

eighties many Indian ladies on their own initiative were coming out of purdah and were receiving Europeans in their homes with cordial hospitality. It was the result of a spontaneous feeling among Indian ladies that they could not keep back in the general atmosphere of goodwill and the removal of restraint. Had this atmosphere been maintained it is possible that in Western India at any rate, purdah would have broken down gradually among the upper classes decades before it did.

This was a happy period whose temper and outlook I have sought to evoke in some detail, for in the harsh and strained years which followed it was forgotten. The change, it seems to me, set in sharply in 1890. The Duke of Connaught went home and his great influence for good in all social matters was lost. He was followed as Army Commander by General Sir George Greaves (reputedly the original of General Bangs in Kipling's "A Code of Morals").¹ Lord Reay too retired, and was succeeded by Lord Harris, a famous and enthusiastic cricketer, but a Conservative of the rising new imperialist school of thought. Our relations with Government House, though perfectly friendly, became more formal and less familiar. The whole tone of relationships stiffened. No longer were the easy, frequent receptions and entertainments attended by people of all communities. At Government House there were merely a few rigidly formal garden parties at which social mingling began to be discouraged. Less and less did Europeans invite Indians to their houses, and soon it became rare for the races to meet around a luncheon or dinner table. Even on occasions where rigid separation was obviously impossible, as at race meetings, colour differences began to show themselves. Sets were formed, not on the natural basis of personal sympathy and antipathy, but on the artificial and unwholesome basis of race and colour. This is an outlook against which I, who had spent my most impressionable years in a totally different atmosphere, was to react strongly.

In Bombay in the nineties perhaps the first sufferers were the

¹ Years later, long after he had retired, I encountered General Greaves on the Dover-Calais steamer. He was alone, and I put the conventional question that courtesy prompted: "Is Lady Greaves going with you to Paris?" To which the warrior replied, "I don't take a ham sandwich when I go to a banquet."

Parsees. Energetic, efficient, socially as well as commercially gifted and adapted, they played an important role in easing and smoothing relations between British and Indians. They now suffered the fate of the go-between who is no longer wanted. They were looked down on by both sides, and were more and more isolated to their own company and that of a few advanced Hindu and Muslim families. Europeans would no longer associate with them because they were Asiatics; Hindus and Muslims considered that they had thrown in their lot with the Europeans and then had been cast aside. It was a disagreeable and unjust plight.

An even unhappier change—and much more far-reaching in its effects—came over the official British view of nascent political feeling. Congress, benevolently encouraged in its beginnings in the eighties and regarded (probably rightly) as a sign of growing-up in one or more members of the great Imperial family, was now thought to be a hostile political organization whose ultimate aim could only be to weaken and destroy the British connection. The alienation of the British ruling classes (or at any rate, the greater number of those they sent to India) from India's educated classes, who were growing in numbers and capacity, was both mental and spiritual. There was frigidity where there had been warmth; and in this process there were sown almost all the seeds of future bitterness.

What happened to the Englishman has been to me all my life a source of wonder and astonishment. Suddenly it seemed that he felt that his prestige as a member of an imperial, governing race would be lost if he accepted those of a different colour as fundamentally his equals. The colour bar was no longer thought of as a physical difference, but far more dangerously—in the end disastrously—as an intellectual and spiritual difference. As long as Indians who adopted and imitated the European way of life were few it was possible for a servant and upholder of the Raj to feel that there was little danger of his unique position being undermined by familiarity and overthrown by numbers. But now racialism—on both sides—marched on with giant's strides. It was soon not merely a matter of the relationship between British rulers and the Indian ruled. The pernicious theory spread that all Asiatics were a second-class race, and that "white men" possessed some intrinsic and unchallengeable superiority.

The infection had, I will admit, its ridiculous aspects. The Turkish Consul-General in Bombay happened—like many of the ruling and official classes in Ottoman Turkey—to be a Bosnian, a Slav, of hundred per cent European stock, but because he was a Muslim ignorant prejudice set him down as an "Asiatic". Some English acquaintances took him into one of their clubs. Other members made such a row about it that the Consul-General said flatly that, as a Muslim and the representative of a semi-Asiatic Empire, he had been treated with discourtesy and contempt on racial grounds, and while he would do his duties as Consul-General, his contacts with the British in Bombay would henceforth be severely official and he would have no personal relations with them. The Persian Consul shared his experience and his sentiments. The Japanese, who were emerging from their long seclusion from outside contact, moved cannily; they established their own commercial undertakings first, so that when their Consul came he found Japanese clubs and social gatherings already organized and did not feel isolated or dependent on the good graces of the Anglo-Indian community—in the old-fashioned sense of that word, Anglo-Indian.

A root cause of the new attitude was fear and lack of inner self-confidence. A contributory factor was the presence, in increasing numbers, of British wives, with no knowledge of, or interest in, the customs and outlook of Indians. Fear afflicted people in trade and commerce just as much as—perhaps even more than—officials. The rift deepened and widened as time went on. The colour bar had to be kept rigid and absolute or (so fear nagged at those in its grip) some mysterious process of contamination would set in, and their faith in their own superiority and in their right—their moral, intellectual, and biological right—to rule others would be sapped.

It was a neurotic attitude, very different from that of earlier times when men like Sir John Malcolm, Sir Mountstuart Elphinstone, and later Lord Ripon and Lord Reay, took it sublimely for granted that England's duty—once she had brought peace, unity, and prosperity to India and had taught its peoples the secrets of liberal government—would be, in the fullness of time, to depart. There was no talk then of Dominion Status, but the precedents of Canada and of the rapidly growing colonies of Australia and

New Zealand were clear to see. But by the nineties all ideas of this sort had been thrown overboard as inimical to the security of the Raj, disloyal, and seditious.

I recall a breakfast party which I gave in Bombay for some senior British officials. Another guest was a cousin of mine—a devoted and loyal subject of the Queen and profoundly pro-British. But he was a student of history. He discoursed on the fact that an Asiatic race, the Arabs, had ruled Spain for five hundred years and after their departure had left indelible and splendid marks of their civilization all over Southern Spain; and on the fact that another Asiatic race, the Turks, had established a major empire in the Balkans and around the Eastern Mediterranean and were still ruling it after several centuries. My British guests took this as an affront.

"We will not have such comparisons made," they said. "Our rule is permanent, not something that lasts a few centuries and then disappears. Even to think as you think is disloyal."

Ideas like these seem strange indeed now in the 1950s, when we have seen British rule in India dissolve and pass away like early morning mist before strong sunlight. But this was the atmosphere in which my later boyhood was spent, with its unhappy, brooding awareness of deepening difference and of growing misunderstanding and hostility.

CHAPTER II

MY FIRST EUROPEAN TOUR

WITH approaching manhood my life shaped itself into new channels of its own. More and more the duties and decisions implicit in my inherited position devolved on me. I was never indeed subject to any Regency, in the accepted sense, and as my capacity to take decisions increased, so my mother and my uncles encouraged me to accept responsibility. My mother, who had insisted on the educational discipline of my early boyhood, was as shrewd and watchful as she was loving. She and I remained—as we did throughout her long life—in the closest, most affectionate intimacy. Every night in those years I would go to her apartments and join with her in prayer—that prayer for unity, for companionship on high, which is the core of Muslim faith. This shared experience gave us both, I think, the strength to bear our load of fatigue and anxiety, mental and spiritual, which was by no means light during these difficult years. But my mother's religion was resolutely practical as well; she saw no virtue in faith without works, and from the outset of my public career I accepted and sought to practise the same standards.

My education continued until I was eighteen. Mr. Kenny, my Irish tutor, once more exerted his beneficent influence and persuaded my mentors that I could give up my hated calligraphy. My mind was opening rapidly to new horizons; in my reading I began to range widely, in English and French as well as in Persian and Arabic; I discovered the intellectual delight—the precision and clarity—of Mill's system of logic. I read voraciously in history and biography, and with my cousin Shamsuddin I became an insatiable reader of novels—a diversion, I may say, whose pleasures have never faded.

On my father's death his racing stables, of course, became my

property; and although I was a minor my horses raced under my name year after year, and long before I was out of my teens His Highness the Aga Khan's horses were well known—and not without their successes—on the turf of Western India. There my inherited and environmental influences made themselves obvious from the first. All my family—my mother not excluded—were keen followers of racing form, English as well as Indian. We were knowledgeable about the English turf; Ormonde's glorious triumphs, for example, meant almost as much to us as they did to his backers on English race courses. I well remember that when I was quite small the victor in any pony races between myself and my cousins was hailed for the rest of the day as "Fred Archer". Archer's death in tragic circumstances plunged us all in gloom, almost as if a close friend had committed suicide.

My successes as an owner were not insignificant. I may claim that for a time I—and my cousin Aga Shamsuddin, who was part-owner with me of a number of excellent horses—dominated the turf in Western India. Four times in succession I won the Nizam's Gold Cup—the most important and valuable race in Western India. With a horse called Yildiz I won the Governor's Cup in Poona during these years, and again somewhat later.

I took up hunting, not of course fox hunting as in England, but jackal hunting both in Poona and Bombay. It happens that I have never hunted the fox in England, but frankly I know no more exhilarating sport than jackal hunting in Bombay over the rice fields on an early, cold winter morning when the scent is good and hounds get a good long run after the wily jackal.

I was a pioneer of another sport in India—hockey, which nowadays is one of the main national games of both India and Pakistan. I began to play it with my cousin and other companions of my own age in the early nineties. I encouraged interest in the game; I gave the cups; I got the Indian Army to play. Teams were built up among the various communities in Bombay, and competitions extended steadily all over India. Hockey and cricket developed at much the same time in India, cricket fostered and encouraged by the then Governor of Bombay, Lord Harris; young Indians who had been to England for some part of their education continued the game when they came home, and it exerted an appeal which it has never lost, which has extended to wider and wider circles in

India and Pakistan, both of which now produce teams of Test-Match calibre and quality.

In my late teens I took up boxing, and made a serious study and use of Eugene Sandow's System of Physical Culture. All my life I have been a keen advocate and practitioner of simple, forthright principles of physical fitness. I have always been a believer in steady exercise. I was a great walker; I took up golf after I was fifty, and one of the catch-phrases which journalists used about me was that my two great ambitions were "to win the Derby and the Open Golf Championship". Well, I have won the Derby—and more than once; the other ambition (if it was ever more than a journalist's invention!) is unfulfilled, but my handicap for years was twelve. But I have never believed in cramming, as many Englishmen do, a great deal of exercise into a few hours over the week-end, and taking little or none during the rest of the week; a certain amount of steady exercise every day has been my habit—exercise to be fitted into the programme of a busy day.

A memorable experience of my later boyhood was meeting Mark Twain. I spent a whole afternoon in his company and finished by having dinner with him at Watson's Hotel in Bombay, where he was staying. He had a pleasant, utterly unassuming charm and a friendliness of manner which captivated the serious-minded lad that I was.

He had amassed a considerable fortune, I believe, and had lost it in bad speculation. Now in old age he had to begin to earn his living all over again, therefore he was travelling around the world and interviewing people on the way.¹ He showed absolutely no sign of bitterness or resentment against his misfortune. He seemed to me dear, gentle and saintly, sad and immensely modest for so great and famous a genius. He reminded me of one of those delicate white flowers, so sensitive that when you touch them they recoil and fold their clear, waxen petals, as if too shy and retiring to tolerate the slightest probe.

More and more as my teens advanced my days were busy. I was keenly aware that I possessed a dual responsibility, perhaps a dual opportunity: first in India, as the leader of an influential

¹ Incidentally he refers to our encounter in his subsequent book *New Innocents Abroad*.

group within the wide Muslim community at an epoch when political aspirations were stirring, and second as the head of a far-ranging international community, a spiritual chief whose authority extended, in a tenuous yet sensitive network, into the heart of many lands and many peoples. I could never be solely an Indian nationalist, although from 1892 onwards and under the influence of wise and good men such as Sir Pherozeshah Mehta and Mr. Badruddin Tyebjee I took the standpoint of moderate Indian nationalism of that time. My unique task, in a world in which the first hints and rumbles of impending conflict were to be discerned, was surely international. My followers were to be found in Burma and South-east Asia, in greater and greater numbers along the Eastern African seaboard from Mombasa to East London and inland in South Africa; in Syria, Persia, and Afghanistan, in Chinese Turkestan, in Russian territories in the heart of Central Asia and the Mesopotamian provinces of Turkey which were later to be known as Iraq. My home inevitably was a sounding board of ideas and beliefs, hopes, fears, and aspirations from all over the Islamic world. My primary advice, indeed my mandate, to my followers who were citizens of many countries, had to be then—and always has been—that the loyalty which they owe to my house and person is a spiritual and non-temporal loyalty, that their temporal allegiance is fully engaged to the State of which they are citizens, and that it is an absolute part of their duty to be good citizens. All my work, in politics and diplomacy all my life, is comprehensible in terms of this dual responsibility with which from my earliest days, I have been charged.

* * * * *

At the end of 1895 and the beginning of 1896 I was on the verge of manhood. The reins of my life's task were now fully in my hands. My tutors took their farewell and bowed their way out of my life. I, like many youths of my age in the East, thought of marriage; and naturally enough I looked around me in the small, confined family circle in which I had grown up.

One of my earliest playmates in my childhood had been my cousin, Shahzadi Begum, whose father, Aga Jungishah, was my uncle and one of my early mentors and exemplars. In our

adolescence, as was usual in our time and society, we saw little or nothing of each other, but as I approached manhood I became sharply aware of my cousin's beauty and charm, and I fell in love with her. It has been alleged, unkindly and unjustly, about my first marriage that it was a "State marriage", arranged for my cousin and myself by our parents, for dynastic reasons. Nothing could be farther from the truth. I was a youth in love, groping towards that experience, that mingling of joy and pain, which turns a boy into a man. Mine and mine only was the initiative in the matter of marriage. I told my mother of my feelings and begged her to approach my uncle and his wife on my behalf, and ask their permission for me to marry Shahzadi. The overtures were made, my formal proposal was accepted. We were to be married within the year. Meanwhile my uncle and aunt, with their daughter and her brother, Shah Abbas, set forth on a pilgrimage to Mecca. The party, having made the Haj, set out for home, and on their way stayed for a time, as was customary, in Jeddah, the port on the Red Sea through which the vast majority of pilgrims to Mecca come and go. My uncle and cousin were assassinated in brutal and violent circumstances; and my aunt and her daughter were in the house when the murders were committed. Police investigation in the Western sense did not exist in Jeddah in those days; communications were scanty and unreliable. The Bombay police closely questioned returning Indian pilgrims and thought much about the affray was, and has always remained, obscure, and although the assailants were said either to have immediately poisoned themselves or to have been beaten to death by the horror-struck attendants and bystanders, it is at least clear that my uncle and his son were the victims of dastardly religious fanaticism.

This ghastly tragedy had a profound effect on me, both physically and emotionally. All through that summer I was seriously ill, a prey to a succession of bouts of fever, with painful rheumatic symptoms. In October, when the great heat of the summer was over and the monsoon rains had passed, I made my first journey to Northern India. Hitherto my travelling outside Western and Southern India, except for visits to Baghdad and to Bushire and Muscat, had been extremely restricted. I now however acquired a taste for travel which I have certainly never abandoned. On

this first trip I visited the great shrines and centres of Muslim India at Agra, Delhi, and Lahore: that magnificent group of monuments to Islamic civilization and culture—the Taj Mahal, the Red Fort in Delhi, and the Friday Mosque, and those exquisite gems, the Pearl Mosques at Delhi and Agra. My way led me, too, to the Anglo-Muslim College (as it then was) at Aligarh, where I met Sir Syed Ahmed and Nawab Mohsen-ul-Mulk. This was the origin of what was for many years one of the crucial concerns of my life—my interest in the extension and improvement of Muslim higher education, and especially the College and University at Aligarh.

I took up its cause then with a youthful fervour which I have never regretted. Aligarh in the 1890s was an admirable institution, but it was hampered and restricted by lack of funds and lack of facilities. Did I realize then, young as I was, that it had in it to become a great power house of Muslim thought and culture and learning, in full accord with Islamic tradition and teaching, yet adapted to the outlook and the techniques of our present age? No one could have foretold all that did in fact happen; but I do know that I was on fire to see Aligarh's scope widened and its usefulness extended, and to find the money for it, by any short-cut means if necessary. Why not, said I in my youthful rashness, go to some great American philanthropist—Mr. Rockefeller or Mr. Carnegie—and ask for a substantial grant?

My new friends were older and sager. It was our responsibility, they said, within our own sixty or seventy million-strong Muslim community in India; if we sought for outside help, even from the richest and most philanthropically inclined of American multimillionaires, we should be dishonoured for all time. They were right, of course. For this was an age which had not experienced two World Wars, and had never heard of Point Four. But that decision, and my own zeal in the cause which I had taken up, led (as such decisions are apt to lead) to years of arduous and all-demanding toil, the journeyings, the speech-making, the sitting on committees, the fight against apathy and the long, long discussions with those in high places, which are the lot of those who commit themselves to such an endeavour.

Often in civilized history a University has supplied the spring-board for a nation's intellectual and spiritual renaissance. In our

time it has been said that the American Robert Missionary College in Constantinople led to the re-emergence of Bulgaria as an independent, sovereign nation. Who can assess the effect on Arab nationalism of the existence of the American University of Beirut? Aligarh is no exception to this rule. But we may claim with pride that Aligarh was the product of our own efforts and of no outside benevolence; and surely it may also be claimed that the independent, sovereign nation of Pakistan was born in the Muslim University of Aligarh.

Reinvigorated and restored to health by my travels, I went home at the end of the year to our wedding ceremonies and celebrations. It was a double wedding. For at the same time Shahzadi's brother, my trusted friend Aga Shamsuddin, was married to another of our cousins. Our nuptials were celebrated with all the appropriate ritual and rejoicing; and then sorrow beset myself and my bride.

It is a long-ago story of young unhappiness, and it can be briefly and sadly told. We were both ignorant and innocent; our ignorance and innocence set a gulf between us which knowledge, wisely and salutarily applied, could have bridged. We were too shy to acquire that knowledge, too innocent even to know how to set about getting it. Tenderness and diffused affection—and my wife had all that I could give—were no use for our forlorn plight. Ours was no less a tragedy because, under the iron conventions of the time, it was both commonplace and concealed. Mine, I thought, was the blame for the grief and misunderstanding that embroiled us; and this deepened my affection for my wife; but for her, baffled and bewildered as she was, the affection I offered was no substitute nor atonement. Inevitably we drifted apart, she to a private purgatory of resentment and reproach, and I to the activities and interests of the outside world.

For me relief was legitimately much easier, for my official and political life rapidly became full and vigorous, and there was a great deal of sheer hard work to be done. If my marriage was a sour sham, my duties and responsibilities were real and earnest in this year of 1897.

During the previous year there had been sinister rumours that an epidemic of bubonic plague was sedulously and remorselessly spreading westwards across Asia. There had been a bad outbreak

in Hong Kong; sporadically it appeared in towns and cities farther and farther west. When in the late summer of 1897 it hit Bombay there was a natural and general tendency to discredit its seriousness; but within a brief time we were all compelled to face the fact that it was indeed an epidemic of disastrous proportions. Understanding of the ecology of plague was still extremely incomplete in the nineties. The medical authorities in Bombay were overwhelmed by the magnitude, and (as it seemed) the complexity, of the catastrophe that had descended on the city. Their reactions were cautious and conservative. Cure they had none, and the only preventative that they could offer was along lines of timid general hygiene, vaguely admirable but unsuited to the precise problem with which they had to deal. Open up, they said, let fresh air and light into the little huts, the hovels and the shanties in which hundreds of thousands of the industrial and agricultural proletariat in Bombay Presidency lived; and when you have let in fresh air, sprinkle as much strong and strong-smelling disinfectant as you can. These precautions were not only ineffective; they ran directly counter to deep-rooted habits in the Indian masses. Had they obviously worked, they might have been forgiven, but as they obviously did not, and the death-roll mounted day by day, it was inevitable that there was a growing feeling of resentment.

It was a grim period. The plague had its ugly, traditional effect on public morals. Respect for law and order slipped ominously. There were outbreaks of looting and violence. Drunkenness and immorality increased; and there was a great deal of bitter feeling against the Government for the haphazard and inefficient way in which they were tackling the crisis. The climax was reached with the assassination (on his way home from a Government House function) of one of the senior British officials responsible for such preventative measures as had been undertaken.

Now it happened that the Government of Bombay had at their disposal a brilliant scientist and research worker, Professor Haffkine, a Russian Jew, who had come to work on problems connected with cholera, who had induced the authorities to tackle cholera by mass inoculation and had had in this sphere considerable success. He was a determined and energetic man. He was convinced that inoculation offered a method of combating bubonic

plague. He pressed his views on official quarters in Bombay without a great deal of success. Controversy seethed around him; but he had little chance to put his views into practice. Meanwhile people were dying like flies—among them many of my own followers.

I knew that something must be done, and I knew that I must take the initiative. I was not, as I have already recounted, entirely without scientific knowledge; I knew something of Pasteur's work in France. I was convinced that the Surgeon-General's Department was working along the wrong lines. I by-passed it and addressed myself direct to Professor Haffkine. He and I formed an immediate alliance and a friendship that was not restricted solely to the grim business that confronted us. This, by now, was urgent enough. I could at least and at once give him facilities for his research and laboratory work. I put freely at his disposal one of my biggest houses, a vast, rambling palace not far from Aga Hall (it is now a part of St. Mary's College, Mazagaon); here he established himself, and here he remained about two years until the Government of India, convinced of the success of his methods, took over the whole research project and put it on a proper, adequate, and official footing.

Meanwhile, I had to act swiftly and drastically. The impact of the plague among my own people was alarming. It was in my power to set an example. I had myself publicly inoculated, and I took care to see that the news of what I had done was spread as far as possible as quickly as possible. My followers could see for themselves that I, their Imam, having in full view of many witnesses submitted myself to this mysterious and dreaded process, had not thereby suffered. The immunity, of which my continued health and my activities were obvious evidence, impressed itself on their consciousness and conquered their fear.

I was twenty years old. I ranged myself (with Haffkine, of course) against orthodox medical opinion of the time—among Europeans no less than among Asiatics. And if the doctors were opposed to the idea of inoculation, what of the views of ordinary people, in my own household and entourage, and in the public at large? Ordinary people were extremely frightened. Looking back across more than half a century, may I not be justified in feeling that the young man that I was showed a certain amount of courage and resolution?

At any rate it worked. Among my own followers the news circulated swiftly, as I had intended it to do, that their Imam had been inoculated, and that they were to follow his example. Deliberately I put my leadership to the test. It survived and vindicated itself in a new and perhaps dramatic fashion. My followers allowed themselves to be inoculated, not in a few isolated instances but as a group. Within a short time statistics were firmly on my side; the death-rate from plague was demonstrably far, far lower among Ismailis than in any other section of the community; the number of new cases, caused by contamination, was sharply reduced; and finally the incidence of recovery was far higher.

A man's first battle in life is always important. Mine had taught me much, about myself and about other people. I had fought official apathy and conservatism, fear, and ignorance. My past foretold my future, for they were foes that were to confront me again and again throughout my life.

By the time the crisis was passed I may have seemed solemn beyond my years, but I possessed an inner self-confidence and strength that temporary and transient twists of fortune henceforth could not easily shake. A by-product of the influence and the authority which I had exerted was that others than my own Ismaili followers looked to me for leadership. 1897 was the year of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. It was natural enough that I should go to Simla to present to the Viceroy, Lord Elgin, an address of loyalty and congratulations to Her Majesty as hereditary Imam of my own Ismaili sect; but, in fact, I went in a triple capacity. I presented three addresses, one from my own community, another as leader and representative of the Muslims of Western India, and a third on behalf of a representative assemblage of the citizens of Bombay and Poona.

Lord Elgin received me graciously and hospitably. I was invited to luncheon by Field-Marshal Sir George White, then Commander-in-Chief in India. The Field-Marshal's nickname was Sir George the Dragon Killer, and no man could have better looked the part than this gauntly handsome old warrior—immensely tall, strong, and stern of visage. Sitting there beside him at luncheon I had a sudden vision of the old man kilted, claymore in hand, fiercely challenging all comers, human and animal, a dragon or

two, a squadron of cavalry, or a herd of rhinoceros. There was still, you see, a vein of romanticism in the young man who had with gravity and propriety presented his three official addresses to His Excellency the Viceroy.

* * * * *

I returned to Bombay to prepare for my biggest and most important journey hitherto.

I set out to discover the Europe of which I had read and heard so much, which beckoned with so insistent and imperious an attraction.

In our distracted and war-battered epoch there is a deep, nostalgic sadness in recalling the splendours and the security—both seemingly unshakable—which Western European civilization had attained in the last decade of the nineteenth century. As a young man I saw that old world at its zenith. I have lived to watch all the vicissitudes of its strange and swift decline. When I first set foot on the soil of Europe, just half a century had elapsed since the convulsions of 1848. Peace, prosperity, and progress seemed universal and all-enveloping. True enough, the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1 had flashed grim warnings for those prescient enough to see them, but to many that conflict seemed a temporary and regrettable divagation from the general and steady trend towards human betterment. Britain, whose world hegemony, founded on absolute naval supremacy, seemed unchallengeable, was powerful and prosperous as never before, under the rule of her august Queen; not since 1815 had she been compelled to intervene in any major continental conflict, and generations of her statesmen and diplomats were trained in the essential art and duty of retaining the Balance of Power in Europe. In spite of a few minatory signs of military, social, and economic danger or discontent, the dominant notes in the Europe of 1898 were those of serenity and affluence.

Thither I set out from Bombay early in February. I was a little more than twenty years of age. Two members of my household accompanied me as personal attendants. We travelled to Marseilles in a brand new liner of the Messageries Maritime fleet. In passing I may say that—at any rate so far as the routes to India, Africa, and the Far East are concerned—the crack ships of the late nineties

were really much better to travel in than their alleged "luxury" twentieth-century successors. Their cabins were more spacious and comfortable and all their amenities were on a far more civilized scale. A great deal of show and chromium plate does not, to my mind, compensate for a decrease in solid comfort.

From Marseilles I went straight to Nice. It was the height of the Riviera winter season; in those days the South of France had no summer season. Every hotel in every resort along the Côte d'Azur was packed and I had the greatest difficulty in finding accommodation. After all, a considerable proportion of the Royalty, nobility, and gentry of Europe was concentrated along this strip of coastline. Queen Victoria was at Cimiez; and at length I found myself a room in the hotel in which the Queen was staying; and of pretty small account I was in the vast, glittering, aristocratic, and opulent company gathered for the Riviera season; the Emperor Franz Joseph at Cap Martin, a score or so Russian Grand Dukes and Austrian Archdukes in their villas and palaces, half the English peerage with a generous sprinkling of millionaires from industry and finance; and most of the Almanach de Gotha from Germany, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Balkan countries lately "emancipated" from Ottoman rule, and Tsarist Russia. The young man from Bombay was dazzled and awed.

I knew nobody. I think the only people, other than my own personal attendants, to whom I spoke half a dozen words were the hotel staff and the officials at the Casino in Monte Carlo. But I enjoyed myself enormously—looking and listening. I went out for long drives from Cimiez right along the coast to Monte Carlo and Menton. I stared at the shop windows—and what shop windows, the jewellers especially! After more than fifty years I have a vivid recollection of the solid wealth on display for the eyes of the wealthiest people in Europe, whether they were financiers or landowners from England or Moscow mill-owners. There were none of your present-day bits and pieces of gold and silver and worthless stones made up into trumpery trinkets; no—this was real jewellery, great, sparkling diamonds, pearls, rubies, emeralds, and sapphires winking and gleaming in the bright winter sun.

At Cannes, at Nice, at Monte Carlo the streets were packed

in the fashionable hours, with the carriages of the great and the wealthy, handsome landaus and victorias with fine, high-stepping horses and coachmen and footmen in dashing liveries. I remember that there were one or two automobiles on show as curiosities in front of the Hôtel de Paris at Monte Carlo. How elegant was the disdain with which the fashionable crowd regarded these noisy, smelly toys. Few then had the foresight to see in them the predecessors not only of today's Concours d'Élégance, but of the great, silver-winged, jet-propelled aircraft that streak across the sky.

Though prosperity was to some extent diffused through all the towns and villages along the Côte d'Azur, and though there was no hunger and there were no rags, and the poorest had at least one solid meat meal a day, it cannot be said that living was cheap on the Riviera in the nineties. Staying as I was at the best hotel, and attended by my two valets, my daily bill—all found but with no extravagance and no entertainment of any kind—was about 200 gold francs. That, translated into present-day terms, would be nearly 40,000 francs a day. But were it possible to live at the same rate and on the same scale as I did on that first trip of mine, I daresay my bill—in contemporary terms—would work out at about 6,000 to 7,000 francs a day. So in relation to the gold standard of the nineties, the cost of living—my sort of living in those days—was five or six times as high as now.

Since I was staying in the same hotel as Queen Victoria, I had frequent opportunities of watching her go out to and return from her daily drives in her landau. She was helped in and out of her carriage by Indian servants from her personal household. I and my own attendants reached the same, rather strange conclusion, and, I may say, it was reinforced later when I saw her servants at closer quarters at Windsor. They were distinctly second-class servants, of the kind that you find around hotels and restaurants, the kind that the newly-arrived or transient European is apt to acquire in the first hotel in which he stays—very different from and very inferior to the admirable, trustworthy, and very high-grade men whom, throughout the years of British rule in India, you would encounter at Viceregal Lodge or at Government House in any of the provinces. It seemed highly odd, and frankly it still does. Was the explanation possibly that the pay offered was not

good enough to attract the first-rate man overseas? Of course, after Queen Victoria's death there was a change; successive King-Emperors had no Indian menial servants, but there were several posts of honour in the Royal Household for Indian A.D.C.'s and orderly officers.

I had ten memorable days on the Riviera, and then off I set for Paris. I have praised the comfort of the liners of those days, but no, not the sleeping cars—anyone who knows the modern *wagon-lits* or Pullman cars, and the glories perhaps of the Blue Train, can have no idea of the cramped, primitive, alleged sleeping car of the nineties and the early 1900s. However, it took me to Paris. I repeat: I was twenty years old, I had steeped myself in French literature and French history, of the whole nineteenth century and earlier. I knew the names of the streets, I knew the way Parisians lived, acted, and thought. Mine in dreams and in reading was the Paris of the two Napoleons, the Paris of Balzac and of Barrès, of the boulevards and the barricades. Where did I stay but at the famous Hôtel Bristol? What did I do on my first morning in Paris but pay my call at the British Embassy?

I have hinted that I was a solemn young man, very serious about my cultural and scientific interests. In the absence of the Ambassador, the Minister gave me the introductions that I wanted and supplemented those that I had brought with me. To the Carnavalet Museum I went, to the Louvre, to the Bibliothèque Nationale. There I was shown round by the curator of Oriental books and manuscripts, accompanied by M. Salomon Reinach, an eminent archaeologist. He was astonished, he said, that a young man who spoke English and French so fluently could read with ease ancient classical Persian and Arabic manuscripts. I was astonished in my turn (though I did not say so) that so distinguished a *savant* should forget that Persian and Arabic were, after all, my native languages, the languages which my forebears had spoken for hundreds of years.

My friend Professor Haffkine in Bombay had given me a letter of introduction to Dr. Roux of the Pasteur Institute. In the evenings I sallied forth to the theatre and the opera. It was not the season in Paris, and therefore there was not the display and the elegance that I had seen on the Riviera. Still, I saw Madame Bartet at the Comédie Française and thought her the most enchanting

and accomplished actress I had ever seen—and now, with a lifetime in between, that is a verdict which I see no reason to alter. I saw Sarah Bernhardt, but frankly she disappointed me. I never thought she came up to Bartet. I went several times to the opera, and except for *Faust*, every opera that I saw was by Meyerbeer. Who ever hears an opera by Meyerbeer nowadays? His reputation suddenly dropped like a plummet, and yet I think he has been unfairly treated, with a fierce contempt which he does not merit. I know that he is no Wagner; I know that he cannot compare with the best of Mozart or Verdi, but I have a hankering belief that a Meyerbeer revival might prove quite a success.

Not all my time in Paris was spent on culture. I did have letters of introduction to members of the Jockey Club; I did go to the races. And after a fortnight I headed for London.

The private, *incognito* status in which I had hitherto travelled was no longer possible. I had reached the capital and centre of the Empire. At the station to meet me when I arrived was an equerry from Buckingham Palace, representing Her Majesty; and from the India Office, representing the Secretary of State, there was the Political A.D.C., Sir Gerald Fitzgerald. I went to the Albemarle Hotel in Piccadilly, which was my headquarters and base throughout that spring and summer.

Soon after I reached the hotel the Duke of Connaught, who had known me in my childhood and boyhood at home, paid a call and stayed for a long time. The British Royal Family's watchful and friendly interest in me had not abated.

London in the nineties has been written about *ad nauseam*, yet it is difficult to exaggerate the magnetic effect and the splendour of London in that sunlit heyday of the Victorian age—the ease, the security, the affluence, the self-confidence. The City was the financial centre of the civilized world, immensely rich, immensely powerful. From Westminster a great Empire was governed with benevolent assurance. If the Foreign Office were dowdy and inconvenient, if the India Office's methods of administering a subcontinent were tortuous and archaic, who could deny the irresistible sense of power and authority concentrated in those few small acres? The outward show of that power and that authority was magnificently impressive. The pound sterling was a gold sovereign, and purchased about eight times what its

paper equivalent does today. The gradations from rich to poor were steep, and from extreme to extreme; yet throughout much of society there was diffused a general sense of prosperity. There was no Welfare State, but there was a robust, genial feeling that Britain was top dog, and there was a gaiety, vigour, and adventurousness about life for the mass of the people.

Real power, political and economic, was in the hands of a few. The rulers of England and the Empire consisted of a small closed circle of the aristocracy, and of those members of the rising plutocracy who had attached themselves to, and got themselves accepted by, the aristocracy. To that circle my own rank and the august connections which I possessed gave me a direct and immediate entry. I who have lived to see the demagogue and the dictator in power in a large part of what was once civilized Europe, saw in my young manhood, at very close quarters, the oligarchy that controlled Victorian England and the Empire.

The London season was just beginning when I arrived. I was immediately swept into the middle of it all. All doors in society were open to me. I took my place in a glittering, superbly organized round and ritual: Epsom, Ascot, Newmarket; a dinner at Lansdowne House, at Lord Ripon's, or Lord Reay's; the opera and a ball at a great ducal mansion; garden parties, country house week-ends. Formal clothes were *de rigueur* in London, a frock coat or a morning coat, a stiff collar and a silk hat and gloves, however hot the weather. Church parade on a Sunday morning in Hyde Park was a stately occasion, with its own elaborate ceremony. There was the detailed ritual of calling. From Royalty downwards the whole of Society was organized with a care and a rigidity inconceivable today. To recall it all now is indeed to evoke a vanished world.

In due course I was summoned to an audience with Her Majesty at Windsor Castle. She received me with the utmost courtesy and affability. The only other person in the room during this first audience was my old patron, the Duke of Connaught, in whose presence I did not feel shy or overawed. The Queen, enfolded in voluminous black wraps and shawls, was seated on a big sofa. Was she tall or short, was she stout or not? I could not tell; her posture and her wraps made assessments of that kind quite impossible. I kissed the hand which she held out to me. She

remarked that the Duke of Connaught was a close friend of my family and myself. She had an odd accent, a mixture of Scotch and German—the German factor in which was perfectly explicable by the fact that she was brought up in the company of her mother, a German princess, and a German governess, Baroness Lehzen. She also had the German conversational trick of interjecting “so”—pronounced “tzo”—frequently into her remarks. I was knighted by the Queen at this meeting but she observed that, since I was a prince myself and the descendant of many kings, she would not ask me to kneel, or to receive the accolade and the touch of the sword upon my shoulder, but she would simply hand the order to me. I was greatly touched by her consideration and courtesy.

A little later I was bidden to stay the night at the Castle and dine with Her Majesty. This, too, was a memorable experience. I sat at dinner between the Queen and her daughter Princess Beatrice—Princess Henry of Battenberg, mother of Queen Ena of Spain. The Queen was wearing her customary black—that mourning which, from the day after her husband died, she never put off. On her wrist she wore a large diamond bracelet, set in the centre of which was a beautiful miniature of the Prince Consort, about three inches long and two inches wide. The Queen was then seventy-nine; the vigour of her bearing and the facility and clarity of her conversation were astonishing.

There were several high officers of State present, including the Lord Chancellor, the Earl of Halsbury, a small, squat, unimpressive-looking man. I was both surprised and tickled when the Queen murmured to me that Lord Halsbury, though not much to look at, was a formidable lawyer and statesman. The Queen talked to me especially about India. Were British senior officials and representatives, she asked, civil or were they wanting in manners towards Indian princes and gentry? I replied truthfully that, so far as I and my family were concerned, we had always been treated with impeccable kindness and courtesy by British officials with whom we came into contact. Throughout dinner the Queen and the two guests to right and left of her—myself and the Lord Chancellor—were served by her Indian attendants, who were the same kind of rather second-rate servants whom I had noticed in her entourage at Nice.

A cartoon portrait by ‘Spy’



The Aga Khan as a young man





With Lord Carnarvon at the Doncaster Sales in 1926

The Aga Khan leads in 'Blenheim', winner of the 1930 Derby



The dinner was long and elaborate—course after course, three or four choices of meat, a hot pudding and an iced pudding, a savoury and all kinds of hothouse fruit—slow and stately in its serving. We sat down at a quarter past nine, and it must have been a quarter to eleven before it was all over. The Queen, in spite of her age, ate and drank heartily—every kind of wine that was offered, and every course, including both the hot and the iced pudding. After dinner, in the State drawing-room each guest was presented to Her Majesty and had a few moments' conversation with her. She gave me a jewelled portrait of herself, decorated with the rose of England, the thistle of Scotland, and the harp of Ireland—and the harp was in emeralds. Next morning her munshi, her Indian secretary, came to me and gave me something which the Queen had herself written in Urdu and Arabic characters.

To be Queen-Empress was for Queen Victoria to possess no formal and remote title. She was keenly alert and sensitive to the views and needs of her Indian subjects, and her liking and sympathy for them were warm and genuine. I particularly remember that she said to me at dinner with great earnestness that she hoped that when British people in India visited mosques and temples they conducted themselves with respect and reverence as they would in cathedrals in their own land.

During this visit to England I first made the acquaintance of various other members of the British Royal Family—first among them, of course, the Prince of Wales, later to become King Edward VII. From the first the Prince was extremely kind to me. He had me at once made an honorary member of his own club, the Marlborough, and some months later, early in 1899, he himself nominated me for full membership. In those days membership of the Marlborough, thus conferred, had a special social and personal significance; one was stamped, as it were, as a personal friend of the Prince of Wales. I may mention in passing that I am still, after more than fifty years, a member of the Marlborough-Windham, and when I am in London, I still drop in there to look at the newspapers. The head hall-porter and I are by now quite the oldest inhabitants; he entered the service of the Club in, I think, '96 or '97. Together he and I recall old times, and our conversation evokes many, many ghosts whose

living presence, as we knew them in our youth, are very real to us.

For the last decade of his life I was honoured with the warm, personal friendship of King Edward VII. My association with him was far from formal. He was elderly and I was young, and at the outset, a stranger; but he treated me always with the greatest kindness and benevolence. Indeed, if I search for a word in which to sum up King Edward's character, the answer is to be found in "benevolent". He wished everybody well. It is perfectly true that he had a great taste for the good things in life, that he enjoyed having a good time; but sincerely and steadily he wanted everyone else—the humblest as well as the highest of his subjects—to have a good time too.

He cared a great deal about the alleviation of pain and suffering. His patronage of hospitals was something which he undertook not as a mere Royal duty, nor for that matter as a fad or personal fancy; it was one expression of a deeply felt attitude to life, a spontaneous and generous sympathy with suffering in all its forms.

Two of his remarks on this subject have been often quoted. I who knew him so well know that they came from the bottom of his heart. "The man who discovers a cure for cancer" (so ran one) "ought to have a statue to his memory in every capital of Europe." I can hear the very inflexion in his voice as he said that; and the other, about certain diseases which doctors describe as preventable, "If preventable, why not prevented?"

In 1904, when a State visit to India by the then Prince of Wales—later King George V—was being discussed, I happened to be in England, and the King sent for me in private audience at Buckingham Palace. He questioned me closely and at length about hospital conditions in India, and disclosed considerable knowledge of his own, as well as great concern. He was especially worried about the terrible state of hospitals in the big cities, particularly Calcutta, and he told me that he proposed to brief his son thoroughly on this subject and make him insist on a close, personal report on several city hospitals. He said too that he advocated the establishment of homes in the mountains, and in healthier areas of the country, for the prevention and early treatment of tuberculosis.

Nearly two years later, in the summer of 1906, the King, in another long private conversation, reverted in great detail to this subject. He commended the Prince of Wales's work along the lines he had himself indicated, and it was a commendation which I could support, from my own knowledge. The King had also had a series of independent reports, and he knew that I, with a group of friends, had established a sanatorium in a hill station for the treatment of tuberculosis in its earlier stages.

King Edward was a very humane as well as human person; this close interest in pain and sickness and their alleviation (had it something to do perhaps with his own attack of typhoid, which so nearly proved fatal?) was not prompted by his sense of kingly duty, but sprang—I am convinced—from his real humanity. It is significant, I think, that it was enhanced and deepened after his own other grave illness, just before his Coronation. He himself was dignified and brave in face of physical pain; but he disliked it exceedingly and sought to diminish its assaults—for others more than for himself.

It has been widely held that King Edward was anti-German, and that he had a prejudice against Germany as a nation because he did not get on well with his nephew, the Kaiser William II. The evidence to the contrary is strong, both from the King's own lips and from witnesses as reliable as Baron von Eckardstein and Count Wolf Metternich—both of whom held positions of influence and authority in their respective periods in the Embassy in London—who went out of their way to tell me that the King was completely sincere in his desire for friendship between Britain and Germany, and that he strove, to the utmost of his ability, to remain on good terms with his nephew. That there were deep and subtle personal differences and difficulties between them cannot be denied. The relationship was almost bound to be strained. The Kaiser acceded to his throne as a very young man, and for a decade or more he was in full control of all the affairs of State in his own country; while his uncle, a middle-aged man, was chafing at being allowed no sort of responsibility and indeed not being even allowed to read the Foreign Office papers. The Kaiser was never the most tactful or self-effacing of men; in twentieth-century terms he suffered from an enormous inferiority complex. He never forgot to assert himself. His uncle strove

valiantly to repress his natural irritation; it was rarely indeed that he blew up, or behaved towards his nephew other than with courtesy and consideration, albeit tinged with the irony which a sage and experienced man of the world could command.

King Edward had a stern sense of decorum; he knew what was fitting in a king and what was fitting in behaviour towards a king. He strongly disliked anybody taking liberties, or taking advantage of his own urbanity and kindness. But I do know of several examples of lapses which earned his peremptory disapproval, yet when the delinquent either wrote directly to His Majesty and apologized, or asked for pardon through one of the officials of the Palace, and demonstrated that he sincerely regretted his offence, the King not only forgave but forgot, and the offender was never shown the slightest hostility or coldness. King Edward was genuinely magnanimous.

He also possessed a great fund of considerate tact in matters great and small. One winter a wealthy and well-known American resident in Paris, a Mrs. Moore, who was a friend of the King's and of my own (the King was often her guest at dinner at Biarritz) was visiting London. The King called on her one bleak afternoon, when there had been a hard frost all day. Mrs. Moore received the King in her warm drawing-room upstairs, and he stayed to tea by her fireside. A few minutes after he had taken his leave there was a knock on the drawing-room door. A Royal footman came in and gave her a note. It was a habit of the King's always to have paper, pencils, and small envelopes close at hand in order that he could jot down any ideas that occurred to him. The King's note to Mrs. Moore, that winter afternoon, warned her that when she went out she must be very careful because the pavement was very slippery and she might easily fall and hurt herself. The King sat waiting in his car until the footman came back from delivering the message.

I recall one occasion when he showed the same tact towards me; and after forty-four years I can still give the precise time and place. It was the Friday of Ascot Week in 1909. The King asked me to luncheon in the Royal Box. I was sitting at His Majesty's table. When the main dish was served, the waiters by-passed me, a little to my surprise, and then a couple of cutlets were put in front of me.

The King called to me across the table in his strong, deep voice. "I thought you wouldn't like the thing on the menu," he said, "so I ordered those cutlets for you."

I glanced at my neighbour's plate and saw a piece of ham on it. The King had realized that I, as a Muslim, would not want to eat the ham, nor would I like to refuse what was put before me at his table; so carefully he had made his own arrangements.

Digressing for a moment, this sort of tact is essential for people in high places. During Lord Curzon's Viceroyalty the eldest son of the then Amir of Afghanistan paid a State visit to Calcutta. On the night of his arrival a special State banquet was given in his honour. I was one of the guests; I sat opposite the Afghan Prince and had a front-row view of a lamentable affair. To my dismay I saw that the soup was well laced with sherry; before the Prince had time to lift his first spoonful to his lips, the political agent who was sitting beside him said in officious and self-important tones: "Your Highness, there is sherry in this soup."

In supposed strict conformity with Muslim canons, the Prince put aside his soup untouched. His fish course had nothing obnoxious about it and he tucked into it happily enough. The first entrée had some slices of ham in it, and sadly the Prince watched that go past him. Then there was a vegetable dish, and it was clearly, blatantly decorated with bits of bacon fat. All the main part of the dinner was thus an unprofitable blank for the poor Prince. At last came the ice cream. Eagerly the Prince prepared to attack it.

"Your Highness," said the officious politico, "it's got charreuse in it."

Resignedly the Prince put his spoon down again—and compensated himself, in the end, with a cheese savoury and some dessert. It was curious that Lord Curzon never had the slightest awareness that his chief guest left the table hungry. It was all the more odd in that Lord Curzon in his own house—I was more than once his guest at Hackwood—was the most considerate and thoughtful host imaginable. The explanation was, I suppose, that as Viceroy he left the day-to-day running of his house to his staff, and someone blundered—in a fashion which Lord Curzon would never have permitted in his own home.

I will confess that I myself have been embroiled in a similar

disaster—in Bombay, and at the Willingdon Club of all places, whose head steward was a Parsee. I gave a big dinner party at which a number of Hindu maharajahs were my guests. I went to the Club beforehand; I told the steward who my guests were to be, and I said that they were very strict about their food, and of course on no account should beef be served.

"I understand, Your Highness," said he, "I shall be very careful. Nothing wrong will happen, I assure you."

We sat down to dinner, quite an assemblage of Hindu maharajahs, some of them Rajputs of the most orthodox religious outlook. Everything went along agreeably until the main course was served. Then to my horror I saw plate after big plate of ox-tongue. My guests could well construe this miserable *faux pas* as a direct and studied insult; I apologized abjectly. As soon as dinner was over I found the steward and rated him soundly.

"What on earth were you up to? I warned you not to serve beef!"

"But, Your Highness," he expostulated, "they were ox-tongues."

He was a Parsee; he had lived in India all his life, and incredible as it may seem, he still thought that ox-tongue would not count as beef.

The effect is strong and long enduring of this kind of prohibition or instruction about diet, imposed in one's childhood, with the sanction of religion to support it, and the tradition probably of many centuries. I remember that I was once dining in Europe with an Indian friend, a Hindu, a man of profound learning and wide culture, whose reaction when a calf's head was put on the table was one of obvious shock and deep distress. He seemed to be almost on the edge of a nervous collapse. A few days later when I asked him why—apart from a quite understandable religious disapproval—he had been so upset, he said that for him to see a calf's head thus displayed on a table was as immediately horrifying as if a human baby's head had been offered.

"How would you feel," he said, "if the chef cooked you a baby's head and served it in aspic and tastefully garnished?"

There is no ready answer. I once asked another friend, a wise and highly-educated Brahmin, a Cambridge scholar, whether he—who had never had any animal food in his life, except milk

products, and whose ancestors for two thousand years or so had never touched eggs, fish, or meat—had any instinctive feeling of repulsion to this kind of food.

He hesitated for a long time and at length answered, "You know, if you had been brought up as I have been, I doubt if you would ever, all your life, get over the instinctive horror of the stink of meat or fish or eggs."

Well, I have wandered some distance from London in that far-off summer of 1898, a long way from my first introduction to London Society. I have spoken of its gaieties, its splendours, its race meetings, its garden parties, its great dinners, its night at the opera, perhaps after the opera a final, late-night call at the Marlborough, and a chat with the Prince of Wales—he had a way of dropping in at the Club on his way home, for a last drink (hot water, lemon, and gin it always was)—but I must not give the impression that I spent all my time frivolously.

My friend Professor Haffkine in Bombay had given me more than one introduction to distinguished scientists in England, including Lord Lister, the great surgeon. Lord Lister was most hospitable; I also met Lord Kelvin, then the doyen of English scientists, who (as I have remarked elsewhere) assured me that flying in heavier-than-air machines was a physical impossibility. I was often the guest of the Baroness Burdett-Coutts at whose house I met several of the leading spiritualists of the period.

I called, too, on Miss Florence Nightingale. She and the Baroness, next to Queen Victoria herself, were the most eminent women of the time. Though by now advanced in years and a complete invalid, confined to a sofa in her drawing-room in her Park Lane home, Miss Nightingale retained a formidable interest in affairs. One of the topics on which she kept herself most closely and fully informed was the British administration of India—especially so far as it concerned matters of health and hygiene. Over the years she had constituted herself, although she had never been to India, an august unofficial adviser to the Raj. Both the India Office and the War Office knew the strength and urgency of Miss Nightingale's memoranda. No newly-appointed Viceroy would have dared, before he left England to take up his appointment, to omit a call on Miss Nightingale, and for all of them a profitable and helpful experience it proved to be. She laid out the plans for

the system of military cantonments established for British garrisons all over India, she devised a medical administrative system, and systems of pay and allowances which subsisted almost without change in detail, certainly without change in principle, until the end of British rule in India.

It was perfectly natural that I should call on her. Lytton Strachey, that entertaining but far from reliable historian, chose in his essay on Miss Nightingale in *Eminent Victorians* to give an account of my first visit to her which is a ludicrous caricature. What he omits to mention is that we became fast friends, and that I went back to see her again and again. Naturally enough she talked at length, eloquently, and earnestly about what could and could not be done for the betterment of health in India, particularly among women and children.

I ventured, however, on more general topics. I was, as I have indicated, a serious young man; and I asked Miss Nightingale whether she thought that there had been any real improvement in human affairs since her youth, whether faith in God had extended and deepened. Lytton Strachey waxed sarcastic about my question, but I still think it was very much to the point. Miss Nightingale anyway saw it as such, and discussed it with the gravity with which I had propounded it. After all there occurred in Miss Nightingale's lifetime (and in mine it has been redoubled) a vast and rapid increase in man's power to exploit his natural resources—from steam propulsion to the internal combustion engine and thence to atomic fission—whose relation to or divorce from faith in God and all that such faith means in action, is a topic of some importance. Miss Nightingale did not see fit, like Mr. Lytton Strachey, to dismiss it with a snigger; she gave me her views on it and she honoured me henceforth with her friendship.

That same summer I met another great figure in the history of the British Army, Field-Marshal Lord Wolseley. Sir Alfred Lyall gave a breakfast party at which the guests were Leonard Courtney, the Liberal writer and politician (later Lord Courtney), Mr. Paul, historian and editor, Lord Wolseley and myself. Somebody mentioned Mr. Gladstone, and the Field-Marshal immediately launched into a passionate denunciation of Gladstone and all his works; there was no word too bad for him, none of us could

get a sentence in, and we sat listening to an unbridled tirade; Gladstone was the most evil and destructive influence of his time, responsible for a catastrophic decline in Britain's prestige and authority in Europe and throughout the world, responsible for the disaster in the Sudan, personally accountable for the death of General Gordon—in short and despite the fact that at least half the population of England idolized him (irrespective of what the other half thought), a malefactor who ought not to be at large in civilized society.

This depth of feeling and this degree of outspokenness, greatly though they surprised me at Sir Alfred Lyall's breakfast table, have not however been unusual. I remember that when Gladstone died, although the tone of public comment was respectful, Society's private remarks as I heard them at dinner parties or staying in great country houses (and the most influential sections of Society were Conservative and Unionist) were fiercely critical and unforgiving. In latter years, too, I recall how the same people talked about Lloyd George (of whom I shall have a good deal to say). Even now, so I believe, a certain member of the Labour Party, of Welsh origin like Lloyd George, is a ferocious bogey to his Tory opponents.

Of course in purely Liberal circles one heard very different opinions. I was the guest that summer of Lord Spencer, who had been a close colleague of Gladstone's and a member of his Cabinet. He took a small house near Birmingham for the agricultural show. On the last night of my stay, when all the other guests had gone, Lord Spencer talked freely if sombrely about that perennially critical issue in British politics in the Victorian Age, the Irish Question. This was 1898; Gladstone's attempt to introduce Home Rule had long been shipwrecked; Lord Salisbury's Unionist Government was securely in power, and its Irish policy consisted of "firm government"—associated with Arthur Balfour's name—and attempts to tackle the thorny problem of land tenure. Lord Spencer insisted that there was no way of settling Ireland's problems except by giving her full political freedom, that twenty years—or two hundred years—of police rule would not make the Irish "loyal" or submissive; that a great chance had been missed in 1886, and that it would not occur again; the inevitable consequences, soon or late, would be an armed

rebellion, with all its accompanying bloodshed and murder, and at the end the loss of Ireland to the Empire. Within a quarter of a century every detail of the prophecy to which I listened that summer night in 1898 was to be meticulously fulfilled. And in India there were those who watched the working out of Ireland's destiny and were fully cognizant of the lessons it taught, the message it signalled across the world.

Back in London I saw the Season through to the end; and then in August when English Society began its stately annual exodus to Cowes and to Scotland—I set forth on my European travels again, to Paris once more and thence to Geneva and Lausanne, to Italy and to Vienna, still then the capital city of a great, historic Empire.

During this otherwise pleasant summer I was greatly shocked and saddened by a grievous piece of news from India. A near kinsman, Hashim Shah, whose father was my elder half-brother, was murdered by a steward in my house in Poona. Mercifully this was not, as the assassinations in Jeddah in 1896 had been, prompted by motives of religious fanaticism, but the outcome of personal resentment and some personal grudge. However, its warning could not be discounted; there was an element of lawlessness and violence in my own close surroundings which would, sooner or later, have to be dealt with firmly, if it were not to become a running sore in the life of Bombay and Poona.

CHAPTER III

EARLY VISITS TO THE MIDDLE EAST

MY experiences in London and during my Continental tour widened my horizons and stimulated my growing interest in—and desire to play my part in—the world of politics and diplomacy. From not long after my arrival in England I was in touch with and was soon fully in the confidence of Sir William Lee Warner, the head of the Political Department of the India Office, the department which handled all the secret and confidential aspects of foreign relations. Through my friendship with a leading racehorse owner, Sir J. B. Maple (founder and head of the big furniture store which bears his name), I made the acquaintance of his son-in-law Baron von Eckardstein, who, since the Ambassador was a sick man, was in virtual charge of the German Embassy.

In the close and frequent company of these friends of mine I was able to observe at first hand the working-out of a series of diplomatic moves of considerable importance. There was a growing awareness in certain circles in Britain that that "Splendid Isolation" which had seemed so natural and desirable only a short time before had its grave disadvantages. The South African crisis was soon to reveal sharply how truly isolated Britain was; the depth and bitterness of anti-British feeling throughout Europe were far too pronounced to ignore. The leading spirit in Lord Salisbury's Cabinet in these years was Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, the Colonial Secretary, a realist despite the sometimes visionary nature of his imperialist ideals, who was acutely cognizant of the dangers of Britain's situation. Surveying the trends of world power at that time he believed that it might be possible to reach an understanding with Germany, and he saw clearly the perils ahead if that understanding were not reached. His official

biography¹ has lately revealed the extent and the pertinacity of Chamberlain's efforts to secure an Anglo-German entente.

My own recollections confirm this to the hilt. It was a sincere and strenuous effort on Britain's part to achieve an understanding; and it failed solely because of the German attitude, which was the result of the outlook and prejudices of the chief German negotiators, Prince von Bülow and Herr von Holstein. Not only did I watch the British approaches, I was fully cognizant of the German reactions to them, through my friendship with von Eckardstein. I could see how sad Eckardstein became at the constant rejection of Britain's sincere hand of friendship—a rejection always based on new and artificial pretexts and evasions. It is sad indeed to reflect on the long-term results of the breakdown of these negotiations. Might not the course of history in the twentieth century have been profoundly different had Chamberlain succeeded in averting the steady, implacable growth of Anglo-German antagonism? Would we not quite possibly have avoided two World Wars? Had the Germans played the game this would certainly have happened; but the great question-mark for European peace lay always in Germany's attitude. *away of the day*

The temperament of the two Germans involved in these negotiations prevented them from rising to the greatness of the chance they were given. They had grown up in the shadow of the great Bismarck, but they were not of his quality of statesmanship. They were essentially small bureaucrats with all Bismarck's arrogance, and they were ineradicably suspicious of what they thought of as British cunning and perfidy. *breakers of faith*

Long, long afterwards Lord Rennell—formerly Sir Rennell Rodd, and for many years British Ambassador in Rome—told me that after the First World War, when Prince von Bülow was living in retirement in Rome, they discussed this whole episode. Bülow admitted with great hesitation and ruefully that he had been wrong to reject the hand of friendship which had been offered by Britain in sincerity and earnestness of purpose.

When my first European tour ended, I set off for East Africa. This, however, was no pleasure jaunt. One or two delicate and important tasks demanding the exertion of a certain amount of

¹ *The Life of Joseph Chamberlain*, vol. III by J. L. Garvin, vol. IV by Julian Amery (London, Macmillan & Co. Ltd.).

diplomatic skill and finesse awaited me there. There were several Ismaili settlements down the coast, and they were rapidly increasing in numbers and in wealth; and more than one of these communities were involved in disputes—by no means of a trifling character—with the local authorities.

East Africa was at the beginning of its rapid, even sensational, opening up and development; but at the turn of the century it presented a very different picture from that which it does today. Several European Powers with colonial aspirations were embroiled, down the thousands of miles from the Red Sea to the Cape, in what proved to be a late but dramatic phase of the Scramble for Africa. Abyssinia, the only native African State with expansionist ambitions, had lately collided, bloodily but victoriously, with the Italians. At the battle of Adowa in 1898 Ras Makonnen, the able lieutenant and ultimate successor of the Emperor Menelik, had heavily defeated an Italian army and put an end, for over thirty years, to Italy's efforts to extend her somewhat precarious coastal foothold. The British having entered into a treaty with the Sultan of Zanzibar, established what was then known as the East African Protectorate (today the flourishing colony of Kenya with its complex multi-racial community), with its base at Mombasa, under the supervision of the Foreign Office; and shortly afterwards there were projects of settlement being put forward by Lord Delamere and others, in what came to be called "the white highlands" in the hinterland of the Protectorate.

Southwards the Germans had staked their claims inland from Dar-es-Salaam in the territories now known as Tanganyika. South again the Portuguese, who were the first Europeans to venture into these regions in the great age of exploration, had an old-established colony. And inland from this, Jameson and his pioneers were carving out of the empty veld and savannahs the lands which were to become Northern and Southern Rhodesia. And to the south again the British and the Boers were already committed to the long, grim struggle of the South African War.

If the beginnings of future economic prosperity and greatness were already visible in the Africa which I visited for the first time in 1899, no less noticeable were the seeds of future political and social difficulties and problems.

Zanzibar, which I visited first, was an ancient seat of Arab

culture. The Sultan no longer exercised absolute powers, but was a constitutional sovereign, acting on the advice of his British Resident and officials. Between these officials and my Ismaili followers there had arisen a complicated dispute, which concerned the ownership and tenure of a tract of land on the seashore, whose value had rapidly increased, but which was an Ismaili burial ground. The dispute had been stubborn and protracted. I was able, however, to arrange a settlement which was admittedly a compromise. I confess that I have worked all my life on the principle that a compromise is better than rigid and unyielding disagreement. The compromise which we reached in Zanzibar was workable to this extent, that there has never been any other major dispute in the years since then between the Ismailis and the British authorities.

In Dar-es-Salaam I was faced with a similar sort of conflict, in this case between the German authorities and my followers over land trading rights. This dispute had smouldered and flickered throughout the nineties; the Germans were suspicious of my Ismaili followers, and there were accusations that they were smuggling in arms and had had a hand in the Arab rebellion of some ten years before. There was therefore a certain stiffness on the part of the German Governor and his officials when I first arrived. However, I persevered, and before I left I was able to see the dispute settled and the suspicions (which were probably one cause of the stubbornness of the dispute) thoroughly dissipated. When I went it was in the knowledge that there was a clean slate, so far as differences between my followers and the German administration were concerned.

From East Africa I went back to Europe for a short time. Then, as winter set in, I turned south and east. On my way home to India I visited Egypt for the first time. Those who have not experienced it, who have not been lucky enough to fall under Egypt's spell, will find it difficult, I suppose, to realize the sheer magic of the first sight of Egypt. Add that my first sight was on a perfect early winter day, and need I say that all my life since then I have had a special corner in my heart for Egypt, and that I have returned there as often as I could?

There is a unique quality about Egypt's charm: the wide, tranquil skies, the extraordinary clarity of its light and atmosphere,

the glories of its sunsets and its starlit nights, and its tremendous monuments of a majestic past. But I had other objects than mere sight-seeing. I wanted to make personal contact with the large Ismaili community of Syria and the remnant of Egyptian Ismailis who had not so far come to see me in India. I also visited the great seat of Muslim learning, the Al Azhar University.

It was a time of momentous and stirring events. Lord Kitchener's great victory at Omdurman in the Sudan was still fresh in everyone's mind. General Wingate had just returned from the south. The Khalifeh had been killed, and the last of his dervish following exterminated.

I called on Lord Cromer, the British Resident in Egypt, whose power and authority in Egypt at that time were paramount. He said that Egypt badly needed a man like Sir Syed Ahmed, to do for its Muslim population the sort of educative and regenerative work which he had done in Aligarh. There was in Egypt at that time a deep rift between, on the one hand the old-fashioned conservative, pious Muslim, contemptuous of modern science and techniques and speaking and reading Arabic, and on the other hand the Frenchified upper classes, whose reading matter was mainly French yellow-back novels, whose meeting place was the club, whose diversions were cards and nocturnal gambling, who detested the British, yearned to see them out, and longed for a return to the régime of the Khedive Ismail. There was nothing like Aligarh to show the vast Muslim population the way towards a compromise with and understanding of modern, Western science, and to raise an élite capable of co-operating with British administrators and technicians in that process of economic and social uplift of which the country was in such desperate need.

Unfortunately, the Khedive Abbas Hilmi was ill at the time—it was suspected that he had some form of paratyphoid—and I was therefore unable to see him. In later years we became great and intimate friends and I admired the brilliance of his intellect, and his wide and deep knowledge of politics and history. I will have occasion to refer to him later. The Egyptian Ministers whom I met were merely nominees of the British—of Lord Cromer, in fact.

People who only know Cairo today can have no idea of the social conditions of the early 1900s. The hotels were full of rich

foreigners, who were "wintering in Egypt", then a highly fashionable pastime. They would make trips up the Nile in hired *dahaabiyehs* or in one of Messrs. Thomas Cook's steamers. They spent money profusely and had a high old time, surrounded by magnificent-looking Egyptian guides and alleged interpreters, who were apt to speak the most grotesque pidgin variety of every European language.

The contents of the Cairo Museum were as fascinating as they have always been, and always will be; although of course Lord Carnarvon's magnificent Tutankhamen discoveries had not yet been made, there was more than enough to see, but the arrangement of it all was even less convenient than it is today. A disagreeable and irreverent custom prevailed of exposing in full view, for anyone who wanted to see them, the actual mummies—not merely the sarcophagi—of all the great Pharaohs. You could see Rameses II, with his noble hawk-like features, lying in his coffin—looking almost as he had in life all those centuries ago—and other former mighty kings and conquerors, at the feet of any chance passer-by.

To me, however, more concerned with the present than the past, possibly the most remarkable fact about Cairo in those days was that it was for all practical purposes another Poona or Simla. It was even more of a citadel of British supremacy than India was. The British were not merely in political control of the country, they assumed a social superiority which the Egyptians appeared humbly to accept. What little political agitation there was was attributed to the "machinations of the Palace".

The general attitude of all classes towards the British Occupying Power, its agents and officials, towards British Army officers and the growing number of employees of British firms, was one of outward submissiveness and obedience. Unhappily—and just as in India in the late nineties and early nineteen hundreds—there was hardly any link between the British community, political, military, and commercial, and either the Egyptian aristocracy or the well-to-do bourgeoisie of Cairo and Alexandria. When rich Egyptians came to Europe they went to Paris, to Switzerland, to Austria or Germany or Italy; they carefully kept clear of England. Hardly any of the winter tourists, except for a few individuals from the Continent, bothered to get to know Egypt's upper and

middle classes. Even the Gezira Sporting Club, in the heart of the metropolitan Cairo, barred Egyptians from its membership other than in very exceptional cases. The only non-British whom the British encountered—except their office subordinates and their servants—were the members of a few wealthy Levantine families who sought to identify themselves completely with the ruling power and were thus accepted. The depth and virulence of this social division can be seen in the fact that I myself, who naturally in my European travels met Egyptians—largely of the aristocracy and members of the ruling dynasty—met hardly one of them, when I was in Cairo, except in their own homes. There was really no common ground of social intercourse. Therefore, inevitably behind the façade of humility there developed a sullen and brooding, almost personal, resentment which later on needlessly, bitterly poisoned the clash of Egyptian nationalism with Britain's interests as the Occupying Power.

After three weeks or so in Cairo I went home to India, where the work I had done had not passed unnoticed by those concerned. The Sultan of Zanzibar bestowed on me the highest order in his gift, the Brilliant Star of Zanzibar, and later the German Emperor awarded me the Royal Prussian Order of the Crown (First Class).

I went from India and made a brief tour of Burma and met my followers there for the first time. I recall one somewhat daunting experience. A Muslim of my acquaintance—not one of my followers—had been very kind to me and had helped me in a variety of ways. I called on him to thank him, and as we exchanged courtesies he sent for a glass of sherbet for me. It was brought. The tall tumbler was held out towards me by a servant, and I saw that the hands that held it were the hands of a leper. Time seemed suspended as I stared horror-struck. I found every excuse I could, said that I was not thirsty, tried to get out of accepting the tumbler still held out towards me. But my host earnestly pressed me and went on pressing me. At last I shut my eyes, took the tumbler and gulped the sherbet down; but the horror of those hands remained.

I was back in Europe in 1900, and in Paris in that year—the year of the Great Exhibition—met the Shah Musafaradin of Persia. No other Shah, in my view, did more to harm Persia than

he did. He was sickly, he was weak, and he was grossly ignorant. He was capricious and extravagant, squandering gifts on his favourites, and incapable of any awareness of his duties and obligations as Shah. All the treasure which his father, Nasruddin, had amassed in fifty years of prudent and capable rule, he dissipated in folly and waste. He had a childish, pitiable passion for the silliest, most costly gadgets—musical boxes, for example, adorned with jewels and gold and silver, and on these and similar trumpery objects he spent a fortune. It was no wonder that making a pun on his name, Musafaradin, the Persian intelligentsia nicknamed him “mauvaise affaire”, and their gibe was taken up by foreigners in Tehran.

He was indeed a “mauvaise affaire” for his country. Since I was his relative, connected with him on my father’s and my mother’s sides of the family, he received me with eager affection, gave me one of his highest decorations and made me presents of diamond ornaments. But he was a sad nincompoop. Talking to him was like talking to a child—and not a very intelligent child at that. His infantile outlook and behaviour were sustained and exploited, for his own purposes, by his Prime Minister, the all-powerful Atabeg, who in his morning audiences with his sovereign did not give him serious reports but told him the sort of fantastic fairy tales a grown-up man will tell a small child to keep him entertained.

When I saw the poor man I happened to mention that I had just been to Burma.

“Oh!” said he, “haven’t the Burmans heads far bigger than other human beings?”

When he was in Paris he heard about Monsieur and Madame Curie and their discovery of radium. He asked to be shown radium at work. The two distinguished scientists said that they would come to his hotel and give him a demonstration of the properties of radium; but they explained that absolute darkness would be necessary for the demonstration. One of the hotel cellars was turned into a dark room; black curtains were put up and all light was completely shut out. The Shah and some of his courtiers went down to the cellar. Monsieur and Madame Curie arrived, and produced a piece of radium whose vivid glow lit up the whole room. Suddenly the Shah took fright. He began to

scream and shout and run round the room. He raved and ranted and accused the Curies of trying to murder him.

The Curies were really not used to this kind of treatment. Much affronted, they took their leave. The Shah was at last made to understand that he had gravely hurt their feelings. As a recompense he awarded each of them one of his highest decorations, and for good measure he ordered each star to be set in diamonds. Off went the baubles to the Curies, who stiffly returned them with formal thanks, pointing out that they had been exposed to far too gross an insult to be able to accept anything of this kind.

Naturally the Shah had to go up the Eiffel Tower, and naturally, about half-way up he panicked; the lift had to be stopped and he had to be brought down again.

His behaviour in public and in private was deplorable. Since I am myself of Iranian descent and a member of the then ruling dynasty, the Kajar family, I was acutely aware of the shame and humiliation of it. So, too, were Iranian statesmen and diplomats, who were scandalized at what the Shah was doing to his own and his country’s reputation. We all tried to cloak it as much as we could and made excuses about his ill-health, which had a certain basis of truth in them because he was a chronic sufferer from kidney trouble.

His folly of course had different, deeper roots. He exhibited, in an especially lurid light, all the dangers of the old-fashioned autocratic oriental monarchy. However incompetent, silly, or criminal such a despot was, not one of the able and intelligent statesmen of the world around him ever stood up to him and told him the truth about himself. The mysterious prestige surrounding kingship and the blood of kings induced a kind of mental paralysis even in good and sincere men, so that they were quite unable—in the interests of their king and their country, even in their own interests—to give true advice and guidance. From what I have been told by distinguished Russian friends this sort of atmosphere prevailed in Tsarist Russia. Did it disappear, I wonder, even in Stalinist Russia? You could not call the men who were thus paralysed cowards; they were not time-servers, they were not utterly lacking in courage or scruples. It was simply that for them such divinity hedged their king that it was not a matter merely of pardoning his follies and weaknesses—for them those follies

and weaknesses simply did not exist. Again and again history teaches this lesson: a tough, self-made man founds a dynasty, his frailer descendants bolster themselves up with this atmosphere of semi-divinity, and then the dynasty collapses and the process starts anew, unless, as happened in Japan for centuries, the semi-divine monarch is shut up in his palace, unapproachable, invisible, and all power is exercised on his behalf by mayors of the palace. Poor Musafaradin was a glaring example of the more pitiable defects of this kind of despotism.

From Paris I went on to Berlin. There I met Holstein at luncheon—one of the two men responsible for frustrating the attempts to achieve an Anglo-German understanding. He was a grey, withdrawn, taciturn man who ate heartily and said little. I also had an audience of the Kaiser at Potsdam. William II was then, I suppose, at the summit of his strange and ill-starred career. To me he was gracious and cordial. I had been warned that he was acutely sensitive about his physical deformity and disliked his withered left arm being looked at. But members of his court and others who knew him said that the curiosity of human beings is such that everybody, meeting the Kaiser for the first time, found his gaze drawn automatically and irresistibly to the left side of his uniform. While I awaited my audience I said to myself over and over again, "You won't look at his arm, you *won't* look at his arm."

He strode into the room; my eyes became a law unto themselves, and there I was staring at his left arm. Fortunately for me, I suppose, he must have been so accustomed to this happening that he did not let it diminish the warmth and courtesy of his greeting.

He held out his right hand and shook hands with me. This was literally a crushing experience. As a compensation for his deformity the Kaiser had, from childhood, determined that his right hand and arm should be so strong that they would do the work of two. He took constant, vigorous exercise; every day he had at least twenty minutes' fencing; he played lawn-tennis often for two hours at a time; and undertook all manner of other remedial exercises. The result was an immense development of strength in his right hand and arm; one of its effects was this appallingly powerful handshake. I am told that mine was no

unusual experience. The Duchess of Teck (later the Marchioness of Cambridge) told me that she—like most other women with whom His Imperial Majesty shook hands—had the greatest difficulty in not letting out a cry of pain as he took her hand in his.

I am sure that he was quite unconscious of what he was doing. He was far too great a gentleman to do it on purpose; but just as our eyes went to his withered arm, so his subconscious made him exert this violent physical strength.

Looking back, this seems to have been a time when I was having a good many audiences with monarchs. Later in this same year I went to Constantinople. The Sultan, Abdul Hamid, made me his guest at the Pera Palace Hotel, and I had a long audience with him at the Yildiz Palace. This encounter was the subject of a good deal of rather wild political speculation—most of it arrant guesswork—at the time and subsequently. The Sultan was also Caliph and therefore the recognized head of the whole Sunni branch of the Islamic world, and I was the head of the Ismaili section of the Shias. The grounds for speculation were obvious.

Our meeting had for me, I must say, its own rather curious flavour of drama. Abdul Hamid lived then in neurotic fear of assassination.¹ He was a chain-smoker, and I have all my life been (as they say) allergic to cigarettes. When I was ushered into his room the doors were immediately locked, and the Sultan and I were alone except for an interpreter. I do not speak Turkish and Abdul Hamid, though I believe he could read both Arabic and Persian, refused to speak either of these languages. The room was warm and cigarette-smoke hung stale and heavy in the air. The Sultan sat huddled in an enormous greatcoat, with Field-Marshal's epaulettes heavy on its shoulders. Slowly I realized that this bulky and cumbrous garment was armoured, and about as bullet proof

¹ It is interesting and not without irony to realize that the word "assassin", which has its special contemporary meaning, was first applied many centuries ago to my ancestors and their Ismaili followers. From time immemorial, small and oppressed minorities have had to be given a bad name—after all, you cannot kill a dog unless you give it a bad name—and in the Middle Ages the Ismailis were such a minority, fighting for their lives and their rights. Their oppressors had to give them a bad name; they associated the Ismailis with the manufacture and use of the drug hashish, and it was alleged that they were addicts. The bad name, thus invented, stuck.

as was possible in those days. Did he think (I wondered) that I had come there to murder him?

Over the lapels of the overcoat a strange and somewhat sinister countenance confronted me. For Abdul Hamid wore heavy make-up—his beard dyed black, his lips carmined, his cheeks rouged and his eyebrows made up to an extent that was comic. He might have been a clown in a circus; but his eyes glowed in this preposterous make-up. Yet this maquillage was no expression of effeminacy or perversion; he was most virile, the sire of many children and the affectionate husband and protector of a large harem.

Our conversation was amiable and courteous. I recall that he was interested and impressed by the fact that I, by way of Kashgar and Sinkiang, had up-to-date and reliable information about the Muslims of Western China.

It was said that, as an aspect of his neurosis about assassination, every particle of food sent up to him had to be tasted by several people on the way, including the cook. As I had no meal with him I cannot vouch fully for the truth of this story, but I do know that he had an idea that the food at my hotel was not particularly good, so twice every day a landau drove up from the Palace with a cargo of china wash-basins filled with excellent dishes, both Turkish and Persian, prepared for me in the Palace and sent to me by Abdul Hamid's express command.

From Constantinople I made my way home to India to tackle a task in my household and entourage—a cleaning up job of nightmare complexity which was to demand a great deal of energy, patience, and endurance for many months to come.

CHAPTER IV

NINE CROWDED YEARS (1900-1909)

THE murder of my kinsman at Poona in the summer of 1898 had emphasized, in the most sensational and unpleasant fashion, the disruptive qualities latent in the huge, ramshackle, feudally extravagant household and entourage which I had inherited, and which I have in previous chapters described at some length.

I was responsible by now for a dependent population of about two thousand people in my households in Bombay and Poona. I actually supported them—most of them in idleness. They were housed and fed at my expense. The financial burden, considerable as it was, was not as worrying as certain other thoroughly undesirable aspects of their manner of life.

When my grandfather left Persia he took with him—as seemed to him natural and proper—the train of a medieval prince. But in Bombay in the last years of the nineteenth century we were not living in the Middle Ages.

There was not only the immediate family, which was large enough. During the earlier part of his wanderings my grandfather was accompanied by a troop of cavalry, who fought under his command in Persia and in Afghanistan, and later rendered redoubtable assistance to Sir Charles Napier in his conquest of Sind. At the beginning these numbered probably some two hundred, some of princely birth, some knights and peasants, but all devoted in their allegiance to my grandfather. When he settled in Bombay they settled around him—were they not his liege men who had endured and fought in his company?—and long before I was born and throughout my childhood, there they were, ageing warriors whose battles were done, in houses or rooms dotted about the rambling estate, with their families growing up around them.

For some of them, after they settled down, sent for their wives from Iran, but most married Indian wives.

These ex-soldiers and their families were not all. During the fifties followers came in fair numbers from Central Asia, from Turkestan and Sinkiang, from Bokhara and Afghanistan, to offer their loyalty and bring their tribute to my grandfather. Some returned to their own distant homes, but some stayed, and those who stayed took Indian wives, or married the daughters of those who had settled earlier. Some Ismailis came from Africa and they brought negro slaves, and when they went home some of their slaves refused to go and stayed in Bombay. Intermarrying and multiplying, all these diverse elements had grown, by 1898 or thereabouts, into a vast assembly of two thousand people, men, women, and children, with little or nothing to do and nothing to occupy them, with no background and no roots. In my grandfather's time and in my father's time (though they were not of course as numerous), their dependent status was taken for granted, and throughout my long minority my mother really had no choice but to go on housing and feeding them. As one generation aged and another grew up (after all, half a century and more had gone by since my grandfather exiled himself from Persia), the whole affair took on, in the view of those who accepted our bounty, the air of a custom established in right.

The old soldiers of course took pensions from my grandfather. As they died off the pensions continued to be paid, first by my father and then by my mother during my minority, but the original sum had to be divided up among its first recipient's descendants. These were often quite numerous, so by the late nineties the actual incomes received by all these beneficiaries were small. Most of them augmented their incomes in one way or another—as race course tipsters or as stablehands, for example. Long years of this rather raffish, irresponsible life, in and around the rapidly growing city and port of Bombay, had not tended to make particularly worthy or useful citizens of them. But they came of high-spirited, proud stock, and their natural energies and abilities were now being dissipated in intrigues and feuds. Quick to take offence, they were apt to be quick, too, in drawing the knife.

Dangerous as the potentialities were, the situation had not been

too bad until the murder of my kinsman in Poona. This, as it were, touched off a fuse. From then on any attempt to control this nest of hornets, internally by the household, or from the outside by the police, met with fierce threats. While I was on my travels I was warned that if I tried to clear up a clutter of ne'er-do-wells, who had become a scandal and a menace, my life, too, would be in danger.

I was determined, however, to put an end to it. The police in Bombay were extremely anxious for me to do nothing too summary or too rash, such as stopping all pensions and turning the lot out into the street. Idle, well-fed, unruly, two thousand of them, from half-a-dozen races in Africa, Central Asia, Persia, and Afghanistan, suddenly loose among the population of Bombay as vagrants, would be a real public danger. And it was a danger which the Government—as I was given firmly to understand—were not prepared to allow.

It was essential, therefore, that if I were to deal with my problem, I must act all the time with the full support of the Government and in close co-operation with the police. It was particularly fortunate that I was on terms of warm friendship and understanding with Sir William Lee Warner at the India Office. He was a tower of strength in the background. In Bombay itself a new Governor, Lord Northcote, had succeeded Lord Sandhurst, he too sustained me with his constant friendship and helped me through an extremely difficult task. Without allies of this stature and authority it would have been immeasurably more difficult.

As it was, I went at it gradually and persistently. Some of the rowdiest and unruliest of all were technically not British subjects; these were deported to the Persian Gulf and turned loose in regions where their propensities were less dangerous than in populous, urban Bombay. To a number I gave lump-sum gratuities, on condition that they, too, took themselves off. One group I got sent off, with the help of the police, to remote hill stations whence they were forbidden to make their way back to Bombay. With the removal of the worst among the older malcontents, we were able to get down to the more agreeable task of reclaiming and educating their children; we set up schools for them and some went to the Jesuit schools nearby; some who were conspicuously bright went on to a higher university education; they all went out