THE ORDINARY MAN'S INDIA

THE ORDINARY MAN'S INDIA

BY

A. CLAUDE BROWN, M.B.E.(Mil.)

(Late Editor *The Empress*, Calcutta)

LONDON

CECIL PALMER

49 CHANDOS STREET, COVENT GARDEN, W.C.2

FIRST
EDITION
1927

Printed in Great Britain
by The Riverside Press Limited
Edinburgh

PREFACE

THE purpose of this book is not to attempt an historical review of India, nor yet to enter into any lengthy dissertation on the political problems of the country.

No book, however, which professed to describe the India of to-day, or any aspects of its European life, would be complete were the Reforms not mentioned. Accordingly I have touched on them here, but from the standpoint of the non-official European.

The outlook of the official European has often been put before the public by distinguished soldiers and Civil Servants, but the point of view of European non-officials, who form no inconsiderable proportion of the European community in India, is not sufficiently well known.

Certain fallacies, too, exist in the minds of many who have never visited India as to the conditions of European life in the country to-day. Many people at home have some link with India; public interest in the country is deep and widespread.

I have had this fact in mind, and aimed at dealing with aspects of European thought and everyday life in the country, in the belief that such information about India will make a popular appeal if dealt with in as interesting, clear and simple a way as possible.

A. CLAUDE BROWN.

June 1927.

CONTENTS

THE ORDINARY MAN'S INDIA

CHAPTER I

Questions and Answers on India—The Outward Journey—General Outfit—Indian Tailors—Currency

ENGLAND is full of strange notions about India. According to some, the European community there consists in the main of soldiers, Civil Servants, tea-planters, slippered pantaloons and slave-drivers.

It is dimly realized that there also are many non-official European residents engaged in some business or other, but their lives, their work, their social position, their political views are wrapped in mystery. I am often asked questions about India like these:

"Which is the best way to go?"

"What is the climate really like?"

"What sort of outfit should I take with me?"

"Is it safe for Europeans out there now?"

"What about the Reforms?"

"What is non-official life in India really like?"

Many people have friends in the country, but that does not always mean that letters are stuffed full of the information which their recipients at home crave for. Indian life is not conducive to the writing of long and intimate letters.

I will deal with some of these questions in the first few pages.

It was during the war that I first went to India. The Cunard liner *Caronia*, converted for the time being into a transport, took some five thousand of us to Bombay. The ship was one of a great convoy which proceeded via

Sierra Leone, Cape Town and Durban. From thence our ship proceeded alone, and we arrived at Bombay exactly two months after leaving Devonport. After a brief stay in that city I was ordered to proceed to Mesopotamia. Three years later I visited India again, this time to stay for six years.

My recent return to England was made in a British-India liner, of small dimensions, and the only one of its class which survived submarine attack during the war. The voyage from Calcutta to Tilbury took a good five weeks. The passengers on board were of much less account than the cargo stored below, and, as many of the bunkers were filled with merchandise, it was necessary to coal on four different occasions during the voyage. It was a slow and uncomfortable trip.

If the matter of choice be left to the man who is going to India for the first time, I recommend him to travel as far as Colombo by one of the steamships of the Bibby Line; these provide for first-class only.

From Colombo the steamer proceeds direct to Rangoon, so all passengers for Southern India must disembark and proceed thenceforth by ferry and rail. But if Bombay or Calcutta is nearer your destination, you must tranship at Colombo to a boat bound for one of these ports.

The question of outfit is one of the first which arises in the intending traveller's mind.

"What sort of trunks shall I take?"

"What kind of clothes are necessary for India?"

"What about a pith helmet?"

I use the words "pith helmet" for the first and last time in this book. Henceforth it is called a *topi*, and the best kind are to be bought in India itself. Still, as you will need one as soon as you reach Port Said, you had better purchase one in London, for the kinds you get at Port Said are monstrosities, which brand the wearer as a new arrival. Moreover, they are quickly discarded as soon as the real article is seen.

Try to buy a *topi* which is light, yet thick in substance,

and covered with thin white or grey-blue cloth. Its *pugaree* should be of the same colour and neatly bound ready in position. The *topi* should shade the eyes and the brim curve downwards, protruding twice as far at the back as at the front, so as to cast a wide shade over the nape of the neck.

Personally I favour what is known as the Curzon *topi*. It is practically identical to the one described, and should be obtainable in London. But if you cannot find one of this sort on no account buy one of the beehive variety, khaki-coloured and having a quilted crown. Rather than that invest in one of the resplendent sun-helmets which are so freely shown in hatters' windows. But get one which is light, and as unlike a military helmet as possible. For the latter kind is expensive, heavy, and quite unsuitable for civilian wear in India, save maybe during the rains.

A *topi* purchased in India costs but a few shillings, and it is preferable to buy such a one at frequent intervals than invest in an expensive affair which will soon look shabby but never really wears out.

Then as to trunks. The steel trunk, if a really strong one with edges which will not burst open the first time it is dropped on end, is very useful. It is comparatively insect-proof, as long as the strips of cork round its inside edges last. Such a trunk will be found very useful on shipboard, for it slips easily under a bunk.

But if you want something in addition, which will hold a lot and be a sort of store-chest for you in the years to come, try to obtain a large wooden box made of thick hard teak, and lined throughout with aluminium. Its lid must fit closely and its corners should be bound with strong metal. This sort of box will defy the ravages of white ants—teak being the only sort of wood they cannot destroy—and it will be practically airtight. The metal-tipped corners are a necessary protection, if you wish the box to survive the severe handling it will receive on many future occasions.

A good leather handbag is always useful; preferably the sort which folds up when required, and can be stowed away in your steel trunk when not wanted. On your train journeys in India, something to hold a change of linen and your night things, shaving kit, etc., will be necessary, for distances are great and the trains very dirty.

The kind of bag I mean will last for years. I had one right through my Eastern travels and it is still going strong.

The question of clothing depends for an answer a good deal as to which part of India you are travelling. For all climates are to be found in this vast continent.

Thus, Bombay has no cold weather at all; Calcutta boasts two months during which you need a greatcoat when driving at night; Simla provides plenty of cold, and there, as well as in Cashmere, Mussoorie, and Darjeeling, ordinary English clothing is wanted all the year round.

Your ordinary washing suits will be best obtained in India. They are very cheap there, and as you need a clean suit every day the question of price is a consideration.

My advice is to have a couple of thin suits made at home from what is called "tropical tweed." These will be useful the latter part of the voyage out, and will see you through the first few days after arrival. By that time some of your thin washing suits will be ready; a smart Indian tailor will make them for you very quickly indeed. I have ordered some thin army tunics early one morning and worn them the evening of the following day.

As to dress clothes. Your ordinary evening dress will serve, provided it is made of not too thick a cloth. Get in addition a dinner-jacket, which will be worn on all but the most formal occasions. Men wear white dinner-clothes a lot in India; these can be made out there, but custom varies much and in Bombay black dress-clothes are considered *de rigueur*, while in Calcutta you may wear black or white, or a mixture of both—black coat and white trousers.

People at home have grown careless in the matter of

evening clothes, but in India men change every evening as a matter of course, and when thus attired hats are seldom worn.

Shoes with crêpe-rubber soles will be excellent for wear on board ship, also on shore, save in the rains, when it is common knowledge crêpe-rubber soles are unsatisfactory.

Of course you play tennis! Even those who do not play in England will want to when in India. Take out a tennis racket of the sort which has steel strings. Gut strings perish very quickly in the alternate heat and damp of the plains.

If you golf, take your clubs with you; there are excellent golf-courses in most parts of India, and almost everybody plays.

Do *not* buy a cholera belt. They are nasty uncomfortable things, productive of prickly heat, and in my opinion quite unnecessary.

For underclothing I strongly advise the wearing of open-mesh material. Some fellows wear no underclothes at all in the hot weather. This I think an uncleanly and mistaken procedure, for the flapping of a damp, thin, cotton shirt on your back is both unpleasant and unhealthy. Take some changes of thick underwear also; in the cold weather it will be found both grateful and comforting. Conditions are so different that a temperature which in England you would consider hardly noticeably cold will in India make you very cold indeed.

Women who need a guide as to what clothes to take with them cannot go far wrong. If they imagine what a really hot day is like during those rare occasions when a short heat-wave visits this country they will understand that the clothes they wear on those unusual occasions at home are the sort of clothes they will have to wear during all the hot weather in India.

Pretty evening frocks are expensive in the cities of the East, so take all you can with you, and the same applies to shoes.

But warm clothing too will be wanted. That fur coat

will be necessary on the voyage out; and it will surely see service at some hill station on more than one occasion before you return to England.

Cotton frocks can be obtained very cheaply if you employ the local *durzee*, as the Indian tailor is called. He cannot initiate, but is a master of imitation. You have but to give him an old frock and purchase the material you wish to have made up; he will do the rest, and turn you out an exact copy of the pattern. Moreover, he will do it sitting outside on your verandah while you wait.

Take your sunshades with you by all means, and all your hats. Some European women wear *topis*, some do not. They are uncomfortable and ugly, but safe—which probably explains why they are so little worn by the fair sex. But, it seems to me, in these days when a woman has wilfully deprived herself of most of her natural head-covering, the wearing of a *topi* of some sort is indicated. A wide-brimmed, thick felt hat is a useful substitute.

Leave your umbrella at home. Indians carry umbrellas as a sign of respectability and to keep off the sun; that is about all they will keep off, for when it rains in India it will take something more than an umbrella to keep you dry. A silk oilskin, and a sou'wester to match, might be useful if you are going to live up-country; but in the cities taxis are plentiful, and your husband's car, or somebody else's husband's car, will always be at your disposal. European women who live in India use their feet chiefly for running to and fro on tennis courts, or when dancing, on the many occasions which a comparatively easy life affords them.

For the woman who is keen on sport, and has a cheerful happy-go-lucky disposition, and is not too seriously minded, the larger cities of India can be very pleasant places.

The question of money will crop up immediately on landing, so, for the benefit of the newcomer, a brief explanation of the currency of the country will be useful.

It is chiefly paper and silver in these days. There are notes for Rs1000, rarely seen, while Rs100 notes are much more common. Rs50 notes are in circulation, but are not much in evidence, for they are most unpopular, resembling much too closely those of the favourite denomination of Rs10. Notes for Rs5 are common, and considerably smaller in size that those previously mentioned. But the smallest of all are the R1 notes, and these are shunned like the plague, which their dirty, worn appearance only too often suggests. There is no gold coinage now, and the largest silver coin is the rupee, about the size of our own two-shilling piece, and popularly known as the "chip." Next in size and value is the 8 anna piece, the size of our own shilling. The 4 anna piece is made in two varieties —one closely resembles our sixpence and the other is a purely nickel coin, rather larger in size, and of a squarish shape, with wavy edges.

The copper coin most in evidence is the anna, rather smaller and thinner than our penny. Then there are pice, which look like farthings and are worth a quarter of an anna each. The coin of lowest value is the pie, twelve of which go to make up one pice. I have heard of these coins but never seen them used as currency.

Roughly speaking, the copper coins are used only by Indians, for their purchasing power is very small and they are dirty and difficult to handle. You will find the notes considerably larger than our own paper currency, and in a much worse state of preservation as a rule.

The purchasing power of a Rs10 note works out about the same as ten shillings at home, so that if you reckon each Rs10 note to be a ten-shilling note you won't be far out in your calculation of values.

It is a mistake to buy quantities of fancy goods immediately the boat gets in. Wait a little and look round, for you will find the vendors nearest the docks the most expensive. It is their business to catch the newcomer. And, if you are going up-country, wait till you get there before spending much money; the value

you will receive amply repays the extra strain on your patience.

You will find many caste prejudices amongst Indians, but the European community has its own peculiar ideas also, and it may be as well to consider these before going any farther.

CHAPTER II

European Caste Prejudices and Conventions—Snobbery and the "Country-born"

IN England nowadays we contrast the prosperity of the new rich with the plight of the new poor; we applaud the very natural desire to go into business, and do something practical to earn a livelihood.

Old prejudices against being engaged in trade have long since passed away, never to return. We take all this for granted, and the rising generation can hardly believe matters ever were otherwise.

But a short residence in India will show any sceptical youngster that these prejudices, which we thought were dead and buried long since, are there very much alive, and more active to-day than they were in England two generations ago.

India is the paradise of the middle classes and the land of snobs.

It is not easy for the new arrival to understand, much less accustom himself to, the rigid lines of demarcation which divide Europeans living in the country.

First there is the Indian Civil Service (the Heaven-born, as they are sometimes irreverently called), those gentlemen who are entitled to place after their names the magic letters I.C.S. Members of this service, after serving a necessary apprenticeship as assistants, are eligible to become District Magistrates, Collectors, Presidency Magistrates, Judges of the High Court, Residents, and Secretaries to Government, etc.

Then, perhaps, I should mention the Royal Indian Marine; but it is a very small service in these days, though, under a projected scheme of reconstruction, there is promise of its ancient glories being revived.

Next come officers of the British and Indian armies.

Then there are innumerable covenanted Government servants—such as the members of the Indian Education Service, officers of the Indian Police, members of the Pilot service, State Railway Officers, Forest Officers, senior Post and Telegraph officials, Public Works Department officials, etc.

All these have covenants with the Secretary of State for India which ensure to them security of tenure, fixed rates of pay, regular leave, and a pension on retirement. Members of these covenanted services, whether European or Indian, are recruited from England.

There is also an uncovenanted Government Service, which is recruited in India, and staffs the less remunerative positions in other departments.

This list is by no means a complete one, but is long enough to prove a sufficient guide for the use of the non-official European who is going out to India for the first time. What more intimately concerns him is to discover into which category, "Mercantile" or "Trades," he will fall. Roughly speaking, India regards these words "Mercantile" and "Trades" to be synonymous with the terms "Wholesale" and "Retail." For the purposes of class distinction, professional men come under the heading "Mercantile."

The "Mercantile" man is one who is engaged in an office or business, either as a principal or employee, which does a strictly wholesale business. Exceptions are made in the case of banks, insurance offices, etc. The "Trades" man is one who is engaged in any retail business, either as a principal or employee.

It sounds very elementary, I know, but it is necessary to lay down these meanings for, strange as it may seem in these democratic times, these definitions determine a man's social standing every hour of the day. Let me give an example which will bring the matter home, quite simply and clearly.

A friend of mine, who was an importer of oils of various

kinds, and had quite a small office and a very moderate income, was discussing this matter of caste prejudices with me in Calcutta.

He instanced Mr X, and went on to explain that, although the two were quite good friends and did business together, he was of course quite unable to ask X to dinner because he was "Trades."

This notwithstanding the fact that X was a Public School boy, a good fellow in every way, and owned a large workshop and one of the best motor businesses in the country.

Here is another case, an even more glaring one.

The principal partner in a large firm, which has fine stores in most of the big Eastern cities, visited India and came to Calcutta. His shops were not petty concerns but large establishments, as important in their own cities as are Harrods or Selfridges in London.

Remaining some time in the country, he wished to join a golf club. There are three excellent golf clubs in Calcutta, all reserved for the mercantile community. He was taken round one of them as a guest, but discovered the impossibility of becoming a member.

He was "Trades." The additional fact that he chanced to be an ex-Member of Parliament, and a knight into the bargain, made not the least difference to his position as long as he remained in India.

In England we are so accustomed to hear of Lady Y opening a hat shop, or of Lord Z becoming a motor salesman, that this objection to any sort of shopkeeping from a social standpoint is almost incredible. Yet such is the case in India. People engaged in retail trade are not considered to be socially the equal of their mercantile countrymen.

One's occupation, not one's birth, breeding, education, or even financial standing, determines one's place in the Indian scheme of things. The small wholesaler, who has a little office in a back street, the clerk in a bank or warehouse, the veriest junior in a wholesale house, suffers no

such handicap. The hall-mark "Mercantile" covers a very multitude of indiscretions.

The comedy usually first shows itself to the newcomer when his ship approaches India. Passengers booked the same class have had a jolly time together throughout the voyage; everyone has been on the most friendly terms. But, with the journey's end in sight, class distinctions become apparent, for by now everybody knows something of everybody else's business. The Government crowd stick more tightly together; the Mercantile close their ranks, and the unfortunate new arrival, if he should be going out to join some trade firm or other, finds himself dropped like a hot coal.

The club life of India is a very important factor in the life of every European there, for little or no home life as it is understood in England exists in India. Your games, your reading of the home papers, your friendly intercourse, all these and much more are procurable at your club, and nowhere else.

The ordinary clubs being barred to the "Trades" they took the matter into their own hands and started clubs for themselves, and manage to rub along quite comfortably too. But their social ostracism rankles, and many Europeans who are not of them sympathize with them. By degrees these European caste prejudices will be broken down, but they exist at present, and the newcomer to India must be prepared for them.

Not that the "Trades" have a bad time in these days. They often have better living accommodation and more money than the "Mercantile" community. They own motor-cars and race their own race-horses, though at the gymkhana meetings they may not ride them. They may join the Rotary Luncheon Club, and the European Association, which is a truly democratic affair, welcomes them with open arms. Thus far may they go, but no farther. For position is everything in India—as long as you stop there.

But when you come home, either permanently or on

holiday, the fact that you are on the dining list at Government House cuts no ice in London. It is only when the social snob from India takes a trip home and rubs shoulders with ordinary mortals again that he comes back to earth. And when he gets pushed off the kerb by a hard-working Covent Garden porter he realizes how unimportant he really is.

These last few years of stress and uncertainty in India have done much to bring Europeans of all classes more closely together. For this reason, if for no other, snobbery there is on the decline. But things move very slowly in the East, and it will take a long while for these silly European caste prejudices to be eliminated altogether.

. . . . . .

Some explanation here on the subject of certain expressions which are offensive to residents of India will not be out of place.

Considerable misapprehension exists in England with regard to the words Eurasian, Anglo-Indian and European. Their modern meaning is misunderstood, and unintentional annoyance is caused frequently to sensitive and loyal people by careless phraseology.

Broadly speaking, the three communities living in India may now accurately be classified as Indians, Europeans and Anglo-Indians.

The word "Eurasian," as far as India is concerned, has ceased to exist. In some ways this is regrettable, for the word so aptly described those people of mixed European and Indian descent.

In old times the word "Anglo-Indian" was universally applied to British people who had lived for many years in India or Burma. The word is still used in this connexion by people who are unaware of its changed meaning. The term "Anglo-Indian" should now be used to describe only those people who, in the old days, were rightly termed "Eurasians." The use of the word in any other sense is, in these days, inaccurate, and very offensive to residents in India.

The misuse of the word "native" has done much to make us unpopular in the East. Nobody refers to dwellers in England as "natives" or "English natives," though they are undoubtedly natives of England.

The pure-bred native of India is an Indian, just as much as the pure-bred native of England is an Englishman. Each has an equal right to be called by his correct name.

It is even worse to refer to the Indian as a "black man," or a "nigger." Yet these terms are sometimes used by people who should know better, while illiterate or ignorant Europeans only too frequently refer to Indians in these inaccurate and highly objectionable ways.

Indians are not black, neither have they negro blood in their veins. They quite rightly resent being referred to in this way.

Generally speaking, the word "European," when associated with India, is used to indicate a British or, strangely enough, an American person of pure ancestry who is resident in India but whose legal domicile is situate in either Great Britain or the Dominions, the Irish Free State, or the United States of America. Of course, if an American citizen, he or she must be pure white.

Strangely enough, the members of other European nationalities are always referred to by their country of origin. To the Indian it is unthinkable that a European should use any other language as his mother-tongue than English.

Finally there is that horrid word "country-born."

You don't hear it in England very much in these days, but only too often is it used by Europeans in India, or those who have returned from India. It is applied in a derogatory sense to those people of undoubted European parentage who have been unwise enough to select India as their place of birth, and who, through no choice of their own, may have had to live there for a good many years without the chance of childhood and education in England.

The term "country-born" is a word born of snobbery out of arrogance. And the slight its use implies is all the more remarkable when it is realized that men like the late Lord Roberts, Lord Chelmsford, Mr Rudyard Kipling, and many others whose names are world-famous, were all born in India.

To such an extent has this prejudice against those born in the country grown, that such people are looked upon by their fellows who were discriminating enough to have been born elsewhere as being quite outside the pale. So bitterly is the disadvantage felt that many young people who are born in the country, and have had no early opportunity of visiting England, find it advisable, on attaining years of discretion, to make a special visit over here and stay sufficiently long to pretend on their return that they are then visiting India for the first time, and know nothing at all of its ways and customs.

It is all very puerile, and cannot easily be understood by people in England, for it seems ridiculous that any child should be handicapped from infancy merely because its parents were unable, or unwilling, to send their little one home for early schooling; or there are other reasons. These other reasons centre round the problem which presents itself to every married man who has children and resides in India. Either he must let his wife go home with the child, or the child must go alone. In either case the family is broken up.

If the family is to remain united, the child is for ever more branded with the word "country-born."

That the sacrifice is so often made, and the family broken up, is also accounted for by the belief that a child of tender years is likely to acquire habits and speech which are undesirable, by being in continuous contact with India in its most impressionable years. It is argued, maybe truly, that an English atmosphere is needed to eradicate, or correct, those tendencies.

But a great deal depends on the parents themselves; for if they are cultured people, and can give their child

a decent schooling in the hills, which is quite possible in India to-day, there is not any real risk of a child growing up in such a way as to disgrace its parents in after life.

The parents can quite easily prevent their children acquiring the *chee-chee* accent, and those gesticulating motions of the hands which accompany it. This *chee-chee* accent, by the way, is almost identical with the spoken English of the Welsh people, and the reason for its adoption by the Anglo-Indian community has been much speculated on but never satisfactorily determined.

During the years of the war it was quite impossible for any children to be sent home from India to be educated. It is a cynical commentary on the snobbishness of so many Europeans resident in India to think that, because a man was on duty there during a national crisis, his children must henceforth be referred to slightingly as "country-born." The word is offensive. It should be banished from the English language.

But, however much we may deplore these caste prejudices and objectionable terms, they still exist, and have to be allowed for by many who wish heartily they could be more independent. For the man in India who is to get on with his firm has many unwritten laws with which to conform. He must be tactful, and juniors are expected to confine their attentions to work and sport, and leave politics and public positions to those who, by long residence in, and experience of, the country are more qualified, and have greater leisure to give to such things.

There are certain people he must call on, and there are others who must be avoided. In fact, the whole business world is hedged round with convention almost as great as that which encompasses the official class. And the young man will go farthest who walks the most warily.

CHAPTER III

Business Life in the Cities—Salaries and the Cost of Living—The Housing Problem and the Rent Act

IN Mesopotamia I once shared a tent with an officer of the Indian Army Reserve, and discovered that he could speak but a few words of Hindustani. This was astonishing in view of the fact that a thorough knowledge of the vernacular was supposed to be one of the essential qualifications for an I.A.R.O. commission. Indeed, a familiarity with Indian conditions and a thorough grip of the vernacular are the principal reasons for the much higher rates of pay enjoyed by Indian Army and Indian Army Reserve officers than those allowed officers of the British Army who for the time being are serving with them.

I commented on this admitted ignorance of the language, and my friend explained that in peace time he was in business in Bombay and that a knowledge of the vernacular was superfluous there. All Indian clerks wrote and spoke English, and business in European-controlled offices and other similar establishments was carried on entirely in that language. Therefore he had not troubled to learn Hindustani at all, though the omission had apparently been overlooked by the army authorities. However that may be, the information regarding the universality of English-speaking clerks in European establishments in India was accurate enough, as I soon discovered when I went there after the war.

The language of Bombay is principally *Gujurati*, while that of Calcutta is *Bengali*. But most Indians speak Hindustani in addition to having a thorough knowledge of their own provincial language. The amount they speak, and its purity, varies very considerably in different parts

of India. Hindustani—or *Urdu*, as it is called officially —is really "the language of the camps." It is the principal medium of articulate expression between Europeans and Indians.

Urdu is the vernacular recognized as the official language in addition to English. All officers of the regular Indian Army have to pass examinations in written and spoken *Urdu*, while the members of the Indian Civil Service have, in addition, to be equally familiar with the language of the province in which they elect first to be stationed when starting their career in India.

In all there are 102 languages spoken in India, though only 23 of them are spoken by more than a million souls.

Douglas Story, the well-known journalist and war correspondent, who died in India during the summer of 1921, once told me that whenever it was suggested to him that he should "learn the language" his invariable reply was: "But which language shall I learn?"

There is a good deal to be said for this point of view, but, on the other hand, there is no denying the fact that Europeans who know nothing of *Urdu* are at a distinct disadvantage when dealing with Indians. The Indian has more regard for the *sahib* who can make himself intelligible to him in the vernacular. This applies especially when dealing with servants. Moreover, a working knowledge of Hindustani will see you through most parts of India, pretty much the same as a working knowledge of French will see you through most parts of Europe.

There are many occasions in the course of ordinary business life when an Indian has to be listened to and questioned who knows *Urdu*, but understands little or no English. Then, if you cannot speak in the vernacular, the services of an interpreter have to be resorted to. Likely enough you send for one of your own clerks, and he starts a long and animated conversation with the man, which

ceases only when you break in and insist on an explanation, having grown tired of listening to a flow of eloquence which is to you quite unintelligible.

You ask what it is all about. The interpreter makes a brief explanation in English, but seems incapable of conveying the full meaning of it all to you. The man's talk has lasted many minutes, but its interpretation takes barely as many seconds. What is told you is really the effect which the words uttered have had on his mind—he will never give you a literal, or semi-literal, translation. The result is usually most unsatisfactory, and as for getting a direct "yes" or "no" in reply to your questions—the thing simply can't be done.

The Indian's mind works in that complex way peculiar to the Orient. The intention is all the while to say what he thinks will please or appease you, quite irrespective of whether his statements are true or otherwise. The man questioned will vary his story greatly—may, under continued pressure, alter it entirely from beginning to end. And through it all run protestations of his relations' and his own trustworthiness, supplemented by an oft-repeated assurance of his undying faith in your justice and generosity—particularly the latter.

Such interviews usually end in your making a decision which is based more on intuition than on the conflicting and confusing evidence that has been given. And it usually turns out to be a right decision, for you get uncannily accurate in your summing up of the rights and wrongs of these cases. It is largely a question of practice and the exhibition of lots of patience, for the Oriental mind delights to clothe its thoughts in words and phrases which are ambiguous.

Only too often expressions are used which are intended, quite deliberately, to mislead you and side-track the line of investigation.

How wearisome it all is. All the time you have to be dragging the witness back to the point. And the time that is wasted at such interviews, and the strain upon

one's nervous system, only those who have had plenty of experience can properly understand.

The only too-frequent futility of these kind of investigations makes you heartily wish for a thorough grasp of the language.

So, if you go to India, I recommend you take the trouble to thoroughly master *Urdu* if you intend remaining in the country for any length of time and intend to be a success in your business.

. . . . . .

It is not generally realized that the total number of Europeans in India is under 200,000. And the vast majority of those who are non-officials live in either Calcutta or Bombay, though there is also a strong non-official community of Europeans in Madras.

Of these places Calcutta has, without doubt, the largest European population, and the city is still the commercial capital of India.

Until 1912 it was also the political capital, but in that year the seat of the Central Government was moved thence to Delhi.

Bombay is the chief port in the country, by reason of its very favourable situation on the coast. The world's largest liners can come right alongside the city and berth in Alexandra Docks. Bombay is thus the principal entrance to and exit from India.

Calcutta is not so fortunate. It is situated some miles up the Hooghly, and really large vessels are unable to pass the bar at the river's mouth. Thus only liners up to 10,000 tons' displacement are able to proceed all the way to Calcutta itself, and on the rare occasions when great Atlantic liners, usually laden with American tourists, arrive at the mouth of the Hooghly, the passengers have to tranship at Diamond Harbour and proceed up-river in smaller steamers.

There is much friendly rivalry between Calcutta and Bombay.

Both for many years have proclaimed themselves the

second city of the Empire; the allusion refers of course to population only, despite the implied references of enthusiasts who use the terms without any qualifying distinction whatsoever.

At the last census, taken in 1921, Calcutta had a total population of 1,132,256 in its municipal area. Bombay totalled 1,175,914, over a recently enlarged municipal area.

Now that Calcutta's municipal area has been likewise enlarged there can be little real difference to-day in the actual population of the two cities. Anyway we will leave it at that, for, though the counting of heads is a favourite method of invidious comparison in India, the mere size of a town does not necessarily indicate its true importance.

Life in Indian cities and the life up-country are two very different things; the difference there is much greater than in England.

But as the majority of Europeans in India reside in the cities, and we are for the moment discussing business life, it is well you should have an impartial idea of the two chief business centres in the country. I will take Bombay first, and be as fair as possible.

Bombay residents like their city best. They point with justifiable pride to the open sea in front and the hills behind, both easy of access and alike providing means of healthful recreation.

But the climate of the city is muggy all the year round; Bombay has no cold weather at all. When I landed there one October it was hotter than at Basra where I had embarked. The nights are always oppressive, and Bombay's hotels, restaurants and places of amusement are not equal to those of Calcutta. There is the cosmopolitan population usually associated with seaports, but the city of Bombay is in reality the stronghold of the Parsees; their influence is paramount in its political and business life.

When the new arrival leaves the central station or

the Alexandra Docks, the approach to Hornby Road, Bombay's principal thoroughfare, is only possible through streets the pavements of which are cluttered with bullocks and cows, sacred but very dirty, who wander about at their own sweet will. The atmosphere is heavy with offensive smells and the noise in the streets is appalling, even for an Indian city.

Bombay has several fine clubs, notably the Royal Bombay Yacht Club, which provides facilities for its members such as no other club in the East can possibly do. It is delightfully situated, right on the sea-front, with gardens stretching down almost to the water's edge.

The Gymkhana Club is a very jolly place, situated in the centre of the city and at the very heart of the mercantile community. It is, in fact, their stronghold, and very popular, catering for every taste in both indoor and outdoor sport. The European resident of Bombay who is unable, or ineligible, to become a member of the Gymkhana has a very thin time indeed.

Bombay possesses some fine buildings, and has a pretty residential quarter on Malabar Hill. There is a fine sports' club some little distance out, and a race-course farther away still.

Certainly Bombay has many attractions, and, for the European who knows no better place in India, is a very good city to live and work in. Yet, when all this has been conceded, I must regard Calcutta as the finest city in the country, and, possibly, anywhere in the East, from either an architectural, business, sporting or social standpoint.

For in Calcutta you have the Victoria Memorial, a massive and truly magnificent marble pile: the cathedral, with its tall and delicate spire, standing in an old-world garden; Government House, in the very centre of the city, standing in spacious grounds, now the residence of the Governor of Bengal, but previous to 1912 the principal official residence of the Viceroy

himself; Belvedere, another official residence, and used in these days by the Viceroy on the occasion of his brief visits to Calcutta. Then there is the General Post Office, a truly handsome building, and close by the offices of the Bengal Secretariat (or Writer's Buildings, as they are still called by most people), which occupy the whole north side of Dalhousie Square. The High Court and many other fine public buildings go to make up a city which has justly been called "the city of palaces."

Calcutta is rich in historical links with the past, back to the times of Warren Hastings, and much earlier. The old cathedral, St John's, still stands, though it is no longer a cathedral, but only a parish church. Therein may be seen the wonderful painting by Zoffany of *The Last Supper*. This takes the form of an altar-piece, and the faces portrayed around the table were recognized as bearing a remarkable likeness to well-known Calcutta residents of that day. It is said that Zoffany avenged himself on an enemy by painting him into the picture in the person of Judas Iscariot.

Calcutta's chief glory is its *maidan*, that great, green, open space, which is at once the playground and the very lungs of the city. Almost the size of Hyde Park, and quite unfenced, the *maidan* spreads itself from Esplanade and Chowringhi, the two principal European shopping streets of Calcutta, right across to Hastings.

The *maidan* is government property and must be kept clear for purposes of defence. Old Fort William stands in the centre, surrounded by a moat, with ramparts and guns complete, and is the headquarters of the Bengal Presidency Brigade. The west boundary of the *maidan* is the River Hooghly, and close alongside is the Strand, a favourite road on which to drive of an evening. Here motor-cars follow one another in an apparently endless stream, returning by one of the numerous roads which bisect the *maidan*, while their occupants "take the air." The Victoria Memorial stands at the extreme

south of the *maidan*, while Chowringhi forms the eastern boundary.

Spaces are allotted on the *maidan* for tennis, football, bowls and golf, and the Royal Calcutta Turf Club has its principal race-course there also. Here it is that the chief fixtures of this world-famous club are held, including the race for the King-Emperor's Cup, and that for the Viceroy's Cup.

At the extreme north-west corner of the *maidan* is to be erected the permanent building designed for the use of the Bengal Legislative Council, which at present has a temporary home in the old Town Hall. But for even so legitimate a purpose as the housing of the provincial legislature, there was strong objection taken, by Europeans and Indians alike, over this encroachment on the *maidan*. For this vast open space is a cherished heritage of priceless value in its present state to the community as a whole. As such it is jealously guarded, and permanent buildings on the *maidan* are expressly forbidden.

Calcutta's hotels, restaurants, theatres, clubs, golf-courses and principal race-course are the finest in the country, maybe in the East, while its business life is greater, and conducted on more up-to-date methods, than can be found elsewhere in India.

Calcutta is, if anything, too European in its ways to suit those romantics who are saturated in the literature of the past which depicted the easy-going life of the old-time India. For in the city, nowadays, you work European hours and wear the conventional garb of the European business man at home, though made of material light in colour and texture. Yet the climate remains all but tropical.

Up-country, in the *moffusil*, as it is called, you start work early in the day and finish by 4 P.M.; not so in Calcutta, for there it is customary to take exercise before breakfast and to arrive at your office about 10 A.M., while the shops usually open an hour earlier. Work continues,

with a short interval for lunch, until 6 P.M., and on Saturdays, 1 P.M. Sunday is, of course, a free day.

Work on Saturday mornings is not taken too seriously in offices, for during the racing season, which lasts from August right through with hardly a break until the following March, everyone's mind is full of the Saturday afternoon's sport, and a study of form and race tips is freely indulged in by most sections of the community.

Life in these Indian cities is very much what you are able to make it, and the presence of a wide circle of friends and acquaintances does much to make your life a full and jolly one, and to deaden the critical instinct. Of course it is fashionable in most European circles throughout India to damn the country, and the life there, on all possible occasions. But, if the objections are dealt with quite honestly, it will be found in most cases that the life in England which is held up in regretful comparison with the life in India is not the life which individuals were used to in the days before they came out to India. Rather is it the life which they imagine could be led by them there now, had they the opportunity of transferring their present social status and salary to the more temperate climate.

Six months' holiday at home on full pay usually suffices; for when it comes to an end, and it becomes necessary to settle down to work again, there are not many Europeans returning to India who can conscientiously say they are sorry for it. For, especially in these days, England is a better playground than workshop. Jobs are more easily held down in India, and the chances of being thrown out of employment there are much less than is now the case at home.

True, you save little or no money in a subordinate position in the East, but, for all that, if you live temperately and keep good health, India has many compensations. Your vanity is pleasantly tickled, your spending power apparently much increased, and, provided you are the covenanted assistant of a good firm, the credit

allowed you is almost unlimited. A few words on this subject of credit will not come amiss, for the "chit" system is a combined blessing and curse which is peculiar to the East.

Europeans seldom pay cash for goods in India; they just "sign" for their purchases. The newcomer may not do so at first, but he will speedily acquire the habit. It is all so fatally easy.

You go on signing all the month and, at the end, your "chits" come home, like chickens, to roost. An Indian collector, called a *durwan* (or bill-wallah), appears on your doorstep. He usually calls at the most inconvenient hour of the day, that hour when, having got up a bit late, you are feeling liverish and are scampering through breakfast with a half-open eye on the clock. Then as you rush out to office you are confronted by a tall Indian in a short shirt who salaams profoundly and holds out a long envelope. It is fat and large.

The old hand passes the trouble on to his bearer, while the newcomer pauses to open his present. There is the bill, and the total seems colossal; surely there is some mistake? But no; there are your "chits" signed in your own hand, proof positive of your indebtedness to some firm or other.

That first day of the new month brings *durwans* galore, with more and more envelopes. There seems no end to the fellows. Your cheque-book grows thinner as the day grows longer; you had really no idea you had spent so much. You must pull in a bit!

And so you do—for a few days, and then the merry game starts all over again. For it is so fatally easy to buy on credit in India, and you can easily sign away a month's pay in a fortnight.

There are "chits" from the garage where you get petrol, and other necessaries, for the car; the provision-store account tots up to a hefty amount; then there is the landlord—he simply *must* be paid; the tailor and clothier must have something on account; the hotel

and restaurant present bills which are not so easily recollected, but there are your signatures and they must be honoured.

The newspapers are mostly cute enough to collect their subscription dues in advance, but all the tradespeople will give long credit if you pay something substantial on account and go on trading with them. Bad debts are often incurred, but the good customers pay high prices, so that the bad ones may pay little or nothing at all; and thus the merry game goes on. You can even sign for taxi rides, and it is only of recent years that the theatres stopped taking "chits."

It is a pernicious system, but very pleasant and convenient withal, and will probably outlast your life and mine.

The status of certain classes of Europeans goes up very considerably when they come to India. The man who was just a plumber at home becomes a sanitary engineer on arrival in the new country. The operative from a Scottish jute factory finds himself in charge of thousands of Indian operatives, and given free quarters in a large compound adjacent to the mill on the outskirts of Calcutta. He is usually able to do himself well and save money into the bargain.

The bank clerk from home becomes one of a number of mercantile assistants on joining a large Indian bank. He sits comfortably beneath a fan, and can smoke at his desk while an Indian clerk calls out to his checking. And it is the Indians who do most of the totting up and balancing which bank clerks are accustomed to do as a matter of course at home. The actual paying out of money over the counter is left entirely to Indian tellers, and though the European in a bank has responsibility, he is not burdened with the detail work and drudgery which were his lot in England.

The fitter in a small garage in England becomes an engineer on arrival in India, and frequently a manager at that. He has authority and responsibility where at

home he was but a bench hand. But he is a *sahib* now, if he but cares to live up to the requisite standard of living and behaviour. For all white men are supposed to be *sahibs* in India, all are equal thus far, though some are *burra* (head) *sahibs*, and some are *chota* (junior) *sahibs*. An amusing story occurs to me which illustrates these definitions.

It was in Mesopotamia, during the war, and at the time I chanced to be the senior officer in a certain camp. One of my subalterns, but newly arrived from England, was quite ignorant of Hindustani. But he had been told that *chota* meant "little," as indeed it does in some senses, and that *burra* meant "large," also equally true.

He was intensely annoyed because he was always referred to by the Indians as the "*chota sahib*," while I was referred to as the "*burra sahib*"—the joke of it all being that my friend was a very small man, and very touchy about his lack of inches. He imagined that the Indians were casting a slur on his stature when calling him the "*chota sahib*."

When I explained to him that though he had been six feet and more he would still remain the "*chota sahib*" he appeared somewhat mollified, though I don't believe he was ever really convinced, and for a long while retained the mistaken impression that the men were having a joke at his expense.

. . . . . .

I do not wish to convey the impression that a man has but to obtain a business appointment in India in order to ensure an easy and pleasant life for the rest of his days. Such cases have been known, but they are, in these days at all events, quite the exception.

Business conditions in India are not what they were twenty, or even seven, years ago. Plenty of money was made there during the war, and directly afterwards, but the complete failure of the company-promoting boom of 1919, resulting in the loss of vast sums of money which had been invested in industrial under-

takings, has brought into disesteem all new enterprises of an industrial nature.

Business staffs have been greatly reduced, and those Europeans who remain have to work pretty hard nowadays for their living, so that men who go to India in these days must be prepared to serve their first contract for a bare living, and nothing more.

If the position is clearly understood no harm is done, but so often men are led away by the figures quoted in rupees appearing higher than the worth of the salary really is in English money.

And again, you notice advertisements in the home papers inviting applications for posts in India, and offering rates of remuneration which are quite inadequate to support the European in the style in which he is expected to live in an Indian city.

Frequently the pay offered is as low as Rs400 a month—sometimes even less. For the unqualified and untried youngster this is probably more than he is really worth, but nevertheless he will have a hard struggle to live on his pay.

At the present rate of exchange Rs400 is just £30—a matter of £7, 10s. per week. Only single men are usually offered such a salary, and it would be absurd for a married man to accept it unless he was to live up-country and have quarters allotted him.

If you are married, and have to live in Calcutta, Bombay or Madras, you can reckon that rent alone will eat up one-third of your monthly salary. Mansion flats in Calcutta range from Rs250 a month upwards, a very fair average being Rs400. And the Rent Act, which has helped tenants so long, is this year expiring and will not be renewed, so rents will likely increase before long.

It is therefore safe to assume that a married man who has been living in England at the rate of, say, £40 a month will find that a salary of Rs.1000 a month is necessary to live equally well in Calcutta or Bombay. True, many scrape along on less, but they mostly live

beyond their means, and life is a constant struggle to keep up appearances and make both ends meet. If you are going out to that sort of thing, you are better off in a smaller post at home.

Single men who are content to live in a boarding-house and share a bedroom can usually find accommodation at Rs200 a month. For another Rs50 they can have a bedroom to themselves. A good many young fellows live at the local Y.M.C.A., which gives excellent value for money.

But it must always be remembered that there are certain codes of living which the large European firms in India expect their staffs to live up to. In Calcutta, for instance, there is what is known as the "South of Park Street" fetish. This refers to the European residential quarter proper, and it is expected of the newly joined mercantile assistant that he reside in the conventional locality. He must have a good address to put on his notepaper.

That is all very well in theory, and no doubt desirable enough from everybody's point of view. Unfortunately it is not always practical to live "South of Park Street," save at a cost which is out of all comparison with the comfort enjoyed. Space in the select quarter is strictly limited, and, as it is, Europeans are herded together in the manner which is usually associated with tenement buildings in England. The following advertisement is taken from a Calcutta paper, and, while no doubt written sarcastically, the plight of the advertiser may be guessed as closely approximating to the facts as stated.

"Mercantile Bachelor, patient disposition, wishes to be accorded the privilege of supporting a refined private family of profiteers in Calcutta. Best locality essential, South of Park Street preferred. Willing to share a bedroom having a minimum of furniture and cheerless aspect. Not more than two other occupants. Privacy

no object. Prepared to entertain any reasonable offer under Rs300 per month. Immediate entry. Highest references given and none asked. Apply Box 4511."

It is stated by the opponents of the extension of the Calcutta Rent Act that cases of profiteering under the Act are so rampant as regards subletting that the Act has failed in many ways to help the majority of people who cannot afford to have a flat of their own.

Landlords have their own worries, and first tenants also, but it is the sub-tenants who have suffered most. It is quite the usual thing for a lessee to live rent free and make a handsome profit in addition by subletting. So Calcutta is no better than London in respect to the housing problem, and the rents, even allowing for higher salaries, are much greater.

Flats have sprung up in many parts of the city, but the cost of building them in the best localities has been very great. I know one block of flats where the rents range from Rs1250 down to Rs250 a month. There are some two hundred flats in the building, and the architect told me that unless all these flats were let at the prices asked, permanently occupied and the rents paid regularly, the landlord would not get 10 per cent. on his capital outlay.

Land is very valuable in Calcutta, and the cost of manual labour has increased 200 per cent. since 1914 in the building and kindred trades.

While some landlords have attempted to profiteer, the fault lies chiefly with those people who have let out single rooms at twice the rent of the entire flat, for, in Calcutta, as in England, the placing of a few sticks of furniture in a room brings it outside the restrictions of the Rent Act.

Many business men find it desirable to reside outside Calcutta altogether, but the *chota sahib* cannot always afford a car, and the cost of transport by taxi, or even train, will be a still further heavy drain on his slender

resources. And even outside Calcutta itself accommodation is strictly limited.

Nor does expense stop here; there are lots of other calls on your purse. Life insurance, a very necessary thing in India, is a constant drain, likewise club fees, amusements, holidays, drinks and smokes, etc., are all fairly heavy items of expenditure in city life. You want everything you had in England in the way of personal comforts, plus a good deal more besides. That is frankly the position, and the pros and cons should carefully be weighed by anyone thinking of making a change and who is tempted by what appears on the surface to be a large salary.

And what of one's future, taking into consideration the increasing employment of Indians in all capacities in the country? The Reforms have a direct effect bearing on this problem, and a brief explanation of their inception, present working, and possible future, will at this stage be useful.

CHAPTER IV

The Reforms : their Initiation, Progress and Future

THE business man who returned to his usual occupation in India after a lengthy absence with the army in Mesopotamia, or elsewhere, found the country in a state of unrest and transition. The Press, both European and vernacular, were busy discussing the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms Scheme.

The European Association, the only organized body of non-official Europeans in the country, and the Services, alike detested the scheme, and protested against its necessity or expediency on every possible occasion. Those Indians who wanted self-government were a small minority of their countrymen, and the scheme did not go nearly far enough to satisfy them. As for the masses of Indians, they neither knew nor cared anything about the matter.

However, the politicians at home had settled the matter. Mr Montagu, then Secretary of State for India, had visited the country, and with the Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford, had decided that the time was ripe for the peoples of India to have a direct voice in the ruling of their country. The British Cabinet acted on these recommendations, and, in 1919, the Reforms came into being.

In this connexion an interesting story was current in India at the time. I cannot vouch for its truth, but it is sufficiently probable to be worthy of repetition here. The inference of the story is that had there been no Mesopotamian scandal there would likely enough have been no Reforms Scheme, the tale being that during the time Mr (now Sir) Austen Chamberlain was Secretary of State for India, he was invited by the Viceroy to visit

India. Before the invitation could be answered the Mespot scandal came to light, which involved the death in India of the then Commander-in-Chief and the resignation of the Secretary of State at home. It has always been recognized that the latter chivalrously accepted the blame for a state of things in which he was nowise directly concerned. His resignation was much regretted in India.

The new Secretary of State, Mr Montagu, on arriving at the India Office, discovered the Viceroy's invitation, and promptly accepted it. Thus it chanced that it was Mr Montagu, and not the actual Secretary of State to whom the invitation had been extended, who came out to India and brought his very Liberal views to bear on the vexed question of a new Constitution. It is an interesting speculation, though a vain one, whether the recommendations subsequently made by Mr Montagu to the Cabinet would have found favour with his predecessor in office. European opinion in India thought quite otherwise, which may have had something to do with the wide circulation enjoyed by this story. I give it for what it is worth, and not as a serious contribution to the history of the inception of the Reforms.

In order to understand the effect on India of the Reforms (or Dyarchy, as the new form of Government is sometimes called), it is necessary to have some rough idea of the population of the country and its religious components.

My figures are those of the last census, taken in 1921. Then the total population of India was 318,492,480 souls. Out of this number 246,003,293 were residents in British India, the remainder being inhabitants of the Indian native states. The Reforms applied only to British India.

Only 10 per cent. of India's total population live in towns, and of these only 5 per cent. inhabit towns of over 10,000 of a population. And, strange as it may seem,

men outnumber women in India, there being only 903 females to every 1000 male inhabitants. There are 208,106 schools in the country, and these are attended by 8,381,850 scholars.

The franchise is not granted to people in India on the same lines as in England. The Reforms placed representation on a basis of communal representation—that is to say, the Hindus, which with Sikhs, Jains and Parsees form 75 per cent. of the population, were allotted representation in the several provincial legislative councils in strict proportion to the numerical strength of their community. So with the Mohammedans, who form 21 per cent. of the population, their representation was allotted strictly in relation to their numerical strength as a community. It follows automatically that the balance of parties shows a larger number of members representing Hindus than are to be found representing Mohammedans, while the non-official Europeans, because of their small numerical strength (there are only 116,000 in the whole of India), have very few representatives.

To the Westerner this appears a strange way of allotting legislative representation. It is strange, and it has yet to be proved that it is a right way. But it was the way which appeared to be most likely of acceptance to a people whose every act and thought is guided by religion, not the religion born of conviction but the religion acquired by inheritance.

Once the Reforms became law the European Association and the European Press of India ceased to oppose the new departure. Dislike of the scheme remained, but it was agreed to make the best of a bad business and loyally to support and endeavour to work the Reforms. And this attitude has been maintained, consistently and fairly, despite much provocation and discouragement. But it should always be remembered that the Reforms were never wanted by those Europeans who knew their India, neither was there any demand for a changed Constitution on the part of the vast bulk of Indians

themselves. There were no popular demonstrations in India such as those which occurred in England and brought about an extension of the franchise here. And it must be remembered that in India, with its vast population of over 300,000,000, not 1,000,000 Indians have even now the least political consciousness.

However, that fact in no wise discouraged the authors of the Reforms; on the contrary, it was their considered and avowed intention "to disturb the placid contentment of the masses." To the reformer's way of thinking this very ignorance and contentment provided the strongest possible argument for the Reforms themselves.

A sharp and bitter controversy started—and its end is even now by no means in sight—as to the wisdom of the means of political representation afforded under the scheme.

One school of thought believes that communal representation has but intensified the age-old Hindu-Moslem bitterness, for this method of representation, being based on the mere size of a particular religious community, has caused both Hindus and Moslems to proselytize by every means in their power. Only by such means can the Moslems hope to increase their political representation, and by similar means the Hindus strive to maintain, or even increase, theirs. The number of lives lost in religious riots during the period the Reforms have been in operation has far exceeded the total casualties in all such riots throughout India for the past fifty years. Those who argue thus point with justification to the fanatical Moplahs of the Malabar coast, who rose in the summer of 1921 and massacred thousands of Hindus, besides forcing as many more to embrace the Moslem faith. And last year's prolonged riots in Calcutta, which were primarily of a religious nature, provide another strong argument in favour of this point of view. People who hold a contrary opinion on this question of communal representation declare that the violence of the past few years has been not so much actually due to

the introduction of the Reforms as that the violence has developed with the Reforms. These defenders of the principle of communal representation argue that, had any other form of representation been substituted, it is quite likely that the new scheme of government would have at once broken down. They do not believe that a system whereby electorates would have been composed of a mixture of Hindus and Moslems could have been a practicable and workable proposition. Furthermore, they blame the delay in our making peace with Turkey for a great deal of the unrest of these past few years. With this latter belief I am inclined to agree ; and there are other contributory causes, notably the activities of interested agitators, both in and outside the British Empire, who have done their best to work on the religious feelings of Hindu and Moslem alike so as to make both believe that British rule is accountable for all the evils and domestic differences, both religious and social, to which India is, and always will be, heir. So much then for a brief exposition of the two opposing schools of thought on communal representation. It is necessarily incomplete, for volumes could be written on the subject, but I think sufficient in a book of this kind.

As a direct outcome of this sharp divergence of opinion the Swaraj Party came into being. Swaraj is the logical development of the policy of non-co-operation which was started by Mr Gandhi but soon passed beyond his power of control. Swaraj means Home Rule for India in much the same way that Home Rule for Ireland meant an Irish Free State. Imitation went as far as copying the crude methods of the early Fenians, and the Swaraj Party's obstruction in the provincial legislative councils on their first entrance was based on the tactics of the old Home Rule Party in the British House of Commons. But the great and essential difference lies in the fact that, whereas the Irish Home Rulers in the Commons had a great mass of the people of Ireland behind them, the Swarajists

have not. They also lack the Irishman's saving grace of humour.

These Swarajist legislators are for the most part lawyers and professional politicians, desirous of office and greedy for the spoils which a successful career under a Swaraj regime could bring them. Not only do the Swarajists aspire completely to dominate the legislature, they believe in controlling the municipalities of the cities of India also. To this end they made an impressive start by capturing the corporations of Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras. They showed their hand in Bombay by promptly giving orders which ensured that no British or Colonial goods were to be purchased by the municipality, while in Calcutta and Madras the Swaraj Corporation committed every possible anti-British act, short of such direct prohibition of Empire goods, of which they were capable. No European or loyal Indian was sure of his job although he might have been a municipal employee for many years; only Government stood between these public servants and instant dismissal. Wherever possible jobs were found for relatives of councillors, and the post of Chief Executive Officer of the Calcutta Corporation was given to a leading Swarajist. Incidentally it may be observed that this individual was arrested by the Bengal Government after his complicity in seditious plots was established, and promptly clapped into jail. Jobbery and corruption were rife in these Swaraj corporations, and had they not been promptly checked by Government it was their intention to obtain control of every public institution in their city, even the hospitals.

But the Swarajist has been found out by his own people, and the party have lost seats at succeeding municipal elections, so that in course of time these corporations will in all probability return to normality.

Indians in the cities make so much noise that it is only too frequently forgotten that the vast majority of Indians live outside the towns and that the ignorant agriculturists and up-country workers of all kinds form

90 per cent. of the entire population of India. These people care nothing for the intrigues of the cities; all they ask for is to be left alone to earn their daily bread in peace. They are still courteous and respectful to those Europeans who treat them decently. The manners of the bear-garden are reserved for the edification of the provincial legislative councils, and the council chambers of city corporations, and are indulged in by the semi-educated Swarajist, who, while boasting of the culture of India and its ancient civilization, manages successfully to defile both. And a great many of these men have been to England for a classical education and have generally been spoilt in the process.

To the simple *ryot*—as the agriculturist is called—the British official on the spot represents security, law and order. To him he goes in trouble, sure of an impartial and patient hearing. Indians in general would rather take his advice, and accept his word, than that of their own countrymen. And the average Indian servant would rather work for a European than an Indian master. The *sahib* does not promise that which he is unable to fulfil or has no intention of performing; also he pays his servants regularly. Of course he insists on discipline, order and cleanliness—virtues which are not of much account as such to the Indian servant, and are only acquired painfully in course of time. Still, for all that, he finds the *sahib* a good master, and as a rule is happy and contented in his work. The Swarajists found that servants were not to be turned against their masters by soft words and vague promises of a better time to come.

But with the simple countryman the paid agitator fared somewhat better. He was successful in many instances in poisoning the minds of simple up-country folk against the British *râj*. He quoted the words of Mr Gandhi, enlarged and twisted their meaning, and promised an immediate new heaven on earth to all who would aid the advent of Swaraj. Some of these agents even went so far as to allege that the British *râj* was

already ended, that in a few days' time the Mahatma—as Gandhi is always called by the faithful—would be proclaimed King. An easy and lazy life was promised, plus high wages, for all who would vote at the coming elections for Swaraj candidates. It was said that so certain was the reign of Gandhi that Europeans in the cities were already leaving the country in thousands. It all sounded most probable to the simple *ryot*, who had never been outside his native village; certainly more probable than the aeroplane which he had seen with his own eyes flying overhead. A little judiciously applied money clinched the argument in a truly Oriental manner.

By such devices and misstatements the Swaraj Party managed to sweep the country at the second elections, when the new leadership began to be felt and the old policy of pure non-co-operation was thrown overboard as impractical and insufficiently spectacular. And the simple electors awaited with stoical patience for the promised change of government by Gandhi to come to pass. They are still waiting.

Entrance to the councils followed a period of intensive non-co-operation, for in the first councils the Swarajists took no part at all. But in this second election no Indian who failed to toe the line and obey the dictates of the Swaraj Party had any real chance of success in most of the constituencies. And many anti-Swarajists were browbeaten into withdrawing their candidature altogether.

Prior to this second election was the day of *hartels*; shops were closed, either with or without the consent of their owners. Peaceful picketing with odds of 20 to 1 against the shopkeeper is a very effective form of persuasion in India. The colleges were boycotted; the effective measure adopted by Swaraj students of lying down in solid rows across the entrance steps was found to be quite forceful enough an excuse to keep students away from their studies. Then one morning Calcutta awoke to find its municipal market closed, the frightened

shopkeepers scattered in all directions, and no supplies of food to be had. Trams and taxis ceased to run, and those Indians who wished to work were forcibly prevented from so doing.

This sort of thing happened, on and off, every week or so for some time, but it was found to be pressing more hardly on Indians than on the hated Europeans, so gradually the enthusiasm waned. Other "stunts" were tried. Processions of non-co-operators were formed and paraded the streets, escorted by bands, and taking toll from all and sundry who would give money to the funds of the Swaraj Party. They all wore white home-spun garments and the little round cap which is a cross between that worn by a baker and that issued to a convict. Some of these processions were a mile long and became a great nuisance in obstructing traffic. But they were very popular with the work-shy, for each young processionist was paid eight annas for his part in the proceedings, and his task was light—merely to walk as slowly as possible and to shout lustily at regular intervals: "*Bande Mataram!*" ("Hail to the Motherland") and "*Mahatma Gandhi ki jai!*" ("Hail to Mahatma Gandhi"). Then there was the organization called the Khilifat Volunteer Corps, which represented the Moslem contribution to non-co-operation. This motley throng was officered by Indians in weird uniforms, wearing Sam Browne belts and carrying swords. They carried banners, and their headquarters amassed lots of money from sympathizers all over India who imagined that England had some hand in the removal of the Khilifat from the person of one individual to another. These same people probably believe now that the introduction of the bowler hat into modern Turkey is an instance of English commercialism, contrived to make rich the hat manufacturers of Luton.

But the subscribers to the Khilifat fund had a nasty shock a few months later when account was taken of the stewardship of the officials who administered the cash. No accounts had been kept which were capable

of being audited, and the rupees had vanished—exactly where has not been explained to this day.

So for a while non-co-operation held sway, and the police could do little or nothing, for Government would not move. Loyal Indians were intimidated and despairing, and Europeans were becoming restive and inclined to take matters into their own hands.

Then, at last, the Bengal Government acted. The Khilifat Corps was proclaimed a lawless association, and disbanded, the members' lethal weapons were confiscated, and the law prohibiting the carrying of such was strictly enforced. The headquarters of the Khilifat Committee was raided, and once again the Calcutta police force took full charge of the streets in northern Calcutta, where for a time the non-co-operators had held sway, even to the extent of attempting to control the traffic!

Matters came to a climax about the time the Prince of Wales was due to arrive in India. Gandhi was still at liberty, and his followers believed that the Viceroy was afraid to imprison him, and for a time it indeed appeared so. But Lord Reading, who had spent his first year as Viceroy of India in taking careful stock of the situation and in giving the non-co-operators a sufficient length of rope, suddenly acted. Gandhi was clapped into jail through the instrumentality of the Bombay Government. It was done very quietly, because certain people were fearful of riots and widespread trouble in consequence. Nothing of the sort happened.

It was a bold stroke and it fell at just the right moment. The non-co-operators were flabbergasted. The more ignorant of them never credited that their Mahatma could be taken at all, much less confined in a human prison. And even when he was known to be inside, these poor people believed that the walls would fall down and release him did he so desire. But nothing happened, and soon their disillusionment was complete; their idol remained, but he had shrunk to human proportions. He had been taken to prison like any other law-breaker who

is caught and sentenced. Moreover, he stayed there. As a political force Gandhi was discredited thenceforth. As such he remains dead to this day. His ultimate release, after a serious operation which nearly cost him his life, had no effect on the political situation. But as a holy man his spiritual teachings are still listened to with respect by all Indians. His life is pure and Spartan in the extreme; his transparent sincerity is admired by all Europeans who know him, but he is not of the stuff from which great political leaders are made. His plane of thought is other-worldly; impractical of realization his ideals in modern India have proved to be. Gandhi is to all outward signs an extinct volcano, though the hidden fires of fanatical idealism still burn within his frail body. India has disappointed him, and he has disappointed India.

With Gandhi's incarceration a new leader of Swaraj arose.

In Bengal, a province of lawyers, there was no cleverer man than C. R. Das. His practice at the Bar was a large one; his skill as a counsel second to none in the country. And, in company with many other Indian lawyers, C. R. Das had relinquished practice as his part in the non-co-operation movement. Apart from their common belief in Swaraj, Gandhi and Das were as the poles asunder. Das was as practical a man as Gandhi was a dreamer. And Das was very much a man-of-the-world. No one was more amused than C. R. Das when, on a memorable occasion, Lord Olivier went out of his way to canonize him during a speech delivered in the House of Lords. Saints were out of fashion just then in India, and C. R. Das never even posed as one. An opportunist? Yes; for with Gandhi out of the way the ambitious lawyer saw his chance and at once grasped it. Putting himself at the head of a group of advanced Swarajists, who had all along been impatient of Gandhi's unpractical leadership, C. R. Das announced a policy of aggression, and advocated entrance to the councils, with the avowed intention

of actively obstructing the Government there by every possible means.

He obtained an immediate following, and succeeded in carrying the party with him. He it was who organized the Swarajists to such purpose that they won that election of which I have already made mention; it was he who engineered the capture of the municipalities, and it was C. R. Das who shortly afterwards became Mayor of Calcutta. In addition, he was the acknowledged political boss of Bengal and the chief driving force in the Swaraj movement in all India.

His move in negotiating the purchase of a daily paper gave his party a formidable weapon, and at the same time smothered an organ which had been favourable to British interests. He dropped the name of *Indian Daily News* and rechristened it *Forward*, and saw that it lived up to its name. It became a bitter opponent of everything British and was always in hot water with the Government. Its former features of interest disappeared overnight and it was henceforth merely a political paper, badly printed, carelessly edited, but withal an exceedingly useful weapon to boost the new policy.

C. R. Das always dressed in *khadder*, the national homespun worn by all Swarajists, and his ample proportions were frequently to be seen compressed into the small dimensions of a decrepit Ford car, in which he drove about surrounded by secretaries and servants. His lips were stained with the red of the betel-nut, which, like most Bengalis, he chewed incessantly, and he went about bareheaded for the most part, his iron-grey hair close cropped and bristly, his spectacles for ever on his nose. But C. R. Das overworked himself, he was here, there and everywhere. Leader of the Swarajists in the Bengal Legislative Council, Mayor of Calcutta, proprietor and editor of a daily paper, and adviser to the All-India movement, constantly travelling and speaking; it was too much for a man of even his abnormal powers.

And, of course, he made mistakes. His really fatal error was in the Tarakeshwa sensation, when he championed the cause of a dissolute Indian priest, or *Mohant*, as such are called. This man had charge of a Hindu temple, and riots broke out in the vicinity when the simple people who worshipped there discovered that matters, both morally and financially, were not as they should be. C. R. Das backed the wrong horse when the *Mohant's* religious superiors sought to set right the irregularities by installing another priest. The Swarajist leader made fiery speeches, and enlisted many thousands of young students to form relays of apparent devotees, who tried in vain to reach the precincts of the temple and capture it again for the benefit of the deposed incumbent. It is the fixed principle of the Indian Government to protect the religious places of the Indians, and the police were forced to arrest large numbers of the rioting students. Much hubbub was created in Bengal over this matter, which had a decided political flavour, and when at last C. R. Das made some sort of arrangement which benefited his party's funds, and agreed thereupon to drop the protest, large numbers of his followers were disillusioned.

This matter of Tarakeshwa was branded by Lord Lytton, then Governor of Bengal, as a fraud from start to finish, which home-truth further annoyed the Swarajists, as they now knew that they had been hoaxed by C. R. Das. His power was waning, and for a long time he had been a very sick man, suffering from diabetes. The end came suddenly, in 1925, and though C. R. Das was much mourned by the party there is little doubt that the Swarajists had found out his true worth as a leader. An opportunist every time, his death undoubtedly made for peace and a better chance for rational Indian opinion to assert itself.

Since the passing of C. R. Das the Swarajist Party has been very indifferently led, and has steadily lost power and influence. More than that, it has been found out.

I venture to predict that its days are numbered, so far, at least, as its more pretentious ambitions are concerned, and a steadily growing body of sane Indian opinion is surely undermining the work of the extremists. The elections which were held during the latter part of last year, while not going completely against the Swarajists in every province, lost them many seats. Bombay went heavily against them, and their plight was even worse in the United Provinces, while in the Punjab their numbers were reduced to a mere fraction. Assam would have none of them, and the party's only real triumphs occurred in Bihar and Madras. In particular the Swarajists' loss of seats in Bengal must have been a bitter pill for the leaders to swallow. The net result of the elections gave India a more representative class of legislator than had been the case in previous elections; there are now fewer firebrands and more representatives of the landowners and the commercial community—those Indians with a stake in the country. Also some of the new members are genuine social reformers, who may be expected to take a real and personal interest in the well-being of their constituents.

The Swarajists fared no better in the Legislative Assembly than they did in the provincial councils, for in the Assembly they lost one-third of their strength and with it the power of effective obstruction, so that, taking it all in all, India is showing at long last some spirit of responsibility, and may eventually be ready for the self-government which the Reforms heralded. Whether or not an extension, or an enlargement, of the scheme will be attempted by the British Parliament, in the specified year of 1929, remains to be seen. That the matter will come up for review in that year is already provided, but any chance of an earlier review of the situation is now extremely unlikely, especially as the Indian National Congress at its last Christmas sitting again endorsed, by a large majority, the complete Swarajist

programme, which comprised the non-acceptance of office and the refusal to vote supplies until Government makes what Congress considered a satisfactory response to the demands of the extremists.

It remains to be seen how closely the elected Swarajists stick together in the newly elected councils. The verb "to rat" is not altogether unknown even to India, and I should not be at all astonished to find a number of secessions from the ranks of the extremists as the fateful year of 1929 approaches.

With this reflection I gladly leave the subject of Indian politics, for it is a childish game as played there at present, and one of which you have probably already heard more than enough.