



## CHAPTER V

Influence of the Cinema on Indian Life and Thought—The American Stranglehold—Incitement to Crimes of Violence

**F**OR a number of years past, India has been the dumping ground of the sensational type of film by American film producers.

Their endeavour has been to get rid of their less valuable and desirable pictures to inexperienced exhibitors, for screening before audiences which consist very largely of wholly illiterate people.

The effort has, on the whole, been very successful. From the commercial point of view these film producers have done very well indeed. Of course they care nothing for the evil influence which such films have upon those who see them. The American producer is a cute business man, out for profit only, and, encountering little or no competition on the Indian market, has been able successfully to dump his rubbish on an easy and profitable market.

Unfortunately he is not the only one who believes that anything is good enough for the East. In reality no greater fallacy exists, and the effect of screened pictorial lies has already done much damage, and continues to exert a really disastrous influence on British prestige in our Eastern Empire.

But who in England really cares? Press and public alike appear indifferent to this aspect of the film problem. India is so remote; we at home are not interested.

Yet these foreign films are only too often a direct incentive to lawlessness. Dacoity (robbery with violence) committed with the aid of motor-cars has of late years been introduced into India. Is this to be wondered at when the American film has shown, most thoroughly, how simply and easily the thing can be done? Bands of



lawless Indians now haunt the great cities and commit robbery with violence, using American cars and American firearms in the manner illustrated so clearly in American productions.

There are also other types of films no less objectionable from the standpoint of all Europeans in India, both official and non-official. For some time I was engaged in censoring films for Government in Bengal, and in the course of my work saw many thoroughly vicious films, some merely indecent, a few wholly unnatural.

Such were, of course, immediately banned, but as each province in India has its own censoring authority it is quite possible for a film which would be banned by a strict censor in one province to pass the less particular censor of another.

As an instance of the ignorance, or callous mentality, of some producers, I will give a brief description of one film which was imported into Bengal and produced before me in the usual way, with the request for a certificate authorizing its screening.

In this film was depicted the daring theft of a baby-girl by a gorilla. The hideous animal carries off the child into a near-by jungle, leaving its parents distracted. The mother goes out of her mind, and the father vows vengeance on all monkeys, declaring that he will shoot every one he sees in the future.

In the latter part of the film is shown the arrival of a curious type of individual, which turns out to be the offspring of the gorilla and the child whom he had carried off years previously.

Now, this subject is horrible and unnatural enough in all conscience to show even to European audiences ; how much worse to try to screen such a story before Indian audiences who still have some respect left for Europeans, and who hold the monkey in veneration and are forbidden by their religion from killing such animals in any circumstances !

Needless to relate, this film was banned immediately,



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though the importer was far from pleased. He showed me a written report from his New York agent stating that the film in question was suitable in every respect for screening in the East. Ignorance, combined with carelessness, some would call it; I consider such action nothing short of criminal negligence.

It is difficult to conceive the mentality of a producer who accepts and screens such a plot to start with, let alone to imagine the mind of the agent who sends such a picture to be screened in India, of all places.

To realize the importance of this question of the domination of the film business in the East which America undoubtedly exercises, it must be appreciated that illiterate Indians form the vast bulk of the population of the country. And by illiterate I do not mean they are unable to read and speak English; I speak of a total inability to read and write their own, or any other, language. So it follows that they are quite incapable of reading those strangely worded captions which appear with most films and purport to explain their meaning.

But if the Indian cannot read or write, there is nothing the matter with his eyesight, and no reading leaves so strong an impression as is recorded by effective pictorial display.

Although the need for good British films is only now being fully realized at home, the subject has agitated European residents of India for very many years past. And the reasons are very strong ones.

The cinema plays an important part in the lives of the peoples of the East, and although I am here referring especially to India, it is none the less true of such places as the Straits Settlements, Egypt, Burma and Hong-Kong, where the prestige of Europeans must be upheld.

In India to-day there are some two hundred cinemas scattered throughout the country, besides numerous travelling portable picture-shows, the owners of which wander about screening pictures, in many cases certified



by no censor at all and which may quite likely be of an objectionable character. Thus it is that literally millions of illiterate people see films at regular intervals week by week, year in and year out.

The chief trouble comes about because those Indians sincerely believe that what they see on the screen are not merely pictorial stories, but actual scenes taken from the daily lives of Europeans in their own countries and homes.

Neither can the Indian differentiate between a British and an American film, for the Eastern mind works somewhat in this way: British people are Europeans; Europeans are white people who speak English; Americans also are white people who speak English; therefore English and Americans are one and the same.

As I have mentioned elsewhere, the Indian cannot understand the real meaning of "European." The word to him means—"a white person who speaks English."

It naturally follows from this way of reasoning that the American film is also British, and this belief is strengthened because the actors and actresses on the films, their mode of life and clothing, are all very much alike. They are just *sahibs* and *memsahibs*, to the illiterate Indian.

India to-day is surfeited with films depicting foolish wives, faithless husbands, gorgeous interiors of palatial mansions, scenes of gross extravagance and lawlessness—all of American origin, but, according to the Indian's way of thinking, undoubtedly British.

Nor is this misconception wholly confined to illiterate Indians, for I was once told, in all seriousness, by an educated and clever Indian business man that he was convinced most women in England went to bed each night in an intoxicated condition. When I denied this he remarked:

"But I know it is so, I see it so often on the films!"

This filmed display of loose living, senseless luxury and fabulous wealth, with which so many foreign films



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are saturated, is doing a serious amount of harm to British prestige in India.

Remember that 95 per cent. of the films shown there are of American origin, the remaining 5 per cent. being made up of German, French, Italian and British, as well as a few locally made pictures by Indians which are of a harmless nature, and deal in the main with stories based on Eastern mythology.

Europeans in India live in the midst of a population composed of many different races and castes. Films which could without serious objection be shown to Western audiences are quite unsuitable for screening indiscriminately before mixed Eastern audiences.

Of course the existing censorship can, and does to a very great extent, prevent the worst type of film being shown. But what the censorship is quite powerless to prevent is the screening of a film merely because of the false atmosphere which permeates it. Foreign films are naturally, and often deliberately, saturated with a foreign atmosphere.

Displays of luxury and licentious living, flaunted before large audiences whose minds are already only too full of discontent, the seeds of which have been sown there by interested agitators against law and order, are harmful in the extreme. It is fatuous to argue, as some still try to do, that as long as there is liberty allowed the vernacular Press to exaggerate and misrepresent facts, there should be equal liberty to screen pictorial untruths. The illiterate Easterner has a very sharp eye, though he may not be able to read.

You have only to watch him at a cinema—as I so often have done—to note how quickly he appreciates what is being screened. His own women are *purdah* (veiled from the sight of other men), yet for a few pence he can revel in pictures of scantily dressed European women, and, in many foreign films, may watch them become intoxicated also.

Is it therefore any wonder that the Indian nowadays



is so inclined to look upon Europeans as a living sham? He sees what is to all appearances the home of the average *sahib* and *mem-sahib* in England, and jumps to the conclusion that life in England is rotten to the core.

Good British films are needed to correct this wrong impression. The European audiences are always asking for pictures with an English atmosphere which will remind them of home. The Indians deserve to be shown the real thing: let them be taught something of the simplicity and sanctity of the average English home; let them see the beauties of our fair countryside, the cleanliness and order of our great cities and seaside towns. At present such pictures are confined to the altogether too short Topical Budgets. These news pictures are most popular with all classes in India, for they show actual happenings at home to the exile, and for him take first place in all programmes.

A great market exists in India, and the East generally, for good British films. At present it is, like England itself, in the grip of the American octopus; but the results in India are infinitely worse than here. European patrons of cinemas want British pictures, and importers are willing to show them, provided they are good pictures. But they have not always been good, and the idea that anything is good enough to send to the East is still unexploded in some quarters.

This is something the British film industry must live down, for it is only by sending out the best and most up-to-date productions that home manufacturers can hope to capture this very desirable trade. It is worse than useless to try to work off old stock and second-rate pictures on the Overseas market. And films must be sold at a really competitive price, which will yet show a good profit to the exhibitor.

The East has been sufficiently exploited by our rivals: let British companies now come forward with a first-class proposition, and, though it will take time and cost money, the result will be a gradual loosening of the grip



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which America now has on the Indian market, and a healthy reaction in favour of British standards in our Eastern Empire.

Although public interest is now much concerned with the question of censoring films sent to India, little or nothing is known as to the means adopted there in carrying out such censorship.

When the Government of India passed the Cinematograph Act of 1918 it was left to the various Provincial Governments to determine how the Act should be worked. Each individual province set about the matter in a different way.

The Government of Madras left the matter entirely to the police to manage, whilst in Burma a Board of Censors worked in conjunction with the police. Very little censoring has to be done in either of these two places, and the original arrangement still stands.

The Government of Bombay appointed a Board of Censors, which consisted of five representative citizens, with the Commissioner of Police as President and an *ex-officio* member of the Board.

A full-time officer, who combined the duties of Secretary and Chief Inspector of Films, was appointed, at a salary of Rs1000 per month, rising in time to Rs1250 by annual increments of Rs50 per month. This gentleman was a European and had as his assistants three Indians, who acted as Assistant Inspectors of Films at salaries of Rs300, rising by increments of Rs50 to Rs500 per month. All were given travelling expenses, and, with slight modifications, this arrangement still stands.

The method adopted by the Government of Bengal was somewhat similar, save that the Act was worked rather more economically, the work of censoring films being left to one European Inspector at a salary of Rs600 per month, rising by annual increments of Rs50 per month to Rs900. An allowance of Rs150, for the upkeep of a motor-car, also was made.



The Bengal Board of Censors is presided over by the Commissioner of Police for Calcutta, one of the deputy commissioners acting as Secretary, both being *ex-officio* members of the Board. The other members are seven representative citizens of Calcutta, nominated by the Government of Bengal. All members of the Board, including the President and Secretary, receive Rs16 for each meeting of the Board which they attend, and also on those rare occasions when they deem it necessary to view a film themselves which has been adversely reported on by the Inspector of Films.

The endeavour all along has been to make the Censoring Department pay for itself out of the fees charged importers of films for the censoring and granting of certificates.

Unfortunately Government levied a duty of 20 per cent. on all imported films only about a year or two after the department really got going, and this additional levy on importers, coupled with the general trade slump, hit the cinemas pretty heavily. A considerable falling off occurred in the importation of films, the amount of censoring necessarily diminished, and the sums realized in fees failed to meet the expenses of the department. This applied to both Bombay and Bengal. But once again the two provinces tackled the problem in quite different ways. Bombay paid the deficit from public funds, while Bengal abolished the post of full-time Inspector of Films and appointed a part-time man, on a salary of Rs250 per month, with no allowances, to do the work in his stead. Necessity for rigid economy was very apparent at the time, and the Government of Bengal did not feel justified in applying public funds to support the censor's department.

But the principle was wrong ; for the trade depression did not last for ever and the work of censoring films is an important public service. The exhibitors objected, as did the public, for the new arrangement operated against their business. With the whole-time Inspector importers



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were able to have their films censored at any time in the day which suited them best, whereas with the new method they were called upon to show their films at an hour which suited the part-time man, who had, of course, to fit in the work with his other Government duties. Loss of time in censoring topical films affects seriously their value, and there are many other instances, of which censoring is but one, which have shown the folly of adopting a penny-wise-pound-foolish policy in Bengal.

If film censoring is necessary at all it should be most carefully attended to. Both the India Office and the Government of India have always laid great stress on the importance of this work. It is not reasonable to expect the censoring of films to be entirely self-supporting, nor is it wise to refuse a grant of public money to support a very necessary public service.

It is high time that the whole subject of censorship in India was reconsidered. The matter concerns India as a whole and should not be left to Provincial Governments to interpret as they think fit. All Boards of Censors should be placed on an equal footing, both as regards their constitution and the pay of inspectors.

Inspectors of films should be carefully chosen, and when appointed should be held directly responsible to Government; their pay should be sufficient to attract and hold the most suitable type of men, and their security of tenure should be as certain as that of any other class of covenanted Government servants. At present they hold office at the pleasure of the local Board of Censors and have no security at all.

The present system of film censoring is bad for India. It is also a hardship to importers to have a film held up and banned, at great loss to themselves, chiefly owing to the ignorance and carelessness of agents in the country of the film's origin.

Why should not Government Film Censors be stationed in the countries where the films come from, or, if this is not practical, why should not there be at least a



Government censor in New York to see all American films destined for India? This would deal with 95 per cent. of the films imported into India, and certainly all the most doubtful. The censor's certificate granted in New York would be necessary to allow of any film's admission to India. Without it the thing would be excluded as undesirable.

If this method was adopted all censoring of films for India would be of the same standard. The present system is unfair and unsafe, cumbersome, and expensive to work. Besides all this, it is largely ineffective, and the cause of endless complaints by Europeans in India, which find frequent expression in the columns of the Press, and in resolutions passed by religious and social bodies.

Films of Indian manufacture are few and far between. For the present these could be censored by the police in the place of origin.

Sooner or later—and the sooner the better—it appears to me that some drastic change must be made in the method of censorship, for there can be little doubt that the prestige of Europeans who reside in India, and of the British Government itself, is being slowly undermined by the pernicious influence of bad foreign films.



## CHAPTER VI

### The Hill Stations of Northern India—A Trip to Darjeeling

EVERY European in India hopes to make holiday at one or other of the hill stations at some time during his residence in the country. Some manage to go every year, and almost all contrive to visit the Hills on at least one occasion.

Simla is perhaps the best known of all the hill stations of Northern India. It is here that the Central Government spend the hot weather, pending the completion of the new Delhi, where millions of pounds are being spent in a great official headquarters. It is a city in itself, and one of the principal excuses for the expenditure is a praiseworthy attempt to keep Government officials at work in the Plains under the best possible conditions that skilled architects and builders can contrive. It is intended that the expensive exodus to Simla will in future years be avoided altogether.

Darjeeling is another very popular hill station, and during the hot weather in Calcutta the Government of Bengal invariably go there, while the Assam Government make their headquarters at Shillong, a charming spot in the Himalayan foothills.

But Mussoorie is perhaps the most generally popular of all hill resorts, although for Europeans who live in Bengal the journey is a long and tedious one. In Mussoorie alone, of all hill stations in Northern India, can visitors enjoy their pleasures outside the orbit of officialdom. No Government summers there, and Mussoorie is therefore not taken possession of by Government officials as such.

Still, Darjeeling remains the most accessible of all hill stations to the majority of non-official Europeans. It is



a pleasant spot, notwithstanding the annual story of its departed glories, the reported bad cooking and discomfort of its hotels, and the lack of sufficient centres of attraction. You speak of a place as you find it, and I shall give you my own experience of Darjeeling. It will serve to give people at home a very fair idea of the Hills in general, and the sort of holiday which their friends in Eastern India will likely be having during October.

This annual holiday is to Bengal what the "Wakes" are to Lancashire. Holidays are great institutions in India, and in Bengal the *pūjas*, as this annual holiday is called, take up most of the month of October. Calcutta is deserted by Europeans, for they take the opportunity, afforded by almost complete suspension of business, to go on their annual vacation. Some go to Puri, a small seaside place quite near; others take a river trip; some go on shooting expeditions, but more go to Darjeeling than anywhere else.

And one year I went too. After the usual preliminaries, which are incidental to any journey, had been attended to, I found myself at Sealdah station and seated comfortably in the Darjeeling Mail.

The afternoon sun was hot on the carriages, even at 5 P.M., and the train was very full. We were soon speeding northward, enjoying a gorgeous sunset, reflected in great expanses of water spread over green fields of *paddy* (rice), the whole making a wonderful colour-scheme, which set me at peace with the world, and kindled joyous anticipation for the holiday which had now commenced.

The welcome call to dinner gave me an opportunity of seeing how quickly Indian servants could do things, if they were really so minded and handled in the right way. The *modus operandi* must for ever remain the secret of the Eastern Bengal Railway; all I can do is to testify to the results in a plain recital of facts.

I have eaten in many a quick-lunch establishment in America, yet have never seen anything to equal the speedy service rendered at that dinner. It was a



veritable whirlwind. There seemed to be four waiters to every table, and no sooner was knife and fork laid on a more or less empty plate than it was whisked away and a fresh course took its place. Some fellow in a hurry seated higher up the dining-car seemed to have set the pace. It was quite useless trying to eat at normal—or even double normal—speed. I tried it, and all I got for my pains was to see that which was destined to be my portion left neglected on one side to get cold, in which condition I ultimately received it.

I had hoped for an hour's comfortable dinner; in reality it took about ten minutes to get through that lightning meal. Yes, I know it was holiday time, and there was another sitting to be catered for, but there was a long and weary journey of many hours' duration ahead of us.

I reckon that dinner lengthened my train journey by fifty minutes.

Apart from this little grouse I have nothing but praise for the Eastern Bengal Railway. Such politeness and efficiency as were accorded passengers have not their equal anywhere else in India.

Although it was a crowded train it was not uncomfortable, and I found my name carefully inscribed on each seat I was to occupy at different stages of the journey. We had one change only—at midnight.

At Siliguri there was a halt of sufficient duration to enable passengers to partake of a substantial breakfast. Then those of us who had so arranged beforehand transferred ourselves and our hand-baggage to the little rail motor, which holds just nine passengers, and, proceeding well in advance of the ordinary mountain train, started to climb the Himalayas in the most comfortable way possible.

Siliguri lies at the foot of the hills; ordinary-gauge trains can go no farther, so here the Eastern Bengal Railway has its terminus.

The Darjeeling-Himalayan Railway is a triumph of



engineering. I was told that its construction was due solely to the perseverance of one man, who, alone of his contemporaries, believed in its possibility. He made the acquaintance of a sporting Marwari, who gave him financial backing—otherwise there would be no Darjeeling as we know it to-day.

Strange as it may seem, I did not feel the cold, though conscious of the keen and pleasant air, until an altitude of 5000 feet was reached. Then clouds were encountered; we passed right through them, and I was glad of the greatcoat I had brought with me.

This journey up the precipitous mountain-side was a progress through woodland scenery so beautiful as to baffle description. It must be seen to be appreciated adequately. We looked down from the little rail motor as one does from an aeroplane; it was really most difficult to realize that I was on *terra firma* at all. Great clouds of grey and purple were above us and below. Every now and then, on glancing down, a break in the clouds would reveal the earth, many miles away—at least, such was my impression.

As the car wound round the spiral rails we crossed and recrossed our tracks many times, and ever at a higher altitude. At length we reached Ghoom, the highest point, 7450 feet above sea-level. From there the track descended slightly, and a farther run of half-an-hour on the level brought us to Darjeeling, the Queen of the Himalayas, a good hour and a half ahead of the mountain train.

I must on no account forget to mention Kurseong, where we stopped for refreshments. Here I was re-introduced to bread-and-butter—the real thing—crisp, white, and with a tasty crust, on which the hill butter was spread thick and yellow. After years of poor imitations this appetizing combination gave me the first really enjoyable meal I had eaten for many weary months.

My first glimpse of Darjeeling will not be easily forgotten.



Little houses with red corrugated roofs were dotted all up and down a great wooded hillside. White, snow-capped mountains towered in the far distance, their lofty peaks floating on billowy waves of cloud; while to my right hand the sky spread out, a vast expanse of azure blue.

At the hotel I found a hearty welcome awaiting me, and a cheery fire in the grate of my comfortable bedroom, the verandah outside commanding a priceless view of the snowcapped hills.

But what a climb it was up from the station for one accustomed to the flatness of the Plains, and a Calcutta dweller at that, who had walked barely a mile a week for months past! I found myself puffing and blowing like a grampus within two minutes; and by the time I reached the hotel I was properly winded.

Of course one soon gets used to the hills, which is as well, for Darjeeling is all hills; you are either going up or down them all day long. This exercise in itself makes the holiday worth while, for you are obliged to walk, unless you care to be taken for an invalid and go about in rickshaws continuously. To my mind this savoured too much of decrepit old age, and I accordingly left them alone.

Then of course there are the hill ponies. They are usually patronized by people who have never ridden anything before more frisky than a bicycle. Some of the scenes I witnessed were distinctly comical, though one nearly ended in a tragedy.

Almost every visitor to Darjeeling joins the Club as a temporary member, for a more jolly or useful institution could hardly be imagined.

The building itself is very compact, its rooms cosy, and its life altogether delightful, as amusement forms its chief attraction. There are good tennis courts, and all members have a chance of playing—if they wait long enough. It took me back, in fancy, a good many years to find a roller-skating rink in full swing again. The



pastime was very popular at Darjeeling the summer I was there. The ball room at the Club is unique in possessing a spring floor—the only one, I believe, of the kind in India. There are always plenty of dinner and after-dinner dances going on at the Club, as well as at most of the hotels.

I found the experience well worth while to journey the five miles to Lebong on a race day, of which there were several during the holidays. The ride itself is a very pretty one, along a well-made road, with towering hills on the one side, from the banks of which hang long evergreens of great beauty, while on the other side spreads a glorious expanse of valley, separating the road from the mountains in the far distance.

On arrival at Lebong I found a small saucer-like track, round which the little Bhutia ponies galloped, several laps to each race. They nearly always got away in a bunch, and the fellow on the rails most frequently won, unless he turned giddy and was forcibly bumped over the rails. This happened on more than one occasion.

The jockeys are mostly hill boys, very youthful, and up to all sorts of tricks. The occasional grown man who gets a mount has all his work cut out to equal the youngsters. A few bookmakers stand up at these races, and a small totalizator is operated in addition. But the chances of making money at Lebong races are small in the extreme. Horses and riders are understood best by the local inhabitants; the casual visitor would be well advised to limit strictly his investments.

There are several ways of getting to Lebong, perhaps the most favoured being that of a rickshaw. This journey, especially the return trip, is a stiff one, and four hefty men are none too many for the job of dragging the heavy carriage and a couple of passengers. These sturdy hill men earn every anna of the ten rupees charged for the double journey. Many people go on ponies, and many more walk by steep paths through the hills; this



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is a much shorter journey than by road, and the climb back provides the greatest possible amount of exercise in the shortest possible space of time that I can recollect enjoying.

Mount Everest is visible from Darjeeling on a clear day, but if you wish for the finest and most romantic view of the world's greatest mountain, without becoming an actual mountaineer, you must go to Tiger Hill, and arrive there by sunrise.

I did not take the trip, being somewhat lazy and quite satisfied for the time with the numerous distractions which Darjeeling provided. But an hotel acquaintance of mine, an American who was touring the whole inhabited globe in the shortest possible space of time, was more energetic. He told our party at table one day that he was determined to reach the top of Tiger Hill by sunrise, and obtain the best view of the world's highest mountain.

He was missing next day, but turned up the day after at dinner as usual, a sadder and wiser man.

It appeared that at 3 A.M. on a bitterly cold and misty morning he started out to accomplish the promised journey. He travelled in what is known locally as a "dandy." Now a dandy is a sort of small canvas bath strapped on top of two poles and carried on the shoulders of four stout hill men. It looks something like a canoe, of the covered-in variety; it has frequently been likened to a coffin, though in all probability it is less comfortable. So you will see that the expedition had nothing very festive or lively about its start. That dandy must have looked particularly gruesome and ghost-like in the mist at three o'clock in the morning.

The American, in describing his experiences, called it "the chair of torture." He also "guessed" it was an invention which was handed down from the Spanish Inquisition.

Anyway, he was a good judge, having spent six weary hours therein on the outward journey, as the men wended



a tortuous way up hills, which threw the passenger on his neck, and then down steep inclines, which shot him back to an upright position again. Through the clouds and mists and the damp intense cold, which chilled him to the marrow, he was borne, willy-nilly, on and still on. Turning back was out of the question; on and still on he went, frozen but undismayed, for ever buoyed up by the hope of the wondrous sight which awaited him at the end of it all.

At last the summit of Tiger Hill was reached. The daylight broke. He saw clouds and clouds, and still more clouds, but never a glimpse of Mount Everest.

Disgusted and disillusioned he returned wearily to Darjeeling, enduring once more the chair of torture, and spent the next twenty-four hours in bed.

It was a piteous story, yet for the life of us we who listened to it that dinner-time could not refrain from seeing its humour. But the American could see nothing funny about it, and was thoroughly put out over the whole business. Which, after all, was not to be wondered at. Next day he was quite himself again; but he never again referred to Tiger Hill in our presence, and two days later returned to Calcutta to continue his world tour. Should this story meet his eye I trust he will forgive the humour I found in its recital and laugh with the rest of us at what was, after all, a humorous incident once its unpleasant actualities were over.

Had the morning been fine and clear a good view of the mountain would have been possible. But, even so, I doubt whether the tedious journey is worth the sight afforded of the sun's rays turning the snows to a rosy hue and glinting on the summit of Mount Everest, showing clear against the sky-line, far, far, away.

I was afterwards told that the best way is to journey at evening the four or five miles to Senechal, put up at the *dak* bungalow, and turn in after dinner, to be awakened in time to complete the climb on foot by sunrise. Even so I was not ambitious to make the trip alone, believing



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that pleasant company has a lot to do with the joys of every successful climb of Tiger Hill.

The blessings of Darjeeling are numerous, and include the total absence of mosquitoes and other winged pests which inhabit the Plains. Thus I needed no mosquito net to protect me at night ; it was a treat to lie in bed and sleep in a cool and refreshing manner again—something I had well-nigh forgotten how to enjoy after years in Mesopotamia and Indian plains. How great was the luxury of once more being able to push my feet down quickly into cold sheets and enjoy the subsequent reaction of grateful, glowing warmth. How welcome the complete absence of the teasing electric fan ; how cheery the open grate, with its sweet-smelling wood fire, the dancing shadows bringing me dreams of home. It was all very good, and very English. No wonder I returned to the Plains feeling refreshed in mind and body.

A word or two about the people of the Hills, for they are worth a mention. It is a well-known fact that hill-people are more or less alike the world over ; all have similar traits and characteristics.

In the Darjeeling district I was much struck by the similarity of the people to those who inhabit Kurdistan. The same sturdy, strong men, self-reliant and fearless of aspect ; the same method of carrying their burdens, suspended over the back from a strap supported from their foreheads ; the same dark-haired, blue-eyed women and children, often surprisingly handsome, cheery and happy, full of humour, are a welcome contrast to the gloomy and sullen people of the Plains.

There were Tibetans, Nepalese and some Gurkhas, all with the Mongolian type of features. Some of the rickshaw men looked almost like Chinese. The women are very picturesque, their native dress of bright colours contrasting pleasantly with their long plaits of coarse, dark hair.

Darjeeling is well worth a visit ; and to any intending travellers to the Hills I advise their taking plenty of



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warm woollen underclothing. And put some of it on before reaching Siliguri, for though you may not by that time feel the cold, the cold will feel you. Should this happen, and you are not well protected, an internal chill may result, which will bring on more than usual hill sickness.

Take my word for it, for the consequences of such a chill, if not really serious, are, to put it mildly, decidedly unpleasant.



## CHAPTER VII

Woman's Life in India—Home and Servants—Shopping—Occupation—Exercise—Children—Milk—The Butterfly Life

**B**ROADLY speaking, European women in India may be divided into two classes : those who are or have been married, and those who most assuredly will marry. The old maid simply does not exist, and the modern bachelor girl is content to retain her title only sufficiently long as is necessary to demonstrate her prowess as a free agent ; she relinquishes her title in a love set to the first worthy male challenger who comes along. Doubles are on the whole more interesting and much less fatiguing. Besides which one can flirt with a much greater sense of daring and diminishing responsibility, for husbands in India are notoriously considerate and understanding.

India may well be considered the happy hunting-ground of the single girl, for if she comes out reasonably fresh from England, is amiable, moderately pretty, witty, and not withal too wise, the odds are strongly in her favour that just as soon as she wishes she will attain her heart's desire. And the permanency of the joy will last as long in India as in other places. It mostly depends on herself.

One hears on all sides a bemoaning because of the lack of paid domestic helps in the homes of England ; those Europeans who live in India are envied their many servants. The English bride will feel joyous at the prospect of the numerous retainers who, in India, will be at her beck and call. On her first arrival in the country she may be somewhat overwhelmed at the number of her servants, and feel most important because of their apparent obsequiousness. They are the old and tried



servants of her husband in his bachelor days, have grown accustomed to his ways, and within reason carry on pretty much as they please. But be under no illusions ; for all their *salaams*, and expressions of goodwill and willingness to minister to the wants of their new mistress, these old servants are none too pleased with the new regime. They are nervous of the *mem-sahib*, shy of being found out in those little failings of omission or commission which the *sahib*, through inability or indifference, was glad enough to overlook. Also there was in those days but one to obey and serve ; now there are two. The *sahib* being out all day, probably using his home merely as a place wherein to sleep and store his possessions, meant long hours of leisure for his servants. Now the *mem-sahib* will be at home a great deal, and will likely, at first at all events, busy herself inspecting the house and its fittings, looking for dust and other signs of uncleanliness which show up so clearly under the strong sunlight which on most days floods the house. And that kitchen, into which the *sahib* never under any possible pretext set foot, will no longer be immune from inspection. Abdul and Mahomed sigh deeply in their beards ; as likely as not they must now look forward to lengthy days of unremitting zeal and labour, their afternoon sleep severely curtailed, and the visits of relatives will be neither so lengthy nor so frequent as of yore.

But it is in the matter of the daily catering, to which the *mem-sahib* will likely bring a trained mind, that the servants have most misgivings. The cook up till now has had full power, and has made convenient and lucrative arrangements with vendors of food-stuffs in the bazaar. Now, in all probability, the *mem-sahib* will wish to take the car and go shopping in the market herself. Or even if she does not, she will at least keep careful check on the stores and discourage the acquisition of those many perquisites which the cook has come to consider his rightful due. Truly, times have changed for the worse.



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All this of course provided the new mistress takes life sufficiently seriously to look after household matters personally. If she does, her first few months may well prove rather troublesome, but in time matters will adjust themselves and a state of open warfare will give rise to one of armed neutrality. And although the husband will be very loth to part with old and trusted servants, he may find such action desirable if the course of married life is to run smoothly. We take the line of least resistance in hot countries, and it is better to sack one's servants than to live in an atmosphere of marital discord, should such an unhappy alternative present itself.

Women, when they come first to India, do not, as a rule, realize the distinctions of the various castes from which their servants are drawn; neither do they realize that Indian servants will perform only those duties which their individual caste restrictions permit. Let me illustrate this point by a true story.

The newly wed wife of an officer arrived at a military station and had a number of servants placed at her bungalow in the cantonment. One was an orderly, a high-caste Brahmin, who stood within the compound ready to carry letters and messages. One day the *mem-sahib* gave an order to this servant, which the man refused to obey. The lady abused him, went off to her husband and demanded punishment for the man. An inquiry followed, in which it transpired that the order given was to the effect that this Brahmin was to go forthwith to the pigsty in the rear of the compound and give it a thorough cleansing.

It is needless to say more to those of my readers who know India; but for the benefit of the uninitiated it is well to explain that the servant's caste forbade him to touch a pig in any circumstances, and as for cleaning the sty, the mere idea was revolting and impossible! Cleaning was no part of his duties. A low-caste man, known as the sweeper, is attached to every household on



purpose to perform such menial tasks ; no doubt he was available had he been sent for, but the newly arrived *mem-sahib* had imagined that any servant would do, and had called on the first one she saw.

This story went the round of the station, and the lady had to put up with a good deal of chaff : her husband was not so lucky, for he was sent for by his colonel, and spent an unpleasant ten minutes defending the ignorance of his wife. Of course he should have told her about such things. Perhaps he had.

It may be useful here to give a list of the various servants which are necessary to a household in India and to indicate their duties, for many more servants are necessary than would be the case in England. Not that a multiplicity of domestics makes for efficiency, for often the whole lot of them will do no more work collectively than would one or two good English servants. But we have no choice in the matter.

The average small household in the East must employ a cook (*bawurchee*) and his mate, for the kitchen ; a valet (*bearer*), to attend to one's clothes and person ; a butler (*khitmutgar*), to wait at table and attend to drinks, etc. ; a washerman (*dhobie*), for laundry-work ; a water-carrier (*bhisti*), to fetch your bath water, and maybe your drinking water too if you live in a place where water is not laid on to the house, and a sweeper (*mehtur*), to do all the most menial work. If you keep a horse or a motor-car a groom (*sais*) will be necessary, and if you keep dogs, a boy (*koota-wala*) will be needed to clean and exercise them. Should your bungalow boast a garden no one will tend it save an Indian gardener (*malee*), while the gate of your compound will quite likely be guarded by a watchman (*durwan*), who spends most of the day doing nothing most industriously, and whose obese proportions, scantily clad, rise from a trestle-bed to salute you as you wander home late at night.

If you are married, a maid-servant (*ayah*) is almost a necessity, most assuredly if there are children. And, in



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houses where no electric fans operate, a punka-puller (*punka-wallah*) will sorely be needed, probably two of them, for you will need a punka day and night in the hot weather. I had almost forgotten the scullion (*mushalchee*), for no self-respecting cook and his mate will function properly in the kitchen without someone to wash the plates and dishes for them.

At the lowest computation this small army of servants will cost you £18 to £20 a month in wages alone; but actual money paid out is only a portion of your responsibilities. You are an adopted father and mother (*ma-bap*) to all your servants, whether you like it or whether you do not, for the doctoring and care of them all, and of their numerous relatives and hangers-on, is assumed to be your personal care.

Most of the servants will be married, and when babies arrive, these are brought to you for inspection and to be received into the orbit of your beneficent influence. You are constantly being asked to provide work, or at least to recommend for work, some one or other of the crowd which shelter behind your name and reputed influence and generosity. You are seldom free from verbal requests and written petitions, for your servants imagine you to be all-powerful, and expect you to be able to produce jobs as easily as a good conjurer produces rabbits out of an empty hat.

One of the disadvantages of life in the East is the total absence of personal privacy accorded you in your own house. No room, no time, is sacred to the Indian servant; he is always at your elbow or just outside the door. Passages are his hiding- and sleeping-places; your kitchen is his drawing-room, for there his relatives—and their name is legion—come to visit him, to smoke their evil-smelling tobacco, to chew betel-nut, and to gabble incessantly.

Requests for leave of absence are frequent; the real or supposed illness of relatives is the excuse most favoured, and such leave is usually taken by members



of your establishment with or without your permission. Meanwhile a mysterious "brother" turns up to carry on the duties of the absent one, and usually contrives to do considerable damage and annoy you by making endless mistakes during the tenure of his unwelcome visit.

It is difficult when engaging an Indian servant to be certain that his credentials are genuine. He carries round with him a bundle of papers which are known as "chits." These purport to be expressions of opinion on the character and attainments of the holder, given him by former employers. Such are not always genuine, and even when they are authentic one is never sure that these "chits" refer to the individual who presents them, for servants quite unblushingly exchange "chits" with one another, or even hire them for the occasion.

In Ceylon a system of Government registration is in force which compels all servants to be registered and carry a service-book containing the name and photograph of the owner. In this book are set down the reasons for discharge from previous situations, the wages paid, and other useful details. Employers are bound to fill in such details when servants leave their employ, and it is also illegal in Ceylon to employ a servant who fails to produce his registration-book. It would be well if this excellent system could be extended to all other Eastern countries, and especially in India would the idea be welcomed by Europeans.

I have said much about servants because efficient servants mean a great deal to European women in India, if only for the unfailing interest which their sins and virtues evoke at any gathering of *mem-sahibs*. They will chat contentedly for hours on this fascinating topic without any fear of brain-fag, while in fancy the shades of a revered and respectable South Kensington for a while soften the brilliance of a too searching Indian sun.

Before leaving this subject I must pay tribute to the Indian cook, who is a very marvel of resourcefulness. He can always be relied upon to provide a good dinner for



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any extra number of guests, at a moment's notice. He will likewise contrive to procure the requisite additional amount of crockery and cutlery for an emergency. How he manages it remains one of the inscrutable mysteries of the East. One just leaves it at that, questions being neither asked nor expected; though, should all the bungalows in the neighbourhood chance to be invaded by guests at the same time, an adequate explanation might be forthcoming without any need of inquiry.

Women feel the heat of India to a greater extent than do men. I think the reason for this is that men forget their discomfort in the absorption of their daily work in the office or mill, while most women find the day long and well-nigh unendurable in a temperature which remains around  $100^{\circ}$  in the shade for months on end. Having little to do, the average woman spends her time during the hot weather in brooding over her physical discomforts. Her life becomes a burden to herself and a trial to her friends; her temper frays, and her oft-consulted mirror reveals fading charms, due not so much to the climate as to a discontented and unoccupied mind.

Women miss the work to which they were used in England. In India much of the housework is taken out of their hands, and rightly so; but nevertheless there is much to be done in other directions, only it is so fatally easy to drift, to become idle alike in brain and finger in a languorous tropical atmosphere.

My advice to women who go to India is to have a hobby, and cultivate it assiduously. It may be needlework, photography, writing, study, reading, or some other congenial light occupation; but whatever it is, make up your mind from the very start to set aside so many hours every day to its pursuit. For preference select that unpleasant time between two and four-thirty each afternoon when the temptation to sleep creeps over one. Sleep by all means if you are thin and wish to put on flesh, although this is usually the very last thing which women seek to acquire. Afternoon sleep is conducive to liver



and obesity, so avoid it as you would the plague should you wish to remain slim.

Adequate and regular exercise is most important. Luckily, tennis clubs abound in all parts of India and the game is played extensively by both sexes. Some women play golf, but the game in India is much more popular with men. Riding is excellent for those women who are able to indulge in the exercise, but in these days it is rarely that one can afford both horses and a motor-car, so it is usually a motor-car.

And then of course there is dancing, the exercise most favoured by women in general these days. But it is foolish to limit one's exercise to the confines of a ballroom. Get out into the open air early each morning before the sun has come to its full strength. A brisk walk with the dogs will do the *mem-sahib* a world of good, and if she can induce her husband to go also so much the better. His liver will be certain to benefit from a shaking up early in the day. If it is only for an hour you will come back ready for a good tub and a change, which will give you an appetite for breakfast and a more healthy outlook on the world in general and yourself in particular.

Shopping is a fascinating pastime to women the world over. India will prove no exception to the newcomer, although the Indian bazaars will pall in time when the first glamour passes away. I believe the New Market in Calcutta is about the largest bazaar in the country, though that of Bombay must run it close, in size and interest alike. Smaller bazaars up-country will be found more typical of the East, for they are primitive and Oriental. In Calcutta, for instance, you will find the New Market a great covered single-storey structure, spread over an area of several acres and crowded with small shops set close to one another. These shops are rented from the Calcutta municipality, which administers the New Market, and bring in considerable revenue to the authorities.

All the shopkeepers speak English, and from the



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moment of your entrance you are pestered to buy ink, pens, notepaper, books, scent, soap, and all kinds of other things, as you walk casually along. If you pause for a moment you are lost, for although you protest ever so strongly that you need neither writing materials nor cleansing articles, the importunate shopkeeper will not take the slightest notice. He continues to extol his wares and insists on quoting a price, stepping in front of you and barring progress. To get rid of him you will say "Too much money." Promptly he will reduce the price, maybe by as much as fifty per cent., and in your astonishment you will accept. Before you can change your mind he will pop the goods into the basket of the nearest coolie, a small crowd of whom have been hanging round ever since you entered the market, and you will have paid up and pressed on, the coolie following with your unwanted purchase.

You are now surrounded by a crowd of hangers-on from the neighbouring shops. To judge by their suggestions it is assumed that you possess nothing in the world save what you stand up in, for there is nothing too personal for them to thrust on your abashed gaze. Corsets and lingerie are dangled in your course as you proceed slowly through the crowds which throng the market at most hours of the day. On every side shrill cries endeavour to attract your attention by proclaiming the excellence and cheapness of their vendors' goods.

"Beautiful soft shirts for the *sahib*!" yells one, as he flourishes a misshapen garment beneath your very nose.

"Silk stockings for the *mem-sahib*," cries another, "very cheap; on this day and for you only Rs2 a pair."

They look it, and you pass along without yielding to the temptation. Your male escort is by this time becoming rather annoyed, and wishes himself well out of it, wondering vaguely why he was overpersuaded into bringing you to this place, which he loathes with a truly masculine hatred. He angrily tells the crowd to *jore* (go away), and the nearest



of them sheer off a few paces, only to surge back upon you once again like a relentless sea. You smile encouragingly, and are the more determined to proceed on your tour of exploration because of his impatience.

At every hundred yards or so a blind beggar, or one covered with loathsome sores, is led up to you. He is usually naked, save for a loin-cloth, and carries a tin suspended from his neck by a cord. You grab hastily the first coin you can lay hands on and give quickly to be rid of the fellow. The crowd murmurs approval, and the good news spreads like wild-fire ; you are now trapped at every corner by one of his class, for word has gone round that a new *mem-sahib* is in the market, one who is charitable and an easy prey. Your soul wilts within you and an unaccustomed itching is apparent on your skin, so that you wish yourself well out of it all, though pride and curiosity impel you forward. And forward you go through section after section of the great market, where almost any commodity can be bought, both eatable and uneatable. Animals dead and living are presented to your gaze ; there is tropical fruit in profusion—bananas, oranges, guavas, grapes, pomegranates, great piles of sticky dates and basketfuls of nuts, all piled up in great banks on either side of the alleyway down which you walk. The floor is sticky and sometimes slippery with fruit juice, banana skins are on every side, inviting an inglorious fall, and the air is faint with the odour of fruit and naked bodies. It is a queer mixture of filth and beauty, typical of the East.

The heat is intense, and you long for a breath of fresh air, but you are in a maze, and it takes a long time for a new-comer to find a way out of the market. Your escort is now sullen and unhelpful ; he is determined you shall have your fill and to spare of the business, and seems incapable of finding a way out of the alleyways and buildings.

Your coolie, with laden basket, moves ahead relentlessly, guiding you to fresh sections of the huge market, while



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from either side of you appear fresh shopkeepers, eager to arrest your attention and take their share of your wealth. Round and round you go, past boot shops, ironmongery shops, bag shops and sweet stalls; past money-changers sitting aloft in their little cages, closely protected by iron bars from the curiosity, and possible dishonesty, of the thronging multitude. Piles of coins are at their feet and their fists are full of rupee notes.

You pass a group of letter-writers, their professional services busily engaged by squatting Indians patiently waiting while their thoughts are inscribed on paper. Petitions, business letters, love letters—all bring grist to the mill of the professional letter-writer. You will remember this when you receive in after days many petitions from your servants, couched in flattering terms and penned in faultless copperplate.

At last you see an opening into the street and dive for it, followed by a protesting mob. You reach the open with difficulty; but even now you are not a free agent, for a near-by *ghari* (a sort of open hackney-carriage) is brought up to the pavement by coolies, who stand on the steps demanding baksheesh for the duty only too gladly performed by the driver himself. You get in and your purchases are dumped on the seat before you, after your escort has seated himself by your side, smiling grimly. You pay the coolie and toss a few coins to the importunate crowd, the driver whips up his decrepit steed, which stretches its bony legs and lurches off at a painful shuffle into the stream of home-going traffic. So much for a new experience.

Another day you will make an expedition to the European shops. And you may with profit include in your itinerary those Indian shops which do business on European lines and store precious silks, jewels, carvings in wood and ivory, and the justly famous brass ware of Benares. In such shops you may examine all such things at your ease and not be plagued to buy. Some of these shops are to be found on the outskirts of the bazaar, but



they are so hemmed in by their cheap-jack neighbours as to be almost impossible of discovery.

And when, if ever, you go to Delhi, seek out the shops which specialize in ivory carvings of animals and such-like, for there you will find white elephants well worth possessing. Should you visit Simla be sure to secure some of those little terra-cotta models of Indian servants; they are extraordinarily well made and proportioned, while their cost is ridiculously low.

A shopping expedition in Bombay or Calcutta to the purely European establishments will astonish the new-comer to India. I will suppose that this time you go by taxi—a more swift and cleanly method than by *ghari*, though somewhat of an adventure if a wild Sikh should be at the wheel. Let him set you down in the centre of the European shopping area, then pay him off and continue your journey from shop to shop on foot.

You will be served by European or Anglo-Indian assistants with a courtesy and patience which is delightful. All the latest goods from England and America are to be found in the large stores, and some of these establishments are so large and lofty that you will find them but little behind London stores in size and resources. Especially at Christmas time some of these places are a veritable fairy-land, their many floors being gaily decorated in the time-honoured way; and if you have children they will find in the toy department a perfect galaxy of toys of all descriptions. There will be lions, tigers and horses, all complete with rockers or wheels; miniature motor-cars and games in infinite variety, while a live Father Christmas supplies a guaranteed lucky “dip” for a modest rupee. Yes, even in India your kiddies may have a bright and merry Christmas; and if they miss the conventional snow which is supposed to accompany the festive season in England, they will miss, and gladly, the rain and mud which are more usual these days. For the weather in India around Christmas is truly delightful; it is called the cold weather, and is about as cold as the most pleasant summer day in



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England. And if you really must have snow, a trip to some of the distant hill stations will give you as much as ever you need.

I have dealt at length with shops because so many people who stay at home imagine that India is a barbaric and wild country. Such folk should see these stores, with their electric lifts, their large brilliantly lit windows, and the cosy restaurants which at lunch- and tea-time minister to the needs of customers. It is all very homelike, and the enterprise of European traders in India merits the fullest possible support from their compatriots in the country.

And the smaller shops too will please you. There are hat shops, boot shops, leather shops, chemists, tobacconists, wine stores, booksellers, picture shops, and all the rest of those establishments to which you are accustomed. You may even get your hair permanently waved, and beauty parlours and manicurists are by no means unknown.

Which brings me to the question of health, and the possibility of living in the Plains during the hot weather. Time was when such a thing as an Englishwoman living in the Plains the whole year round was unheard of; married couples separated as a matter of course, and the wife went to the Hills while hubby remained behind, working extra hard in order to provide the wherewithal for his better half to enjoy herself in the salubrious climate of Darjeeling or Mussoorie.

The annual pilgrimage takes place to this day, but it is no longer universal. India is much more healthy than it was, and conditions of life in the Plains have greatly improved; so that unless a woman is genuinely ill or run down she can survive the hot weather just as well as can her husband. And even European children manage to thrive in the Plains, if properly looked after and subjected to reasonable precautions. Make it a household rule to boil all milk; see to this personally, for if left to servants, sooner or later they will forget, and the consequences may be disastrous. No food is so likely to harbour germs as does milk, and some idea of the conditions under which



milk in India is obtained will be dealt with in a later chapter.

Good water is obtainable in Calcutta and may safely be drunk as received from the tap, but in most parts of India it is advisable to boil all water which is to be used for drinking purposes. And where possible it is advisable to obtain your sodas from a reasonably safe source. In the large towns European chemists specialize in mineral waters and may be relied on to take all possible precautions in their manufacture. The Indian soda-water concerns provide cheaper sodas, but are not so particular regarding cleanliness.

The problem of keeping your house, flat or bungalow cool in the hot weather is worth mentioning. It is a mistake to imagine that open windows make for comfort, for this is the case only at certain times of the day. In the early morning, and in the evening and throughout the night, by all means keep the windows open, but close them and draw the curtains from ten o'clock in the morning until five o'clock in the afternoon. By doing so you will retain the cool air in the house and shut out the warmth from outside. The electric fans, or hand-punkas, will keep the air circulating; and if a wide strip of matting is placed in front of the outer door, and kept moist by spraying water from a garden syringe over it at regular intervals, the hot air which rushes in when the door is opened will become cool and fresh ere it enters the house.

While life in the cities is very pleasant for women, and full of pleasing distractions in the evening, life in small up-country stations, or in places such as tea-gardens, where the planter and his wife, and perhaps an assistant, are the only white people for miles around, is apt to drag and become very monotonous. In such places a woman is thrown very largely on her own resources; she must make her own amusements or go without. More than ever is a hobby necessary in these far-flung posts, for she will be alone in the house for many hours at a time, and visitors are few and far between. What a boon the new broad-



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casting stations in India will be to those lonely souls in these distant places ! I was chatting with Mr Eric Dunstan at the headquarters of the B.B.C. just before he left for India to take over the position of General Manager of the new Indian Broadcasting Company, and we talked about the position of listeners in lonely places. I was glad to find that the new company recognizes its possibilities and responsibilities in this direction, and that the chances are that before long a series of stations will be in working order throughout India which will bring programmes of music and talks within the reach of everyone in the country. A start is to be made in Bombay and Calcutta, on a much more elaborate scale than the previous small stations, and a sort of Indian "Daventry" is to be set up which, it is hoped, will serve most of the country. It is quite likely that it will be found possible to relay programmes from England via Egypt, so that listeners in India during most evenings will be able to hear the afternoon programme from home.

The illness of a husband on a tea-garden will bring a wife plenty of responsibility, and work too. Such an eventuality is always possible, and it is well to be prepared for it, for if the *sahib* goes down with prolonged fever it is the *mem-sahib* who will be looked to for guidance, advice and help by the workers on the plantation. This sort of life will bring out the very best, as well as the worst, which is in a woman, and the prospect is not pleasant to contemplate for one who is happy only when leading a sheltered and comfortable city life. A woman in such circumstances must be prepared for the exercise of much self-sacrifice and forbearance. She must be capable of "holding the fort" in time of trouble, must be a real pal and helpmate to her husband, and, above all else, prove herself to be an Englishwoman in the very fullest sense of the word.

She must conquer her dread of loneliness, her natural fear of wild animals, her repugnance of those numerous creepy-crawlies which abound in the country ; and should



she possess some knowledge of medicine and nursing, so much the better. I know of a woman placed in these circumstances whose husband went down with fever and became delirious. While she was nursing him the noise of voices outside the bungalow drew her to the door. A worker on the estate had been bitten by a venomous snake, and, as no doctor was at hand, the terrified man had been brought to the bungalow for treatment. The *mem-sahib's* immediate help was needed, for the *sahib* was unable to exercise his customary resource, and in such an emergency every moment was of importance.

Though she knew well enough what treatment was necessary, the woman shrank from the ordeal. But she faced it; and though a few days before she would have been incredulous of her ability to do so, the emergency, when it came, found her unexpectedly calm and capable. Thus it was her hand which held the razor that made the necessary incision, slashing away the affected portion of flesh and cutting deep enough to release the poison in a gush of blood. And hers were the hands which finally dressed and bound the wound, and to her care and prompt action the man undoubtedly owed his life. So she "held the fort" and carried on the tradition of the *sahib*, he who was always ready for anything.

Such a case, while not usual, is nevertheless quite a possible occurrence in any isolated Indian station. Up-country life is most assuredly not suited to the purely butterfly type of girl.

Just now I mentioned creepy-crawlies. Besides mosquitoes, which thrive in all parts of the country to a more or less degree during most of the year, and in addition to those insects and vermin which are more or less familiar in England, you will find plenty of other pests. The black-beetle of India is always termed a cockroach; it is bigger and more hideous than the home variety, and is sometimes red and sometimes a whitish colour. It is a notorious disease-carrier, which creeps over food and makes itself generally objectionable. And it can



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fly; it is most disconcerting when one alights on you unexpectedly.

A very effective way to get rid of these pests is to place little piles of powdered borax, at night, in the dark corners and other places where they congregate. You will find lots of cockroaches flat on their backs, with their toes turned up, next morning. They seem impelled to eat the borax, and die literally on the spot.

White ants abound in many parts of India and are most destructive. They come up through cracks in the floor, and have been known to eat a trunkful of clothes in a single night! It is well to have your boxes, furniture, etc., made of teak, for this is the only sort of wood white ants cannot eat. And it is a good plan to set the legs of stationary articles in tins or earthenware jars, and to keep these filled with a mixture of oil and water. This will keep the white ants from climbing up and doing irreparable damage. A sure sign of white ants being present is a grey brittle deposit, of spiral formation, looking like frozen powder, which shows itself protruding from the joins in the floorboards or elsewhere, and sometimes standing several inches high. A liberal quantity of paraffin poured over this pile will do away with the ants, at least for a time. This may not be very scientific, but it proved most effective in my own bungalow. Of course there are many more insects, but you soon get used to them, and after a time repugnance gives place to a calm indifference. It is the only thing to do in the East.

How often does one need a trip home? That is a favourite question, and I always reply: "It just depends on the woman." If her general health is good there is no reason why an English holiday should be necessary for five years. On the other hand, a trip home every three years is necessary for some women, and very pleasant and beneficial for all. It is rather like discussing the buying of a new hat. It is not so often that a woman really needs one, she just wants one. And of course she gets it. How and when depends on purse and personality.



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I cannot close this chapter without insisting on the need for cultivating a cheerful disposition and making the best of things out East. There are many worse places, and the woman who considers it fashionable to be constantly grumbling at her lot eventually becomes a source of unbearable irritation to her husband and a bore to her friends. And her health is likely to suffer in the process, for a healthy and contented mind goes a long way in maintaining a healthy body, no less in India than in other parts of the world.

The woman who takes the trouble to make herself agreeable to her husband's friends and business acquaintances will find the effort well worth while. And it will sometimes be an effort, for some of the most influential men out East are by no means the brilliant conversationalists you might imagine. Women can do a great deal to either help or hinder their husbands' progress in the business and social life of the country. The fact that business houses in India prefer to enlist the services of bachelors rather than of married men, in these days, would seem to infer that in the past the women who have hindered have outnumbered those who have helped.



## CHAPTER VIII

Calcutta's Night Life—Chinatown—European and Indian Theatres  
—The Underworld of the Cities—Pavement Beds

NIGHT life in the large Indian cities is intensely interesting to the newcomer, and although this interest wanes as time passes, and you become used to the ways of the East, it never entirely departs from the soul which retains a spark of romance.

One thing is certain about this night life, and that is the undoubted safety in normal times which may be guaranteed Europeans in all parts of modern Indian towns, scaremongers who assert to the contrary notwithstanding. There is nothing to be feared from the narrow alleys of the local Chinatown, nor from the streets of the Indian quarter proper—no violence save the attacks of germs, and from these latter only aseptic bodies fortified by frequent vaccinations and inoculations can be considered reasonably immune.

Even should you be so hardy and unconventional as to prefer to venture abroad on foot, scorning the motor-car or the more humble *ghari*, it is extremely unlikely that any violence or rudeness will be offered your person, provided you behave decently and show a due consideration for the rights and prejudices of other human beings. The inhabitants of these crowded areas for the most part ask but to be allowed to live peaceably, and enjoy themselves according to their lights and in the manner prescribed by their ancestors.

The humble Indian's way of amusing himself of an evening is not likely to commend itself to European minds. To our way of thinking there is nothing particularly attractive in squatting on the ground, accompanied by one's friends, in a circle, with hard stones for cushions



and only the starry sky above for a canopy. Neither would the crude Indian drum, which beats a monotonous tom-tom-tom with a maddening and unfailing regularity throughout half the night, be considered by any of us as a welcome or suitable substitute for a good piano or a decent wireless set. Indians are simple folks, easily amused and satisfied; moreover they are in the mass very poor, earning as a rule barely enough to provide themselves and their dependents with the necessary minimum of food and clothing. True you may observe in your travels at night a certain number of fat *durwans* (doorkeepers) resting their ample proportions on trestlebeds and wrapped lightly in winding sheets which were once white. But their fat is more the outcome of a total lack of even the mildest form of exercise than the result of proud feeding. Rice is their staple diet, and even a very fat Indian can't make much of a splash on the equivalent of seven shillings a week and some sort of makeshift quarters thrown in.

These little parties may be seen in all quarters of Indian cities night after night; you will see them as you go to the theatre and they will still be there as you return home. For the European theatre is over by midnight, having started soon after nine-thirty; but the Indian theatres go on long into the early hours of the following morning. Indians love the theatre, and go as often as they possibly can afford. They sit in solid masses in a suffocating atmosphere while the long Eastern drama drags its weary way to a close. To the European such an entertainment seems boring and irritating to a degree, but Indians love these plays based on mythology, and are not critical of primitive scenery and slow action.

Unless such be dancing-girls, women are rarely seen on the Indian stage, all female parts being taken by male actors suitably made-up. Long speeches and a certain amount of knockabout fun are indulged in by the players, while the audience, not to be outdone, bandy shrill cries with friends or acquaintances in distant parts of the



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theatre, and at other times hold animated conversations with their near-by neighbours. While these pleasantries are being indulged in the play itself is of course totally ignored, and the unfortunate players struggle on, to all intents oblivious of their unappreciative and inattentive audience. One visit to an Indian theatre will probably suffice to satisfy the curiosity of the average European, for the plays being entirely in the vernacular will mean nothing intelligible to the Westerner; moreover the atmosphere will quite likely be considered distinctly oppressive, and somewhat ultra-odoriferous. Should you sample the Indian theatre you will get lots for your money, as the "show" will continue until two o'clock, or even later still into the hours of the morning, and you will come away dry inside but thoroughly wet as far as your outer man is concerned.

The European theatres in India are pretty much the same in architecture and seating accommodation as they are at home, and it is rare to find an Indian patron save a wealthy man who affects European dress. Europeans have these places practically to themselves, and it is entirely to them that travelling theatrical companies must look for support. The hour of commencement is considerably later than is customary in England; even so, 9.30 P.M. is apparently not sufficiently late for many people, and the percentage of late arrivals is very high, causing much heart-burning on the part of seriously minded theatre-goers, while these careless folk are the despair of the management and the players. Occasionally some strong-minded actor or actress comes along who insists on the doors being closed and patrons being refused admission while an Act is in progress. Miss Marie Tempest did this when in Calcutta, and after the first night there was very little trouble in respect of late-comers; but, alas! all actresses have not the drawing capacity of Marie Tempest, nor her independence, and to make such a general rule with all companies would probably have a really disastrous effect on the theatre which adopted it.



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The fact may be lamented, but it must nevertheless be accepted, that Europeans in the East refuse to take the theatre seriously, nor are many of them very keen on the drama. Rather do they wish for a light and cheery entertainment, something in the nature of a musical liqueur to round off a good dinner. They are apt to be captious and intolerant of any play that requires a certain amount of serious attention, and prefer the soft strumming of the Hawaiian steel guitar to the wit and sarcasm of Bernard Shaw or the subtle humour of A. A. Milne. Needless to say, the play or entertainment which savours of what is popularly known as "highbrow" ingredients is doomed from the word go, and the "tag" will be spoken to many vacant stalls, while the chinking of glasses in the theatre bar merrily tolls its requiem.

It is no easy matter for theatrical managements in India to cater for their patrons in these days. The position is well-nigh a desperate one. Costs of production have gone up immensely since those pre-war days when steamer and railway fares were sufficiently moderate to allow of good-sized companies being brought out, with an ample supply of "props," at frequently recurring intervals throughout the year. The increased rates of travel have naturally meant a certain increase in prices to the theatre-going public in order to allow the bringing out of any English companies at all, and this increase in the price of seats has acted to the detriment of theatrical business generally. Added to this has been the burden imposed by Provincial Indian Governments in the form of an Entertainment Tax, the net result being that theatrical enterprise has become more of a speculation than ever before. Profits have vanished and Provincial Governments have made more money out of the theatres than the unfortunate shareholders, so much so that theatrical shares are at a discount, and many quite unsaleable; for in the existing circumstances it is necessary to fill a theatre to capacity every night of the week, including Sundays, in order to show any sort of reasonable profit. That is, of course, a



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hopeless proposition, for the European residents are not all inveterate playgoers, and to go once a week is the most that the majority who wish to go can afford, as there are lots of other calls on one's pocket as well as theatres. Thus it is that many theatres are impossible, and the few that function are kept above water largely owing to the assistance rendered them by local amateur theatrical societies, who hire the theatres several times a year, and by societies who run locally organized concerts, and so on. These in most cases pay the theatres much better than do the visiting professional companies, and at the same time the amateurs raise a great deal of money for local charities, besides providing an outlet for the ambitions and legitimate aspirations of talented amateur actors and actresses.

The question of an orchestra is a difficult one in the East, for it is quite out of the question in these days for a professional touring company out from England to travel its own orchestra. The most they can run to is their own conductor, who may also act as pianist. He has to make the best he can of the orchestra at the local theatre, which usually consists of a scratch crowd of Goanese musicians, and their efforts, while praiseworthy, are hardly good enough to act as a requisite complement to the English company bringing out the latest musical comedy or revue from home.

Another source of trouble lies in the matter of lighting and in Indian scene-shifters. The local "limes" is apt to be a bit sketchy in his colour-schemes, and inclined to do things on his own, which make players turn green in more senses than one. So frequently there are many creaking hinges, and failures of all descriptions, at the first few performances, and even after a week or more of practice, when a certain standard of proficiency might reasonably be expected, some contretemps is almost certain to occur during the performance. Lights fail when most needed, or blaze out when a "black out" is signalled, and it is quite usual for the audience to be treated to the amusing spectacle of an Indian scene-shifter racing across the stage



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just as the curtain rises. It rather cramps the style of the actor whose entrance chances to coincide with the unconventional exit of his Aryan brother, though the incident provides the critic with suitable matter wherein to dip his vitriolic pen.

The difficulties with which actors who work in the East have to cope are often not sufficiently allowed for on the part of audiences. Take cities like Bombay, Calcutta or Madras, in May, when the temperature is very high and people's tempers are frayed and ennui is prevalent almost to the extent of total inanition. In such places and in such circumstances the actor, or actress, fresh out from England is usually off-colour for a week or so after arrival. Yet as likely as not they are billed to show almost immediately, and are expected by their audience to give a performance of the highest standard, for prominent in the stalls will be many people who saw the "show" at home and are only too likely in the mood to draw invidious comparisons. So then, here are these poor mummers, suffering from the bites of innumerable insects, and maybe in addition tormented by prickly-heat, their heads aching and with incipient fever poisoning the blood which courses hotly through their veins. Is it any wonder that with grease-paint melting on their brows, and finding its dripping way down stage-clothes meant for cooler climes, these unfortunate men and women sometimes forget their entrances, miss their cues, and muddle their words?

I recollect watching a performance in Calcutta of *French Leave*—most excellently it was acted too—and after the fall of the curtain I went behind to talk to the leading man. He had played the General, and was just free of the Sam Browne belt and thick khaki tunic. I assisted in stripping the dripping shirt from his back, when it was deposited in a bucket and removed for cleansing and drying in time for the next performance, it being the only khaki shirt available at the time. Such is the perspiration of the East, and although the audience is kept cool by the whirling of numerous fans, in all parts of the theatre, it is



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not possible to have fans working on the stage, and to work with verve and enthusiasm while the thermometer stands at  $98^{\circ}$  in the shade is a most exhausting procedure. Added to which, the very fans which cool the audience are an additional handicap to the players, for the whirling blades ruin the acoustic properties of the building, so that in order to be heard clearly the actors must speak in over-modulated tones. The strain on one's throat is thus doubled, and consequent loss of voice is very common.

The number of plays which have to be performed in a given time is much greater than in England, for in the East there is no possibility of any play, however good, running for months on end. The European population of any Indian city is so comparatively small that most people who wish to see a play do so at one of the first three or four performances, hence a week at the outside is the limit to which a play can run consecutively. Indeed in many cases there are two, or even three, changes of programme in a week, and in order to keep up this state of things during the month or six weeks a theatrical company will remain in Calcutta or Bombay it is necessary for the company to be called together for rehearsal every morning, including Sundays.

As likely as not the members of the company have had no previous chance of rehearsing together before leaving England, and the opportunities of doing so on shipboard during the voyage out are rather sketchy. I have even known of cases where a company has come out prepared to put on half-a-dozen selected plays, only to find on arrival that these very plays have been produced in their first city of call but a few months previously by another company. In this case a complete new set of plays had to be swotted up right away, though luckily they had one ready with which to open. Bad staff work, of course; but that is rather typical of the East in theatrical matters.

Really the only free time actors and actresses get in the East is the afternoons of six days of the week, for a



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Sunday afternoon matinee is quite the usual thing. True, there are times when travelling between towns during which idleness is imperative, but the conditions of Indian train journeys cannot by the widest stretch of the most lively imagination be termed pleasant or restful. The only chance of a good rest is when the company goes to Rangoon, for then they get three or four days on a comfortable steamer and, always provided the Bay of Bengal is in a good mood, a most enjoyable time may be experienced, for the Rangoon mail steamers are comfortable and the cuisine excellent in every respect. If the tour is extended to include the Straits Settlements and the Federated Malay Straits, and from thence on to Shanghai, further pleasant periods of rest and recuperation may be looked for, and in the days when China was quiet a trip to Peking was usually included in the company's itinerary. But the long river journey there and back was often too much for the harmony of many theatrical companies, and not infrequently private jealousies and feuds had broken out between members of the company, and a return to work and civilization was almost universally welcomed, especially by the business members of the party.

As a welcome contrast to the hardships and trials of actors and actresses in the East, it must be conceded that residents in India and elsewhere exert themselves to a great extent to make pleasant the lot of the strangers in their midst. Theatrical folk quite frequently are made a good deal of by the more cosmopolitan residents of the city visited, and there are plenty of invitations to play golf and tennis in clubs and chummeries. Supper-parties after the show are also fairly frequent, and a hail-fellow-well-met spirit presides at such convivial gatherings. The ladies of the party assuredly have no cause to complain of any lack of attention on the part of local gallants, who are only too glad to make much of a girl fresh out from home. Nor is it entirely unknown for a contract to be broken and another of a different kind to be entered into by reason of such a friendship—a theatrical manager



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thereby losing an actress and a local business man gaining a wife as a result of the transaction.

I have said enough on the subject of theatres, and rather more than I had intended, but so little is known about the actor's life in the tropics that I hope to be forgiven by those few of the initiated whom I may have bored, my excuse being that, after all, theatres bulk very largely in the night life of any city, though certainly less in the East than the West. And the actor who comes East, while he is very unlikely to save any money, at least sees a good deal of life.

A trip to Chinatown is one of the night excursions which you certainly should not miss, on a visit to Calcutta at all events.

It is easily reached via Bowbazar Street, which is one of the main arteries of the city. Narrow winding streets, ill-lit and indescribably filthy, lead you past mean one-storeyed buildings to the quarter where John Chinaman resides with his family. The Chinese dwellings themselves, and their occupants, are clean and decent enough, and John himself is an exemplary citizen when left alone to ply his trade without molestation, either as a carpenter or as a shoemaker, at both of which he excels. True, his work costs more, but it is also worth very much more, than that of the Indian, for it is invariably well done, and completed to time, two little-understood qualities in India.

The Chinaman has small use for the Indian; he despises his competitor for his lack of enterprise and general inclination to indolence, his careless way of half-doing a job, and his utter indifference to the value of time. John Chinaman employs Indians as waiters in his restaurants, but the cooking and other really important work he does himself.

Chinese restaurants are popular as a novelty with the European residents of Calcutta, and it is quite the usual thing to make up a party, which may include ladies, to



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pay an evening visit to Chinatown. A motor-car can just contrive to negotiate safely the many turns and twists of the tortuous byways which take you into the quarter, and a spice of adventure is added if, as is quite likely, some of the party, although old residents, may be totally ignorant of the locality of Chinatown, for it is well hidden—though really one of the most accessible of Calcutta's night sights.

Time was, and that not many years ago, when the numerous gaming-houses, wherein are played *fan-tan* and other Eastern games of chance, were open to all visitors regardless of nationality. It is not so now, for European visitors did not always play the game and were apt to make their own rules. The Chinese quite naturally retaliated and there was a certain amount of trouble. So that nowadays, while the police allow John and his family to gamble to their hearts' content, no European may enter a Chinese gaming-house, even as a spectator, and the police are very strict about the matter of enforcing this decree.

Having arrived at the restaurant, a smiling proprietor welcomes the party, personally leading the way inside and conducting you to a curtained alcove. The seats are bare and hard, and the table is of plain unpolished wood, but the cloth spread thereon is immaculate, and you will find the fare provided to be of the very best quality, and wonderfully cooked. Pictures of beautiful English girls adorn the walls—the kind of pictures which were once so popular with the publishers of Christmas annuals—and a warm savoury smell of cooking pervades the place. A Chinese and also a European menu is presented, and the visitor is wise who makes his choice from the long list of Chinese dishes. These are novel, and each order is especially prepared, being placed on the table smoking hot, while the quantity provided will be found invariably ample for the combined appetites of two normal individuals. It is therefore quite the usual thing to order one portion for every two members of the party, and



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the restaurant proprietor takes no exception to this method of ordering.

Rice fried in the Chinese manner will be found particularly delicious, and to those of you who know rice merely as the chief ingredient of English rice-pudding this dish will prove a revelation ; and the curried prawns mixed with it may be eaten with a sense of comparative security, as for the nonce you can forget that these savoury morsels have most likely been retrieved from the disease-infested waters of the adjacent River Hooghly. You may at least be certain that the prawns have been properly cleaned and prepared by a cook who thoroughly knows his business.

Ordinary table cutlery will be found placed ready for your use, as well as the spoon and fork with which curry should always be eaten. Chinese chop-sticks are also provided, but their use is an art not easily or quickly acquired, so, if you like your food hot, and are at all hungry, it will be well to confine yourself to the use of the usual spoon and fork. The chop-sticks may be pocketed as a souvenir to be shown to admiring friends the next day.

Then to be thoroughly in the picture you should order China tea and drink it without milk or sugar during the course of the meal, and afterwards, if you are so inclined, you may drink something stronger, but only up till eleven o'clock, which is the authorized licence hour in Calcutta, for John is a law-abiding citizen and values his privileges much too highly to place them in jeopardy for the sake of a transient profit. The Chinaman in India never looks for trouble ; as a general rule he gives much less trouble to the police than do either Indians, Anglo-Indians, or Europeans. Of course John has plenty of opium for private consumption, and some of this may be obtained by him in ways which are not strictly orthodox, but that is quite another story.

In the mean streets which cluster round the Chinese quarter are small houses and hovels, many of which are



occupied by the very dregs of society. Here are now and again to be found Europeans who have sunk so low as to be almost beyond recognition. These men come from all sections of society; some are soldiers who have deserted from their regiments and have managed to elude both military and civilian police sufficiently long to be tolerably safe from recognition; some are stow-aways who arrived aboard a coasting steamer and got ashore with smuggled opium, of which they disposed only to find themselves caught in the toils of the owner of an opium den. There are sailors who deserted their ships; and cases have even been heard of where men who once held a decent position in the life of the city have sunk so low that they now hide in this underworld, unknown and unrecognized, long since mourned as dead by friends and relatives.

Sometimes these derelicts venture out into the European quarter and sleep on seats in the Eden Gardens at night, or on to the *maidan*, but are careful to return to their filth and their opium before ordinary citizens are about. The problem of these men is a hopeless one: reclamation seems out of the question, for when the opium habit grips a man he loses all sense of decency, and as in the East such men invariably "go native," as the saying is, nothing can be done for them; they are rarely seen by day, and at night-time they slink about picking up a precarious living in devious unsavoury ways, until they can no longer procure the wherewithal to provide themselves with the drug which has become their very life. Thus the end comes miserably and inevitably. These cases are of course exceptional, and I mention them in this part of the night life of Indian cities as a striking contrast to the gaiety and brightness which is so apparent on the surface of things.

All large cities have their brothels, and in India the policy of segregation has been adopted as the best solution of the problem. So the pimps and painted ladies



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are not much interfered with, as long as they keep to the quarter allotted them and do not make too great a parade of their business. People who drive round these districts know perfectly well what to expect in the way of sightseeing, and have only themselves to blame if they are disgusted with the scenes witnessed. Men are robbed if they walk these streets with pockets full of notes—one rarely looks for trouble without a certain amount of success. To drive round the Indian brothel area is to see tall houses the lower storeys of which have rooms plainly seen from the street. The windows are flung wide open, and iron bars run vertically from top to bottom, and each cage has its bird, arrayed in gayest plumage, singing to the passer-by in tones of engaging allurements. Brilliant lights are everywhere, and a babel of sound almost deafens the ear. There are no European women here, but in another part of the city stand quiet bungalows each in its own grounds; there are trees and comparative darkness and quiet, but at each gateway sits an Indian servant, who questions the lingering passer-by or calls to the driver of the conveyance. And if you wish to enter, the gates are flung wide, and welcoming figures come out to greet you. The women are European, but not English, and for the most part have lived a good many years in the country.

The condition of the streets of Indian cities at night may well amaze the newcomer, for in many places the pavements are made well-nigh impassable by reason of recumbent forms wrapped in grubby white cloth. At first sight you would take them for corpses, for the heads are covered to keep off winged insects, but if you watch long enough some slight movement will assure you that the body within its wrapping is a breathing human entity. They are for the most part men, and they have no other place in which to sleep than the public footpath. There they lie, not from choice but through sheer necessity. You would be astonished to know that, like as not,



one of these dirty sheets contains the man who delivers the provisions from some store or runs messages, or it may be he who delivers your ice or sodas, or, worst of all, he may be one of your own servants, or even your washerman.

Space is valuable in these days, and the landlord's profits more than ever necessary, so that both must be gained—even, if needs be, at the expense of human decencies. Hence it is that in these great Eastern towns modern flats, which tower as high as the local authority will permit, have been built, and in order to secure the maximum number of rooms and flats no accommodation has been allotted for servants' quarters. In less unhappy times, when commercialism was not so rampant nor competition so keen, each *sahib* had his own bungalow, complete with garden and compound, wherein were proper quarters for his entire staff. But in these days servants must find their own quarters, and although wages have increased very considerably the accommodation for the servant who resides away from his work is little, if any, better than of yore—it is certainly much farther away, too far in most cases to be of any practical value. And if it is difficult for the servant class, how much worse must it be for the still lower classes? They live like animals, for the most part, and nobody seems to trouble very much about it all.

Better housing for the poor is never an election cry on the part of aspirants for legislative honours, and the Indians who represent the districts wherein live these miserable people care little or nothing for their constituents' material welfare. No one outside Government circles even suggests any remedy for this lamentable state of things, and official wheels move even slower than usual when not lubricated by public opinion. Do not imagine, however, that it is entirely the fault of Europeans, for it most certainly is not. The filthy insanitary huts in the neighbourhood of the Bengal Jute Mills are owned and farmed by Indians, the majority



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of whom are substantial people in their own community. These Indians are not, and never have been, willing to sell their lands, nor to do anything to make the huts built thereon sanitary or decent. Although the jute industry has pressed for the grant of compulsory powers to enable them to buy such land, and erect sanitary buildings thereon, Government has never been willing to legislate to this end.

These are the conditions outside the cities, where land is less difficult to obtain, and in the cities matters are infinitely worse. The Indian landlord much prefers to erect large blocks of flats (and Armenians and Greeks and Jews are probably even worse in this respect), which will let at high rents and appeal to well-to-do Europeans, who from sheer necessity have to part with one-third of their monthly incomes in order to rent a place of very modest dimensions. There are few, if any, Europeans who own either land or houses in Indian cities, so that any charge of grinding the faces of the Indian poor must be laid at the door of their own countrymen.

It is little enough that you see of the lives of the poor people of Indian cities as you drive swiftly in a comfortable car ; but even so, at night-time, when you alight you must step warily for fear of falling over the prone body of some unfortunate human being whose hard couch is the very pavement you wish to cross. It is also the bed of the pariah dogs, while all around the rats make play, chasing one another across the prone bodies sunk in exhausted slumber.

If by some miracle all means of locomotion, save the ancient one of walking, were taken away from well-fed and well-housed men and women, and for a brief week all had to walk on their nightly travels, the pathos and misery of their fellow-human beings would come home to them with a force at present non-existent. It is an Indian problem. Indians are chiefly responsible, and until they feel and admit their responsibility the problem will remain.



I wish to end this chapter on a more cheerful note. The night life of a city conjures up visions of gaiety and amusement, light and laughter. Well, it is to be found, and is found, by the majority of Europeans who reside in one or other of the principal cities of India.

There are dances almost nightly at one or other of the principal hotels or restaurants, and in this connexion I would like particularly to mention Firpo's and Peliti's restaurants in Calcutta. In these places you can obtain as good a dinner, as well cooked and as nicely served, as even the most fastidious gourmet could desire. Both places run capital dinner-dances, and the bands which furnish the music are European, and play the most up-to-date music. You dine and dance in comfort, and these establishments are conducted in a manner which compares very favourably with the most famous London restaurants.

If you want a big dance hall with two bands, and an air of more boisterous revelry, the Grand Hotel will probably please you as far as Calcutta is concerned, and when I was last in Bombay it was to Green's restaurant that the cheery people resorted at night-time for a combination of good food and cosmopolitan gaiety.

Then you may dance before dinner at the Saturday Club, Calcutta, and sometimes after dinner too when a charity dance is organized there, for the floor is excellent and the amenities of the Club are frequently placed at the disposal of the organizers of local charities. It is here that a St Andrew's Day dinner is held each autumn, when all the Scotsmen attend, and half the Englishmen in the city who can get tickets. 'Tis a great night, and, if the pipers do not deafen you altogether before speech-making time arrives, you may quite likely hear some important political announcement from H.E. the Governor of Bengal, who invariably graces the proceedings with his presence.

Yes; there is plenty to see and do at night in these



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cities, and you may have just as pleasant a time as your pocket will permit, a much better time than the average man at home in a similar position ever has.

If you are keen on amateur theatricals you will find organized societies only too glad to welcome useful and talented recruits to swell their ranks. If you are a Freemason you will be glad to know that the craft is strong in India, and in the large towns fine permanent temples are the meeting-place almost nightly of some lodge or other. You may be a cinema "fan"; if so, you will find some excellent picture theatres, run on modern lines, and showing the most up-to-date pictures, in which you may spend your evenings.

Those Europeans who are at all public-spirited can find plenty of outlet for their energies in the activities of various political, religious and social organizations. The demand for assistance in these directions invariably exceeds the supply, for helpers are constantly dropping out. Leave home, sickness, death; removal to another part of India or permanent retirement to England—all these leave gaps which it is difficult to fill. There is plenty of room for helpers.

All this quite apart from the usual round of social evening engagements, which crowd upon the European in India whose circle of friends widens as years of residence accumulate in a particular city. Life can become a continued rush of activities if you so desire. You may be always busy, or you may prefer to vegetate.

Wise are those people who can hit on the happy medium. This is not easy, however, for those who are able and willing to work are allowed to do so, and find all the time more and more honorary duties thrust upon them. It is more so the case in the East than in the West, for helpers are less plentiful. The average man is inclined to put all his energies into his daily business, anything left over being devoted to sport. Thus he becomes prosperous and popular in his immediate set, though the net result is a very dull member of society.