tribe claiming descent from the Prophet. |
| **Shariat** | the canon law of Islam. |
| **Shastras** | the holy books of the Hindus. |
| **Shisham** | *Dalbergia sissu.* |
| **Sirkar** | Government. |
| **Square** | the unit of measurement in the older canal colonies and measuring 27·8 acres ; cf. rectangle. |
| **Tahsil** | a section of a district. |
| **Tamasha** | a mixture of show and jollification. |
| **Zail** | a group of villages at the head of which is a zaildar. |
| **Zaildar** | the headman of a zail. |
| **Zemindar** | (as used in the Punjab) a landowner, however small. |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