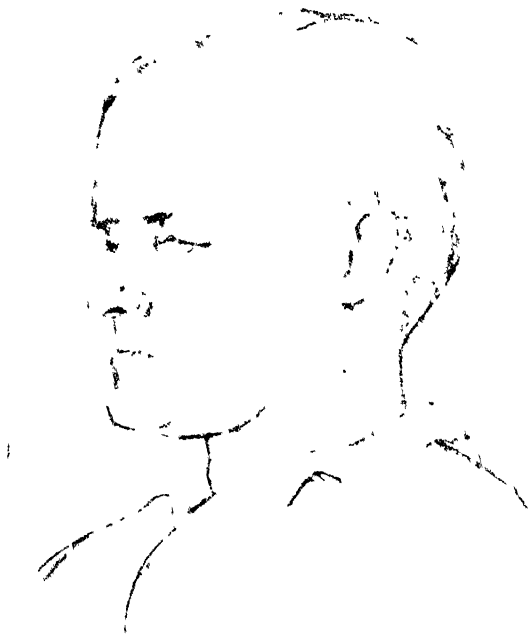
SCHOLAR GYPSY



VERRIER
1942

With the author's compliments

Shamrao Hivale,
-Patangarh P. O.,
Mandla District

SCHOLAR GYPSY

A STUDY OF VERRIER ELWIN

BY

SHAMRAO HIVALE

Author of *The Pardhans of the Upper Narbada Valley;* Joint-author of *Songs of the Forest,* and *Folk-Songs of the Maikal Hills*

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FOR

JAWAHARLAL

AND

SURESH

PREFACE

I FIRST met Dr Verrier Elwin in April 1928, and I have lived and worked with him ever since. I have twice visited England and on both occasions made my home with his family; I am acquainted with many of his relatives, and know his mother and sister very well indeed. This gives me some authority for writing this book.

My task has also been made easier by the fact that Verrier keeps very full and complete diaries, and for some periods had written a sort of record; and many letters are available. I have also often made notes of his conversations. This has made it possible for me sometimes to use his own words, and I have allowed his letters to tell their own story as far as possible.

Of two periods of Verrier's life I have said little—his years at Oxford and the time of intensive anthropological research with its many Bombay contacts from 1940-1946—for he himself proposes to write about them in a book which will be both amusing and exciting.

There are many points of interest in this record: the conflict with the Bishops raises important issues for the Indian Christians; the letters to Europe give many details of our National Movement; the last chapter gives some facts about Indian anthropology.

I have chosen the title *Scholar Gypsy* because it is so appropriate to Verrier himself, the Oxford scholar 'of pregnant parts and quick inventive brain', who forsook his friends and went to roam the world with the 'wild brotherhood' of aboriginals. There is one stanza in Matthew Arnold's poem which is specially appropriate to Verrier, as he has been in the last fifteen years.

> Thou hast not liv'd, why should'st thou perish, so?
> Thou hadst *one* aim, *one* business, *one* desire:
> Else wert thou long since number'd with the dead—
> Else hadst thou spent, like other men, thy fire.

This absorption in one great aim, the welfare and the happiness of the aboriginals of India, possesses Verrier completely. It may be noted that Matthew Arnold also gives

expression to Verrier's desire for the aboriginals, his fear lest ' this strange disease of modern life ' should contaminate them.

> But fly our paths, our feverish contact fly!
> For strong the infection of our mental strife,
> Which, though it gives no bliss, yet spoils for rest;
> And we should win thee from thy own fair life,
> Like us distracted, and like us unblest.
>
> Soon, soon thy cheer would die,
> Thy hopes grow timorous, and unfix'd thy powers,
> And thy clear aims be cross and shifting made:
> And then thy glad perennial youth would fade,
> Fade, and grow old at last, and die like ours.

SHAMRAO HIVALE

1 October 1946.
Patangarh,
Mandla District, India

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CHAPTER I

EARLY YEARS[1]

Riding o'er land and sailing o'er sea,
O but we went merrily!

VERRIER ELWIN or, to give him his full name, Harry Verrier Holman Elwin, was born at Dover in Kent, England, in 1902, in the early morning of 29 August, the day which—as Verrier has pointed out—is traditionally associated with the birthday of King Herod, a circumstance which has no doubt given him his love of tribal dancing and extreme dislike of all reformers, for it will be remembered that the dance of Salome and the beheading of John the Baptist were the highlights of that celebrated birthday party.

The Elwins are an Anglo-Saxon, not a Welsh, family (Elwin is a Christian name in Wales, a surname in Kent) and *Burke's Landed Gentry* traces Verrier's pedigree back to 1531. None of these ancestors were very noteable; in 1600 Henry Elwyn (as it was then spelt) was "one of the ancients (i.e. senior barristers) of New Inn"; two hundred years later we find Michael Elwin as one of the officials of the Naval Victualling Department at Dover; for the most part the Elwins were solicitors, officials and in recent years clergymen. Two of Verrier's uncles were in the I.C.S., from which they resigned at the time of the Morley-Minto Reforms, and the two sons of the younger of them, D. H. Elwin in the Madras and R. B. Elwin in the Punjab service, are well known in official circles today. It is probably safe to say that (with the exception of Margaret Elwin, not listed in *Burke*, who was burnt as a witch in 1615 for plotting to burn a town in Norfolk and raise a wind to fan the flames) Verrier has been the first of the Elwins to depart from the strict and narrow path of orthodoxy in religion and politics since the family began four hundred years ago.

[1] I owe most of the material of this chapter to Mrs M. O. Elwin and to Verrier Elwin himself.

The family arms are described in *Burke* as azure, on a saltire between four billets or, nine saltires couped of the field. The crest is upon a billet fesse-wise or, a stag's head erased proper. The family motto is *maxima paulatim*.

Verrier's father was the fifth son in a family of twelve, a Dover man like all his forebears. He was, at the time of Verrier's birth, the Right Reverend Lord Bishop of Sierra Leone, and I possess an old copy of the *Sierra Leone Messenger* for 1910, which gives an account of the life and death of this heroic man who died of yellow fever, far from his wife and children, at the age of 38. The Bishop was a D.D. of Oxford and, after serving a curacy in that city, went to West Africa as a missionary; he was at first Principal of Fourah Bay College, but soon became Bishop. He returned to England for Verrier's baptism, at which two other Bishops assisted; one of them told Verrier long afterwards, 'Three of us tried to cast the devil out of you, with remarkably little success.'

In those days the west coast of Africa was not only the White Man's Grave; it was a place of danger and adventure and the Bishop had to undertake journeys in the wilds, the recollection of which make his anthropologist son's mouth water. In 1909, however, just as he was about to return to England for good, when he was expected to become Bishop of Bristol, Dr Elwin fell sick and died. Had he lived, Verrier's life would have been very different. The Bishop left behind his widow, Verrier, a little daughter, Eldyth, and a baby son whom he had never seen, Basil.

An account of the Bishop's character, taken from the *Sierra Leone Messenger*, is interesting; some of his qualities have appeared in the son, some definitely not.

> "His nature was unusually affectionate, yet most manly; his temper singularly under control; and, in a climate which racks and strains the nerves almost to breaking point, I do not recollect his ever being gloomy or depressed. With children and the aged he had a rare

gift of tenderness and sympathy. He had great delight in the beauties of scenery, and could be as merry and light-hearted as a boy whenever it was possible to have a day free of duty. There must be many who remember his ringing laugh, yet none who can recall an undeserved rebuke or angry word. He was brave in facing 'perils of waters and perils in the wilderness'. Though a martyr to sea-sickness, he never held back from painful journeys in many a crazy craft when there was work to do. Once he took his life in his hands and separated two savages who were fighting in blind fury, urged on by a bloodthirsty crowd. He never complained if the only meal at the end of a long day's march was a little condensed soup and a few biscuits. He was a friend whom it was a delight to serve, a man whom all were bound to love."

Verrier's mother, Minnie Ormsby Holman, was born in India, at Murree, which her family had done much to found. Her father had been one of the East India Company people and most of the family were born here. Verrier's uncle, now Sir H. C. Holman, spent most of his life in the Indian Army, holding commands at Jubbulpore and Mhow; he was a great linguist and led an expedition to Russia after the last war, for which he received the K.C.B. He was known as 'Burn-the-Files Holman', from his passionate love of burning unnecessary documents.

Mrs. Elwin, with whom I stayed frequently on both my visits to England, is a beautiful and interesting woman, very quick in repartee and full of humour in spite of being tremendously religious. She, like the Bishop, has always been strongly Protestant and Fundamentalist, but she was quickly won over to the Indian cause by Verrier. She entertained Mahatma Gandhi in her house at Oxford, and had a very deep affection for Mahadeo Desai, with whom she often corresponded. Her house at Oxford became a home for many Indian students.

Verrier was unfortunate in not going to a Public School. In her ideal for her eldest son, Mrs Elwin was possessed above all things with the desire to keep him untainted by the Church of Rome (an aim in which she has been unexpectedly successful) and the infidelity which she believed to come from the application of modern scholarship to the Holy Bible. She herself believed in the literal truth of

every word of the Bible 'from cover to cover'; Verrier must do the same. Bishop Elwin had hoped his son would go to Westminster, but there seemed to the mother's sheltering eyes some danger of Popery there; then Rugby was tried, but Dr David the Headmaster admitted to Mrs Elwin that he accepted the first few chapters of the Book of Genesis as true only in a symbolic sense, so that was no good. Finally an old friend suggested a small West country school, Dean Close, Cheltenham, which had been founded to uphold the basic principles of Evangelical religion, and where certainly there was never any nonsense about applying the ordinary standards of intelligence to the Word of God or of brightening the infinitely dreary Chapel services by any but the most spiritual means.

Verrier seems at this time to have been a shy, not very attractive little boy, terribly priggish, filled by his uncles with conventional Imperialist ideas and by his mother with the belief that there was nothing, nothing in the world to compare with the joy of leading souls to Jesus. On one occasion, he has told me, he made a list of the boys in his class with columns in which he gave each so many marks for morals, intelligence, religion and attractiveness and a note on how near or far they were from Jesus. We notice the instincts of the anthropologist, in however bizarre a form, already at work, but unfortunately Verrier left the incriminating document one day in the School Lavatory and later had the mortification of seeing it copied out on a black-board with dire consequences to himself from the boys whom he had marked low for 'attractiveness'.

Verrier was at school during the last war. He was an enthusiastic supporter of the Officer's Training Corps and in time became Company Sergeant Major. He studied bombing and once knew a lot about British and German bombs. He did a fair amount of boxing. Twenty years afterwards he was to describe his O. T. C. experiences in a speech at Jubbulpore, to be incorrectly reported as advocating armed rebellion, and to have his deportation from India recommended.

Verrier was not very good at games, but he played soccer and hockey regularly for the school and won his second eleven colours. He also won a copy of *Alice*

through the Looking-Glass for boxing. Dean Close was not a very good school, but there was always something going on. One day the Headmaster was arrested for stealing a tin of sardines and a Bible from the Army and Navy Stores; another day a certain Mr Light, then engaged in trying to teach Verrier the rudiments of literature, was arrested for murder, and the famous Green Bicycle Case began to puzzle the world. Light's arrest had a curious result as far as Verrier was concerned. The school staff was already greatly depleted and when Verrier insisted on studying English Literature instead of anything else, there was no one to teach him. He has said that this was the greatest bit of luck he ever had. The Headmaster, though stiff in his religious views, was after all the father of the poet James Elroy Flecker, and had a great love of literature. He turned Verrier loose in the school library and let him develop more or less as he liked. Few men would have had the sense to do this to a boy of seventeen, and for Verrier the benefit was incalculable. He was early trained in the Oxford tradition of scholarship, which is so different from that in our Indian Universities, where we have to sit taking notes of lectures and learning them by heart. Verrier was forced to explore and think for himself and so, while still at school, he became an ardent Wordsworthian and laid the foundations of a life-long devotion to Shakespeare and Blake.

Verrier won a lot of prizes in his last year at school, but he failed to get a scholarship at St John's and in 1921 went up to Merton as a Commoner with no very great expectation of academic success. But directly he reached Oxford he completely changed. He is still almost abnormally sensitive to atmosphere and there are several different Verriers according to the company he is in. In Oxford he found at last a place where he could *live*. And the Oxford of 1921-22 seems to have been a thrilling place for, as Roger Fulford says in *The Right Honourable Gentleman*,

> "Never has undergraduate life been more terrifyingly, more scorchingly brilliant than in the years when England settled down to enjoy the peace. The young men of Oxford drank their wines and spirits, spent their

father's modest fortunes, and put the world to rights with all the poise and sophistication of Victorian clubmen; they gossiped about one another with such backbiting gusto that the University at times recalled the cackling malice of a tea-party at a bridge club for ladies. The fashion for disguising intelligence by behaving like an enthusiastic wasp had spread rapidly to Oxford from Bloomsbury. Discussion of subjects, which is generally profoundly boring, had given place to discussion of people, which is always fascinating; tartness and wit were the essential ingredients of conversation. It is not only the passage of years, not only the tricks of memory, not only the blandishments of social historians which conjure up this sparkling vision; it was in sober fact a brilliant epoch. Oxford in 1922 whispered the last enchantments of the Edwardian Age."

I am not qualified to write about Verrier's life at Oxford —besides that is a thing he is going to do himself. So I will confine myself to its bare outlines. After going up, Verrier quickly won an Exhibition at Merton and then settled down to read the Honours School of English Literature. That school was in its infancy and had not yet assumed the dreadful stereotyped features of Eng. Lit. It was still rather exciting—there was very little *Beowolf* in those days—and Verrier was very lucky in his teachers. He was just too late for Sir Walter Raleigh, but his first tutor was Mr H. W. Garrod, who was elected Professor of Poetry, and then he came under Dr Nichol Smith, for whom Verrier retains the utmost veneration, who not only taught him what to love in literature but also how to use books. His patience and scholarship instilled into Verrier's mind the beginnings of the true scientific spirit. In his third year Verrier won the Charles Oldham Scholarship, the highest University award for purely English studies, and in 1924 was placed in the First Class of the Final Honours School.

Verrier then turned to theology, for of course he was destined, as his father had been, for the Church. But he did not ignore his literary studies and won the Mathew Arnold Prize for an essay on 'The Poetry of Revolution', an interesting forecast of later events. He was invited by Professor Nichol-Smith to assist him in the preparation

of *The Oxford Book of Eighteenth Century Verse.* He also tried, though he was still too young for it, still almost an undergraduate, for an English Fellowship at Magdalen and nearly got it; he was in the first three and reached the stage of being invited to dinner to see if his table manners were good enough. He finally fell, as he has said, by a worthy hand, for the successful candidate was the now famous writer, C. S. Lewis. A much greater disappointment was the failure to win the Newdigate with a poem on Michaelangelo, over which Verrier took a great deal of pains. He was in the first five out of sixty, but the disappointment was severe.

However, Verrier went on and in due course obtained another 'First'. Then he won the Junior Denyer and Johnson Scholarship—one of the examiners said that his answer papers might have been printed and published in any learned journal as they stood. He was appointed Vice-Principal of Wycliffe Hall, a theological college in North Oxford, and also a Lecturer at Merton. He was also appointed Examining Chaplain, a very special honour, to the Bishop of Bradfield, the great manufacturing city in the midlands.

Mrs Elwin took a house in North Oxford and everything seemed happily settled.

During his days at Oxford, which were supremely happy, Verrier had spent far too much time on religious activities; he preached at the Martyrs Memorial, worked for the C. S. S. M., was President of all kinds of undergraduate religious societies. He was present at the very first meeting which Mr Frank Buchmann held in Oxford, and still recalls with satisfaction that he opposed it by every means in his power. 'I saw through the fellow from the very start', he will tell you with just a little smirk.[1]

Verrier has never been very good at games, but he played regularly for the College and captained its second hockey

[1] Buchmann also saw through Verrier. At one of these early meetings he pointed at Verrier and shouted, "You are opposed to this movement!" "Certainly", replied Verrier. "Then it means there's a secret sin in your life". "Certainly", said Verrier again, "and as far as you are concerned it will remain so."

eleven. In one disastrous season the team lost every match, and I wonder if that was where Verrier learnt to be such a good loser. He made many friends, and has kept all but the most orthodox. He never did much at the Union, but he was the life and soul of his College debating society, of which he was President for several terms, and won a reputation as a charming and witty speaker.

CHAPTER II

THE FIRST FIVE YEARS IN INDIA

'East and West are but alternate beats of the same heart'
—TAGORE.

IN the summer of 1927 Verrier, then twenty-five years old, had the world at his feet. Behind him was a brilliant career, before him golden opportunities of service and preferment. There were talks of a Fellowship in three different colleges. He was the youngest Examining Chaplain in the Church of England. There can be no doubt that if he had continued as he began, he would today have been a Prince of the Church, living in his Palace at Durham or Winchester, in dignity and honour. And now when I look at him, sitting at his desk, bare-foot, in patched and tattered clothes, perhaps struggling against the onset of malaria, I wonder if his sacrifice was worth while or whether, when he turned his back on Oxford, he did not make a terrible mistake.

Verrier himself has no such doubts. 'I have given nothing to India', he says, 'but India's gift to me has been immeasurable, above price.'

He himself once tried to explain why he left Oxford in September 1927 and came to India, and I will let him tell the story in his own words, as he wrote many years later. "Probably my Evangelical upbringing had a lot to do with it. From childhood the ideal not only of a life of sacrifice, but a life of adventure had been held up before me. My mother had been nearly eaten in a cannibal village. My father had been an explorer in the wilds of Africa. For years I had been made to study the great lesson that the chief prizes of life were not those of money, political success or marriage, but that the greatest joys were those of the mind and spirit.

"At that time, while I was savouring deliciously the chances of a life in this College or that or in this sphere of ecclesiastical preferment or that, there fell like a thunderbolt the advice of my tutor, F. W. Green, then a

Fellow of Merton and now a Canon of Norwich Cathedral. He said, ' If you stay in Oxford, there is nothing before you but spiritual death. You must get out and go to a slum parish where you will live among the poor.' This was perhaps the hardest thing that I ever heard in my life. For ten years I had regarded an Oxford Fellowship as the summit of ambition and every year I had come to value it more, for it included everything that I liked most in life —the best of company, the opportunities of scholarship, a good way of life, and the loveliest city in Europe to live in. Yet, I never doubted that Green's advice was good. I went to London and tried to find the parish that he advised.

" By some extraordinary chance I arrived at the Clergy House of St. Mary Magdalene, Munster Square, on the very day that the Vicar had died and naturally my reception was somewhat casual. I took the next train back to Oxford and began to look around for somewhere else to go.

" For the past two years my thought and sympathy had been powerfully directed towards India. In this there were a good many factors present. The first was that my family had a very long connexion with that country. All through my childhood I had been abused with Hindustani *galis* by the older members of my mother's family. My mother herself was born in India. India, you might say, was in my blood far more than Africa, where my father died.

" Now, it sounds very priggish and pompous to say this, but I was young then and I think it is quite true that I had in my mind an idea of reparation. I said to myself, ' All my family has made money out of India, they went there to get what they could; it is high time that somebody goes there to give instead of to get, to serve and suffer instead of to rule. I know this will sound distasteful to members of my family and also to some of my English friends. I can only say that the idea has been a powerful one in influencing me during the past twenty years.

" This thought was strongly reinforced by my friendship with that erratic, wayward, delightful genius Bernard Aluwihare, who was then an undergraduate at Jesus and has since been a Minister in the Government of Ceylon.

I have a dim memory of lecturing a fellow graduate at Merton at the time of the Amritsar Massacre and declaring that it was the only way to treat the natives and that anybody who had served in India would say the same. It was Bernard who first roused in my mind some sort of dissatisfaction with this conventional attitude and before I had left Oxford he had instilled into me not only a devotion to the non-violent idealism of Mahatma Gandhi and the internationalist culture of Tagore, but had filled me with a desire to see the wrongs of India righted.

"I shall not easily forget those days. They were days of torment, for here there was no struggle between the flesh and the spirit, between what was obviously wrong and what was obviously right; here was a struggle between the mind and the spirit. My mind anchored me to Oxford, my spirit told me to go and throw my life into an unknown sea which might easily turn out to be a morass.

"I had read that India was a poor country. I was tied to her by family bonds. I was greatly attracted by her culture, her religion, her art. I was filled with a desire to do something to make reparation for what my countrymen and my caste had done to her. The obvious thing was, therefore, to go to India.

"By a curious coincidence, two of my greatest friends at that time, Algy Robertson and Bernard Fielding-Clarke, had decided to go to India that very year as members of an experimental Anglican Community called the Christa Seva Sangh.

"The founder of this body was Father Jack Winslow. Winslow had been a missionary in Western India for many years, but after a time had decided to break away from conventional missionary activity in order to identify himself more closely with the poor and with Indian nationalism and culture. There was a great deal to Winslow. He had studied certain aspects of Indian mysticism and made them his own. I shall never forget a lecture which he gave in Oxford on Indian Yoga. He might have been a great Christian leader. He certainly was a remarkable Christian stimulant—but subsequent history proved that you cannot live on cocktails. Any way he captivated me and the

others with a vision of what might be done in India when Christianity became truly oriental in character.

"I took to this new idea with the utmost enthusiasm and even before I had left England I had made some study of Hindu philosophy and religion and had worked out various ways in which Christian architecture, art, philosophy, mysticism and worship could be approximated to the oriental model. Even today, when these things, I am afraid, are not so important to me as they once were, I believe that the suggestions I then made are valid.

"The Christa Seva Sangh then was founded to explore the possibilities of the reorientalisation of the Christian religion. This was no new thing, though it had become overlaid with the prevailing Westernization. Fr Stevens, the Jesuit, the first Englishman to come to India, wrote a version of the Bible in the form of a Purana. The Abbe Dubois lived and dressed in entirely Indian style and is said to have composed a Supplement to the Vedas proving the truth of Christian Doctrine. In more modern times, the well-known Bombay historian, Fr Heras, had worked at the Indianization of Church architecture. Yet these efforts were only spasmodic. Over the Christian Church, both Catholic and Protestant, there is today in India a veneer of Westernisation. To the devout Hindu, Christianity often means little more than beef and boots if it is Protestant, and beef and beer if it is Catholic. This has undoubtedly done much to alienate the ordinary Indian Christian from his fellow-countryman and make him seem a strange and alien figure in the Indian scene. The dependance of many Protestant Christians upon their missionaries has intensified the Westernizing process and has also resulted in the bulk of Indian Christians being separated politically from the national movement, though now there is a strong Congress element among them. More deeply, while the forms of Catholic worship are more acceptable to the Indian mind, both the architecture and ritual of the ordinary Protestant and Anglican Church in India is wholly alien to it. It is very hard for an Indian to feel that the ordinary Protestant Church is a place of worship at all. There are no images, there are no offerings of flowers, there are no lights. The stiff wooden

benches, the whirling electric fans, the bright daylight is altogether alien from the mystery and beauty of the Indian temple. Catholic thought with its mysticism is, of course, very akin to the Indian genius, but little has been done to try to express the Christian faith in terms which the Hindu is likely to understand and appreciate. The Christa Seva Sangh set out ambitiously enough to alter this. An Ashram was built in Poona. Unfortunately the founder of the Sangh failed to put his Ashram either on a river bank or on a hill, with the result that it was impossible to get very much of the right atmosphere. But pretty monastic buildings were erected, though these were marred by some abominable architecture on their outskirts. I myself was responsible for the building of a small chapel in the form of a Hindu temple with a Cross on the summit and this, I am glad to say, has now been adopted by the Brothers as their permanent place of worship. Altered and extended it is now very beautiful indeed. In the Ashram there lived a Society which aimed at combining Indian and European members in a common brotherhood."

In August 1928, Verrier fell dangerously ill with dysentery (the disease that later was to rob us of the heroic Ronald Freeman) and for a time his life was despaired of. Indeed he was given the Last Rites and warning cables were sent to his family in England. But he recovered and gradually recovered his health. He was sent for a year to England, a year which he spent for the most part at Oxford, working in the Bodleian Library and the Indian Institute.

He returned to India in the cold weather of 1929 and we gave him a great welcome. Almost at once Fr Winslow went on leave and appointed Verrier head of the C. S. S. Ashram, a great responsibility for so young a man.

But those were great days for Christa Seva Sangh. We were able to link ourselves with the Congress Movement; several of the brothers nearly landed themselves in jail. Verrier's own influence was directed towards inspiring the Indian Christian community to enter the struggle, to shaming by his example the Quisling Indians who were supporting the British and to informing people in Europe

and America about what was going on. One incident of those days may be described in his own words.

"At this time the Indian Press was excited by the appearance in India of a young Englishman who was chosen by Mahatma Gandhi to be the bearer of one of his famous letters to the Viceroy. Gandhi's emissary with his flaxen hair and khaki shorts breaking into the world of immaculately dressed A.D.C's excited public imagination almost as much as the idea of the half-naked Fakir striding up the steps of Viceregal Lodge to parley with the King's Representative on equal terms. He was Reginald Reynolds, who has since married Ethel Mannin the novelist, written a history of water-closets and become my very dear friend. At that time Reginald, like myself, suffered from the unpardonable crime of youth. Nothing he said could be correct; nothing he did could be proper, because he was young. How I would give everything in the world to be in a position to commit that crime again, and even to suffer once more those foolish criticisms !

"At that time I hardly knew who Reginald Reynolds was. But when he wrote to me asking for the hospitality of the Ashram for a few days on his way to England, I naturally sent him, as I sent everybody, a warm invitation to stay with us. He came and charmed us all by his simplicity and by his wit. He was very far from being a mere sentimental admirer of the Mahatma, or an unintelligent supporter of the Congress cause. He asked if he might give a lecture in the Ashram on the Mahatma's philosophy. On condition that his lecture was not of a political character, I agreed and Reginald gave an unusually fine address to a great crowd of people, in which he stressed those aspects of the Mahatma's teaching which make for international peace and national progress. There was not a word in the speech that could not have been delivered in any Cathedral in England.

"But this was too much for Government, and they at last got busy. I was expecting the police, which shows how little I knew about the Church of England. What I got, of course, was the Archdeacon. He wrote to me saying that Government was seriously upset at our entertaining a person like Reginald Reynolds, and asking for an explana-

tion of my conduct. I replied—as far as I remember—that Reginald was not a member of any illegal association. He was not a proclaimed offender. He was a respected member of the Society of Friends and I could see no reason why he was not a proper visitor in any religious institution whose doors were open to members of every political party, and welcomed alike the Imperialist and the Revolutionary. I ended up by saying how astonishing I found it that this question should be raised by a representative of the Church instead of by the police."

After this, however, Verrier was chased by the police and shadowed by Chaplains of the Establishment.

At the end of 1930 Verrier was invited by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel to visit Gujarat, and enquire how far the rules of the game were being observed by Congressmen and Government alike. In Gujarat at this time a No-Tax Campaign had been started on a very wide scale, and Government had taken strong measures to counter it, so strong indeed that in many places the whole population had migrated from their homes into the neighbouring Baroda State. Verrier visited over sixty villages in five Talukas—Anand, Nadiad, Borsad, Bardoli and Jalalpur. I joined him after the first part of the tour in Anand and Nadiad. Our party included an ex-Minister of the Bombay Government, an Indian scholar holding the doctor's degree of Marburg University, Mr J. C. Kumarappa and a number of people who had an intimate knowledge of the district. Our friend Mr Chimnalal Shah, who was then chiefly known as a research scholar into the origins of Jainism, joined us for a time and we were led by Mr Amritlal Thakkar himself.

This was the first time that Verrier had seen the National Movement in action in the villages, and it had a deep effect upon him. In one of his letters he wrote,

"In Gujarat, you see the very best of the National Movement. Many people nowadays deplore what they call 'the troubles' in India, and long for what they call 'peace'. But for centuries, 'peace' in India has meant stagnation. 'Peace' means caste-oppression; this new kind of war means caste-abolition. 'Peace' means drunkenness: 'war' means temperance. 'Peace' means the degradation of

women: 'war' has meant their emancipation. Gujarat till now has been a country of shopkeepers. It has been absorbed in business, in money-making. Today it has something to live for. It is stirred to the depths by the ideals of service and sacrifice.

"I went to the scene of Gandhiji's arrest. There is a tiny hut, made of bamboo and thatch, beside a lake. This was the Palace of the real ruler of India. The mind could not help turning in contrast to the magnificence of Viceregal Lodge at Delhi, built on the money of millions who hardly get enough to eat."

Verrier wrote a report entitled *In the Deserted Villages of Gujarat*: it was printed in *The Bombay Chronicle* and later as an illustrated pamphlet. From this pamphlet, which probably few of my readers have seen, I epitomize some of Verrier's impressions.

There was a great deal of illegal attachment and confiscation. On the tour in Borsad, Verrier wrote, "It is not too much to say that a reign of terror holds sway over these quiet villages and fields. We saw old men scarcely able to walk who had been belaboured by the police: again and again we stood by the charred ruins of what once had been happy prosperous homes; we heard many stories of the confiscation of essential implements outside the provisions of the Land Revenue Code; we passed through village after village, silent and deserted through fear of the police *zulam;* we interviewed newly-appointed Mukhis (village headmen) of rascally antecedents who did not know their job; and we heard much evidence of a 'Divide and Rule' policy that was setting one community against another."

"In Borsad Taluka there was a widespread outbreak of fires in the houses of people who had not paid their revenue, and little attempt was made by the authorities to discover the culprits. Indeed, in some places the villagers were actually prevented from putting out the fires."

"One of the most remarkable incidents of this campaign was what is known as the Hijrat or migration out of British India of whole villages as a result of police raids with lathi charges and indiscriminate beatings on the people."

"Borsad Taluka intermingles at every point with the

Baroda State. In 1818 after the conquest of the Peshwas, the British and Gaekwad officials accomplished a *phulgunthani* division of the territory; like the petals of torn flowers, the different sections overlap. The district, therefore, is peculiarly favourable for a migration. We visited a great number of deserted villages. At Sejpur, I looked across the fields of green tobacco plants, at the white walls and red-brown roofs, framed in sheltering trees, of the fine houses of the Patidars with their carved pillars and doors, and quaint interesting mural paintings. From these beautiful houses the villagers had gone out to brave wind and weather in little huts. I asked again and again about the hardships in these places, but was invariably met with the reply that in the country's cause, such hardships were of small account. The spirit of the migrants is epitomized in a text I saw hanging in one of the tents :—

" A coward has no home in Gujarat ".

' The camps are clean and well-ordered. They are like the headquarters of an army on the march. But you could feel the atmosphere of strain. At any moment houses in the deserted villages may be burnt, crops or land irretrievably lost, or there may be a raid at night by the police.'

Of these camps, Verrier wrote also in *The Dawn of Indian Freedom*,

" I have stayed in some of the ' War Camps ' of Gujarat: I could not help comparing them with the camps described in *All Quiet on the Western Front*. On the one side, frantic hysteria, nerves stretched to the breaking-point: on the other, calm and lofty equipoise. There was drunken valour: here valorous temperance. There was foul language and sordid ideas: here was the very spirit of religion. In Europe, men were being degraded to the level of beasts: in India they were being raised to the highest levels of which humanity is capable."

And again, reverting to his Report, I quote, " Truly, whatever one thinks of the cause for which these peasants are fighting, their spirit is wonderful, I was totally unable to get a grumble out of them. They are men inspired, not only by the saintly character of Mahatma Gandhi, but also by the splendid, virile, heroic and cheery figure of Sardar

Vallabhbhai Patel. They have the real spirit of Ahimsa. I listened to a speech on Love by an ex-Deputy Collector who had, after twenty-six years of loyal service, resigned his post as a protest against the police atrocities, thereby forfeiting his pension. I heard an old man in one of the camps declare: 'In ancient days, our *Bhaktas* had Faith in God, and saw Him face to face. We must have a faith like theirs. For everything depends on God.'"

Verrier was deeply stirred by what he saw of the treatment of individuals. "There can be no doubt that Government has used very severe measures indeed in dealing with the campaigners. We saw many villagers, including women, who had been beaten violently. I remember vividly the account given us by two widows whose house was invaded by the police. They were dragged outside and beaten, and when they complained to the Sub-Inspector, he replied with callous brutality, 'Go and tell your husbands. If you want Swaraj, you should put on bangles'. Widows in India, of course, do not wear bangles.

"Often, as I looked in the gentle, patient faces of the old men who were beaten and insulted, I seem to see the thorn-crowned face of Jesus suffering in all the sorrows of his children, but as I talked with these two women, so infinitely pathetic in the garments of their widowhood, defenceless and unprotected, I thought I could see in them my own mother, and I wondered what I should feel if my quiet Oxford home was broken open, and my mother and sister assaulted and insulted by the police."

Nothing moved Verrier more than the arrest of Mr Ramdas Gandhi, which he witnessed.

"On our arrival at Navsari, we were met by Mr Ramdas Gandhi and while I was talking to him, in the very middle of a sentence, he was arrested. He went to the jail with the cheer and bearing of a prince. The next I saw of him was in the Jalalpur lock-up. There, in a dark hole, unlighted, unfurnished, he was sitting behind bars peering out into the welcome light. That even criminals, let alone men of culture and education, could be treated worse than animals in a zoo, would be a disgrace even to an uncivilised Government."

After describing other instances of assault, Verrier exclaims,

"I would ask any Englishman who reads these pages to try and imagine what he would feel if this tale of beating and insult had come from the villages in the Cotswolds or the English Lakes. Surely humanity is one; and we should feel the sufferings even of an unknown Indian peasant as if he were our own brother."

Verrier's aim was not, as was so often said, to blackguard his own countrymen; he simply wanted then, as he wants today, a square deal for the underdog. He was still a Christian priest, remember, and his final appeal was to the "Christian" Government,

"But surely it is possible to meet even such an emergency as this by methods which are true to the principles of Law and Justice, Righteousness and Humanity, and not by those which betray them.

"I would urge on all my fellow-Christians who read these pages, not least on any English Government servants, if they have the good fortune to meet their eye, that the principles of Christ apply equally to public and private life, that what is wrong for an individual is wrong also for the State, that if it is sinful for a private citizen to be brutal, callous, or unfair, it is also sinful for an official to be these things. If the higher officials of Gujarat would take a fearless stand against all that is morally questionable in the Government campaign against the Satyagrahis, if they would insist on the minor officials and the police behaving in a human and decent manner, if they would put all they know of the principles of Christ into the conduct of public affairs in Gujarat, then whatever the issue of the present struggle may be, they will have preserved intact the authority of Law, the sanctity of Justice and left behind no heritage of bitter memories."

Verrier's first visit to the Sabarmati Ashram was in January 1928, and he has written of that visit:

"I am not ashamed to admit that the vision of India, which I got at Sabarmati, revolutionized my whole outlook. At that time the Gandhi Movement had reached a pitch of sincerity and devotion that has rarely been equalled in the political upheavals of the world. The Sabarmati Ashram

itself, standing on the tall banks of the river, was the home of some hundreds of people marked by that quiet and disciplined devotion to hard work and to the poor, that is characteristic of the best type of Congressmen. Among them Mahatma Gandhi walked in almost unearthly dignity and beauty. It may seem strange to the European who knows the Mahatma chiefly by his caricatures. But the first thing that struck me about him was just his beauty, the spiritual power within him so transformed his body, and the love and kindliness of his nature was evident."

After that there were many visits: sometimes the place was full, sometimes it was stripped of the members who were in jail. I had gone to England for training and he was alone.

On one visit, Verrier was fortunate enough to be present at the official birth of the word 'Harijan' in 1931, and has described the incident in one of his letters.

'One of the Ahmedabad mill-owners, a Brahmin, has a fine family temple, and Gandhiji persuaded him to throw it open to the untouchables. So one evening there was a great function: everyone who mattered in Ahmedabad was there; and Bapu [1] came to perform the opening ceremony by introducing a whole crowd of "untouchable" children into the Temple. The Brahmin priests of the temple, not daring to protest, yet utterly bewildered, sat silently watching the first 'pollution' of their sacred house. Bapu made a beautiful speech in which he said that the work which he really had at heart was not political work into which he had been driven by force of circumstances, but work for the liberation of the poor. He gave the "untouchables" a new name. They are "Harijan", people of God, he said, and it is we who are the people of the evil one for keeping them in subjection.

'I had intended', Verrier's record continues, 'extending my tour from Sabarmati into a return visit to Bardoli and Vedchhi; but Bapu peremptorily forbade this. Your health will not stand it, he said, you must either stay here or return at once to Poona. So I decided to join his party which was leaving after a day or two for Bombay. This

[1] The familiar name, meaning "Father", which is generally used for Mahatma Gandhi by his followers.

train journey was another most interesting experience. Three small third-class carriages were reserved on the night-train for Bombay. I arrived first on the platform: then Mirabehn turned up with a sick boy and a sick woman whom Bapu was taking for treatment to Bombay. Then Pyarelal arrived with a bus-load of luggage, piles and piles of it, boxes of files, rolls of bedding and baskets of food, spinning-wheels, water pots,—it was all cascaded into the tiny carriage. Finally at the last moment, Bapu and Mrs Gandhi with Jamnalal Bajaj, and the Secretaries arrived. No one knew that Bapu was going, so there was no demonstration, though about a hundred people gathered round the carriage. There was no shouting as the train left the station. Directly we were on the move, Bapu got up and told us that his day of silence had begun and would continue till the following evening. Mirabehn had just made his bed, and he went straight to it. Within five minutes he was fast asleep. The rest of us tossed about on the hard narrow seats till midnight. At every station someone had to get up and guard the windows to prevent people waking Bapu up. Old women want to touch his head; others want to give him presents, or they thrust lanterns into the carriage and just look at him. But it was a beautiful thing to see the utterly peaceful childlike sleep of the Mahatma, undisturbed by the jolting train, or by the memory of the endless files that were piled up around him. At four we all got up for prayers, and in the darkness as the train rushed onward, the familiar songs were sung, and the verses from the *Bhagavad Gita* about control of mind and body, and the peace that comes from this, were recited.

'I stayed a few days in Bombay. On the last morning about six-thirty as I was preparing to catch the eight o'clock train to Poona, a phone message came to say that I was to go round to Laburnam Road at once to see the Mahatma. This sounded very important, so I went round immediately and went upstairs. It was the day of the critically important All-India Congress Committee meetings. Bapu was sitting in a tiny room talking to some man who was involved in trouble with the police. He had an air of repose and calm such as you or I might possibly obtain on a good holiday. I waited a little, and then he said that he had sent for me

because he knew I was in perplexity about my future, and he had thought that he might perhaps be of use to me. It was just then that I was thinking so hard about my relations with C.S.S. Mirabehn had told him something. He had it all in his mind—and on such a day. I was astonished, and deeply moved. Then for twenty minutes he talked to me about the whole business with the most perfect tact and understanding, giving several examples from his own career. He told me of his own relations with the Servants of India Society, and why he did not join them. He said, " If you are doubtful of your position in a Society, tell them the worst about yourself. Even exaggerate the difficulties. Then if they will swallow that, you will be all right." " It is normally a good rule not to go till you are turned out." ' But you musn't have a constant burden on your mind, the thought that you are embarrasing your Society. Even if the thought is imaginary, it is very real in its effects. If I imagine a ghost in my room—even if there is not a ghost in the whole world—I will be unable to sleep. And this ghost you must lay. Smite it, kill it—no room for Ahimsa here." Finally he urged me to go to Almora in the Himalayas, and recover my health fully, at his own expense.

Verrier's experience during these months were decisive for his whole life. He came to the conclusion that he must leave the Christa Seva Sangh and go to live in some very poor village where he would be in closest contact with the people. ' At that time ', he says, ' I thought of going to the untouchables, and to Gujarat. But Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel persuaded me against this. " The untouchables ", he said, " are not your problem. They are the sin of the Hindus, and it is the Hindus who must make reparation to them ". He also pointed out that Gujarat was already full of social workers and missionaries, and I would find it very difficult to establish myself in a clear field. One day as I was driving through the streets of Ahmedabad with Sardar Vallabhbhai and Seth Jamnalal Bajaj, I heard for the first time in my life—from the lips of Jamnalalji—the magic word " Gond ". " Why don't you come to the Central Provinces " said Jamnalalji, " and do something for a tribe which is almost entirely neglected both by national workers and by missionaries? " '

At that time Verrier did not even know that there were aboriginals in India. He had never read a word of technical anthropology. He was entirely ignorant of the whole problem. But he liked what Jamnalalji had to tell him about the Gonds, and decided to visit the Central Provinces before the end of the year.

In the meantime Verrier had written to me in England, telling me of his plans and asking me if I would join him. We were still, it must be remembered, thinking of ourselves as Churchmen, and I still hoped to be ordained. To join Verrier at that moment meant cutting short my training in England. Our idea was that we would live together in a small Ashram in a Gond village. We would identify ourselves with the positive and non-political aspects of the National Movement. We would continue to be members of the Church, and we would draw up a Rule of Franciscan living which we would observe. We would not, however, do any missionary work or preaching, and we would not aim at any kind of conversion. Our Ashram would be open to people of any faith or of none.

Such a plan would not be possible in England, for I do not think any Bishop there would be able to accept it. But it seemed to Verrier that in India there was no reason whatever why groups of national-minded Christians should not associate themselves with members of other faiths in the most intimate manner for the service of the poor without in any way losing the distinctiveness of their own religion.

After long discussions, and much good advice from the Mahatma himself, I finally sent Verrier a cable saying that I would join him at the end of the year, and this brought his plans within the realm of practical politics, and he resigned from Christa Seva Sangh.

This was a tremendous plunge in the dark. We had no idea of the country into which we would go. We would be working in a new language area, and I was then ignorant of Hindi. We had practically no money and were not at all sure how we were to get any. For our immediate needs Jamnalalji was ready to provide, and we can never forget how he helped us through those dark and difficult days.

Verrier stayed in Poona till the end of October 1931, and then set out on his wanderings. He went first to stay at the Satyagraha Ashram at Wardha, Gandhiji's favourite Ashram where he used to go whenever he wanted rest and retreat, and where later he was able to establish his headquarters. The Wardha Ashram was on lines similar to Sabarmati, but smaller, more homely, less rigorist in its discipline. 'If Sabarmati reminds you of a Jesuit seminary', Verrier writes, 'Wardha makes you think of a primitive Franciscan settlement. Its Acharya, Vinoba Bhave, was a very exact imitator of one side of the Mahatma's character, a recluse, a philosopher, almost indifferent to this contemporary world. The members of the Ashram devoted themselves to social service, and had a fully organised scheme of village uplift. They did not formally take part in politics as such: their concern was the creation of national love-force through selfless service'.

'But, of course, the real power behind the Wardha Ashram was the illuminated merchant Jamnalal Bajaj. Jamnalalji was a man of great property; a merchant prince who ten years ago left his palatial home for a small overcrowded bungalow, where he lived a life of great simplicity. He still owned a good deal of property, but he regarded himself as a trustee, and the whole of his fortune was at the public service. He was a typical product of the Indian National Movement: he had given his life to the winning of freedom through national reconstruction. Long ago he threw open the doors of his family temple to the "untouchables". He was a leader of the Khadi movement which brought prosperity to the homes of the very poor. While I was with him, we went to open a number of wells to the "untouchables" and that month about eighty wells, and a number of temples, were freed from the burden of caste restrictions. I was with him for his forty-second birthday. He told me how his previous birthday had been spent in jail, and how he had prayed that God would enable him during the following year to do something for the untouchables, and that he would give him a real friend from among his "enemies" (the English). "And so God has sent you to me," he said.'

On Jamnalalji's advice Verrier went up to Betul, a charm-

ing country town on the Satpura plateau, to see whether he could find a suitable place for our headquarters in that area. He had an introduction to a leading merchant and landlord, Seth Dipchand Gothi. He received Verrier with great kindness and affection, entertained him royally in the bosom of his family, and took him about the country-side to see as many places as possible. Although a man of considerable wealth, he had no motor car. 'If I get one, it will always be commandeered by officials, and I should feel so annoyed that I prefer to go on foot'. So they went down by train to the Tapti river, and tramped on foot through the jungle, visiting a number of Gond villages. Afterwards they made a long journey by bullock cart in the Korku country. Verrier liked Betul very much and was fascinated by the Gonds and Korkus, even though he had a foretaste of what village life would mean, in the way he was pursued by the police wherever he went. At that time Verrier used to wear a dhoti tied Madrasi fashion and a long shirt which hung down outside. Both, of course, were of khadi. For a few days he even put on a Gandhi cap. But this gave him so criminal an appearance in the eyes even of his dearest friends that he abandoned it. It was not wonderful, therefore, that an Englishman so unorthodoxly dressed should have attracted the notice of the police, especially as Betul had been the scene of some violent struggles between Government and the aboriginals.

From Betul Verrier went to Chhindwara, where he was fortunate to have a car put at his disposal, and he was taken up to the beautiful village of Tamia on the Pachmari Road. Unfortunately he was not the first person to think Tamia a suitable place to live in. There were missionaries in the neighbourhood, a Government dispensary and even a dak bungalow. Beautiful as it was, therefore, we had to abandon the idea of settling in Chhindwara.

When Verrier got back to Wardha he found myself at a loose end, for it was not possible for him to go and settle in a village until I returned, even if we could have got land and made arrangements in time. I was not due back from England until Christmas. Verrier went, therefore, to stay with his friend, Acharya Kripalani, at Meerut. The follow-

ing account, from one of Verrier's letters, will be of interest:

'I had first met Kripalani at Bardoli and had been fascinated by him then. He is a man of fantastic humour, the widest culture, and great powers of sacrifice. Until 1920, he never missed his holiday in the Himalayas: he loves the mountains with his whole heart. But for ten years, he has spent his summer in the plains serving the poor. He had money, position, prospects. They all went. He became Principal of the National University at Ahmedabad. He had an Ashram for students at Benares, where they lived on eight rupees a month. Later he started the Gandhi Ashram at Meerut, and built up out of nothing the finest Khadi production centre in the country. He is artist, philosopher, poet, turned spinner—I love him. His Ashram at Meerut has a romantic story behind it, for Kripalani and his little band of disciples with a capital of Rs. 45 has built it up into an organization which now handles Rs. 60,000 every month, and is the headquarters of all the Khadi work in the United Provinces. Its speciality is the production of fine printed cloth. It has a research department both for designs and dyes, and many of its members are graduates who have left their colleges to devote themselves to work for the poor. Fifteen annas in every rupee that is spent on Khadi goes directly to the villager, and the organizers of the movement live on a mere pittance. In the Meerut Ashram, the maximum allowance for married people is Rs. 50 a month, and the Acharya himself takes only Rs. 20. Food costs Rs. 7 a month. The workers live in little mud houses that cost Rs. 30-50 to build. The Ashram "Rule" is very flexible. There are morning and evening prayers, but these are not compulsory. The members may not take part in politics, or make speeches. They scarcely ever go to the city to meet their friends. Their consecration is the fruit of the unending challenge of their work.'

After a few days in Meerut studying the Khadi industry there, Verrier went with Kripalani on a tour to the United Provinces. They visited all the bigger places and many of the smaller and more interesting ones—Muttra, Brindaban, Hardwar, Hrishikesh, Ayodhya. Although they travelled generally in great discomfort (third class), it was a

wonderful tour and everywhere they went they were most hospitably received. Unfortunately for him, Verrier had to give a lecture at every place, a thing which he has always disliked doing. However, he composed a standard speech which he made almost word for word on every occasion, yet Kripalani, who heard it every time, said that he never once was bored by it. He was chiefly concerned on this tour, as was Kripalani himself, in promoting the cause of Khadi. He used to give a number of reasons why people should wear Khadi—because it was the symbol of freedom, because it equalized people by dressing rich and poor alike in the same cloth, because it put money in the hands of poor people instead of the capitalists and because it was a constant reminder of the philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi. He then would give a brief outline of that philosophy, stressing particularly the note of universal love, non-violence and the new peaceful method of political agitation which the Mahatma had introduced.

During his tour in the United Provinces, Verrier came for the first time into real contact with Indian poverty, for the villages of the C. P. and the U. P. are much poorer than those of Gujarat or Maharashtra. As Kripalani said to him, ' People with any imagination ought not to visit these villages. It is almost more than I can bear.' He was right. Verrier wrote, ' it is utterly heart-breaking to see these wretched tumble-down villages, with their pools of filth, their cheerlessness, the thin scarcely-clad bodies of their inhabitants, with hunger and despair in their lustreless eyes. Near Meerut, a villager was crippled in an accident. All day he had to lie on his rough bed. No one could be spared to nurse him. As the time for paying the rent drew near, the family began to wonder how he was to be fed. They carried him tenderly to the doctor. I saw the poor man with his body covered with ghastly bed-sores. And his friends who loved him said to the doctor, " We cannot feed him. There is no one to care for him. Can you give him something to take him to another world? " '

The tour was surprisingly uneventful. But they were investigated by the police on various occasions, and once, in Cawnpore, an order was passed forbidding them to hold any public meeting.

Their last visit on the way down to Bombay to meet the Mahatma on his return from the Round Table Conference —I too was travelling with him—was at Jubbulpore. Here Verrier gave precisely the same lecture which he had delivered in every large town in the United Provinces, urging the people to remain non-violent, to love their enemies and while fighting bravely for freedom to keep the spirit of peace in their hearts. The local C. I. D. whose reporter was not apparently very familiar with the English language sent in a report that Verrier had advocated violent revolution, and had praised the terrorist Bhagat Singh who had been executed previously. Verrier had made some reference to the *Bhagavad Gita*, and no doubt the reporter (probably a Mussalman) had confused the two words.

'What followed' wrote Verrier, 'is typical of what is continually happening all over India. The reporter went up to the Commissioner, Mr Irwin. He, a devout Roman Catholic, was already prejudiced against me on account of what he regarded as my spurious title of "Father". On reading the report of the C. I. D., he at once applied for my transportation from India. I was never asked whether I had in fact said any of the things ascribed to me. No proper enquiry was made, nor did I then or at any other time have any chance of defending myself, or giving an explanation. Indeed I only came to know of what had happened when the Bishop of Nagpur accused me of having advocated violence and terrorism in my speech at Jubbulpore. The Bishop also never gave me any chance of explanation, but simply told me that the Commissioner had applied for my deportation, and that in view of what I said he could not blame him. Here again a blind reliance on the report of a practically illiterate member of the C. I. D., swayed the representatives of both Government and Church, and caused me years of trouble and annoyance, and a very great hampering of the work I desired to do. The reader will understand that if such things are possible in the case of an Englishman, who was fairly well known and was fortunate in many friends, what cannot be done to friendless and ordinary Indian students and others who are so frequently victimized on the mere reports of police spies.'

From Jubbulpore Kripalani and Verrier travelled down

to Bombay. For Kripalani, of course, the great event was the arrival of Mahatma Gandhi. Verrier has confessed that for him my return to India seemed even more important. He managed to get a special pass to go on board the boat. It was a very impressive sight that morning, for the whole of the great city seemed to have turned out to welcome the Mahatma, and the immediate approaches to the docks were lined with saffron-robed Desh Sevikas. I found Verrier looking very well but he contented himself with greeting me and his old friend Bernard Aluwihare; for he has never felt it was proper for people of no importance in the political world, just because they are Europeans, to push themselves forward into the presence of Gandhiji. However, we were invited to go to the Mahatma's house where we shared a room with the Privats, the delightful Swiss couple who had travelled to India with our party.

The following day Verrier and I went up to Matheran in order to make our plans for the future in some degree of quiet. But after only three days a telegram arrived from Mahadeo Desai asking us to come to Bombay at once. We left in less than ten minutes, got a couple of horses, and rode down the hill to a station from which we could get a quick train to Bombay.

I will let Verrier now take up the story, in the words of a letter which he circulated to his European friends.

"We found the utmost excitement prevailing in the city: the Viceroy had finally rejected the Mahatma's offer of peace: and despite the intervention of the Liberals and Mill-owners, the arrest of Congress leaders was expected at any moment. But when we reached Mani Bhuvan and climbed to the roof, we found a great serenity in astonishing contrast to the crowds and turmoil outside. The roof is a charming place. Low tents have been erected, and there are palms and plants: at least 300 people can gather there. It is cool and you can see the stars. Bapu was sitting at the wheel, quietly spinning. He had already begun his weekly silence. I carried on a one-sided conversation with him, and he wrote down his questions and replies. Shamrao thanked him for his kindness to him on the voyage. Then Shamrao and I retired with Bernard Aluwi-

hare to the smaller tent and Bapu lay down about three yards from us, while some thirty others—all women—lay on the roof under the canvas shelter. Mrs Gandhi and Mirabehn gave us a delicious supper of dates, nuts and fruit. But I could not sleep. I felt I had to keep vigil, and for hours I was under those splendid stars that rose, tier upon tier above me, while beside me Bapu slept like a child committed to his Father's hands. I thought of Christ going up to Jerusalem, his eyes filled with determination and courage; and I seemed to see the Spirit of Christ travelling the centuries like a bright sword turned against all wrong and injustice. Among these sleeping friends so dear to us, brave, pure-hearted, sincere, the spirit of Love was so manifest, and so unconquerable.

"At last I went and lay down between Shamrao and Bernard on our hastily improvised bed, and fell into a heavy sleep. It seemed as if I had slept all my life when suddenly like the coming of a dream there was a stir and a whisper. 'The police have come'. We started up and I saw what I will never forget—a fully uniformed Commissioner of Police at the foot of Bapu's bed, and Bapu just waking, a little bewildered, looking so old, fragile and pathetic. 'Mr Gandhi, it is my duty to arrest you.' A beautiful smile of welcome broke out on Bapu's face. He made signs to show that he was keeping silence. The Commissioner smiled and with great courtesy said, 'I should like you to be ready in half an hour's time.' It was five minutes past three. Bapu looked at his watch and the Commissioner said, 'Ah, the famous watch!' And they both laughed heartily. Bapu took a pencil and wrote, 'I will be ready to come with you in half an hour.' The Commissioner laid his hand on Bapu's shoulder with a gesture so full of affection that I thought it was an embrace, until I realized that it was the formal token of arrest. Bapu then cleaned his teeth and retired for a moment. The door was guarded, but all of us who were on the roof sat round in a circle. I looked out onto the road where some had been keeping all-night vigil and where a little crowd, very quiet and orderly, had collected, but there were no special police precautions. Bapu then sat in the midst of us for the prayers and we sang together the Song of the true Vaish-

nava. Then Bapu took pencil and paper and wrote a few messages, some last instructions to his followers and a letter to Sardar Vallabhbhai, which was as follows: 'Infinite is God's mercy'. (These were the first words to be written after his arrest). 'Please tell the people never to swerve from truth and non-violence. Never to flinch, but to give their lives and all to win swaraj.'" He then wrote a short note and gave it to me:

"My dear Elwyn,

I am so glad you have come. I would like you yourself to tell your countrymen that I love them even as I love my own countrymen. I have never done anything towards them in hatred or malice and God willing I shall never do anything in that manner in future. I am acting no differently towards them now from what I have done under similar circumstances towards my own kith and kin.

with love

yours

M. K. Gandhi"

"Then Bapu stood up to take farewell. It was a strange sight. The police at the door, Mirabehn and Devadas bustling to and fro with the baggage which was already packed, Bapu surrounded by his friends, many of them in tears. Mrs Gandhi with tears running down her cheeks said, 'Can't you take me with you?' Everyone in turn touched his feet, and when I said goodbye he pulled my ear with a beautiful smile and gave me quite a good slap on the side of my face. He was full of joy and laughter. Then, followed by the whole company, he went downstairs. But Shamrao and I watched from the roof. The tiny figure got into the car and the crowd surged round it. It was a wonderful tribute to India's non-violence that only a few policemen could stand in the midst of the crowd without fear of danger. Just at that moment a message came to say that Sardar Vallabhbhai, the Congress President, was also arrested. And then the crowd scattered as the car bearing the very soul of India drove away through the dark and deserted streets."

my dear Olwyn

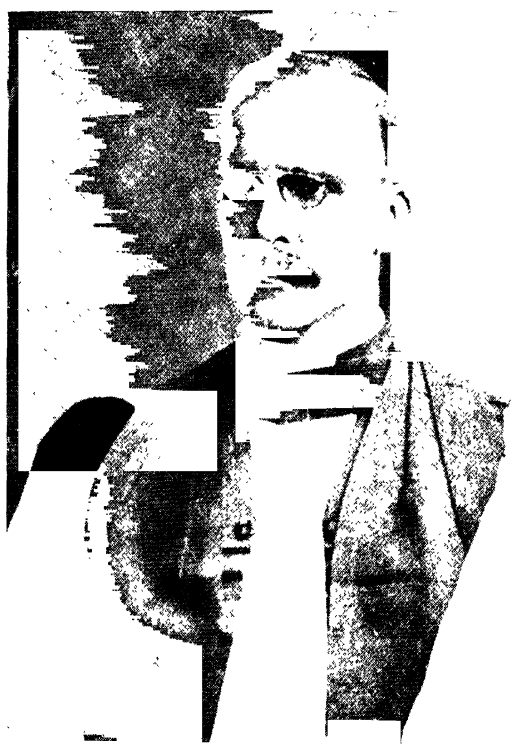
I am so glad you have come. I would like you myself to tell your countrymen that I love them even as I love my own countrymen. I have never done anything towards them in hatred or malice and God willing I shall never do anything in that manner in future. I am acting no differently towards them now from what I have done under similar circumstances towards my own kith and kin.

with love

yours

M K Gandhi

VERRIER ELWIN'S MOTHER



THE RIGHT REVEREND
E. H ELWIN, D.D

VERRIER AT THE AGE OF FOUR

AT SCHOOL IN 1919

AS A CLERGYMAN AT OXFORD IN 1926

Among the Mahatma's final instructions was a brief note suggesting that Verrier should go up to Peshawar.

At that time practically nothing was known in India of what was happening in the North-West Frontier Province. No journalists had been admitted, and the Congress High Command had received no reports except that Government was taking very severe measures to deal with Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan and his Red Shirts. The disorganization into which the arrest of the leaders had thrown the Congress may be seen from the fact that Verrier and I had to go to the Frontier without any introductions. We were simply told to go straight there and find out what we could.

We went first to Delhi where we stayed in a big house in the city, while the local people got us tickets for Peshawar, a thing which it was not very easy to do. We travelled inter-class, which I thought would be bound to attract attention, but which, as it turned out, was the reason why we were able to get through the very strict police cordon that was drawn round the province. When the Frontier Government got information that Verrier was on the way, they seem to have expected him to be travelling first-class; and I believe that a perfectly innocent English business-man was held by the police in mistake, to his great indignation. Verrier wore an English suit belonging to Bernard Aluwihare which was far too small for him, but made him look respectable. It was an exciting journey. On the Lahore platform we were met by Miss Korshed Nowrojee who gave us a little more information about what we were to expect. 'I will never forget,' Verrier says, 'the feeling of desolation when we arrived on the platform at Peshawar. We had no idea where to go. We had no idea where to begin. We had, however, the name of a Mohammedan merchant in the city and we drove to his house only to be kept waiting for an hour, while he deliberated whether or not it was safe to see us.'

I wrote at the time an account of the trip, and it formed part of one of our English letters. Verrier's report was proscribed and all copies seized, but it was reprinted in London, and Verrier may well claim the credit for being the first to make the name of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan and his Red Shirts widely known in Europe and America.

Our trip to Peshawar was one of the most thrilling adventures in my life. I never thought I would ever be able to see the City of Mystery, and the famous Khyber Pass—least of all under such conditions. We had heard the most alarming reports, and we went expecting to be either arrested or shot down at any moment. We got out at the City Station, and drove to the house of a merchant whose name had been given to us. The tangawalla was very excited when he saw the "sahib" going to the city with all his kit. Peshawar, I think, is the dirtiest city in the world, but also the most romantic, with its bazaars, its splendid fruit shops, and carpets and old coins and jewellry, its streets thronged with swaggering Pathans and wild-looking Afridis from across the border. Imagine our arriving there without knowing a soul! We were led into a pitch-dark passage at the end of a little lane, and stumbled upstairs to the office of our merchant. This was dirty also, a dark little room, with a typewriter on a table, a few files, and one or two chairs. The merchant was dressed very smartly and looked quite brave. We thought we should get a lot of help from him. But as soon as he read our letter of introduction (from Devadas Gandhi, the son of the Mahatma, who had visited the Province) he trembled all over his body. "The man you want is very old and blind, and is unable to see anyone," he said. However, we did not give up hope, but sat there talking to him. Verrier is very good at getting out information, and we were able to learn a good deal of the situation even from this panic-stricken friend of ours, who was in himself a vivid illustration of the Reign of Terror on the Frontier. He thought that I looked suspicious in my Maharashtran clothes, and lent me some of his—baggy Pathan trousers and Russian shoes. After about an hour, the merchant whom his brother had described as old and blind came in. He was about 35 and was perfect in feature. He helped us a good deal, though very cautious that no official should discover that he had had anything to do with us. Our first plan was to stay with him as if we were merchants come to deal with his firm, but we soon found that this would not do, since no Englishmen ever stayed in an Indian home in the City. So we drove off, through several police guards, to the

biggest hotel in the Cantonment where many rich Englishmen and officers were living. The first night we had to take our dinner in our room as Verrier had no evening clothes. The next morning we took our lunch in the big room where most of these English people were present. I don't think I love any people more than the English. The best year of my life has been in England, and I am always perfectly at ease in English homes. But when we entered this room I felt a most awful sensation—I felt I was among the enemies of my people who were despising my presence there. It was an unpleasant sensation, and even poor Verrier did not seem at rest. To avoid suspicion he had to smoke and talk and make a general show of being one of "them". This was not deceit: it was only commonsense: if he had acted differently he would have been arrested at once. Most of the Congress people and Red Shirts came to meet us at night to avoid the police. We had to move from this big hotel to the Dak Bungalow as it was terribly expensive. There was only one room with a bed empty: in the other bed there was an English engineer. I had no place to live and had to sleep on the verandah. It was terribly cold, with the wind blowing straight from the snow mountains. I could hardly sleep, but it would have roused suspicion if I had been too familiar with Verrier. Englishmen and Indians are not familiar on the Frontier. I had to appear as his "clerk", and when we drove in a car or tanga I sat in front with the driver and he occupied the back seat. It was very funny that when we got our bill there was an item, "Food for the sahib" and then "Food for the fellow". The engineer at the bungalow was a typical Englishman in India, quite pleasant, but without any idea of what was going on in the city except that some ignorant Indians were causing trouble. "If there's any disturbance, the aeroplanes will just drop some bombs and that will teach them." He told us we would not be allowed into the city, and advised Verrier to carry a pistol. Verrier had to sit silent while he laid down the law about Indian politics. In short, he lived in the last century at the time of the Indian Mutiny.

After finishing our enquiries in Peshawar City, we went out into the villages. Everyone told us this would be

impossible, and we did find it difficult to get a car. But with the help of friends and much spending of money, we managed it. Every village road was guarded by troops with fixed bayonets, but partly through the driver taking us by out-of-the-way routes and partly through Verrier looking as if he were a big official, we got through. In fact, usually the police saluted us, and the military guards presented arms. We had a very interesting tour through the villages in Peshawar District, and took tea in a village that was raided the following night. The next day, we drove over to Kohat through tribal country. It was a wonderful drive, over wild and rugged tracts, where every house was a fort and every man carried a gun. When I look back to that time I still wonder how we ever got entrance to the tribal country. Europeans were not allowed to go there: it was too dangerous. We simply bluffed our way through. At every short interval you have police stations. At one place, we were stopped and the police came and asked Verrier if he had a pistol. When he said, " No ", they were astonished, and did not know what to do. But he calmly lit a cigarette and they let us through.

Kohat is a little fortress in the midst of the hills. It was here that many Red Shirts were killed by the military in December last. Verrier did what we supposed any Englishman would do: he drove straight to the Dak Bungalow and ordered a good lunch. I and a friend who came with us went into the city to collect information. My friend took me to many Red Shirt people, but I could hardly get a word out of them. As soon as they heard why I was there, they would say, " I was ill on that day, and saw nothing ", or " I know nothing about it." I was really annoyed at this timidity. One of the Congress workers was so frightened that he kept looking here and there in case there was any C. I. D. man about. I spoke to him severely. I told him that we had come 1,700 miles at the risk of our lives to discover what was happening and to send them relief, and that he was a coward to tell us nothing. At last after great hesitation he took us to his room, and there I wrote down all that he had seen or heard. I am not exaggerating—most of the time he was breathing hard.

Our most exciting visit was on our last day, up the

Khyber Pass. You all know that before the English came, our only fear of invasion was through the Pass. The Aryans came by this route, and from here the Mohammedan invaders descended upon our plains. Most of the Pass is occupied by the Afridis, who are extremely friendly to the Indians, but less so to the British who try to keep them under control. It is a barren, awe-inspiring country, great stretches of rocky desolation. You go miles without seeing a single tree on these grim-looking hills—though at a great distance you can see the snow-covered mountains. Through the Pass come hundreds of Arabs with their long train of camels bringing dried fruit to the bazaars of Peshawar. They have been doing it for ages. The most famous place in the Pass is the narrowest part of it, about 18 feet, where you can see a small white mosque which the Mohammedans think was built by the Khalifat of Mohammed himself soon after his death. Visitors are allowed only up to 40 miles in the Pass. After reaching the railway terminus, Landi Kotal, we thought of walking back through the Afridi villages for some five miles to Zintara, and picking up the train there to Peshawar. It was really a mad risk—especially for Verrier when you remember that only a few months ago the Afridis were fighting the English, and even on that day there were occasional rifle-shots, tokens of the family feuds that never cease. However, by making friends with a railway official, we found a perfectly sweet Afridi, who was willing to guide us. In his house, he had some Buddhist relics which may have made him more peaceful. He knew Hindi, so we soon began to ask him about the Afridis and what they thought of the Indian Movement. He was delightful company. He said to Verrier, " I talk to you as one free man to another." I, of course, was a slave, and he had no use for me. I asked him what he thought of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, and he seemed to think very little of him, since he only fought with his pen. He pointed to some women gathering weeds for their food. " That is why we fight the British. Our food would make you sick. When we get too hungry, we fight." He told us that the British gave them each 40 rupees to keep quiet, but if Congress would pay them more, they would come and win freedom for India. " Aren't you

afraid of the aeroplanes?" we asked. He laughed. "We can shoot down any aeroplane." He pointed to some graves by the roadside. "There are boys of five years old there. Everyone of our children is a warrior, and everyone of us is a King." They knew of Gandhiji, whom they called the Malang (the Saint); but they thought there was another great leader in India called "Inquillab" (the Urdu word meaning Revolution). And I suppose the only leader in India today who is not imprisoned, and who can never be, is Inquillab, the Spirit of Revolution.

We went into one of the fortress-villages, with its high, strong mud walls, and its watch-tower, and fierce yet noble-looking inhabitants.

That morning, Verrier said to me, "We have got all our information: now we have only to become heroes by being arrested." Before going up the Pass, he sent a courteous letter to the Deputy Commissioner, saying why we had come, and asking for an interview so that he might hear the official view of things, and so present a fair and balanced report. On returning from the Pass, we found the answer to our letter in two English police officers and some constables, and an order for Verrier's deportation from the Province. The police officer was very charming, and kept on saying he was "damned sorry". The text of the Order was as follows:—

ORDER.

In exercise of the powers delegated to me under Section 4(1) (c) Emergency Powers Ordinance, it is hereby directed that the Reverend Verrier Elwin shall forthwith remove himself from and shall not return to the North-West Frontier Province.

The penalty to which he becomes liable for breach of this Order should be explained to Mr Elwin.

(Sd.) O. K. CAROE,
District Magistrate,
15-1-32. Peshawar.

It was very amusing, and I felt a kind of pleasant sensation when these people began to search our papers. Verrier drank his tea while it was going on. We had expected this

search, and were ready for it. They found nothing of importance, though Verrier was ready to give them anything if they asked for it. He did not, however, feel it his duty to help them in their search. All the important papers were hidden in a packet of Force which we placed prominently on a table in the middle of the room, and none of the searchers thought of examining it. After this, the English officers and two Indian merchants who were present as search-witnesses left us, and we remained under open arrest. I soon got friendly with the Indian police-officer and got a good deal of very important information out of him. The Deputy-Commissioner had refused to see Verrier at any cost, but the English police-officer invited him to his house—where he went under police escort—and told him many things. It was very amusing to see the faces of the police-officers when we told them all the places we had been to. They shook us by the hand, and congratulated us, for they had been searching for us for days. They were very touched by Verrier's struggling to help our poor country, even against his own people. To me they said, "The Marathas alone will win India's freedom." They were greatly surprised and even shocked to see me talking quite freely and at ease with the English officer—a thing, they said, quite unknown in the Province.

We were compelled to leave by the worst train in the day which gave us three successive nights in the train. We were escorted to the borders of the Province by four police officers. Before we left Peshawar the local C.I.D. was paraded before us, so that we should not escape them again. Verrier said it reminded him of Mr Pickwick "sitting for his portrait" in the Fleet.

We were now at a new crisis of our fortunes. The general idea was that Verrier should follow in the footsteps of C. F. Andrews, and devote himself to the same kind of semi-political work that the latter was engaged on, more specially devoting himself to keeping Britain and America informed about what was going on, in making enquiries where necessary into allegations of excessive repression, and generally working for a solution of the problem. At that time the practice was that, whenever a President of the All India Congress was arrested, a new President was

appointed in his place. Jamnalalji told Verrier that they planned a series of Presidents which should include members of every community, and that they wanted him to become President when it was the turn for an Englishman to occupy that high office. He pointed out that this would, of course, mean his arrest and imprisonment within the next few months, and he said that he was willing. There was then a suggestion of our going to make a further enquiry in Bihar.

Suddenly, however, it came upon both Verrier and myself as a sort of revelation that this was not the work we were meant for. I was specially insistent that I had not given up my education in England and come to join Verrier for any other purpose than our original one, which was to live among the poor. At the same time Verrier was already beginning to see, what he saw still more clearly a little later, that 'Indian nationalism has not really benefited from the aid of European political amateurs. If a man wants to go into the political field, he must be as well equipped with the knowledge of his subject as anybody who wishes to take up any other profession'. We, therefore, made a decision which, though fraught with years of deprivation and suffering, was I am certain the right one. Jamnalalji was now in jail. But we sent him a message that we were going to adhere to our original plan of living among the Gonds. Betul, we were told, was no good. It was not possible to obtain land. So Verrier asked the advice of the Bishop of Nagpur with whom he was having some correspondence, and he suggested Mandla District, and in particular the village of Karanjia, as a place which would be particularly suitable for us. Of the five last Europeans to stay there, he pointed out, four had died within a year.

Our going to Karanjia, therefore, was a deliberate attempt to find reality away from the bustle and confusion of politics. It did not mean that we had abandoned our political interests. But it did mean, as Verrier informed the Provincial Government, that we had no intention of carrying on political propaganda among the aboriginals. Verrier has always strongly felt that the aboriginals were not suitable cannon fodder for a political movement. They

have too many wrongs of their own which must be righted before they can be enlisted in any wider movement.

Almost as soon as we arrived in Karanjia, Verrier was greeted with a letter from an Indian member of the I.C.S., Mr D. V. Rege, with whom we were later to become good friends. It ran as follows:

Dear Father Elwin,

In reply to your letter of the 29th January, the Commissioner has asked me to inform you that in view of your political record, we do not want you in this district.

Yours sincerely,
D. V. Rege

After getting this letter and ignoring its contents, we expected to be arrested every day and in fact we posted a boy on the top of a neighbouring hill to keep a look-out for the police, so that we would have some time to make our preparations before they arrived. Nothing, however, happened, except that one day we were raided and searched by the police, and a little later Mr Rege himself came and we had a very pleasant time together. During those first months in Karanjia, sitting on the floor of our little hut, Verrier wrote a small book, *Truth About India: Can We Get It?* which had a wide circulation in Europe and America, and brought home to many the realities of the Indian situation.

Verrier has described in *Leaves from the Jungle* our general life in Karanjia, and I will go straight on to the next important incident in his life. We decided, rather unwisely I think, that he should go to England during the rains, partly to try to arouse people to the seriousness of the Indian situation, and partly to gain supporters for our own work. We went down to Bombay, and there Verrier nearly abandoned the trip. His passport had expired and the Bombay Government refused to renew it except for a period of three weeks, which would just allow him to reach England, but not to return. So he gave up the idea of going to England, and announced the fact in the Press.

There was an immediate outcry, and *The Bombay Chronicle* devoted its morning leader to the subject, point-

Mandla.

3.2.32

Dear Father Elwin,

In reply to your letter of the 29th January, the Commissioner has asked me to inform you that in view of your political record we do not want you in this district.

Yours sincerely,

D. R.

ing out that it was men like Verrier ' who enable Indians to believe that the British nation does not consist entirely of Imperialists, commercial exploiters, swashbuckling special correspondents. They are the one link that holds the attenuated chain of Indo-British relations together '. Soon afterwards, Verrier received a friendly letter from the Chief Passport Officer, asking him to go and see him, which he did. The official explained that even if he had renewed his passport for five years, Government could always cancel it at any moment, but that actually his own refusal to extend it for a longer period was due to purely technical reasons, and he saw no reason why he should have any difficulty in getting it renewed for the full period after he had reached England.

Verrier was much simpler then than he is now. He should, of course, have seen very clearly, especially in view of the Commissioner's attempt to get him deported, that Government was only anxious to get him out of India without a press agitation. But Verrier was really keen to go to England, and after arranging that I should go for medical training at the Tirupattur Ashram, I said good-bye to him and Verrier left Bombay.

Verrier had an interesting journey across Europe, making contact with the pro-Indian groups in Italy, Switzerland and France. In Siena and Florence, he writes,

" I found a most touching sympathy with our cause. India should know the friends that are working valiantly, but with the greatest difficulty. Miss Turton, splendid and energetic for all her seventy-five years, spreads the message far and wide. At Siena, I stayed in the lovely palace of Ravizza, the family of which showed deepest sympathy. In Florence I spent the night in a house of enchantment, the Villa Star, a heaven of art and culture, whose private chapel is being decorated by Giovanni and Mai Costetti. Giovanni is an artist of genius, and some of his work is singing in my mind today. He is writing a little book in Italian about Bapu and I am to contribute a foreword giving some of my experiences. An Italian scholar has written asking permission to translate my joint-production with Kanu Desai. Kanu is admired by the Costettis. Mai Costetti had written an article on the Indian situation and

sent it to six papers in America, England, France, Norway, Germany, Italy. Not one would publish it, and the editor of the Italian paper said that he had received instructions from his Government to publish no anti-British article on the Indian question. They heard that similar instructions have been given in America."

Verrier went on to visit Villeneuve and M. and Mme Privat: he stayed with M. Romain Rolland on the way back. In Paris he stayed at the flat of Mme Guiyesse whence she issued her paper *Nouvelles de l'Inde.*

When Verrier reached London he had a regular reception at Victoria Station, and a full programme was arranged for him. He has never spoken out more clearly and courageously. His first meeting was at Bow, where the Mahatma had stayed in London, with George Lansbury in the chair. 'Life in India today', said Verrier, 'is like an Edgar Wallace detective story. You are always reminded that the police are with you! The only solution of the present situation is to give India what she wants, that is self-government. But if Briton will not do this, she at least ought to fight with clean hands'. He concluded, 'I long to see my countrymen achieve a sufficient degree of greatness to rise to the chivalrous appeal of Mahatma Gandhi. If we do so we will show that brute force is not the only power, and that the principles of Jesus Christ are still being applied in the conduct of great peoples towards one another'. If that appeal had been heeded, what suffering in the past fifteen years would have been saved!

At a later meeting, presided over by C. F. Andrews, Verrier described the condition of India, the oppression of the police, the sufferings of the imprisoned. He again pleaded for justice. 'Surely to do justice to a country that wants to be free is no betrayal, but the highest loyalty to our own traditions.... While the statesmen of Europe are endeavouring to abandon brute force, Britain is employing that force in India'. He described Gandhiji's arrest earlier in the year and said that as he saw the Mahatma and the Police Commissioner face each other he 'had no doubt that Mahatma Gandhi's empty hands were the stronger hands and that if they took away from England her Empire

they might restore to her a feeling of chivalry in dealing with a weaker race.'

Verrier addressed many other meetings and had a number of interviews with members of Government, among them Lord Irwin. With Lord Sankey, then Lord Chancellor, there sprang up a warm friendship, and among our treasures is a copy of *The Spirit of Man*, in which Lord Sankey has marked his favourite passages. But Sir Samuel Hoare refused to see Verrier on the ground (he wrote) that he (Verrier) had behaved 'in an indiscreet way' and that 'it would not be appropriate that he (Sir Samuel) should receive him' at the India Office.

This was not surprising in view of what Hoare was planning. Verrier applied for a renewal of his passport immediately, getting George Lansbury, Leader of the Opposition in the House of Commons, to sign his application, but a week later he received the following letter:

> "The Chief Passport Officer presents his compliments to the Reverend H. V. H. Elwin and, with reference to his application for the renewal of his passport, begs to inform him in accordance with a request made by the Secretary of State for India that he cannot be granted passport facilities for entry into India.
>
> "If Mr. Elwin desires his passport to be renewed this will be done but the passport will have to be endorsed as not valid for India."

'This document,' Verrier has written, 'was one of the most shattering I have ever received, and yet I am glad I had it, for it revealed to me as nothing else could have done the misery and helplessness of being a political outcaste, a condition into which so many thousands of people have been thrown both by British Imperialism and by the Dictatorships of the last decade. It was impossible to get an interview with anyone. Nobody would answer your letters. I was not important enough for the Press in England to take up my cause. I felt as though I was standing in front of a great precipice up which there was no hope of climbing. I approached everyone I could, and they too told me of the great difficulty they found in persuading the authorities even to discuss anything to do with me. I spent August in the Lake District with my family, a

PASSPORT OFFICE,
1, QUEEN ANNE'S GATE BUILDINGS,
DARTMOUTH STREET,
WESTMINSTER,
LONDON, S.W.1.

FOREIGN OFFICE.

Telephone:
Telegraphic Address:
"TELEGRAM, PARL., LONDON."

Please quote Reference PE/E.25732.(S/F).

The Chief Passport Officer presents his compliments to the Reverend H.V.H. Elwin and, with reference to his application for the renewal of passport, begs to inform him in accordance with a request made by the Secretary of State for India that he cannot be granted passport facilities for entry into India.

If Mr. Elwin desires his passport to be renewed this will be done but the passport will have to be endorsed as not valid for India.

29th July 1932.

district which previously had given me the sweetest sensation of pleasure. But this holiday was a very miserable one.'

But Verrier has never lacked friends, and some of these, working behind the scenes, were able to put enough pressure on the India Office officials to get them to consent to allow Verrier to return to India, provided that he signed an undertaking

> "That he would confine himself entirely to his work among the Gonds;
> take no part in civil disobedience or any other political movement;
> refrain as far as possible, from associating with any persons engaged in political agitation; and refrain from writing articles against the Government; and would observe the undertaking in the spirit as well as the letter."

Here was another crisis! C. F. Andrews thought Verrier should not sign; others thought he should. Verrier himself, though furious at the way he had been treated, had no doubt of his duty. He had started his aboriginal work and he must go on with it. He signed and caught the first available boat for India.

This meant, of course, the end of Verrier's active political life; it meant much misunderstanding, much isolation—for he was now cut off from everyone. His own people wouldn't have him, and ours couldn't! But it meant also a new life of work for the poor and of scholarship. Sir Francis Younghusband once said, 'I will always be grateful to Sam Hoare for one thing at least, that he forced Elwin from politics to poetry.'

Few people know how poor Verrier suffered under these restrictions. He has said that to give up his right to go to jail was the only sacrifice he has ever made. Yet I am sure he was right to make it. This is how he really became one with the poor. Nothing is more annoying than petty police persecution, to have your letters read by the C.I.D. But Verrier welcomed it as his tiny share of the nation's suffering. And he was really in prison! He was not permitted to visit his friends at Wardha. He was asked to give a series of lectures on Prayer at a Students Christian Asso-

ciation Conference, and C. F. Andrews approached Maxwell, who was then Home Member, for permission. Maxwell refused it. The mighty British Government were afraid of Verrier even giving some talks on Prayer!

In those hard days, Verrier received great help and encouragement from certain friends, who have stood by him in every vicissitude up to the present day. There were the members of the Naoroji family; the late J. A. D. Naoroji was greatly loved by Verrier, and the sisters, especially Mrs Nurgis Captain and Miss Kurshed Naoroji have always treated him as one of the family. With the Pochas of Poona also Verrier has enjoyed a friendship going back to 1928. The late Miss Ala Pocha did much to bring him into the National Movement, and her brothers have always been among his best friends. Miss Margaret Moore, whom Verrier has called " the wittiest woman in India ", has been faithful to him even through the missionary controversy, which must have hurt her deeply.

Verrier had a great affection for Seth Jamnalal Bajaj, who sent him to the Gonds, and gave us a great deal of help in our early years of village life. In 1932 we went to see him in the Dhulia Jail and Verrier was so shocked at the way he was being treated that he swore he would go barefoot wherever he could without being conspicuous—an oath he has kept for fifteen years. After Jamnalalji's death in 1942, Verrier wrote to Mahadeo Desai:

" I remember how when I had an operation in Bombay Jamnalalji with all the burden of business and weight of administrative Congress duties upon his shoulders came over to the hospital and sat beside me during the whole of the ordeal. They at first only gave me a local anaesthetic and he was thus able to talk to me and distract my mind. I remember him again coming up to Karanjia to see our work for the Gonds with Miss Muriel Lester [1] and the lady who is now Mrs Kripalani. I shall never forget the enthusiastic interest with which he examined everything, the generous and ready help that he gave when it was needed and the remarkable sympathy and interest that he showed immediately in all our little problems.

[1] Miss Lester has described this visit in her book *It Occurred to Me*.

MAHATMA GANDHI, IN 1932, TALKING WITH VERRIER

VERRIER WITH MIRA-BEHN IN MAHATMA GANDHI'S KITCHEN AT BARDOLI IN 1929

VERRIER WITH ACHARYA KRIPALANI IN 1930

VERRIER ELWIN IN 1941

"In the old days, to visit Jamnalalji's simple little house in Wardha was a wonderful experience. Jamnalalji's own life never lost its simplicity, but when Wardha became a metropolis, naturally many other buildings and institutions sprang up and the others became crowded. But in 1931 and 1932 the note of simplicity and peace was as evident as in a Sadhu's home. I think that only a very few Englishmen visited Wardha in those days and Jamnalalji was never so well-known as some other Congress leaders, largely because of his unwillingness to talk much in English. I think that was a pity, for there was much in Jamnalalji to appeal strongly to the Westerner. His simplicity and honour, his straightforwardness and plainness of speech (I remember him rebuking me for saying 'thank you' so often, which he said I could not possibly mean), his quaker-like attitude to existence would have made a strong appeal. His devotion to truth was unique in a very rich man. You felt that every word he uttered was fit to be audited by a Chartered Accountant; you felt that all his emotions would balance properly and that his ideals would never show a deficit. I loved him very dearly."

CHAPTER III

EARLY WORKS

'Whosoever, in writing a modern history, shall follow truth too near the heels, it may haply strike out his teeth'
—SIR WALTER RALEIGH.

Verrier's first published book was a collection of inferior religious poems, of which the less said the better. He produced in England and India a number of rather pious little books and booklets, but two of these are of a higher standard. His *Richard Rolle* is a study of a fourteenth-century English mystic against the background of Indian *bhakti* and is dedicated to Gurdial Mallik; his *St Francis of Assisi* is a good introduction to the life of the saint, again with many Indian and Hindu parallels.

But his most important contribution to the study of mysticism is his book *Christian Dhyana*. This is an account of an anonymous fourteenth-century mystical classic called *The Cloud of Unknowing*, a book which—as Verrier wrote, "might have been written by some Christian Sadhu, so entirely does it express that rhythmic philosophy, that deep, slow breath of thought characteristic of the East. How to be free from petty mundane distractions, how to be purified from the sin that separates, how to unify and concentrate the mind, how to discipline the self and bring it to perfection and to God—such urgent and practical questions are asked by all lovers of the Infinite. In *The Cloud of Unknowing* the answer will be found."

The Dawn of Indian Freedom, a joint work by Father Winslow and Verrier, with a Foreword by Archbishop Temple, appeared in 1931 and had a lot of influence, specially in religious circles, in Britain. Verrier's contribution consisted of two long chapters, one a study of Mahatma Gandhi, the other a 70-page sketch of the history and principles of Satyagraha. Verrier's chapters were violently attacked in *The Times of India*, which incidentally told the Archbishop that 'he would have done better not to meddle in a matter of which he knew so very little'. But elsewhere

the book was sympathetically received, even by those who disagreed with it. And indeed where has Satyagraha been better understood or more lyrically described? A pamphlet, based on Verrier's Chapters, was prepared by the Friends of India in London, and widely circulated.

I refer to the important pamphlet *In the Deserted Villages of Gujerat* elsewhere. Unhappily, I cannot describe Verrier's Frontier Report at all, for it was immediately proscribed; the police raided our house and seized all our copies; and two Congress Ministries have failed to lift the ban.

In 1932, there was published in London [1] a beautiful volume of pictures of Mahatma Gandhi by Kanu Desai, with a prefatory essay by Verrier which gives in a brief form one of the most charming and revealing accounts of our great leader that has yet been written. Verrier begins by saying,

> "It is perhaps not without significance that an Indian and an Englishman can unite in trying to interpret to East and West alike some aspects of this Master of the art of living, whose message already spans the hemispheres.
>
> "In the following pages I have tried to portray Mahatma Gandhi—in my own clumsy and stubborn medium—in the forms in which he has touched my heart and helped me. He will perhaps forgive my impertinence, knowing that what I have written comes simply from my love of him."

The first study is of Kanu Desai's inspired painting 'Lead, Kindly Light'.

> "There is spiritual genius as well as great art in this conception of the explorer stepping out in the darkness, with just sufficient light for his immediate needs. G. K. Chesterton has written somewhere of the mystery of the human back; Kanu Desai has caught this mystery—the back of the Mahatma, dignified, bent yet vigorous in its sublime purpose. Who can guess the expression of the face that looks away to that 'Yonder' in which Plotinus told us was our true home? Of what renunciations does not that back tell us, so resolutely turned on 'the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life,' the things that pass away? It is a true and beautiful

[1] The Golden Vista Press, Fetter Lane, London.

thought also to notice that the light upon his path streams from the Mahatma's own heart. The searcher after Truth, who does not veil the light within, does not have to carry a lantern—he has both hands free for service—and he can never be lost in the darkness, for however far he goes there will be light for one step more."

On Gandhiji the ascetic, Verrier writes,

"He has adopted manual labour and has filled his life with ceaseless toil. He has reduced his food to the smallest quantity possible. His clothing is that of the poorest peasant. I once had the honour of washing his famous loin-cloth and I was able to see how the very minimum of cloth was used, even the ends being cut away to provide handkerchiefs. He travels third-class, and thus knows by experience the woes of the worst treated passengers in the world. He exercises no copyright over his many books. His cottage at Sabarmati, his hut at Keradi where he was arrested, are plain, sparely-furnished dwellings where his humblest followers can feel at home. He writes his countless letters on tiny scraps of paper, used with rigid economy. For him simplicity of living is a religious adventure, an act of worship."

"The Mahatma's asceticism does not express itself in sitting on a bed of spikes, but in the careful keeping of accounts."

"The Mahatma's asceticism is of the open air. See him asleep beneath the stars, restful and calm. I associate him with growing flowers, fresh fruit, the wide and open river, the prayer before the morning star has risen, the walk in the unsullied air of dawn."

One of Kanu Desai's most famous drawings is entitled 'The War Path' and shows Gandhiji's feet on his walk to the sea. Of this Verrier writes,

"And so, according to Miltonic precept, this poet of the Karma Marga (path of action) has made his life a true poem. Nowhere has his dramatic genius, his instinct for poetry and romance been more clearly revealed than in the great march to Dandi. In India the feet—the lotus feet—have always been objects of worship, and Kanu Desai has illustrated with exquisite art the reverence which India felt for those bare defenceless feet treading their weary but exultant way of freedom—a freedom of the soul which the thundering legions in the background could never hope to gain. What genius planned that march! None but a poet could have done it. It has the artist's touch upon it. It was politics taken out

of doors—the long road winding in the distance, the waving palms, the wide-stretching sands, and the broad sea untaxed and restricted at Dandi. Here was the Odyssey of modern India. It was her supreme moral adventure, expressed in a medium simple and intense."

Verrier, himself a life-long rebel, was specially attracted by the rebelliousness of the Mahatma.

"The rebellion of the Mahatma is the spirit of truth in action, fighting its way against a stubborn, hostile world. His rebellion is untainted by self-seeking; it has the mark of moral splendour upon it; it is so full of courtesy and chivalry that you hardly realize how fundamentally rebellious his rebellion is.

"We are apt to think nowadays of Mahatma Gandhi as primarily a rebel against the British Government. But this political revolution is a mere incident, a detail in a vast war of ideas. It is not the British Government that the Mahatma opposes so much as the entire scheme of civilization, the whole cycle of ideas for which it stands."

Only a poet like Verrier could understand with such deep insight the sorrows of Gandhiji. He writes of India, impoverished and enslaved, and continues,

"Of this general and diffused suffering, Mahatma Gandhi is the natural focus. All the sorrows of his country meet in his great heart. He is a man of extreme and delicate sensitiveness, capable of that intense feeling which is the ennobling difference between one man and another. I am not thinking now of his personal sufferings, his sicknesses, the spiritual isolation of prison life that he has so often endured, the endless attacks upon him, the betrayals that he has known, the troubled weather in which his whole public life has been spent. He is as detached from these as he is from his personal joys. I am thinking rather how the pains of oppressed humanity everywhere must weigh upon his spirit. The medieval mystic, Lady Julian, prayed for three wounds from God, and one of these was the wound of compassion. You will notice, in some of the pictures of this book, an expression on the face of the Mahatma which is nothing but a universal compassion, a tender pitifulness. What did the Mahatma feel as he nursed the Zulus in South Africa, and tended the weals caused by the lashes? How costly to his sensitive spirit must have been the long-drawn struggle against injustice in South Africa? In India, the sorrows of the poor are always with him."

The Mahatma's wonderful love of people is one of the first things that impresses any observer.

> "Like every true lover, he is very humble and very daring. He loves his followers so much that he dares to ask anything of them, and yet he claims no followers and places himself last of all. His love is seen in his accessibility. He is open to every one and interested in every one. He has the gift of suffering fools gladly. For him love is a fine art, and courtesy the finest part of it. He is so loving that he can concentrate entirely on the immediate problem before him. While he is talking to you, he is yours completely. He is thinking of you, of your problem and nothing else. That great mind, vexed with the multitudinous questions of a sub-continent, is for the time being focussed upon you and your little needs. That is a great achievement in the art of love.
>
> "What to the metaphysician is a triumph of intellectual subtlety is to Mahatma Gandhi a supreme adventure of the heart and mind. His love is a reasoned love; it is no sentiment or emotion; it is the fruit of hard thinking; it is in fact a part of Truth. Hence there are no perils to his universalism; it is as strong as Truth itself. Mahatma Gandhi is universal because he has put his selfhood to death; from the funeral-pyre of individualism there rises the triumph of universal love."

This book was, in the opinion of many, the finest of Verrier's contributions to the literature of the National Movement. He also wrote endless articles for newspapers and journals in Europe and America, as well as in India. He published a small booklet *Religious and Cultural Aspects of Khadi*, with a Foreword by Acharya Kripalani, and many articles on religious subjects—the Nivritti-Marga, the religion of Bhakti, the mysticism associated with the idea of Light—in *The Ashram Review*. But his most important work was a study of *Mahatma Gandhi's Philosophy of Truth*, which appeared in *The Modern Review*. He first surveys historically those Western mystics who have thought of religion primarily in terms of Truth, from Plato and Plotinus to the present day, and then makes a detailed study of the Mahatma's own philosophy. "This does not imply any borrowing from Western thought: the Mahatma's roots go deep into his own soil, and I do not suppose that he has ever heard of John Smith, the Cambridge Platonist, whose outlook on Truth is so similar to

his own. But it will help us to see its grandeur and dignity, as well as the beauty of a life spent in its service, as we watch the one love of Truth spanning the vast divergence of the hemispheres."

"The identification of the Ultimate Reality with Truth is very old, and Mahatma Gandhi is original not so much in speaking of Truth as in speaking of practically nothing else. His conception of Truth is metaphysical, mystical and moral; there is no aspect of it which is not real to him. It has been his special task to bring this lofty philosophical idea down to earth, to introduce it as a working principle into the lives of ordinary people, to direct its austere moral challenge upon world-politics, to exalt it as a practical basis of business and personal relations and to work out with great exactness what is implied in the quest for its realization."

Finally, though it is not an "early work", I will only refer here, for it will be accessible to all my readers, to Verrier's beautiful account of Mahadeo Desai which he contributed to the "birthday book" presented to Mahatma Gandhi in 1944.

CHAPTER IV

LETTERS TO EUROPE

'Thou lest in fetters now, but in the end the rightful cause will prevail; the day of deliverance is at hand, a new time is beginning'

—HEINE.

In addition to publications and lectures, Verrier did all he could to spread the Indian cause abroad by issuing letters to a wide circle of friends in Europe and America. These letters had a lot of influence, for their mixed passion and humour appealed to Westerners. They have never been published, and I will give some extracts from them, both to illustrate Verrier's own character and because they throw an interesting light on our National Movement in 1930 and 1931.

We Indians should not forget that for an Englishman to throw himself into the National Movement as Verrier did then was not the easy thing it would be today. Now, when Nehru is in power, most Englishmen are pro-Congress; now, when it is safe to do so, many of our own people, who in the hour of danger kept carefully aloof, crowd round Mahatma Gandhi. But that was not Verrier's way. He went all out for the Congress cause when it was dangerous; directly it became safe, he even cooled off a little.

And to someone so sensitive as Verrier it was a costly warfare. It is not pleasant to be called 'traitor to your own people'; to have the doors of houses shut against you; to become a social outcaste. But the enthusiasm and passion of the time carried him through.

1

April 1930

"What a joy it was to reach Bombay, the beautiful city now thrilling with exhilaration and energy. After the lilies and languors of Poona, so academic, stiff and cautious, the roses and raptures (metaphorically speaking) of Bombay, so friendly, audacious and courageous, were most

refreshing. At four in the morning, the streets are thronged with a thousand miniature processions, boys and girls, women, old men, Hindus, Moslems, Jains, Parsis, Jews and Christians, carrying the national flag, and singing hymns and prayers. Almost the whole city is in swadeshi dress with Gandhi caps. The National Flag flies in every street, and on every other car or bicycle. Monster meetings and processions are held continually. Every afternoon the police raid the Nationalist Headquarters (I watched one of these in the company of a large, amiable and amused crowd: it is the daily joke in Bombay), arrest a few leaders and confiscate everything they can find which has to do with the 'Congress Bulletin'—a prohibited journal. As the police van drives away, the news vendors come out following them selling copies of the 'Bulletin' which has been hidden in a place which I had better not mention here.

"It is a sobering experience for an Englishman to visit the Congress Hospital. Leonard Schiff and I were received with great affection and friendliness and nothing was hid from us. Here was a boy of 19 who had gone to Sholapur to fly the National Flag there. On arrival, he had been at once arrested with his companions, all of them unarmed, defenceless boys, and they were each put in separate cells, stripped naked, brutally assaulted in the most delicate parts of their bodies, and flogged till they fell senseless. My friend was still in Hospital six weeks after the event. There were others who had been hurled into thorn-bushes; some whose stomachs were covered with burns caused by lighted cigarettes being placed against the naked skin; others were covered with tiny wounds caused by needles being thrust into their bodies. Many had heads, arms, legs broken by *lathi*-blows. (A *lathi* is a heavy stick, often with a brass knob, used by the police to flog unarmed and peaceful men, women, and children.) These atrocities had been committed largely by British police, and always under British supervision."

He then quotes the report of Mirabehn 'one of the most sober and level-headed women I have ever met' on cases she examined in the hospital at Dharasana.

"The whole affair is one of the most devilish, cold-blooded, and unjustifiable in the history of nations.

"India has now realised the true nature of the British Raj, and with that realization the Raj is doomed."

There follows a fantastic account of a visit which Verrier and I paid to Simla. Verrier wanted to see the Viceroy and put things before him, but on that occasion (though not later) Lord Irwin refused him an interview.

Verrier was suffering, as usual in those days, from a mild form of dysentery.

"I was only allowed by the doctor Horlick's Malted Milk and Whisky, which isn't the best diet perhaps for a 24 hours' journey. However, we felt we ought to go. I was cheered at Delhi by an Anglo-Indian who got into the train and asked me my 'persuasion'. 'I am an Anglican,' I said. 'Well, I'm Church of English myself,' he replied, 'but no doubt it's all the same in the eyes of God'. We ultimately reached a station called Kalka, which was bristling with armed men, and covered with red carpets. We then discovered that all the Provincial Governors were travelling to Simla for a conference on the Simon Report. However, we now had to prepare for our ascent of the Himalayas. Being ignorant and simple-minded religious we went by train. We were crammed, with a large number of enormous and vocal Panjabis (the most ferocious-looking people I have ever seen) into a sort of Little Ease, in which we remained squashed and suffocated for nine hours. The train also goes round and round, so that you get a sort of horizontal sea-sickness. By the time we reached Simla, I thought the end had come. I was greatly revived, however, by the attentions of the C.I.D. In our happy heathen South, the sight of a priest[1] in cassock and sandals is so familiar that it excites no comment. In the largely Christian town of Simla, such an apparition was more unusual. When, in addition, you remember that the priest is wearing khadi, and has a face dark and sinister, lined and furrowed with the crimes of a life-time, you will understand that the police could come to only one conclusion. Such a being could have come to Simla with but one purpose—the assassination of the Viceroy. Look at that suspicious bulge in his right pocket—the very shape of a hand-grenade. Is it only a bottle of Horlick's Malted Milk? Without doubt

[1] Verrier was, of course, still a priest in those days.

the white powder is either of an explosive or poisonous character. Anyway I was surrounded by a group of minor detectives enquiring who my father was and why I dared to be me, while an eagle-faced man with a great cudgell brooded over us. When they had departed from us for a season, we went on to stay with Laurence Crosthwaite, who was at Merton with me, at Bishop Cotton's School, a charming place, with an exquisite view reaching right down to the plains and the Sutlej River winding away into the sunset. We soon found ourselves in the most gorgeous Edgar Wallace atmosphere. When I went out in a rickshaw (I was really too weak to walk) I was escorted by a magnificent police-inspector, fully armed, called P. C. Theophilus Singh. He was a Christian, and we had some uplifting conversation, while everyone bowed and scraped under the impression that I was a person of importance being protected. I took the poor creature miles—and then went into the Y.M.C.A. and read 'Punch'. The Police Force of Simla are like the ladies of the 18th century who could not so much as drink tea without a stratagem. Instead of doing the simple ordinary thing, and ringing up the Headmaster to ask who his guest was, they sent shadowy figures to intrigue with the cook and find out what we had for breakfast. Yes, he hardly eats anything at all. Mr Gandhi believes in fasting. Therefore he must be a believer in the bomb, and no doubt he eats gunpowder and cyanide in his bedroom.

"We stayed in Simla for four or five days, and the bracing air did me a lot of good, but I couldn't endure the Olympian atmosphere, the sense of being right out of the world, while India was suffering in the Plains. So in order to play our part properly, we waited till a dense fog descended upon both the just and the unjust, and then crept out and away in closed rickshaws to a car, which soon carried us down the hills. What a glorious drive it was, through the magnificent mountain formations of the lower Himalayas. Of course it's not a patch on the Lake District, but still it was very pleasant. At Kalka we took the train to Delhi, where we caught the Frontier Mail, by which Lady Irwin also travelled. The railway line was guarded at 50 yard intervals for a thousand miles.

"It was a great relief to get away from the bayonets and pistols of Simla to the quiet revolutionary atmosphere of Bombay. At last, we were back in our own dear country. I rushed to the delightful flat of my Jain friend, Chimanlal Shah, who was very good to me. We found the stations crowded with women volunteers trying to prevent people going to the Poona races. After seeing a number of friends, we went to Poona the same evening by the 'Deccan Queen', the finest electric train in the world, and received a great welcome from the brothers.

"It is interesting to read the carefully censored news which is permitted to appear in the English newspapers. I wonder if I might suggest a few things to you with regard to the present situation in India.

"1. I hope none of you will talk about the 'dreadful unrest' and 'how said things are' in India. There are far worse things than unrest: effervescence is a little undignified, but there's nothing sad about it: the only sad thing about a champagne bottle is its cork. The stagnation, the lack of self-respect, the slave-mentality of a hundred years is far more dreadful, it seems to me, than a few months of unrest. And further, this particular kind of unrest is most astonishing. As that great missionary, Willie Holland, said to me the other day. 'This nationalist movement is so exhilarating: it brings out all the best in people'. That is true. These are wonderful days in India. A nation is coming to the birth. And it does seem to me the sheerest hypocrisy and humbug for Europeans who had a share in the hideous brutalities of the Great War to point the finger of scorn at India because now and then a mob gets out of hand. What Hazlitt said of the Romantic Revival may well be applied to India. 'There was a mighty fermentation. The waters were out: public opinion was in a state of projection. Men's brains were busy, their spirits stirring, their hearts full and their hands not idle. Their eyes were opened to expect the greatest things, and their ears burned with curiosity and zeal to know the truth, that the truth might make them free'.

"2. Don't be taken in when the newspapers tell you that the National Movement is only the work of a small group of intellectuals and of only one party in the nation. In

the first place, the relation of the Congress to other sections of opinion is not like that of our 'parties' to one another; it is rather the relation of the vanguard to the rest of the army. All the other parties, however much they may criticize Congress *methods*, are out for the same goal, that India should be master in her own house. And secondly, the repressive policy of Government has been largely responsible for bringing most of the Indian parties together. The Parsi community is almost entirely with the Congress. Large numbers of Jews and Christians are coming in. I recently asked the 'Liberal' Editor of 'The Servant of India' about the Mohammedans. He said that in his opinon, fifty per cent were with the Congress, including most of their really fine leaders. The Liberals themselves (that is, the so-called Moderate party, who prefer to 'make trouble' by constitutional means) are not so much pro-Congress as anti-Government. The Indian Princes are simply looking to their own advantage. A high Government official said to me recently, 'In every previous affair we have had strong pro-Government reactions in several of the great sections of the public—either among the merchants, or among the land-owners, or among the Moslems as against the Hindus. But this time, India is united.' The third point is that this is largely a Peasant Movement. The great majority of the people to be found at any political meeting do not know English. The real strength of the Congress is in the villages, and—in my opinion—its real moral power lies in the stress it lays on village uplift and development as the basis of freedom. Thousands of town-bred graduates are being sent back to the villages to do propaganda work, and except among the outcastes they win an eager response. Certain sections of the outcaste community are, however, very suspicious of a possible Brahmin-raj.

"3. A most moving feature of India today is her willingness to suffer without retaliation even under the most desperate provocation. In view of the gross untruths put about by official propaganda to discredit the satyagrahis, I do want to stress the universally-admitted fact that the Satyagrahis themselves are almost entirely guiltless of any kind of violence. What has happened is that the Under-

world has tried to benefit by the situation, and the real Revolutionaries who regard Mahatma Gandhi as a petty bourgeois have caused a certain amount of rioting—far less, it may be said, than there would be in Europe under similar circumstances. And I am sorry to say that there is a universal belief that such violence as there is is instigated by Government agents.

" I have already given you some idea of what the Satyagrahis have to suffer at the hands of the British police. In prison, their state is even worse. Some, like Gandhiji, are treated excellently. Many others, as for example in the jail at Visapur, are treated in a way that recalls the worst barbarities of the Middle Ages.

" It is very painful to have to say these things, and I hope you will not be angry with me for doing so. I am not writing in any spirit of bitterness, but with a feeling of deepest penitence and shame. I am telling you these things because I want you to feel penitent as well. Only a great outpouring of penance can avert the judgement which must surely be overhanging our country. I have only told you the thousandth part. I am not a politician: I live a semi-enclosed life; yet even I cannot escape hearing and seeing these tragic things. I am told that once, when Mr C. F. Andrews was investigating the terrible aftermath of the Amritsar massacre, he found a peasant covered with weals from a flogging inflicted to extort a confession from him. Mr Andrews prostrated himself on the ground at his feet, exclaiming, 'On behalf of my fellow-countrymen I do penance for the wrongs they have done you.' We all feel like that, with a crushing burden of sorrow on our hearts that a Christian Empire can be so Christless, yet happy that non-Christian subjects can be so Christlike.

" The one noble figure of hope is Lord Irwin, but his hands are tied, and his battle of peace and love is indeed a lonely one. On the other side, the Satyagrahis are not all saints, nor could a pacifist Christian support all that they do. But, on the whole, a nobler, more friendly, more disciplined, finer body of men I have never met than the members of Gandhiji's non-violent 'army'.

" Well, that's over, and I'm glad. I felt I had to tell you. Please believe that my heart has no anger for my late

'fellow-contrymen': I adore England; and for that very reason our hearts are full of an overwhelming sorrow."

Verrier ended this letter, as he did so many, with a sudden lapse from seriousness.

"We celebrated the Feast of the Assumption by a two days holiday. We got a bus, and twelve of us went off on 'pilgrimage' to Pandharpur, the chief pilgrim-centre of Western India. We got a saffron flag such as pilgrims use, and sewed a cross on to it, took our musical instruments and wore our rosaries just as the pilgrims do. It was a thrilling experience. We were admitted into the great Vithoba Temple, but the orthodox people were not over friendly. A lovely sadhu, however, just like the prophet Elijah, took us under his wing, and when he was joined by Amos and Nahum we got a fairly good view of everything. The river was also very beautiful. We had some fun with the police here also. Directly we arrived, a report was sent to the superintendent that two well-known English murderers had arrived from Bengal with a gang of dacoits (This is quite true). They must be murderers, it was said, (i) because they wore khadi, (ii) because they all talked different languages, and (iii) because they had a lot of knobby things in their baggage which must be bombs! The knobby bombs were made up as follows:

One tin of spahghetti cooked with tomato and cheese.
One tin of baked beans.
One tin of Singapore Pineapple.
One tin of Nestle's Milk.

"My own special diet, in fact. I have eaten them all, but none of them have proved explosive so far! So, as I was walking along the river-bank, with Sadananda, who was looking very much the Holy Man and carrying his flag, we were suddenly surrounded by police, one of whom threatened us with his cudgell. Friendly relations, however, were rapidly established (by the time I left Pandharpur whenever I met a policeman, he wanted to shake hands with me: it is all very Gilbertian, as I say) and we parted greatest friends. As, however, I had written down my information in English and no one in the Pandharpur Police Force was acquainted with that language, at night our

bungalow was invested by the police and it all had to be done over again in Marathi. The Inspector now took the opportunity of telling us that the real cause of suspicion was not after all murder, but that our English members were not wearing collars, trousers or boots, and we must surely admit that this did look a little fishy! So a man was told off to watch us all night, and we went to bed much amused!"

And he ends, in yet another mood, with 'one last picture' of another kind.

"Imagine a vast plain on the outskirts of Poona, with the hills beyond. And fill it with a crowd such as you will seldom have seen in England. A host of saffron banners mount to the sky. It is the company of the pilgrims carrying the relics of Tukaram to Pandharpur. Business is stopped; traffic is dislocated: schools are closed; what matter? Tukaram is on the road again, and his message flies from heart to heart. 'Where pity, pardon, peace abide, there God abides'. 'Ever gentle are the pure in heart'. 'Such are the saints who meet us on our path that the fetters of the world are broken at the sight of them; they are ever filled with the joy of true mind and true being; and we shall honour them as hallowed sources of liberation'."

2

November 1930

The Political Situation.

It is very difficult for me to give any sort of adequate review of the political situation, but I think certain things might well be emphasized.

(*a*) The situation has never been darker. There seems no light and no hope. It is a complete deadlock. Nothing has been more symptomatic of the determination of the people than the way Divali this year has been observed in Bombay. Divali is the great Indian Feast of Lights, holding the place of Christmas in the Hindu mind. Even in 1900, at the time of plague and famine, it was celebrated. In 1918, when the streets of Bombay were heaped

with the victims of influenza, it was celebrated. But this year, both in the great markets and the homes of the people, there was no Divali. "The women whose voice is decisive in all matters pertaining to household rites, and even the very children whose deafening crackers used to fill the air with acrid smoke for days before and after Divali, abstained without a word from their cherished lights and sounds and sweets. New clothes which every household buys for Divali were also eschewed."

(*b*) The real battle, as this letter perhaps implies, is between the three ways of gaining freedom for India.

(i) The way of conference and co-operation represented by Mr Shastri.

(ii) The way of non-violent demonstration and economic boycott represented by Gandhiji.

(iii) The way of violent Revolution. In each case, the goal is more or less the same, although the phraseology is different.

(*c*) The Congress has enormous power throughout the whole country, a power which Government completely under-estimated at the beginning of the campaign, and which the British press has persistently refused to admit. The point is, that the present Movement goes down to the very roots of National life, and it is no more possible to repress it than to repress India itself. This is, I think, true in spite of real opposition to the Congress among certain sections of the Indian people.

(*d*) It is most remarkable how the "psychological storm-centre" has shifted from the political issues involved to the repressive measures of Government. From the British point of view, I can't help thinking that Government has made a most fatal mistake. It has not behaved to its enemies as though they were one day to be its friends.

(*e*) There is, partly as a result of this, a most tragic bitterness growing up in the country. One symptom of this is the reaction against Lord Irwin. *Young India* last week called him a "lineal descendant of Herod the Great". Such language is, of course, absurd. We know the goodness and greatness of the Viceroy. But it is no good concealing the fact that many thoughtful Indians are saying (it has been said to me scores of times), "If Lord Irwin is

a Christian, why is he allowing his subordinates to betray the cause of Christ?" I don't say that this kind of feeling is justified: but it exists, and widely. Another symptom is the reaction against missionaries. Several times recently, mature and thoughtful Indian Christians have spoken to me like this—"We are so fed up with the English, that we want everyone of you out of the country. We want to turn out not only Government officials, but also missionaries, and among missionaries not only the 'imperialist' ones, but also those who, like yourself, sympathize entirely with our cause. The best way you can serve India is to clear out of it". This feeling is not yet probably wide-spread, but it is there, and it is growing. What is really widespread is a feeling of deep dissatisfaction that the missionaries have been content to stand by and watch injustice and atrocity without a word of protest. I was at diner with a Parsee family the other day, and they belaboured me during the whole meal. "Why does not the Bishop of Bombay do something?" "Does the Lambeth Report mean what it says or not?" "Can you honestly say that the Viceroy is a Christian?" Again let me stress the fact that I am not saying such questions are justified, but they are being asked. But you know, I sometimes can't help wondering if some of them are not justified. I told a most important and leading ecclesiastic the other day some of the police atrocities I'd seen, and asked him if such things were really helping the cause of India, or of Christ. This was his answer, "In the first place, I don't believe that these things have happened. In the second place, even if they do happen, they ought to happen. We would never get anywhere in this country, unless we flogged people, and flogged them hard". And a Chaplain the other day was advocating the turning of machine-guns on the satyagrahis so ferociously that even a general had to protest. It is not easy to take the other line. A chaplain was hauled over the coals by government for praying that Pandit Motilal Nehru's health might be restored to him. The head of a large Christian organization in Western India is an Englishman. He has joined the English defence force and draws Rs. 150 a month for a promise that he will be ready to fight against Indians if need be. No one minds that: an Englishman is by defini-

tion a patriot. But this same patriot, if any *Indian* member of the mission is patriotic enough to attend a political meeting, or show sympathy with his own country, declares loudly that "Christians must have nothing to do with politics" and threatens to cut his salary. My friends, it is this kind of humbug and hypocrisy that is making missionary work almost impossible. I am sorry to have to write in this way, but you *must* know the facts, and you must pray and work with all your might to get them altered.

(*f*) Finally, I want to tell you something I have seen myself. After my last letter, several friends have written saying that they cannot believe that Englishmen could do the things that I described. About a fortnight ago, I had to go to Bombay and I stayed with some friends in a house which commands a view of the road in which the Congress Headquarters is situated. The day I arrived the Congress in Bombay was declared illegal, and the next morning when I went out to Mass I found the Headquarters occupied and the road blocked by police. As I came back I watched the Satyagrahis being taken off to jail (300 were arrested in a few days) and then from 10 to 11 I stood at the window and watched the scenes in the street below. It is a very busy street, thronged with business-men, students, casual citizens. That morning, there was naturally a rather larger number of people coming to see what had happened. But there was no crowd, no demonstration, no shouting of slogans, not a single Satyagrahi in sight, simply ordinary peaceful citizens going to and fro, with little groups collecting here and there to discuss the situation. A dozen Indian police guarded the approach to Congress House and there were probably 50 others inside. Up and down the road strutted two British police-sergeants, armed with heavy sticks. Their bearing and behaviour reminded me of nothing so much as of our English cartoons of the German soldiers in the war. Every two or three minutes they would lift up their sticks and charge the passers-by. A charming-looking student went up to one of them and asked a question. The Englishman raised his stick and hit him in the face. I could hear the crack of the blow four stories up. He hurled an old man on to the ground. He chased and

mercilessly beat a boy who was simply walking along the road. A respectable elderly citizen was hustled, his morning newspaper knocked out of his hand, and kicked contemptuously across the road. I lost all count of the number of people who were kicked, beaten, or insulted. This was nothing, my host told me, the police were very mild that morning: there were no broken heads or limbs. It was not the violence so much as the arrogance and contempt of it that made me, as I stood there watching, one of the most miserable men in the world. As I watched, I realized that the problem in India is not so much political as racial. No English policeman would ever have treated English people like that, as if they were vermin to be destroyed, or flies to be brushed away and killed. I can't tell you what I felt as I watched these traitors to England, our England which we love, and whose fair name is daily being dragged in the dust by *your* representatives. And I felt too with such a crushing sorrow that the only two "Christians" within sight were playing the part of Pilate, and the Hindus were literally turning the other cheek.

At night, again I stood on a balcony and watched the lathi charges, this time by Indian police. The victims were again simple ordinary people out for an evening stroll. I could see no reason for it: there was no crowd, no demonstration: it looked as if the police simply wanted to show their authority. Regularly every twenty minutes, a row of police lines up, and then rushes down the crowded road, hitting every one they can. A young Indian was caught by three of them within a few yards of me. One policeman knocked off his hat. Another hit him on the left cheek. The third gave him a resounding thwack on the right. Then they fell on him with their sticks, and made him run for his life. If you have ever seen a lathi charge, you will never forget it—those huge sticks whirling in the air, the rush to avoid them, the thwack of the blow on head or shoulders, women and children suffering with the men. What possible use or advantage can there be in such things? And what I saw was nothing to what has often been described to me by responsible witnesses. I really hate having to tell you these things, but it is necessary if you are to understand the present feeling of the country.

The one topic of conversation everywhere is the repressive policy of Government, and the unnecessary excesses of the police in effecting it. I have no doubt that there have been exaggerations. I realize fully that stories are far too readily accepted if they have a propaganda value. But even if half of what we hear is true, the tale is tragic indeed. From all over India comes the same story—an apparently deliberate attempt to break the national spirit by any means. Nor is it only subordinate officials who are responsible. Often officers of the highest rank have been present and even ordered the police action.

Today, the newspapers contain reports of some tragic events in Bombay. It was proposed to salute the National Flag on the Azad Maidan—a perfectly innocent sort of Empire Day Ceremony, only the other way round. The Police forbade it. The people, considering the prohibition to be unreasonable, ignored the order, and 50,000 white-clad citizens, many of them women, came for the Ceremony. 500 police, 50 British officers, and a troop of mounted police delivered lathi charges on this vast crowd all through a long morning. "It is estimated," says *The Times of India*, "that 220 persons were injured as a result of the lathi charges. Of them about 70 were treated on the spot, while the rest were taken to the Congress Free Hospital. Nine of these cases are reported to be very serious." There were present the Commissioner of Police, all the Deputy Commissioners, two Presidency Magistrates and Major-General Weir, General Officer Commanding Bombay District, and the proceedings were carried on under their supervision.

Is this the way to handle a perfectly peaceful political demonstration?

A very bad impression has been created by the refusal of Government to allow any kind of independent enquiry into these matters. Three of the most honest men in India, not Congressmen, Hussain Tyebji, Devadhar and Natarajan went to investigate the alleged police excesses at Dharasana. They were peremptorily ordered to leave the place. They did produce a report, however, and it is as bad as anything I have told you. The Mavalakar Committee sent for a similar purpose to Ranpur was at once arrested. Vithalbhai Patel, ex-President of the Assembly, wished to

make an enquiry into the shooting at Peshawar. He was not permitted to enter the city, and every effort was made by the C.I.D. to prevent witnesses going to the Court of Enquiry whch he established outside. Mr Thakkar, one of the Servants of India Society, a devoted social worker, has been given 6 months rigorous imprisonment for watching the police and reporting on the way they dealt with the crowds. India asks, what is the reason for this fear of independent enquiry? It makes one think furiously when a respected and responsible Moderate like Mr Thakkar solemnly announces at his trial that it is impossible to expect justice at a British Court in India today and refuses to continue his defence. Mr Thakkar ended his statement, "I expect justice from a much higher quarter, Who will judge you, Sir, and me, both in His true perspective. May God teach truth to my untruthful persecutors and may they repent over their misdeeds."

My friends, I write this with a deep sense of responsibility. The East is very patient, but unless something happens and happens soon, unless there is an entire change of policy, the present wonderful spirit of non-violence and restraint will break and there will be a tragedy of tragedies, for which we English people will be ultimately responsible, since by a little tact and a little love, we could have avoided it. I do not want to blame the police. Their nerves are strained to the uttermost: at any moment they expect assassination. They are simply expressing an entire racial attitude in which we all have our share. The arrogance and cruelty of our officials in India is simply a symptom of our national pride and superiority. That is why I am telling you these things, because you and I are in a sense responsible, and it is we who must do penance.

The cause of organized, institutional Christianity is suffering through these things. Everywhere I go, the question is asked, "Is this a Christian nation which rules us? If this is the result of Christianity, let us cling to Hinduism." An old, steady, non-political pandit said to me to-day, "So long as you Christians dominate over us with the sword, how can we believe in Christianity as a working religion?"

Let me give you a few concluding pictures. I was present

at the opening of the new Congress House which was started the day after the old one was confiscated. As a matter of fact, directly the Congress House was declared illegal, between 1,000 and 1,500 houses put up boards, "This is Congress House"! But this was the real one. I got a fine seat in a window. An immense crowd collected, which solemnly chanted a sort of Litany, led by a white-clad Cantor with a cracked voice.

V. Mahatma Gandhi ki
R. Jai.
V. Inquillab (Revolution)
R. Zindabad (Long Live).
V. Up, Up
R. National Flag.
V. Down, Down
R. Union Jack.
V. Every House
R. A Congress House.
V. Every Man
R. A Congress Man.
V. God Save
R. The Congress House.
V. Mahatma Gandhi ki
R. Jai.

The effect of this was similar to that of Community Singing. After half an hour, the new Dictator of Bombay made his way through the crowd. He was Mr Osman Sobhan—a member of one of the leading Moslem families of Bombay, a millionaire, and with the port and features of a prince. He hoisted the National Flag amid tremendous cheering: the crowd sang one or two songs: he made a brief speech exhorting the people to carry on the fight with the weapons of truth and love—and all was over. I had a few minutes talk with him afterwards on a private matter, I asked him if he was optimistic. "Not optimistic," he said with a smile, "but determined." The next day he was arrested, and the millionaire is to spend the next six months as a felon.

That is one picture—Bombay, resolute, determined, undismayed. Her noblest citizens crowding to the jails. A

tide of idealism sweeping from end to end of the city. And as I mixed with her crowds, what impressed me was this, that they were composed not of wild and enthusiastic young men, (the students have not, as a matter of fact, participated very eagerly in the struggle), but mature and responsible merchants, lawyers, doctors, and public men. And an amazing number of women. 15,000 women went in procession in Bombay the other day. You who know India will realize what that means.

Here is another picture—Poona. The inside of Yeravda Jail. A burly Pathan has been inside its walls for twelve years. He was arrested for an act of patriotic violence. In jail he has been converted to Gandhism. He is to be released this month, and he proposes at once to join the Satyagrahis with the certain prospect of re-incarceration. "Hitherto," he says, "I have offered my body on the altar of the Motherland, but now I am going to give my soul." An employee at the prison told me that.

A third picture—Peshawar. A huge strong Punjabi, whose very trade is war, stands in the dock. He has become a Satyagrahi. Many false witnesses appear against him. His friends watch anxiously. Will he bear the strain? At last he exclaims, "That saint of a Gandhi, how he has bewitched me!" The sergeant at his side asks contemptuously, "Why, what could you do?" "This!" said the Punjabi, and he seized in his enormous hands the great iron rail of the dock, and bent it double.

It is a marvel indeed when non-violence lays its spell on such men as these!

From the Prison Cell

It is a great joy that the voice of the Mahatma is not altogether quenched. From the seclusion and silence of his prison cell, Mahatma Gandhi is permitted to address a weekly letter to the nation. These beautiful lay-sermons are some of the most touching and pathetic features of the situation. I would like to give you some quotations from his letters. The weekly subjects are as follows:—They are the eleven principles on which the Satyagraha Ashram is founded—Truth, Love, Chastity, Control of the Palate, Non-stealing, Poverty, Physical Labour, Swadeshi, Fear-

lessness, Removal of Untouchability, and Tolerance. He has added a discourse on Humility, and the Taking of Vows.

March 1931

I have described in *The Servant of Christ* my " darshan " of the Mahatma. I had the happiness of seeing a number of other leaders also. I saw Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru several times, though I had no talk with him. In bearing and stature he reminds you of the Prince of Wales, and he has the same effect of fascination on people. He has a most beautiful face, the face of a dreamer and idealist, keenly intellectual, indomitable and courageous. Although his hair is grey with his forty years of fighting and jail, he is the fitting symbol of Young India. At the Karachi Congress, he did a very big thing. Against his own judgement and desire, he stood by the Mahatma, and lost no small share of his popularity with the Youth party as a result of his splendid loyalty.

I called on Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, who had invited me to Gujerat. I shall never forget that five-minute interview. The Sardar gave me a greeting such as I have seldom experienced, and embraced me as if I had been his son. The Sardar is the Peasants' Leader, himself a peasant, a great-hearted, courageous, cheery figure, idolised all over peasant India.

It has been one of our special joys to meet many of the friends for whom we prayed night by night while they were in jail. In Bombay, I saw Mr Nariman, the very fine leader of the Bombay Congress, who was three times in prison. He said he was treated fairly well. I saw Mr Jamnadas Dwarkadas in the middle of a battle between the Communists and Congressmen at the Kamdar Maidan. Two yards away a young lady in a red tam-o-shanter was screaming revolutionary slogans at the top of her voice: a burly Sikh was shouting so loudly that he fell down in a fit: two Communist orators were shaking their fists at Mr Nariman and yelling "We are here as ambassadors of peace," Unmoved by this, Jamnadas discoursed to me

on the supreme importance of the inner life, and how real the eternal things of the spirit became to you when you were in jail.

Our dear romantic-looking Sundaram, head of the Benares University Volunteers, came to the Ashram. He had just got out of prison in Madras. He said he had never been happier in his life. He was severely beaten by the police, but " I felt no pain ", he said, " I thought of the sufferings of Jesus Christ ". The poet, Harindranath Chattopadhyaya, also came. He wrote a great deal of poetry in prison. But he did not enjoy it. He had to watch the warders at their flogging practice. " Even the moonlight ", he told me, " looks different when it falls on the prison-compound." But one night as he sat, lonely and disconsolate in his solitary cell, a tiny ant came crawling over the stone floor, he found company and was consoled.

Then there was Pyarelal, also a poet, who was so brutally treated in Yeravda that the Mahatma had to threaten a hunger-strike to help him; and a friend who had to grind stone under the burning sun till his strength failed within him; and others who tell grim stories of men tied up by their hands to the roof all night, of unbelievable humiliations, of food mixed with dust and chips of wood. But it was part of their " offering " and they do not complain. And, today, thank God, they are free.

My third visit to Bombay involves a story which illustrates some of the reasons why India has not become Christian. Last December it became necessary, so the Bishop of Bombay informed me, to renew my license. This put me in a very great difficulty; I was not prepared to sever my connexion with the Church of England: on the other hand, it was extraordinarily difficult to make an act of formal allegiance to a Church in which racial distinctions were still observed, which was largely dominated by the military and imperialist spirit, and was allowing itself to be used as the subservient tool of a foreign Government. (These difficulties, of course, apply only to the *Church in India*: I have the utmost devotion to our Church as it is in England.) I wrote to the Bishop along these lines, and asked for three months to make up my mind. At the end of that period, I decided that—having cleared my consci-

ence by some sort of protest—I should ask the Bishop to license me. He arranged, therefore, to meet me at the Diocesan Registrar's in Bombay.

On arrival I found myself in the offices of the Solicitors to Government. The Registrar, a Government lawyer, beyond a curt "Sit Down", cut me dead throughout the interview, refusing even to say "Good Morning" to me as we departed. I am pretty used to that sort of thing now, but what worried me was this. How could I possibly ask *any* of my Indian friends to become Christians, still less Christian priests, if Christianity involved this sort of thing. So long as our religion is established in Government offices, we have automatically shut the door of our faith to the flower of the Indian nation. And although the Indian Church measure is passed, no one shows the slightest intention of altering the present state of things.

I have been so touched by some of you who have written to say that you are doing penance . . . It is still needed. It is needed for ignorance, perhaps even more than for cruelty. And you do understand, don't you, that in writing these things, I am not just trying to malign my own countrymen, but I do want you to see things as they are.

It is very difficult to assess the exact nature of the present situation. The country received the terms of the Gandhi-Irwin pact with a sort of stunned surprise. Nobody wanted it: nobody approved of it; it was simply the amazing power of Mahatma Gandhi and the splendid loyalty of his chief lieutenants that got it accepted by the people. It is, of course, realized that it is only a truce, and it is no good concealing the fact that India is busily preparing for "war" again. To the Congress, the breathing-space is invaluable. We must pray with all our hearts that another campaign will not be necessary: if it comes it will be terrible. But India has very little hope. How can it have?

In spite of all the talk about goodwill and reconciliation the spirit of officialdom remains unchanged. In Bombay, on the enforced absence of the Governor, a civilian—the very man who personally superintended some of the worst of the police excesses, and who embodies in his person the ideals of the old regime—was recently appointed

Acting-Governor. It was as though the Indian Government were to say, we don't care anything for this Irwin-Macdonald policy: we stand by all that we have ever maintained. At least, that is how it looked to Indian eyes.

A less justifiable cause of indignation in India, was the execution of Bhagat Singh and his comrades. Bhagat Singh was a brave man, and in many ways a fine and noble man, but he taught and practiced violence: he took the risk of execution; and he himself would have been the last to protest against his fate. A report tells how the condemned men went laughing to the gallows, and died with a befitting courage. But the country regarded their execution as a breach of the spirit of the "Truce" and at one time it looked as if the Karachi Congress would repudiate the Mahatma's policy. But all opposition melted away when the Congress met, and Gandhi remains virtual Dictator of India with an almost universal political and moral preeminence.

Another cause of discontent is the large number of political prisoners still in jail. I don't know if you realize that in India you can be put in jail on mere suspicion and kept there for years without a trial. There are hundreds of such prisoners now in India. Others who have had their trial are sentenced to savage sentences. Most of any, I feel for the Garwhali prisoners, a platoon of Indian soldiers who, when ordered to fire on an unarmed crowd including women and children, refused to do so. They knew what their refusal meant, and I was proud of being made of the same human clay when I read of it. They are now in prison, some under life sentences, some for fifteen, ten, seven years. Can you realize what that means, you dear friendly people in your happy English homes? In a little village in the North, there is a wife who will never again have her man's arms about her. There is a mother whose grey hairs will go down lonely to the grave. There are children who will suffer because their fathers refused to murder other fathers' children. Have you ever seen an Indian prison on visitor's day? If you treasure a heart unbroken, avoid it. Behind the bars, the shackled prisoners stand in rows: in front are the pathetic groups of mothers, wives and children. Just for three minutes they will talk, all

at once, no privacy, no embrace, and then they see the man they love drawn back from the bars and another takes his place.

This is the picture I must leave with you—India, nursing her wounds, brooding over her wrongs, suspicious, hostile, waiting. . . .

4

December 1931

I went with Mr A. V. Thakkar on a ten-days' tour to see work done for " untouchables ". We first went to Bombay, and put up at the Servants of India Society, where we were most kindly received by the Labour leader, N. M. Joshi. In Bombay, we spent two exhausting and crowded days visiting the tenements of the Bhangis (the sweepers who in the absence of the flush-system remove the refuse from the lavatories). These are untouchables: they are all in the employment of the Municipality, and live in municipal dwellings. It was an astonishing experience. The worse slums in London are nothing to these tenements laden with humanity, dropping with filth. Some of the tenements are tall buildings with hundreds of little rooms. In these some of the rooms are clean and airy, but overcrowded. Others are single-storied dwellings, beautifully built, clean and open. But there are few of these. The majority, four-storied or single-storied, are dark, overcrowded, intolerably filthy. One settlement, typical of several others, was no more than a collection of tiny kennels, the houses built out of the sides of kerosene tins nailed together, without windows, on ground which—when the rain pours down—becomes a swamp exhaling poisonous vapours. Here live brothers and sisters of our own, condemned by a vile social custom to a life of degrading toil. The theatre of their joys and sorrows are these dark hutches. I went into one of them: the family was sitting and lying in the pitch darkness: the hut was heavy with the damp-laden heat of Bombay. Scarcely able to breathe, I backed out into the familiar sunlight. Here children come to birth, the first joys of love awaken, fevers and choleras must be endured, until death comes to free them—these brothers and sisters

whom society has made into parasites on human excrement.

We went to the central sewage station. It was fairly clean—but the smells! Smells, astonishing, shocking, bewildering smells! a whole new world of possibilities in horror! smells mixed and blended to produce new smells; every second they came; in their infinite variety, they swarmed about you, now stimulating, now depressing you, unforgettable, amazing. And past many of the sweeper-settlements, where live little children whose affinities are with blue skies and " all enchanting innocencies ", the open sewer carries its slow-moving, hideous cargo.

" *Homo sacra res homini* ", said Seneca, and I have often quoted it recently in talking to gatherings of high-caste Hindus, telling them that, whatever their pretensions may be, if they regard any man as an outcaste, they themselves have no religion and are to be despised.

In Jalhod, we stayed with a landowner, and a deputation of sweepers waited on Mr Thakkar, but they were not admitted to the house or even to the courtyard, and we had to talk to them sitting in the street under a steady downpour of rain.

From Ahmedabad, we went to Dohad, the centre of Thakkar's Bapa's work among the Bhils. Here I had the (to me) novel experience of opening and naming a street —Thakkar Street. We spent three exceptionally interesting days among the Bhils. The Bhils are not outcastes, but they rank as depressed, almost as criminal tribes. One day, while we were driving through a wild and desolate region, we met the King of the Brigands, the Al Capone of the district, riding into the city to support one of his followers who had been arrested. The Bhils are an attractive people, very dark in colour, the men with long hair and almost naked, the women covered with heavy brass bangles.

We visited three out of the ten ashrams maintained by the Bhil Seva Mandal (Society for the Service of the Bhils). Each Ashram is in charge of an Acharya and two or three Assistants, and contains 40 to 50 boys and girls. Spinning and weaving, with literary education and gymnastics, form an important part of their training. They have prayers four times a day, and two of the Ashrams have very charming little temples. Each boy costs Rs 3 a month for his

food and Rs 7 a month for everything. The boys are intelligent and obedient, and seemed cheerful and healthy. These Ashrams are, I think, quite ideal as educational institutions. They are not too big, and can be run on family lines. Literary and vocational training proceeds side by side. The whole basis of the life is religious. The games are simple Indian village games, and the boys practice archery and the village dances. The general standard of living has been kept as close to the standard of the boys' own homes as possible.

The Ashrams will, in time, transform the Bhil Community. When so virile and naturally intelligent a race gains enlightenment, it will contribute leaders to the country and produce the finest types of manhood and womanhood. The leader of this work, Thakkar Bapa, is one of the few genuine saints—humble, simple, loving, devoted. He has some of the marks of S. Francis—a love of the poor, a constant serenity and joy, a vast capacity for work.

From Dohad, I came back alone to spend a month at Sabarmati. I have had the joy of being given a room in Gandhiji's own house. It is very peaceful here, and I am busy and happy. The programme is a strenuous one.

4.0 Rising Bell.
4.20 Prayer.
6.0 Light breakfast (Cup of milk and a piece of bread).
6.0-7.0 Study.
7.0-9.0 Spinning and Carding Class.
9.15 Hindi Class.
10.0 Bath, washing clothes, etc.
10.45 Mid-day meal of chapattis, boiled vegetables and curds.
11.15-12.30 Rest.
12.30 Lecture on Technique of Weaving.
1.30-3.30 Weaving Shed.
4.0-5.0 Spinning.
5.0 Bath in River.
5.30 Evening meal of chapattis, boiled vegetables, a little rice, and milk, Some fruit.
6.15 Walk.
7.30 Prayer.

8.0-9.0 Recreation.
9.0 Bed.

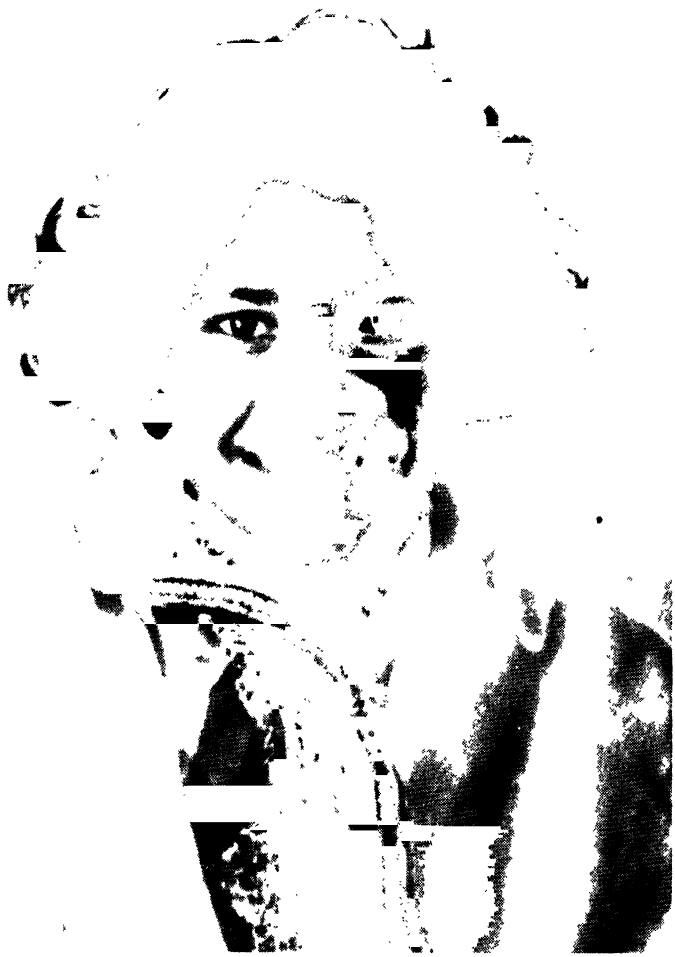
The actual members have a much harder time. Spinning and Weaving classes for them are from 7.0-10.30 and 1.30-5. On the other hand, I have writing work, etc. which they escape. It is exactly like being back at school again. I go in terror of being late: Gandhiji has compared the events of the day to a railway-train—if you arrive late at the station, you miss the train; if you arrive late for a meal, you miss the meal. The discipline is very strict. There is roll-call at morning and evening prayers, and in the evening we have to say how much yarn we have spun during the day. My name is called with the other students. There are about 150 people here, boys and girls, men and women, both married and unmarried. The strictest chastity, both within and outside the marriage tie, is enjoined. The Ashram is a most interesting experiment in co-monasticism: so far it has worked very well. The chief features of the life are Body-Labour (everyone is expected to do eight hours work a day), Economy (expenses are reduced to Rs 12 a month, and no private property is permitted), Discipline, Cleanliness, Punctuality. Full members observe six Vows—Truth, Ahimsa (Love), Celibacy, Control of the Palate, Non-Stealing (in the sense that it is theft if we use articles which we do not really need) and Non-Possession (i.e. Simplicity of Life).

It is rather difficult to compare the Ashram to our monasteries. It is Franciscan in its devotion to poverty and to the poor. Its rigid discipline reminds one of a Jesuit seminary. Its alliance of politics, economics and religion must be almost unique. You would appreciate the sanity and good-sense that characterises the place.

It is especially valuable to be here when the Mahatma is away. Even in his absence, the life works "like a mill", as someone put it to me. There is perfect order. It is a fine example of strenuous living.

I greatly enjoy my experiences in the spinning and carding class and in the weaving shed. It is very new to me, this body-labour, but it is quite enthralling, the triumph of drawing a perfect thread of even count, the joy of seeing the white fleecy cloud of cotton rise up under the twanging

THE AUTHOR AND KUSUM HIVALE



KOSI ELWIN

carding-bow, the struggle with the complex processes of weaving, and the delight of watching the cloth grow beneath your hand.

My great trial in the Ashram is the visitors. My room has windows with bars to them instead of glass, giving the impression that one is in a sort of cage. Crowds of visitors come daily to the Ashram, and they all come and look at the curious new specimen—*Homo sapiens from England*—through the bars. I may be sleeping, or dressing, or eating, it doesn't matter. And they often mistake me for Mirabehn who, with her shaven head, looks a little masculine. You hear them gather at the window, they lift up the children to see better. There is a pause while they drink me in. And then a whisper, "To think that is the daughter of an English admiral."

My chief criticism of the Ashram is its lack of culture. The library is open only once a week. There is little interest in art. Music, however, is taught. Not all are as simple as the member who said to me "Mister, do you ever read any books?" Some are really learned. "Love," said one of them to me the other day, "must be ontological. I can never think of love as epistemological," he said.

Here you see the Mahatma from yet another angle—as the monastic founder and spiritual director. On the way to see the Viceroy, he will be writing endless notes of spiritual advice to every member of the Ashram. He knows them all, hears their confession, gives them counsel, is always at their service. "I went to him", a boy of seventeen told me, "and told him all the bad things in my life, and what a relief I felt when the burden of my sin was removed." To one who asked advice about his life-work, he said, "Seek first Truth, and everything else will come to you." He is very stern, he makes tremendous demands, yet he is sure to understand. He has the power of giving himself completely even to the apparently unimportant.

5

February 1932

The other day a well-to-do merchant in Bombay said to me, "We money-making people merely exist; but you *live*."

I think it would be true to say that since Christmas we have really lived—and at a high level of what I can only call serene adventurousness. There has been adventure, but it has not been just excitement: there has been with it joy and serenity, as there should be for those who try to follow St Francis. It has not been quite so adventurous as I expected when I wrote my last letter: we are not in prison: sometimes I wish we were: Shamrao and I between us have travelled some ten thousand miles in the last three months, mostly third-class, and we are beginning to long for a settled life. We are very literally now "strangers and pilgrims on the earth", having "no settled dwelling-place", "in journeyings often"; again and again we have set out "not knowing whither we went." And now many of our friends are afraid to have us in their homes, and it is sometimes difficult even to get food. And this not because we are the enemies of India, but because we are her friends.

For you can hardly believe, you people with a thousand years of freedom in your veins, the scope of the repression which your countrymen—my countrymen—are laying upon India. We are living under a regime of extraordinary law—a lawless law which gives to its representatives the power to do almost anything they like. The Ordinances give power to officials to arrest, detain or control people even on suspicion. If Government is satisfied that there are any reasonable grounds for believing that any person has acted, is acting, or is about to act in a manner prejudicial to public safety, he may be directed not to enter, reside or remain in any specified area. The penalty for disobedience is two years' imprisonment or fine or both. This regulation means that a man can be detained for a short period simply on suspicion. He is then released, under conditions so humiliating that he is bound to break them. For breaking them, he is sentenced to two years' imprisonment. You can therefore at present receive two years' imprisonment simply for being suspected of having something to do with the Congress. Officials have powers to take possession of buildings, to control and regulate posts, telegraphs and railways, to control the supply of certain

commodities of general use, to establish special courts, and so on. Trials of political prisoners normally take place within the prison walls, and before the trial begins, the magistrate is instructed as to the sentence he should pass.

Under these Ordinances, the leaders of the nation and thousands of the rank and file have been arrested. Not only have all Congress institutions been outlawed, but also many institutions of no political purpose, but which are inspired by a patriotic spirit—such as the Bhil Seva Mandal, Anti-Untouchability and Prohibition Associations, and Khadi production centres. Congress funds have been confiscated, and even money lying in banks to the credit of private individuals where it has been suspected that such money might be used for Congress purposes. Many presses have been seized: security has been demanded from papers representing the nationalist standpoint; and notices have been served on all papers restraining them from criticism of Government, from publishing pictures of national leaders, and controlling their printing of news. No one can use the post or telegraph service with confidence. At the same time, persistent propaganda is being carried on against the Congress—its leaders are vilified and its aims are misrepresented—in official communiques, and in the Anglo-Indian Press. All expression of popular opinion is banned: meetings are forcibly dispersed by the use of lathis; there have already been several cases of firing; even a meeting like that of the Merchants Chamber in Bombay was forbidden. There have been in many places real attempts at terrorisation: severe beatings especially in villages; harsh and even indecent treatment in the jails; the penalizing of those who show sympathy to national workers—hotel keepers in Bombay were forbidden to serve them with food; parents are fined for the activities of their children, and a whole village may be heavily fined if some of the inhabitants take part in the movement. Long and severe sentences are given, and the women have suffered especially, being subjected to rough handling, and nearly always condemned to rigorous imprisonment.

And this has fallen on a nation which had no desire for war, and whose great leader returned from England long-

ing for co-operation. I can personally testify that the Congress leaders did not want a fight this year: the country was not ready for it; and everyone was looking forward to a period of constructive work. It is impossible to avoid the impression that Government wanted a fight; it wanted to break the power of the Congress. The Viceroy's refusal even to see Mahatma Gandhi, and his condescending and ill-mannered answer to the latter's conciliatory telegram, forced war upon the nation. I do not believe that the situation on the Frontier and in the United Provinces could not have been settled if a policy of co-operation and discussion had been followed. If the Mahatma was allowed to discuss the Ordinances in Whitehall, why could he not do so in Delhi? If the Prime Minister and Sir Samuel Hoare were ready to meet him, why should the Viceroy refuse? The result of the Viceroy's refusal has been that the whole of India has felt the burden of an intolerable insult, and a sense of wrong is growing daily which is alienating many of the Government's former friends.

Now we have before us a long and desperate fight, which can have but one issue. Nothing will ever break the spirit of the Congress. Nothing at all events can break the spirit of the Mahatma; and if he alone were in jail it would be sufficient. Both sides are determined. Government is determined to smash Congress to pieces; Congress is determined to win complete independence. "Nothing will ever make us give in now," Pandit Malaviya said to me the other day. "You cannot compel us to have anything to do with you, or to buy your goods. The first condition of peace will be the immediate withdrawal of the Indian Civil Service."

The real danger and tragedy of the situation lies in the effect it will have on the future of Indo-British relations. I need not emphasize again its effect on the future of Christianity in India. The wife of the Indian-Christian Principal of a college said to me, "What is the use of people preaching Christianity when a Christian nation is treating us in this manner?"

India to-day is like a great prison-house. Try to imagine England with all your best friends in jail; you yourself bothered by the police every time you get into a train; unable to get accurate news; unable to write to your

friends without the thought that some prying official may surprise your confidences; and a tide of suppressed bitterness and indignation flowing from one end of the country to the other. "To what purpose is this waste?" To delay by a few years an inevitable end. That is all. And its effect is the ruin of British trade, the end of British prestige, the loss of Britain's reputation for justice and fair dealing, and the permanent alienation of two great peoples who should be friends.

I write as an Englishman, a loyal Englishman, one who loves his country with all his heart. There is not a trace of bitterness or anger in me, but there is an abundance of shame and sorrow. And once again I call on my English friends to do penance and reparation with me for our national sins.

Of the trip to Peshawar (described at p. 34), Verrier wrote,

"What strange characters we met! There was the Indian representative of Reuter's at Delhi—an amusing, Puck-like little man. 'As a protest against the arrest of the Mahatma, I have given up Scotch whisky altogether: henceforth I will only drink Continental spirits.' And again very solemnly, 'I believe in Blood. That is why Irwin was a good Viceroy.' In the Punjab, we travelled with a Sadhu. He had no clothes: he was very cold: Shamrao gave him a blanket. In the morning, he produced some money out of a filthy rag and bought me a packet of cigarettes as the supreme way of showing gratitude to an Englishman. Then there was the Hindu who had nearly become a Christian. 'When I played tennis,' he said, 'I used to ask Christ that I might win. And I always did.' But then he read the *Bhagavad Gita* and learnt that a religious man was one who did not care whether he won or lost, and the impression created by the miracle was obliterated. Perhaps the most pathetic figure we met was the English wife of one of the Peshawar Congress leaders. On Christmas eve she went to sleep in a little Frontier village. At two in the morning of Christmas Day—when all over the world the midnight Mass had come to its triumphant close of peace—she was called out of bed into the bitter cold, her house was searched, and she was told that her husband

and all the male members of her family were arrested. After a week she left the village to go to her bungalow in Peshawar, and found it surrounded by soldiers with fixed bayonets. She managed to get permission to occupy the house, where she lived utterly alone and deserted, until her son arrived from England.

" After Peshawar, we went down to Bombay, to find this astonishing war in full progress. There was very little outward activity—no meetings or processions—but under the surface there was a widespread and more practical business. Everything at present depends on the merchants, and among the merchants there has been strenuous propaganda. Their chief representative has withdrawn from the R.T.C. Committees. The markets have remained closed day after day. The export of gold has been considerably reduced. It was a curious experience to visit the great cloth markets, and the gold market. At the various doors stood little groups of saffron-clothed Desh Sevikas (women volunteers). A handful of them, so great was their moral influence, was sufficient to paralyse a whole industry. Inside, the markets were peopled by dogs and monkeys, and the long streets of locked deserted shops echoed to their chatterings. The Desh Sevikas told me a curious story (which I believe is true) of a merchant who exported some gold on the very day that Mahatma Gandhi was arrested. His name was written in chalk on the road outside the bullion market as a traitor. When he saw it, he was so overwhelmed with remorse and fear that he fell dead in the street."

CHAPTER V

THE STRUGGLE WITH THE CHURCH

"Above all things, Liberty!"

Verrier's struggle with the Church may be said to have begun on the day he hoisted the Congress flag above the buildings of the Christa Seva Sangh at Poona.

There followed five years of controversy and even now I feel a sort of thrill when I remember how Verrier stood up, almost single-handed, against Bishop after Bishop, missionary after missionary, in defence of our country. Some of the things for which he fought are taken for granted today—and Verrier had no small share in establishing them.

Verrier's first point was that the Indian Christians, clergy and laity alike, had just as much right to take part in the Congress movement as to support the British Empire.

His second point was that it was quite untrue, as so many of the clergy and officials were saying, that 'Christianity had nothing to do with politics'. He insisted that the Christian community not only had a right but a duty to enter political life and that to fight for freedom was the heritage of every religious man.

These two points will receive much illustration in the following pages, and I need not discuss them further now. But Verrier's work at this time was very important. Most Indian Christians were 'loyal'; few supported the National Movement. Verrier gave a great impetus to many to rally round the Congress. Above all, he provided a logical reasonable basis for their participation in politics. His booklet *Christ and Satyagraha* is a regular guide-book for the Christian revolutionary; it unites the Fathers of the Church and the best religious thought of modern times to prove the right and duty of the Christian to overthrow a foreign or despotic Government. He gives a number of circumstances when a Government should, on principles generally accepted by the Church, be resisted. The first is when its authority is not just but usurped. 'It is the

universal belief in India that the foreign and unnatural Government now in existence, began in usurpation, continued in usurpation and must end as soon as possible.' Then a Government may be resisted when it commands that which is unjust, when it is not the expression of the general will, when it impoverishes the common life, when a law violates some higher law of ethics or religion.

But the spirit of this pamphlet, as of all Verrier's work, can be seen in the following passage.

> "Above all things, the Christian's task is one of reconciliation. 'Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called sons of God'. To be a peace-maker does not mean that a man must be politically neutral, but that, while believing whole-heartedly in the justice of his own cause, he tries to see and to make known all that is good on the other side, and never shuts any possible doorway into peace. 'I have dedicated my whole life,' says Romain Rolland, 'to the reconciliation of mankind'. What a wonderful and Christ-like ideal! It is one that is not out of reach even of the combatant in the present bloodless war. For us in India today, reconciliation does not mean giving in before the goal is won; it does not mean a cry of Peace, Peace, when there is no peace. What it does mean is that we should carry on our war always with a view to peace; that we should so act that no bitter memories, no poignant regrets, shall arise to haunt our future; that we should always behave to our enemies as if they were one day to be our friends.
>
> "In one sense, every war is a civil war; all strife between men is a domestic strife; there is only one nation, one race, one family; we all belong to the nation, the race, the family of God."

This result was achieved at great cost to himself. Verrier came to India to study and meditate; he found himself thrust into the turmoil of practical affairs. His advocacy of the Congress cause cut him off from many European friends, isolated him and brought him a lot of spiritual and social loneliness. Of course, there were friends who stood by him. John Maclean was one; Leonard Schiff was another, Yesudas Martin a third. And he gradually won a whole world of new friends, in India and outside.

So long as he remained in the Diocese of Bombay, there was no actual breach with the Church. The trouble came when we moved from Bombay into the Diocese of Nagpur.

It was then necessary for Verrier to come to terms with a new Bishop.[1] We met him in the house of a Deputy Commissioner at Bilaspur, and at first (not having seen Verrier's police file) he was very good to us. We went up to Karanjia and then there began an extraordinary correspondence, of which I give extracts as illustrating the way the Church supported the Empire and also for the light it throws on Verrier himself. Verrier has been criticized for his arrogance, for his impertinence in daring to write as he did to a Prince of the Church, a successor of the Apostles. But it should be remembered that Verrier was not fighting only for himself; he was thinking all the time of the humble Indian padres and catechists who needed liberty to serve and love their Motherland.

But let us turn to the letters.

On 16 February 1932, the Bishop wrote to Verrier: we were then in Karanjia.

> "I fear there is going to be a lot of trouble about your being permitted to stay in the Mandla District. I wrote to Mr Irwin, who promptly replied to me in Calcutta that he had already personally recommended that you should be deported from India for your activities in Jubbulpore. I have seen some of the evidence that was placed before Mr Irwin and really, on that, I do not wonder that he has made this recommendation."

The Bishop continued by insisting that Verrier should take the Oath of Allegiance to the King-Emperor, an oath which even at that date was not constitutionally required from clergy of the Church of India, as well as the Oath of Canonical Obedience to himself. About the second, there

[1] This was Bishop Wood. Many years later Verrier wrote of him as follows:

> "He was a brave, good, strong man. He was able to win the admiration of men like Grigson. He loved the Gonds. It may have been as material for Christianity. But love is such a rare thing that whatever the motive may be, it is worth having.
>
> "His scholarship, however, was not of a high order and his book *In and Out of Canada* has been condemned by an American scholar as the only one by an European writer which fakes its folk-lore.
>
> "After his death the Bishop had the good fortune of having his life written by Dr Eyre Chatterton who represents him as the ideal Christian sportsman and says, 'How fully he had won the confidence of Government is evident from the fact that in his third year in India, he was awarded the Kaisar-i-Hind Medal' and that 'He was *always on the most friendly terms with Forest officials.' There could* hardly be higher praise."

was no question, but the meaning of the first was interpreted by the Bishop as follows:

"The meaning that I always attach to it is perfectly clear and straightforward. First of all I consider that the Clergy should belong to no political party. It is their duty to fit people to do their duty as good citizens in that state of life into which shall please God to call them. They therefore should be prepared to support whatever is right and just regardless of political parties.

"The King-Emperor himself is not satisfied with the present methods of governing India and has directed that changes be made.[1] Any Priest therefore who takes the Oath of Allegiance is bound to separate himself from any party which adopts unconstitutional and illegal methods of political agitation.

"If, therefore, you desire to take the Oath of Allegiance, I think you should separate yourself absolutely from the Congress Party which has been declared an illegal association on account of its unconstitutional and unlawful methods of working. I do not consider that any Priest of the Church of India, Burma and Ceylon can justifiably remain a member of the Congress Party as at present constituted and working."

On 1 March 1932, Verrier wrote to the Bishop to say that, although he would have no difficulty

"in repeating the Oath of Allegiance in the Church of England, it would be wrong for me to take it in the Church of India, Burma and Ceylon, which is free of state control and does not lay this obligation on its clergy. My personal loyalty to His Majesty is not here in question. My objection is to the fettering of the church in India by a demand which would impair its usefulness in this country. There is an all-too-prevalent belief that if a man is won for Christ, he is lost for India, and that no patriot in India can be a member of the Church. The greatest hindrance to the progress of the Gospel today is that very identification of Christianity with British Imperialism which your letter supports.

[1] With the tone of this, Verrier has composed a passage from *Nelson's Indian Readers*, First Book.

"Queen Victoria loved India very much. She had an Indian gentleman to teach her Urdu. Edward the Seventh also loved India. Because of his love for it he sent his son and daughter-in-law (compare, says Verrier, John iii, 16), the Prince and Princess of Wales, to visit it, and to learn to love it, and the Indian people. King George has shown, both on that visit and in many other ways, that his liking for the country is just as great as that of his grandmother or his father."

"If no Congressman can be a member of the Church, you are yourself identifying the Church with a particular political party, and you are thereby closing its doors against the very flower of India, men and women who command the devotion and allegiance of the great bulk of people in this country, and into whose hands we shall have to transfer the reins of government in a year or two. I cannot see any meaning in the freedom of the Church of India, Burma and Ceylon, unless it is to be the Church of the people of India, Burma and Ceylon, whose mouthpiece and representative is the National Congress. Congressmen do not forfeit the right to be members of Christ because they adopt the method of civil disobedience which is the ancient and legitimate right of every people which cannot get justice by constitutional means.

"The Church, in the words of St Augustine, is a city which 'summoneth its citizens from all tribes, and collecteth its pilgrim fellowship from all languages, taking no heed of what is diverse in manners or laws or institutions'. It must enfold within its arms of love everyone in India, from the members of the European Association to the most extreme follower of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. There is nothing in the Gospel of Jesus Christ to justify your Lordship's identification of the universal Church with party politics, or in penalizing me for my political opinions.

"I am not a member of the Congress, and I do not understand your Lordship's reference to my liability to be arrested as being a member of an illegal Association. As a Christian, however, I naturally have the liveliest sympathy for an organization which has adopted into its political programme so much of the Spirit and teaching of Jesus Christ, and which has taken as its weapon not armed force, but the truthful and non-violent method of Satyagraha which represents a transformation of the war-principle by the Sermon on the Mount. Nor need any Christian be ashamed of following Mahatma Gandhi, the most sublime and Christ-like figure now living on this planet.

"In the political sphere I have done nothing unworthy of a Catholic priest, on which I could not parallel a hundred times over from the history of the Church. I have said and written nothing that is untrue, or which I regret, or which I would not repeat if I had opportunity. On two occasions, with shame and sorrow I have had to expose the unjust dealings of my countrymen with a weaker nation; I have written a pamphlet examining in the light of Scripture and the great schoolmen, the

Christian's attitude to Civil Disobedience; in conjunction with a member of the Provincial Synod I have written a book to which the Archbishop of York has contributed a Foreword, in which I have characterized Civil Disobedience as the moral substitute for war, an alternative to armaments, the discovery of which should be welcomed by every Christian. I have lectured on the philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi and the cause of Khadi—two subjects of vital importance for the free nation now coming to birth. I have never spoken as a party man, nor am I regarded as such by Indians. I do not remember giving a public lecture without proclaiming the Gospel of truth, love and sacrifice, that our first debt is to the poor, that we must forgive our enemies and that it is love which must in the future regulate the relationships of great peoples."

In the same month, Verrier wrote again in reply to a letter from the Bishop which rebuked him for interesting himself in politics.

"You refer frequently to the nonsense I have been talking and the dangerous propaganda in which I have indulged. Do you really think it is fair to condemn a man unheard, without even specifying the charge? You have had one flagrant example of the lies spread about me in official circles. You say that I was unwise at Jubbulpore, but you do not comment on the injustice of the Commissioner's demand for my deportation without any enquiry whether the report about me was true. If you want to see the burden of my so-called 'political propaganda' you will find it in my chapters of *The Dawn of Indian Freedom*, to which Archbishop Temple has written a Foreword. It is an impossible demand to make of a priest that he should have nothing to do with politics. The religion of the Incarnation is bound to claim the whole of human life as its province. This has always been realized by the Christian Church, and I need not remind you of C.O.P.E.C. which was inspired by the present Archbishop of York, and of the Papal Encyclical *Libertas Præstantissimum* which declares that 'the Church does not condemn those who, if it can be done without violation of justice, wish to make their country independent of any foreign or despotic power.' The last Lambeth Conference declared that 'Peace will never be achieved till international relations are controlled by religious and ethical standards. . . . As citizens of the Kingdom of God we are summoned to make war on injustice, falsehood and covetousness within ourselves

and in the world around us. Neither industry nor commerce nor finance lies outside the borders of the Kingdom of God, for at every point they touch human values and depend on human motives, and nothing human is alien to Him who came that men might have life and it abundantly.' I have done nothing which is not covered by the Lambeth declaration.

"You yourself do not abstain from politics. You draw your salary from a secular Government. You live in the company of officials, and you are regarded by the majority of Indians not as a minister of Christ but as a government official. You say there is no authority for my actions in the Gospel: where in the Gospel do you find the justification for drawing a large salary from a secular Government? You tell me to withdraw my support from Congress, which is trying to remodel the principles of war on the Sermon of the Mount. Do you forbid your chaplains to have anything to do with the army, a body of men which exists for organized and legalized murder, the antithesis of the Gospel of the Prince of Peace? Do you not see that your authority to speak on political questions is invalidated by the fact that you are a paid servant of the British Government?

"I hope you will forgive me for speaking frankly and strongly, and I beg you to forgive me if I have forgotten the respect that is due to your position. You do not realize how disastrously the cause of the Gospel of Christ in India is suffering as a result of the 'official Christianity' which you represent and desire to perpetuate. You have no right to shut the doors of the universal Church upon us because we belong to the opposite political camp to yours. That is mixing up politics and religion with a vengeance."

Shortly afterwards, we were visited by the Bishop at Karanjia, and I take the following account of the interview from one of Verrier's letters to European friends.

"The other day the Bishop arrived here, with two C.M.S. missionaries, and we all had a long conversation which resulted in a deadlock more or less. He could not, he said, have anything to do with us, if we had anything to do with the Mahatma and his followers. Gandhi was the great enemy of Christ in modern India: C. F. Andrews was contemptuously dismissed as a 'recreant priest'; Congress was doing devil's work and had substituted brute force for Satyagraha. The Bishop even took exception to Khadi. If we did any Khadi work, he couldn't licence me. I pointed

out to him that Mr Emerson, (who is he ? said the Bishop) the Home Secretary, had told me that Government had no objection to Khadi and that he himself admired the movement. C. S. S. also, I understand, has permission from the Governor of Bombay to run a Khadi centre. But no, said the Bishop, we cannot as Christians support Khadi and if you do Khadi work I can have nothing to do with you.

"At this point, the younger of the two C.M.S. missionaries, who had arrived in India a month ago, exclaimed in a very solemn voice, 'I do not see any use, my Lord, in discussing the affairs of Christ with a renegade. In fact, Father Elwin is more than a renegade, he is a traitor: he has betrayed his country and his Lord and has thrown in his lot with their enemies. What profit is there in discussing the things of the Kingdom with such a man?' This, almost too good to be true, was the sort of remark which compensates the sorrows of a lifetime, and my delighted smile to Shamrao was so obvious that I am sorry to say the dear creature began to feel he had said the wrong thing. He later apologized and we became friends.

"'No priest of mine,' continued the Bishop, 'may have any political views'. I began to give some precedents, including St Thomas Aquinas and the Archbishop of York. 'I don't care about the Archbishop. In *my* diocese there will be nothing of the kind'. 'But if a Congressman wishes to become a Christian priest?' 'Then he must foreswear the Congress'. 'But your clergy have the Union Jack in their churches. Isn't that politics?' 'Ah, but the Union Jack is the standard of the Cross'." [1]

"A bloody Cross," said Shamrao, unable to contain himself any longer.

I tried another way of approach. "You, my lord, were a chaplain in the war. You lived among those whose hands were stained with blood, and whose profession was to kill others. You gave them your moral support (the Bishop nodded), and you did all you could to help your side to win. I have simply been a sort of Chaplain to men whose hands are not blood-stained but who are using the weapons of

[1] Remember, should you e'er grow slack
Repressing the seditious black—
The Cross is on the Union Jack.

non-violence and truth. Why, if I am wrong, were you right? Haven't Congressmen souls?" The Bishop looked incredulous, but could only say, "Well, it takes a great deal to save the soul of a Congressman."

"I tried yet once again. C. F. Andrews has done more to show Christ to India than any other living man. To Indians his initials, C.F.A., stand for 'Christ's Faithful Apostle'. So I said, 'We try to follow in the path of Andrews (with the difference that we wish to exercise our ministry in the Church). You are acquainted with Andrews' activities. If he asked you for a licence, would you give it to him?' 'I would have nothing whatever to do with him.'"

"There was a lot more, but the sum of the whole matter was that unless we were prepared to sever all connexion with the Mahatma and his followers, even to the extent of dropping Khadi work, the Bishop would have nothing whatever to do with us. He concluded to this effect, 'You are a traitor to the cause of Christ. You are a traitor to the King-Emperor. You are doing the work of the devil.' And he got up and went, only just turning to Shamrao. 'As for you, I will have nothing whatever to do with you.'"

We were both very upset by this interview, partly because it was so completely unnecessary. We were not, in fact, doing any political work: indeed we were being criticized for withdrawing from the fray. Later in the letter, Verrier emphasizes this:

"Only far down the list come such political interests as we have, for I am no politician, and even that is the work of love—love which has to take the sword of justice and the armour of truth. For you cannot love your friends only in fair weather: you must stand by them always.

"To me the prisons of India are crowded with living men and women, hundreds of whom I know and love, to many of whom I am bound by the tenderest of ties, with whom I have had intimate spiritual communion, friends whom I love with all my heart and whose sufferings invade my dreams. To the Bishop, they are a pack of tiresome agitators who have won 'the cheap martyrdom of imprisonment.' (his actual words.)

"It is a topsy-turvey world. It is unequal, as Mr Weller

Senior used to say when his rum wasn't mixed half and half. It's unequal. Suppose Shamrao had gone to the war under the standard of the Cross (the Union Jack) and had loosed poison gas upon his fellow-men, bombed women and children, and shot and bayoneted and hated the enemies of England—then on his return he would have been hailed as a hero, and any Bishop would have ordained him. But because he shows sympathy (that is all) to a movement which is fighting with the weapons of non-violence, and love, and suffering, he is unworthy to be a minister of Christ.

"In the Middle Ages, the State was regarded as the police force of the Church. But today in India the Church is expected to act as the police force of the State, and the Bishops who draw their salaries from the State are very loyal to their employers.

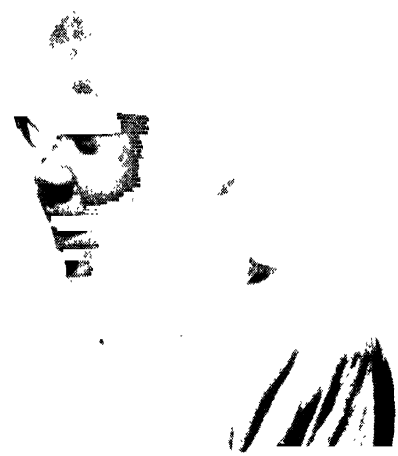
"In these days, when Britain and India are being daily driven asunder by the injustice of the Ordinance regime you would expect the Bishops, who at Lambeth summoned their followers 'to make war on injustice, falsehood and covetousness' and emphatically declared that political issues did not lie outside the borders of the Kingdom of God, to make some protest in the Name of Christ. Yet not only are they unmoved by the suffering around them; they urge on the secular power to strike more vigorously, and lend the whole of their moral support to the policy of repression. And *then* they say to me, No Christian must have anything to do with politics.

"The Hindu Deputy-Commissioner sent us a beautiful deer-skin for our Chapel, but when the Bishop came here he would not even enter our Chapel and say a prayer for us.

"But these days will pass. We have youth on our side; and after all there will be an amnesty some day and soon Congress will be the Government. Then the Bishop, on his theory of passive obedience, will be bound to support the Congress!"

Yet again the Bishop sent a long letter, pointing out what an undesirable and dangerous person Verrier was, and explaining that he had asked him to leave the Congress, "because I love the Gonds and I am not keen that through any act of mine they should be the people who should provide any part of the 'million lives' and the 'rivers of blood'

JAWARLALAL, WITH THE AUTHOR'S CHILDREN—SURESH AND RAMHULA



JAWARLALAL

VERRIER WITH ABORIGINAL CHILDREN AT PATANGARH

VERRIER ELWIN'S STUDY AT PATANGARH

that the Mahatma says he is willing to expend in the attainment of his political aims. Those aims appear to be the re-establishment of some form of the Vedic Religion and culture in India, when his party has the power."

In June, the Bishop repeated his creed.

> "If an Indian Christian desires to be a nationalist and to see India self-governing he has all my sympathy and, so long as his activites are constitutional, my support. But you have repeatedly told me that your sympathies are with Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress party—i.e., definitely Hindu and opposed to the spread of Christianity and that you put their political ideas above your duties as a priest to preach Christ."

But what really annoyed Verrier was that the Bishop sent him an official notification about the outlawing of the Wardha Ashram.

"Political and Military Department.
Notification.
Nagpur, the 1st June 1932.

No. 565-842-C.D.—In exercise of the powers conferred by sub-section (1) of section 3 of the Unlawful Association Ordinance, 1932 (Ordinance IV of 1932), the Governor in Council is pleased to notify the following places which in his opinion are used for the purpose of unlawful association

(1) The Satyagraha Ashram at Wardha;
(2) The bungalow of Jamnalal Bajaj, called the Ashram at Wardha; and
(3) The garden of Jamnalal Bajaj at Wardha and the 'Shibir' situated in it.

By order of the Governor in Council,
H. Gowan,
Chief Secretary to Government,
Central Provinces.

* * *

No. 350. Dated Nagpur, the 2nd June 1932.

Copy forwarded to the Rev Father Verrier Elwin, The Ashram, Karanjia, for information.

(Sd.) Alex Nagpur
Bishop of Nagpur."

On 21 November 1932, the Bishop wrote again,

"As I wrote to you the Commissioner in reply to my letter on your behalf stated that he had already applied to Government to have you removed from his Division and also from India. Honestly I do not blame him or Government. Your anti-Government and political activities have been very serious indeed—as I am now learning.

"The only condition on which I can support you and approve of your working in this Diocese is that you definitely sever your connexion with Congress. It is an illegal association and no priest of the Church should be connected with it in any way. It is definitely causing dispeace and hatred when all men of good will, who love India, are straining every effort to bring peace and progress. I urge you therefore to sever your connexion with it completely and to turn to your work—as a priest in the Church. So long as you keep your political opinions to yourself, you may hold what you please. One can only pray that you will outgrow your present opinions."

On 2 December 1932, Verrier wrote to the Bishop to take his first important step towards severing his connexion with the Church. Since very few people understand the arrangements of the Church of England I will try to explain.

1. Anyone who is baptized and confirmed is a member of the Church and can enjoy its ordinary privileges.

2. A man who after training and testing, is ordained as a priest has a potential, but not an actual, right to function as such.

3. If he wishes to *function* as a priest—conduct services, preach, administer sacraments—he must obtain a licence to do so from the Bishop of the Diocese where he resides.

A priest may surrender his licence, but yet remain a priest, and a member of the Church. This is what C. F. Andrews did. He surrendered his licence, but to the end of his life retained his status as a priest.

Now on 2 December 1932, Verrier followed Andrews' example and declared that he proposed not to apply for a licence and realized that he would therefore be unable to function as a priest any longer. Three years later, he took the further step of surrendering his priesthood altogether

and at about the same time he withdrew from membership of the Church.

"My reason is that the Church of India, Burma and Ceylon, though nominally free, is still virtually under the control of a foreign government. While serving in the Diocese of Bombay the extent of this control was less apparent, but my relations with you have raised the problems arising from it in an acute form.

"I hope you will forgive me if I point out—in no spirit of hostility but in order to make my point clear—some examples of this. You address me on envelopes marked 'Government of India': your letters bear the imprint 'On His Majesty's Service'. You draw your salary from the coffers of Government: the Union Jack flies—illegally—over your Cathedral. When I asked you for a licence, you made no enquiries about my spiritual or theological qualifications: you demanded what you had no constitutional right to demand, an oath of allegiance to the King-Emperor. When we last met you concluded our conversation by saying that I was doing the work of the devil. When the private house of Sheth Jamnalal Bajaj was declared illegal and occupied by the police a notification was sent to me; but this notification came not from the Home Department of Government, but from your office. You have refused—on political grounds—even to consider one of my co-workers for ordination, although he has had three years training in a religious house. Neither you nor your fellow-bishops have raised a word of protest against the ruthless and brutal policy of repression that in the last three years has attempted to crush the national spirit of India. Instead you have justified this repression, even claiming that flogging is a legitimate punishment for non-violent political offenders. In your dealings with me, you have played the part, not of a father in God, but of an agent of the foreign government.

"Between this state-religion and the religion of the New Testament I can trace no connexion. It was not the disciples who cried 'We have no king but Caesar'. We never see our Exemplar sitting at ease at Caesar's table, but only standing in rags before his judgement-seat. I would feel the same if the Church allowed itself to be subservient to Mr Gandhi's government. Where the government does not exist at the will of the people the position is even worse.

"I have thrown in my lot with India. For the time being I am outside active politics, being bound by the restrictions laid on me by Government. I have never

intended the Gond Seva Mandal to be a centre of political agitation. But I am unwaveringly of the opposition. If I am silent, it is not because my heart is changed, but because I am a prisoner of honour to the Government, and until they release me I shall behave as such. But my heart and my spirit is with those who are suffering, in so Christ-like a spirit, in the jails. How can I work under one who is practically an official of the government which I regard as hostile to the interests of the country which I love."

And Verrier ended his letter in words which I know were sincere, for he always liked the Bishop and, he has said since, 'After all, the man did me the inestimable service of driving me from theology to anthropology':—

"Like Loisy, I am not an adept in the art of genuflection, but I hope you will allow me to say that I can find no bitterness in my heart towards you, but only sentiments of the deepest affection and respect. I have spoken frankly, because you like frankness. But you must always—whatever happens—look on me as one who loves you, and if we ever meet again I trust it will be as friends."

On 2 November 1935, Verrier took the second of the three steps I have mentioned above and wrote to the Metropolitan of Calcutta:

"I am writing formally to announce to you my decision to be no longer a member of the Church of England either as a priest or a communicant."

He added, "I leave the Church of my baptism without a trace of bitterness and hostility, with nothing but love and reverence for the great tradition in which I have grown up. But it will be dishonest for me to remain longer."

This, however, was not enough. The position of an Anglican priest is not merely spiritual: there are social and legal implications. When Verrier went to England in 1936, he consulted his life-long friend Archbishop Temple and on 27 November 1936 he signed a "Deed of Relinquishment" stating that "having been admitted to the Office of Priest in the Church of England do hereby in pursuance of the Clerical Disabilities Act 1870 declare that I relinquish all rights, privileges, advantages and exemptions of the Office as by law belonging to it."

Since 1936, therefore, it has not only been incorrect, but the height of bad manners to address Verrier as the 'Rev' or 'Father' or even to announce him, as one meeting did, as 'the late Father Elwin'.

The main conflict with the Church authorities was over politics. Presently this conflict resolved itself, for as Verrier became more and more engrossed in literary and scientific work, he had less and less to do with politics. But a deeper issue remained and continues to this day, for the problem of religious conversion or cultural change is as interesting to the anthropologist as to the priest.

I have found among Verrier's papers a long note he wrote a few years ago on conversion and I will reproduce it in full.

"My mother's idea of conversion was one of the purest that could be found anywhere. It had nothing to do with joining a sect or community. She was even deeply suspicious of churches. To her conversion meant first the transformation of life by the discovery of Jesus Christ and the forgiveness of sins through repentance before the Cross. This was followed by a further process known as the 'second blessing', whereby the convert made complete surrender and became filled with the Holy Spirit. This double process resulted in a spiritual transformation of spirit, soul and body into the likeness of Christ himself. This, of course, was the teaching of the German mystics whom my mother greatly admired. The writings of Suso, Tauler, Ter-Steegen and others were constantly in her hands. Here was a theory of spiritual regeneration that at least in its application to England and other Christian countries had nothing to do with proselytization. But when it came to heathen countries like Africa and India, my mother and her friends were emphatic that before the spiritual process which I have just described begin in a soul he must abandon, deny and abjure his old evil faith, which was one of the works of darkness.

"About half way through my time at Oxford the influence of the mystical literature which I was then studying so eagerly began to make itself felt, and I began to think of religion not as a matter of saving oneself or one's neighbour from damnation (I do not mean damnation in the crude sense of hell, but in its modern sense of selfish-

ness), but as the quest for the Eternal Love, Truth and Beauty. The mystics have always been notoriously lukewarm about missions, and imperceptibly this attitude began to influence me, so that by the time I had left Oxford I was no longer interpreting my religion in terms of conversion at all.

"I joined the Christa Seva Sangh because I understood that its main purpose was scholarly rather than evangelistic. Before long, however, I found a very strong division of opinion among the Brothers of the Society. Unfortunately the founder, Father Winslow, had never really thought the matter to its logical conclusion with the result that he frequently made contradictory statements. He would tell Hindus of his horror of proselytization; he would then explain to Christians the necessity for conversion. Proselytization to the European generally implies the taking of an unfair advantage of a victim—for example, it has not been unknown for Catholic priests to go to Indian hospitals and baptize unconscious dying Hindus and Mussalmans. In times of famine many missionaries at one time undoubtedly took advantage of people's hunger to convert them. But conversion, said Father Winslow, by which we may mean sharing with others the best thing in our own life, is a very different matter. But I doubt if Father Winslow ever really settled in his mind whether it was possible to share these things without making a man a member of the Church.

"The modern missionary movement in India has, in fact, been thrown into the utmost confusion by Hindu counter-propaganda. The Catholics in the main continue firmly orthodox in the motive of their missionary effort. The non-Christian who resists the Gospel is doomed. There is only one way of salvation, and that is through the Catholic Church. Among the other missionaries, however, there is the widest difference of opinion. Many of the more orthodox Evangelical and Anglo-Catholic missionaries hold the view that is substantially the same as that of the Roman Church. But the more modern-minded missionaries (especially the really good and intelligent ones) have found it extremely difficult to adjust their minds. For example, there is the great problem of Mahatma Gandhi. How is he

to be explained? For the politically sensitive, there is the further problem of explaining how it is the 'Christian' nations so often fall lamentably below the standard of the 'Heathen' nations in various aspects of public morality. The study of comparative religion has made it extremely difficult for anyone to claim absolute and final truth for his own faith. The study of Christian origins in particular has revealed to thinking people how much of what used to be regarded as peculiar to Christianity had a non-Christian basis.

"The best modern missionaries, therefore, have largely abandoned the old idea of 'saving souls'. They now speak in terms of sharing spiritual treasure with their friends, and it is left rather vague how this sharing is to be achieved. I doubt if any modern missionary has devised so effective a spiritual machinery for transforming human lives as was taught by my mother or by the Roman Catholic Church.

"Mahatma Gandhi, who has a great sense of humour, once suggested that missionaries should not preach at all, but should be content to live among the people and allow their fragrance to spread among them just as the sweet smell of a rose inspires a garden. The snag about this, of course, is that so few missionaries really smell like roses. Moreover, the missionary imperative here is not strong enough. I doubt if anyone would tramp like Livingstone through Darkest Africa simply in order to smell nice in the nostrils of the native population. The most advanced type of missionary is content to live the Christian life as best he may, and to teach to any who will hear him the treasures of Christianity with the simple aim of thereby furthering the cause of the Spirit. He looks on all men of religion as brothers engaged in a common quest and fighting a common battle against the cause of evil. If a Hindu, therefore, is helped by him to be a better Hindu or a Mussulman a better Mussulman[1] he is assisting his allies in this great endeavour."

[1] But, later still, Verrier comments on this. 'Here is another snag What do you mean by a "better Mussalman"? That, say, Mr Abdur Rahim in the Crawford Market becomes more like Mr Jinnah or more like Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan?' When we say a man is a great Christian or a good Hindu, we usually mean that he is not a Christian or a Hindu at all in the historic sense of the words.

Even after Verrier had definitely made up his mind about any form of 'conversion', he was still receiving kindly rebukes from various friends. Father Winslow, for example, held the view that, although the best spiritual and intelligent Hindu might well be left alone to live in his own community with nothing more than the inspiration of the Christian spirit, it was necessary when dealing with the aboriginals and untouchables to bring them right inside the Christian community and Church. No less a person than C. F. Andrews wrote to Verrier several times in a rather similar strain. In a letter written on board S.S. 'Maloja' and dated 12 November 1933, he says, "There is one thing, however, that I think you should avoid and that is going too far when you take up a cause and thus losing the balance of judgement. I know that this is 'calling the kettle black', and I am quite aware of being the 'pot'; but all the same you and I have to learn by experience and we shall both lose a great deal if we lose our sense of proportion. For instance while what you say is undoubtedly true about primitive people, there are hideous savageries which are unclean and diabolical, such as I myself have witnessed in Central Africa and Fiji. These may not actually exist among Gonds, but I wonder whether I am quite right in saying even this much. Such things as human sacrifice and witchcraft under the spell of religious dread and even cannibal orgies are common in Central Africa. And life in this primitive form becomes often a ghastly terror, impossible to describe. It would be difficult to over-estimate the freedom from these primitive terrors wherewith Christ has set us free. And I cannot at all agree with Bapu that these forms of 'religion', which are really evil in their essence, are not to be condemned, and those who practise them are not to be converted. I believe in South India the devil worship is absolutely hideous in some of its forms and utterly unworthy of Man made in the image of God.

"Once, at Muttra, I saw another sight which filled me with loathing and disgust. It was cow worship in its most gross form. The literal lowering of the human spirit by *pooja* offered with all the ceremonial of worship to a cow, while frenzy increased every moment. Those who were present thought that I would rejoice in the scene because

of my love of animals, and specially of the cow, but this mania on the part of human beings, who were otherwise perfectly sane, did nothing but disgust me.

"I am writing all this out because I myself have gone to the utmost limits of toleration, bordering on weakness, and I can see the same danger in your own case.

"Thus to turn back to yourself, while you will help Gonds by revealing to us all their most beautiful characteristics, you will be doing no good at all to them or to us if you over-idealize them as I tended to over-idealize Hinduism at one time, with consequences such as I have hinted at in this letter. I was as young as you are when I did this. Now that I am much older I do not want in the least to lose my first love, but I do wish to gain wisdom and discernment."

And again, C. F. Andrews wrote on 31 March, 1938:

"Have you not gone too far in following Bapu about 'conversion'? I fully accept that these Hill tribes must be freed from the suspicion and fear that you have some ulterior motive. I would not wish you to take the ordinary standpoint with regard to them. But the joy, which we have in our own hearts owing to the love of Christ *must* find its expression, because it is the one motive power in our own lives. Bapu would seem to suggest that even to *wish* in one's own heart to give to another that joy, which has been the strength and stay of one's own life, is itself wrong. I cannot possibly go with him there; and if I could not speak quite freely about Christ in the Asram at Santiniketan, I should feel most unhappy: but everything there is as natural as possible and there are no inhibitions. At the same time, it is a matter of honour and trust with me there that I should never take any unfair advantage—which is what Christ meant by 'proselytizing' in the only sentence where He used the word."

Verrier's first important pronouncement on the subject of the conversion of the aboriginals appeared in *Harijan* for 24 September, 1938. He had been invited to contribute, to a volume which was being prepared for the World Missionary Conference to be held in India in 1939, a chapter on aboriginal tribes with special reference to 'the menace

of Hinduism '. Verrier sent a copy of his reply to Mahadeo Desai who published it in *Harijan*.

Since this was Verrier's first statement of a principle which he has since greatly developed, I will give it in full, taking it direct from *Harijan*.

" Very many thanks for your letter and for doing me the honour of including me in the list of contributors to your proposed book.

" But I am afraid I will have to say ' No '. For while I welcome any attempt to make the truth that there is in Christianity intelligible, to free it from its associations with Imperialism, Fascism and Capitalism, and to make it possible for Indian Christians to support without discredit their own national leaders and be at home in their own land, it is yet obvious that your book is part of the missionary enterprise, from which I have long since dissociated myself.

" For I am not merely a reformed or liberal missionary; *I am not a missionary at all.* It is four years since I wrote to the Metropolitan to tell him that I was no longer either a member or a priest of the Church of England, two years since I established this position with the formality of legal papers.

" I was led to take this step by the shameless support given by the Church to a sadistic type of Western Imperialism, by the tacit alliance of the Church with a godless capitalist system, by its wilful impotence before the menace of war and fascism, and its refusal to support any real movement towards non-violence, by its adherence to doctrines and ceremonies which no one could support without a burden on his intellectual conscience, and by the general character of missionary propaganda. During the last Satyagraha movement I found far more essential ' Christianity ' among the followers of Mahatma Gandhi than in the Bishops who denounced them. I saw in the life of my beloved friends of the Sabarmati Ashram a quality of spiritual life and energy derived from the *Bhagavad Gita* which made it impossible to believe that salvation was confined to members of the Church.

" You ask me to write on the menace of Hinduism. I am afraid that I should have to say something about ' the menace of Christianity '.

"Looking at the matter from a purely scientific anthropological standpoint, I think there can be little doubt that Christian civilization is more destructive to primitive tribal life and morals than any other form of culture.

"I could call evidence from every part of the world, but I will be content with two reliable witnesses. The first is Mr J. P. Mills, Hon Ethnographer to the Government of Assam. He describes how among the Nagas 'the suppression of all ornaments, of dancing, of singing (except hymns), of village feasts and of all artistic outlet for the missionaries is spreading an unspeakable drabness over village life. The abolition of the sacrificial feasts is to do away with the very few occasions on which the awful monotony of village life is broken.' He also tells of the 'execrable artistic productions' of the Baptist chapels which have had so mischievous an influence on tribal art, the destruction of the craft of wood-carving, the substitution of individualism for tribal loyalty. 'An Animist puts the village before himself. *A Baptist puts himself before the village.*'

"A similar situation was found by Professor Firth among the Tikopian Islanders. 'Allegiance has been divided, jealousy has arisen between the chiefs and the mission leaders, and bewilderment and uneasiness have resulted among the people.' The old customs which gave zest to village life and sanction to village morality have been disturbed, family life has been disorganized. I cannot but regret, says the Professor (who is by no means prejudiced against missions), that the urge to proselytization finds it necessary to disturb a people whose adjustment to life in their traditional institutions has been on the whole a satisfactory one. To make an unsophisticated isolated defenceless people bear a part of the burden of our own uneasy, restless spirit seems a pity. And again, what justification can be found for this steady pressure to break down the customs of a people against whom the main charge is that their gods are different from ours?"

"Since Hinduism has itself developed out of the ancient religion of the soil, the natural development of the tribesmen is towards a liberal Hinduism, not unlike that of Gandhi and Tagore. Unhappily, most of the movements at

present agitating the aboriginals of India are reactionary and Sanatanist: the Hindu missionary is apt to be as destructive of tribal life as the Christian. The Raj Gond Movement, for example, is run by a number of self-seeking communalists who are trying to introduce to their poorer simpler brethren those very aspects of Hinduism which the reformers are attempting to abolish—belief in untouchability, purdah for women, child-marriage, the sacred thread—and to destroy the old culture of song and dance.

"But there is no reason why this should be so. We have no more right to regard untouchability as characteristic of Hinduism than Hindus would have the right to regard belief in Hell, the Devil and everlasting damnation as characteristic of Christianity.

"A liberal rationalistic Hinduism, that makes its approach on scientific anthropological principles, would probably do less than any other form of culture to disturb and disintegrate tribal life.

"Personally, I have always held that so far as religion is concerned, the aboriginal should be left alone. He has little interest in the gods, and no wonder—for they have done little for him. In their dealings with the aboriginals, not only in India but throughout the world, adherents of all religions would do well to adopt an attitude of penitence and reparation. The higher civilizations, in their greed and their stupidity, have done ill by these people. All that we may do now is to serve them, protect them and give them bread. Let them follow the law of their own development.

"The future of aboriginals all over the world should be in the control of science, not of religion. They should certainly be protected from every kind of missionary.

"Holding this view, how could I co-operate in your missionary venture?"

In 1944 Verrier startled the whole of India by an all-out attack on missionary methods in aboriginal areas. There was a tremendous controversy and Verrier was belaboured in pulpits from Kohat to Colombo. It is all so fresh in the public mind that I need not discuss it here, but I will give the three main points on which Verrier rested India's case against the missionaries.

"There is first the universal conviction that their very presence is an anachronism. Few persons of intelligence now believe that salvation is to be found only in Christianity and that all outside are damned. The condition of modern Europe does not suggest that it has the moral right to send emissaries to save the souls of the gentle peace-loving nations of the east.

"India is no 'savage' or 'heathen' country. Its religious traditions are far older than those of Catholic Europe. Almost alone in a world given over to force and to material values, India clings, gloriously stubborn, to spiritual things. Throughout the centuries it has revealed an extraordinary power of regeneration, producing in astonishing sequence saints and heroes, poets and artists, lawgivers and scientists whose achievements are unrivalled in the world. No other nation would have survived so well the degradation of a hundred years of foreign rule. And this great and noble country is to entertain Christian missionaries who will save its soul and put its feet on the right path! What an impertinence!

"The second part of India's case rests on a profound belief that a change of religion is actually harmful to the aboriginals. It destroys tribal unity, strips the people of age-long moral sanctions, separates them from the mass of their fellow-countrymen and in many cases leads to a decadence that is as pathetic as it is deplorable.

"The great authority of Dr Henry Balfour found among the Nagas who had come under mission influence 'marked evidence of a comparative lack of that virility, alertness and zest' which he had observed elsewhere. Baron von Eikstedt has described how the Andaman Home Policy of winning the aboriginals to loyalty through evangelization has proved 'the door of death' to the Andamanese. Geoffrey Gorer is scathing in his account of mission work among the Lepchas, of whom over a thousand have been converted. The main result, he says, has been to 'implant a strong sense of individual sin and excessive prudery, with which is coupled a tendency to snigger at excretory functions'. The breaking-up of tribal life and the too rapid destruction of ancient customs by the missionaries often

leads to worse customs than those which have been supplanted. Thus the *Archives d'Anthropologie Criminelle* describes how in Burma the missionaries have 'unintentionally but inevitably favoured the growth of prostitution in that country by condemning free unions'. And Malinowski says that missionary attempts to break up the *bukumatulu* system in the Trobriand Islands only threw tribal life into confusion. 'It is needless to say', he points out, 'that this state of affairs does not enhance true morality'.

"The aboriginals, who are the children of India, also have their own life, their own art and culture, their own religion, to which they are deeply attached and which is by no means to be despised. The culture of these hillmen is a unique and lovely thing and their simplicity, honesty and charm has been admired by all who know them. When I first settled in aboriginal company thirteen years ago, I was under the impression that the hillmen were not Hindus. Eight years of hard study and research convinced me that I was wrong. I mention this to show that I myself have no bias in this matter; I have no special inclination to Hinduism, I have certainly no prejudice against Catholicism; I have come to the conclusion on no other grounds than those of fact. And that conclusion is that the aboriginals of peninsular India (I cannot speak for the Nagas of Assam whom I have never seen) profess a religion of the Hindu family and that they should be classed as Hindus at the time of the Census."

The third criticism related to missionary methods—economic exploitation of aboriginal poverty, psychological exploitation of aboriginal ignorance, and the social exploitation of a dominant racialism and the support of the Imperial power.

"No free country can brook such interference with its life and culture. Suppose a Hindu mission went to England, spread itself over the peaceful villages of Cornwall, threatened the people with prosecution and beating if they did not attend to them, interfered in the civil and criminal cases before the courts, indulged in vicious propaganda against the local Christian leaders—for how long would the British Government permit them to remain? But today in Mandla this is exactly what is happening, not only with the

compliance but even with the active support of the authorities."

"We urge that the missionaries should be withdrawn from the Partially Excluded Areas; we insist that all education in these areas should be taken over by Government; we demand that Government should itself do twice as much as the missionaries have hitherto achieved. We have no interest in keeping these people backward. If they are to take their honoured place as Kshatriyas in the Hindu social system, they must be trained in the arts of liberal thinking and educated to courage and the tradition of honour.

"It is particularly necessary that Government should forbid any proselytizing agency to function in any Partially Excluded Area in the whole of India. For Parliament has laid a solemn duty on the Provincial Governments to protect the life and culture and religion of the people in these areas. Otherwise, what were these areas established for? The position with regard to missionaries and the Partially Excluded Areas is conveniently epitomized by an incident in Boswell. Dr Johnson was defending the expulsion from Oxford of a group of Methodists who would not study but went in for 'Exhortation'. 'But was it not hard, Sir,' said Boswell, 'to expel them, for I am told they were good beings?' 'Sir, they may be good beings, but they were not fit for the University of Oxford. A cow is a very good animal in the field, but we turn her out of a garden.'"

So now the inner conflict over religion and the Church is done. That point is settled; there is no more of it. But I must add two more things. Once Verrier was asked whether, now that he was no longer a member of the Christian Church, he intended like Stokes to turn Hindu or like Arundale to become a Theosophist. 'There was once,' he replied, 'a Roman Catholic priest who ceased to believe in miracles and had to leave the Church. A friend asked him if he would become a Protestant. 'Sir,' he answered, 'I may have lost my faith, but I have not lost my reason'. And my answer is the same.'

The second thing is this. I have several times asked Verrier if he has ever regretted leaving the Church where he might have done so much good; if he misses the

services, the prayers, the communion. 'Never for one moment', he replied. 'There is no single act of my life which has given me so much happiness, such a liberation, such a peace as my signing the Deed of Relinquishment. And these tedious controversies have left no bitterness in me against Church or missionaries, in fact'—he added with a grin—'I hardly ever think of them—except on the battle-ground!'

CHAPTER VI

VILLAGE LIFE

His country lies beyond and beyond, forest and river, forest, swamp and river, the mountains of Arakkaboa —leagues and leagues . . . .

— WALTER DE LA MARE.

Verrier himself has described our village life in his *Leaves from the Jungle*, a book which brings the record to the end of 1935. He is planning to write another book about the period June 1940 onwards, when so much of his time and nearly all his thinking, has been given to tours of exploration and research. For the intervening years, we have a number of letters, supplemented occasionally by notes from his diary, which give a picture, half-humorous, half-tragic, of our life in the jungle.

1

1 April 1936

Verrier begins his first 1936 letter, which he characteristically dates April 1st, with two stories, which—he thinks—St Francis would have enjoyed.

An old Gond of Kawardha State, which is itself governed by a Gond ruler, was telling us about the origin of the different clans into which his tribe was divided. 'Netam Raja,' he said, 'was the greatest of the Gond kings. One day he called the whole world to go with him to worship Burra Deo. He travelled with a great company, they were all poor men, he alone was rich. On the way, they stopped for food in a clearing of the forest, and while everyone else was cooking on ovens made from stones and with earthen pots, he made his oven of sugar and his cooking-pots of butter to show how rich he was. The rest of the company soon finished and went on to the River Girwa, but whenever the Raja lit his fire, the pot melted and the oven collapsed. He took so long to prepare his food that he was left behind. The others came to the river, and crossed it by catching hold of a great creeper that stretched from

side to side. When they were over, they pulled up the creeper by the roots and threw it away. Then came Netam Raja and found he couldn't get across. So he began to shout and curse. Then a tortoise came and took him over, and ever since then the members of the Netam clan, though they are named after the dog, revere the tortoise. Then said Netam Raja, 'If you want to be happy, make your oven of stone and your cooking-pots of earth; don't try to make them of sugar and butter, for only earth can stand the fire. And so we Gonds must remain near to the earth, and then no fire can destroy us.'

And a little later he told us another story. At the very beginning God was wondering who was fit to carry on the work of the world. So he prepared this test. He made three chairs, one of gold, one of silver, and one of earth. Then he called a Mussalman, a Hindu and a Gond, and asked them to choose which they would. The Mussalman sat down in the golden chair, the Hindu sat in the silver chair, but the Gond chose the earthen chair. Then God said, 'It is the Gond who is fittest of all to carry on the work of the world, for only he who can sit in a chair of earth will be able to bear the hardships that are to come. And so God made the Gonds the support and refuge of the world. It is by our labours with the earth that the world exists.'

I have begun my letter with these two stories because they illustrate strikingly the Gonds' devotion to the earth, and also because they remind us of the too often forgotten fact that our great civilizations do actually depend on the peasant for their existence. They also remind us that those who would work for the poor must not expect to do so with pots of butter and ovens of sugar, but they must themselves embrace a life of poverty and humility, living as close to the earth as they can.

At first sight, though, it will look as if we were violently departing from these very proper principles. For we have acquired Ponto. And Ponto is nothing less than a motor-car. True, he lives in a mud-hut like the rest of us; true, he suffers from all the infirmities of his great age; true, there are no roads for him to exercise on—yet still, there

is no getting away from it, he is a car; petrol runs in his veins, gas inflates his wheezing lungs, we couldn't possibly disguise him as an elephant, a bullock-waggon or a litter. He is called Ponto because his accellerator is stuck at 30 m.p.h. which is a little fast for these precipitous mountain roads, and we keep on having to say "Down, Ponto"—a phrase I learnt from Bernard Clarke, who as a matter of fact gave us a little over the half, or fore-quarters, of our new friend.

I am not going to justify Ponto to you: he is not a necessity; no one who knows him could possibly call him a luxury; we are all, in fact, a little frightened of him. But we got him in order to carry on more extensive ethnographical researches.

Now that Shamrao has become an author, there is no holding him; and we mustn't forget that E. B. Tylor said long ago that one day ethnography would no more be a mere derided by-way to truth, but that its help would be sought by governments. The only disadvantage is that we have to go fifty miles in any direction before we get on to a road. The first fifty miles of road varies; now it is like a troubled sea; now a very exciting golf-course; sometimes it disappears altogether, and we have to go forward on foot taking soundings. Ponto's velocity, however, is so enormous that he usually jumps right over obstacles, landing on the opposite bank with a crash that makes Shamrao stare and gasp.

First of all Ponto took us through Seoni, Balaghat and Kawardha State. Seoni is the scene of Kipling's *Jungle Book*. It is a lovely district, lots of trees, hills and the Wainganga River (which means Arrow of Water, a most inappropriate name for one of the most sinuous rivers in the world). We went to the source of the Wainganga, where the images of two little Gond lovers are still worshipped by the Hindus, then on to Bisapur, where a Gond queen—rather than submit to the embraces of her Mussalman conqueror—planted a miraculous tree and died. The images of herself and her consort stand under a great tree in the forest. The consort's head had fallen off, and the Gonds, with roars of laughter, picked it up and put it on again.

Our guide was an old man who told us that Queen Victoria had once put a curse on him, and broken his front tooth.

We went on, and on. At a village called Behrai on the borders of Balaghat we struck a mine of folk-lore. We liked Balaghat, with its magnificent sal forests and splendid roads, but rather rashly attempted to go straight over the Chilpi Pass into Kawardha State.

The Chilpi Pass, which is inhabited by very picturesque Baigas, is just a path running over a perpendicular hill. But Ponto, her ancient duds flapping in the wind, did it in style, sticking only half a dozen times, and at last achieving a deed that can have been accomplished by very few of the inhabitants of this planet.

Kawardha has a Gond King, and one very old and famous temple. We spent a long morning in the rain looking for it and at last discovered it in the middle of the jungle, by a lake full of crocodiles.

Our next tour was to Bastar. This was one of the most interesting trips I have ever made. Bastar is a large, mountainous, forest-covered, infinitely remote state almost entirely peopled by aboriginals, three hundred miles to the south-west of us. We climbed the great hill that admits you to the Bastar plateau in a thunderstorm. It was a new, and utterly exciting, world. We stayed with the Administrator and Mrs Hyde, and they arranged such an excellent programme that within a week we had a glimpse of all the tribes and had been able to get some idea of their chief institutions.

Ponto did very well. We only got stuck in a ditch once. It was then that an old peasant shook his head at us and said, " Ah, if only you would keep to bullock-carts, you wouldn't find yourselves in this sort of trouble ".

But Ponto is not all. Lionel Fielden, the Controller of Broadcasting, has given us a sumptuous and efficient battery set. This also is housed in a mud hut, which looks just like a Gond shrine, and in spite of the steep sky's commotion we get a very good reception. Every evening, a fire (not a sacred fire) is kindled before the shrine, and we turn on the Hindi programme from Delhi. Generally twenty or thirty people listen in, but it is curious to observe

how uninterested the Gonds are in it. It is partly, I think, that the Hindi programmes are rather tedious, partly that the language is too Urduised and our folk can't understand it; but largely that they have no idea of geography. Half the romance of the wireless is due to our sense of geography. And so it doesn't thrill. One night I came in and found the entire audience lying fast asleep round the fire, while overhead there boomed out an admirable lecture on Rural Reconstruction by Mr F. L. Brayne.

As the villagers grow more educated, however, and as the programmes are adapted to rural needs, broadcasting may become a useful adjunct to education. But unless it can be allied to television, I doubt very much if it will ever have much influence in the Indian village.

The Vidyamandir, or Boarding School, varies according to the weather and the Ahir, or cow-herd. In the rains, there were 90 children in the boarding school; in February the numbers dropped to 50, for there was then a lot of work in the fields. Now that the work is less the numbers are again rising. There is no greater menace to education than the Ahir. In most Gond villages the care of the cattle is entrusted to him, and so long as he does his work, boys can be spared to go to school. But he is apt to migrate overnight, without a word of warning, and then every child in the village will have to go to the grazing grounds. The disappearance of the Ahir caused the closing of one of our schools. Our work has also been hampered by local opposition to the education of Gonds. Minor officials, landlords, traders, contractors and others have openly said that they don't want the aboriginals educated, as then they will be more difficult to manage—or in other words, to exploit. This was amusingly illustrated when a Brahmin Patwari told the parent of one of our boys not to allow his son to study beyond the first year; if he studied further, he would be of no use in the fields. 'Exactly,' replied the father. 'He will then be able to get your job.'

The Dispensary is busy as ever. A very nice young M.O. comes once a month from Bajag, 25 miles away, to advise on difficult cases. We have sent a number of people 100 miles to Bilaspur for surgical treatment, and the Civil

Surgeon and his assistants have treated them with the greatest consideration.

The Leper Home remains the happiest place in the Mandal. Whenever we get depressed, we go there to be cheered up. To our great joy, one of the patients has been certified cured. A number of new patients have come, and we are increasing the accommodation, the lepers themselves doing the building. Their garden has done very well this year—nasturtiums, pinks, arctotis, salvia, petunias, cornflowers, clarkias, poppies made a fine show. The lepers' school has also gone on well, even the Baigas showing enthusiasm to read and write.

The Dharmashala, or Guest House, is nearly always full. There is Tutta the epileptic, a cast-off dowagar, a one-legged peasant, a lame Kabir Panthi musician, and all sorts of travellers and patients. Last week, a dear old sadhu died. I had to lay him out and wash him—a thing I've never done before—and perform his obsequies. We burnt his body on a pyre in a beautiful little glade in the forest, where Kopi the leper and the old friaress and many other friends are buried. The red flames leaping up to the rising sun, and the peaceful trees and mountains all around, made a picture that was in beautiful contrast to the horrid reality of disease and misery of the night before. He was a true Sadhu, courteous and detached and unafraid.

The Administrator of Bastar has given us a pet leopard, and the Deputy Commissioner of Mandla, a beautiful chital stag. The three surviving Rhode Islanders survive, but they fought so violently that they have had to be separated, and now live, each with his own harem, in lonely dignity. Our turkeys, whom we call the Macbeths, are well and produced two children, both of whom died. A leopard (not the pet one) invaded my house, ate some of the doves, and pranced about on the verbenas. This year, my own garden has been rather a failure—the frost was very bad, or so I like to think. However even now there is some show of hollyhocks, verbenas, wall-flowers, strawflower, petunia, arctotis, begonia, and the sweet-peas, during an all-too-short season, were excellent. The carnations were all eaten by the Macbeths.

At the beginning of March, I visited Jubbulpore, taking

with me two little Gond boys, Pithu and Saligram: they were delighted with the trip, but their most vivid memories seem to be connected with what they had to eat. While I was there, I was able—through the kindness of the Superintendent—to see all the Gonds at present in the Central Jail. One thing struck me very forcibly, that many of the Gond prisoners had been in prison several times. What happens is that when a Gond returns to his village from the jail, he has to give a tribal dinner, which may cost anything from Rs. 5 to Rs. 40, and sometimes also pay a fine—not because the tribe minds about his crime, but because in jail everyone eats together. But the unhappy man is almost penniless; his family has had a hard struggle in his absence—and as often as not, he commits another crime in order to get the money that will atone for the last one. Something certainly needs to be done to help the Gond after his release from prison.

2

Letter dated 25 June 1936

To put first things first—the heat this summer has been the hottest I have yet known; the operations of the Second Law of Thermodynamics seem to have been suspended: we get hotter and hotter. So that even Shamrao and I got a little tete-beche to one another, and I remember one peaceful evening (O calm of hills above!) throwing my supper plate—curry, rice, mango chutney and two veg.—at him in a rage. Unhappily I missed. . . .

We have had a good many visitors this year. The roar of traffic on the main road has been almost unbearable—at least one car a week. The Dharmashala, or Guest House, is always full of people, though these do not come by car, and now has some permanent residents—a dear old lady who had an affair with mad Galgal the sweeper a few years ago and was turned out of her house for it, and a remarkable old man who looks like something out of "The Hunting of the Snark". He has come, he says, to die here, but I don't think that will happen yet. He makes little vanity bags and every Tuesday toddles down to the bazaar and sells them. He has an enormous hernia, which he exhibits

with a kind of mournful pride. Both these Dear Old Things are, ecclesiastically, Kabir Panthis, members of one of the reformed Hindu sects which neither drinks, smokes, eats meat nor worships idols, a sort of Hindu "Group". Another old man, a Basdeo or wandering minstrel, died of pneumonia.

The most memorable of our visitors was the Raja of Sarangarh. The Raja Sahib is himself a Gond—there are still a few Gond rulers surviving the wreckage of the great Gond Kingdoms: Kawarda, Raigarh, Sakti and Sarangarh are all Gond states. He is a most loveable, delightful man, unassuming, with no trace of pomposity, though he is said to have one of the best equipped Westernized palaces in the country. A great nobleman. He stayed with us two days. The first day, we collected some 1,500 Gonds and had a big show for him. In his own state the Raja Sahib himself dances with the people, but our dances are different and he was not used to our drums. We also had two Uplift Rallies, addressed by the Veterinary Assistant, the Medical Officer and the Agricultural man, but like most uplift work these did not even ruffle the surface of the Gond mind. When we asked afterwards, "What were the Sahibs talking about?", the general reply was "Who knows, brother? Their own affairs, perhaps." But it did them all good to see one of their own tribe as a real Raja. The next day we went in the Raja Sahib's marvellous car to Amarkantak, source of the Narbada River, and the Falls of Kapildhara and Sonbhadra, source of the sacred "golden-armed" Son, and in the evening the whole party came to dinner, which strained our resources to the uttermost, especially as we'd run out of flour, but Maruti the cook rose to the occasion—and, as I have said, there are always Heinz and Morton, perhaps the greatest boons that the White Races have conferred on a suffering world.

Our various institutions are going on much as usual. In our three branch centres, night schools have been started for older people in addition to the primary schools. In our main school, numbers have kept fairly steady at 80, the most encouraging thing being the number of big boys. We even had a Gond landlord who had been swindled out of some land, and was determined to be sufficiently literate to

prevent a repetition of the tragedy. On the other hand, some of our best Gond boys have been removed, including both the boys I took to Jubbulpore last March. Pithu broke his arm: we sent him to hospital and he completely recovered. But his mother was so angry at his going to hospital that she has never let us see him again!

Don't imagine that there is anything special about our schools. The atmosphere and discipline is entirely modern, but the teaching (in the absence of any experts) is amateurish. We have no punishments or exams, but we have introduced prizes, since it is essential to foster a psychology of competition in subject races. Madame Montessori is very good for *Italy* — or Great Britain.

The greatest progress has been in the Leper Refuge. It has become a regular village, a close-knit community. This is largely due to Gulabdas, the mukkadam or Headman, who has organized everything, puts everyone to work, developed a fine garden, and keeps the place spotlessly clean. There are now twenty-three in residence, three out-patients and three or four on holiday. We have Gonds, Baigas, Kols and a Bhil, as well as a few Hindus.

There is at last water in the well, not very much, but the bottom is quite definitely wet.

We have as usual distributed a great quantity of seeds, seedlings and young trees. Soya beans, beans of every possible kind, tomato, lettuce, cucumber, gourds, pumpkins, greens, cabbages, lady's fingers, chili, bringal, and among trees—plantains, papaya, mango, fig, guava, orange, sour lime. And we have offered a prize for the best garden.

But this year our attention has been given more to livestock than gardening. You can't do both, for the one eats the other. Singaru the leopard is very well. Gonds come twenty miles to see her. In fact, one day we went with Mahatu the Baiga wizard to a village and he gave a little talk on the Ashram. "They have a beautiful flower garden," he said, "and a leopard goddess, and a bird which goes gobble-gobble and another that says 'quack quack' and a chital." "That's all?" I asked. "Yes, that's all. But"—after a little thought—"there *is* a school and hospital." But you could see what really interested him.

Then there is the beautiful chital stag given us by

Mr Rahim, and the gutri or barking-deer, small, timid, most affectionate. The rabbits now number six in spite of heavy mortality, and very pretty they are. There is also a herd of pigs, a herd of goats, and our stud-bull is due any day.

Among birds, the Macbeths stand first in dignity and importance. There were a number of little Macbeths, but they all died, a fate incident to baby turkeys. There is a waddle of geese, but they have all turned out to be ladies. The doves are multiplying, and it is some time since any of them were eaten by cats or panthers. In the Aviary, which is a large light building with trees in it, there is a pair of blue jays, very pretty birds but with the expression of an irascible don. There are three solemn green parrots, mainas and phadkis, and three lovely golden-brown titur, a sort of partridge. The barking-deer lives with them and they are all great friends, so much so that he sometimes licks the birds with his active little tongue and removes most of their feathers.

And then, chickens. The Rhode Island Red cocks are certainly improving the local breed. Such of their offspring as survive are very good. But even the intra-oval existence of a chick in Karanjia is full of perils. Our hens seem to have a passion for egg food. There is no more depressing sight than to watch Lady Macbeth lay an enormous egg (suggestive at the very least of triplets) and then turn round and gobble it up before it has even had time to cool. However, we have hatched out some four dozen chickens of whom just half survive. Some died of heat, others of cold. Some were drowned in their drinking-water, others trodden on by their parents. One night a gigantic cobra got into the hen-house. It devoured a chick and gave its mother a nasty bite. I attacked the creature with the antique Gond sword I always keep by my bed-side, but it got away. (The other cobra who did Swedish exercises from the roof above my bed was executed by Shamrao). The mother was paralysed for four days and then recovered, celebrating its return to health by pecking one of the other chicks to death. The real trouble, I suspect, is that our knowledge of chicken-breeding is mainly derived from P. G. Wodehouse's *Love among the Chickens*.

The wireless is gradually getting popular. The Hindi programmes have been greatly improved, and on the whole we get a remarkably good reception. Shamrao is the expert in this field, and I suppose on an average he has fifty people listening-in every day. But I have not yet been able to discover why the Gonds particularly avoid the wireless. I want to stress that there is nothing whatever wrong either with programmes or reception. The other villagers listen with absorbed interest: there must be some taboo, some dark and ancient superstition to account for the lack of interest among the Gonds. Is it that the wireless trespasses on the domain of Pawan Dassorie, the Wind-God, the blind God who bumps into everything and knocks over things because he can't see where he is going?

Don't despise our ethnographical work as some friends affect to do. In the first place, "specialized and scientifically competent field-work among primitive peoples has to be done against time: it must be accomplished within the next few decades or never." This is particularly true of India. And then, of course, I myself have a far more than scientific interest in these problems. I believe ethnography is itself a powerful instrument for the succour of the tribesmen. The more you can make people known, the more you will make them loved. If we can inspire officials, traders, contractors, with a genuine interest in the life and culture of the villagers with whom they have to deal, they will treat them far better and try to further their interests. The best officials in these districts are keen amateur ethnographers. The best timber-contractor I have ever met was a mine of folk-lore.

So we have been visiting obscure villages in the depths of the forest and having endless talks with the most astonishing old gentlemen, with long wild hair and hardly any clothes. One of these is Mahatu the Bhumia (Bhumia means "People of the Earth"), a great gentleman and chock-full of magic. The first time he went in the car, he sat upright in his seat muttering spells the whole journey to keep it in the road. As luck would have it we met a tiger that day, and Mahatu at once began the Charm of Protection, and the great creature went peacefully away.

Another friend is Bukwa (his name means "the hungry

one"). He is a Baiga landlord, a tiny vigorous little man, always ready to shout with laughter, always ready too to help himself to *all* the cigarettes and tobacco. He does this with an air of deep abstraction rather in the manner of Mrs Bardell filling the three glasses with a little drop of something to keep the cold out.

By the way, our other old man, Panda Baba—who comes in *Songs of the Forest* and *Leaves from the Jungle*—has been nominated to the Local Board, and is now its Vice-Chairman. He greets officials visiting the Ashram with an air of infinite condescension, shaking them by the hand.

I am very sorry to say that Nanas, the fine boy who has been with us from the first, is slowly dying of T.B. His family brought him back from the sanatorium where we had sent him, and preferred to entrust him to the local witch-doctor. And the chief sorrow we have had for many days has been the death of Satula, the beautiful and heroic leper-girl who used to rob our Refuge of any hint of gloom.

At the end of 1936, Verrier went to England for two months, and when he returned it was to our new centre Sanhrwachhapar. On his return, he found a "Rai Gond" reform movement in full swing. He describes it in one of his letters.

In each village the great reformer calls the Gonds together and, opening his books, announces the true religion. This is, that they must stop eating chickens (it is odd how antagonistic in its moments of spiritual exaltation the Oriental mind becomes to the domestic fowl), abandon liquor, cease yoking cows to the plough, give up eating pigs, put their women in purdah, observe untouchability, wear the sacred thread, and stop dancing and singing.

We had a big gathering to welcome us. At the last gathering of this kind, forty villages sent their drums and dancers. This time only five dared to dance; the rest sat about all night bored and dull, their feet itching to dance, but not daring to do so. Our romantic delightful Gonds had gone flat as stale beer. For in the name of Government, dancing had been forbidden. For our religious leader sees clearly that the Church can do little without the State, and so all his prohibitions have been given official sanctions. Government, he says, will fine you ten rupees

for drinking, fifteen rupees for keeping pigs, fifty rupees for dancing the Karma. In this, a certain Sub-Inspector of Police, an enormously fat Brahmin, has found time, in the intervals of muddling his official duties, to give valuable assistance. Government, he declared, would levy a fine of fifty rupees on anyone who sang Dadariya (forest songs) and he told a long story of a man who was fined fifty rupees for shooting a crow. How much worse then to kill the common, or domestic, fowl? In the 1928 and 1932 movements, a few months after the Gonds had killed all their chickens, the magicians declared that chickens were necessary for sacrifice. And then you could see the poor Gonds paying Re. 1-8 for a small hen and six annas for an egg!

So song and dance, the only distinctive elements of Gond culture, have been driven from our district.

Chickens and pigs are the only tax-free animals. The Gonds have been compelled, in the name of religion and Government, to kill them off—a very serious economic loss.

The poor Gond has often to yoke his cows (who are past giving milk) to the plough. Now he is not allowed to do so. A Gond came to me the other day in great distress because the Sub-Inspector of Police had forbidden him to use his cows for ploughing—and he had nothing else.

Liquor is the one tonic available to the malaria-ridden Gond. It is the one warming and cheering thing in his nakedness. Now this is taken from him and nothing put in its place.

One of the most attractive features of the Gond was the decent way he treated his women, and his refusal to regard any human being as untouchable. He has now been forced to change his attitude in these matters.

The old Raj-Gond aristocrats won't have anything to do with this movement, and regard the new Raj-Gonds with utmost scorn, refusing to eat or drink with them.

One generally, of course, "clicks" where one least expects to. I certainly never thought that we would inspire a movement among the Meheras. The Meheras of Mandla are probably a branch of the great untouchable Mahar community. They have, however, tried to disguise their connexion by changing their name, giving up beef-eating and adopting an attitude of condescension towards the rest of

the world. Many of them have become Kabir-Panthis: that is, they have joined the organization founded by Kabir the poet (who was himself half-Hindu and half-Mussalman) to unite the two great religions of India and to abolish caste. But in the course of time, the Kabir-Panthis have become as sectarian as anybody else. They deny that Kabir's father was a Mussalman, and they base much of their claim to spiritual distinction on their antipathy to the common, or domestic, fowl.

Unhappily, in spite of their heroic teetotalism and vegetarianism, everybody continues to look down on the Meheras. Last month, a deputation of them came to see us and ask how this could be remedied. Shamrao, always so practical, at once said they must eat more, and eat more meat. They are indeed pitiably thin: it is all very well being a vegetarian when you can get vegetables, but there are no vegetables in our neighbourhood. Vegetarianism is, of course, a rich man's fad. Then we suggested that in four years' time there would be a Census. Government was not likely to make a record of the number of Meheras who abstained from chickens, but they would record the percentage of both men and women who could read and write. If therefore the Meheras could show a very high percentage of literacy, who would dare despise them? This idea caught on enormously: an organization was formed, we keeping carefully out of it, a Secretary (a pleasant youth who has written an essay on "The Stupidity of Meheras") was appointed, and a very big scheme of education has been drawn up, *by the people themselves*.

It is rather pathetic, the way everyone is struggling for social recognition, nearly always along a wrong path. In our village is a Chamar (untouchable shoe-maker) who refuses to handle leather in order that he may be respected, many of the Baigas have abandoned basket-making (one of their hereditary occupations) because that is also the work of Dhulias whom they consider inferior; some Meheras refuse to weave so that they will not be mistaken for Mahars. In every case an economic loss—and no real social gain. On the other hand, some castes are anxious to remain as they are: the Dhobis sent me a long permission insisting that they should be classed as untouchables so that

they could obtain the Government privileges and scholarships for their children.

This job really gets more difficult every day, largely because of the hopeless apathy of the villagers themselves. I can put the whole of our problem in one story. In a neighbouring village, there was a very good pond where everyone got their water. But one year, in heavy rains, there was a breach in its banks and the water ran out. So now every day all the village walks two miles to the river and two miles back for its water, with a great waste of energy and time. A week's united effort by the village could repair the pond and save them all that waste. When we suggested it to them, they said, "We are poor men, what can we do?"

Another villager said to us the other day, "God has made us poor: it's no good trying to be anything else."

In the last three months we have passed from deep despondency to being so busy that we can't be anything but happy. The opening of a shop and my appointment as Magistrate, to say nothing of Shamrao's new interest in veterinary matters, has added enormously to our work. The whole countryside seems to have got the idea that I have almost unlimited powers, and we are besieged night and day with even the poorest people bringing cases that are ten, fifty, even sixty years old, that they have never dared tell anyone before. At the same time, the sheer terror exhibited by everyone is most amusing, though it shows also the perils of this warfare. The story in my Diary, which must be almost unprecedented and every word of which is true (though names and dates are slightly altered), reveals something of the oppression and corruption of the remoter districts.

It brings home to me what I have always said. If only a high official, with the largest powers, would go and live in a village for a few months, he would be able to rectify a world of wrongs.

1937

Jan. 1st. Depart from Jubbulpore for Sanhrwachhapar by lorry in bitter cold of winter and by nightfall have only reached half way. Somewhat cheered by meeting Sub-

Inspector of Police who, on being asked what he thinks of Abdication, says, "But King George V. isn't dead, is he?" Feel that this puts human greatness in its proper place.

Jan. 3rd. Proceed to Sanhrwachhapur, where I find Shamrao has installed formidable looking Gurkha armed with dagger who salutes me with military precision. Also a new cook. Warm welcome from villagers headed by sinister-looking tenant Ram Charan who is, we are told, an ex-constable and an ex-convict. Having a highly official manner, he used to pretend to be a Sub-Inspector, arrested people and then took heavy bribes to let them go. He also would post himself by the roadside and extract taxes from travellers. This at last got him six months.

Jan. 4. Grieved by news that our beautiful pet leopard has been killed in Karanjia. She escaped from her cage, went to the leper home, where she tried to embrace some of the patients (apparently in a spirit of purest friendliness) and was ultimately shot by the headman with his muzzle-loader.

Jan. 6th. Living in Apostolic discomfort and patriarchal solitude in little hut untidily crowded with clothing, toy trains, books, ointment for itch, rejected manuscripts and volumes of modern poetry. Depression increased by refusal of everyone to dance and impossibility of getting eggs, all hens having been slaughtered as unworthy of religious persons.

Jan. 7th. Very exciting report from Karanjia about man who nearly transformed himself into a tiger. "He was gradually changing, his skin had become a tiger's skin, in a few minutes the tiger's soul would have been in him, there he was crouching down." But at such a moment, if you are trying to turn into a tiger you must not hear the moo of a cow or see a man. Seven men come by and spoil the magic. The wizard, now half a tiger, gets stuck. The villagers take him to the police-station, but the Sub-Inspector declares that Government cannot deal with such matters, and the tiger-man runs away.

Jan. 8th. Old gentleman in village dies. As he is being taken to grave, he suddenly sits up. Then he dies again; I hope, finally—as this time they bury him. His widow, very devout old lady, fasts every fifth day. When we ask why,

she says you must fast on the first day of every month. But that, we protest, does not occur every five days. "Oh," says she, "Nowadays even the sun and moon have become liars: one can't trust them: we have to make our own calculations."

Jan. 9th. Very busy building new settlement. Adorable boy comes and offers me five rupees if I will get his wife back for him. Another man wants us to get him a job in the police. "But then you'll be cruel to people and put them in prison." "No, brother, no; make me a policeman and I swear I'll never put anyone in prison."

Jan. 14th. The Gurkha complains that the local witches have made his wife ill. Ask the villagers to carry her in a litter down to the station, she ranking as a Brahmin. Agitated deputation of Meheras, headed by bearded Mahunt, their Bishop, at once comes to say that it is against their religion to carry anyone, even a Brahmin, even to hospital. In view of fact that Meheras are generally regarded as untouchables, this is rather amusing. Tell them the story of Good Samaritan, which they seem to think is quite suitable for Christians—who after all will do *anything* and even eat hens.

Jan. 16th. Much gratified to learn that our river is pleasantly haunted. It contains a pot full of buried treasure, tied by a chain. "The ghosts play around it: they dive in and out of the river." Once a Gond boy was sitting on the bank, grazing his father's goats. Suddenly a line of pots, each filled with gold, came floating down the river and said to the boy, "Guide us and we'll give you our little sister." The boy took them to a shaded pool, and they went into the deep water one by one. At last only one little pot remained. "Our little sister is for you," they said. "If anyone troubles you, bring him here." The boy ran home with joy, but when the villagers saw all that money they demanded a share of it. So the boy took them down the river and begged for her protection. Then the river began to boil and bubble, and a voice came, "I have given the money: let no one trouble the boy."

Another time, a boy asked his wife to get water from our river. She went and found a magic pot with open mouth. She was going to run away when the pot spoke. "You

may take as much as you like, only tell me how much." She said, " Five handfuls of gold." She took it, but she put in her hands a sixth time and the mouth of the pot closed on them and caught them. She screamed for her husband who came and cut off her hands with his axe, and the pot sank into the river. The villagers distributed the money among themselves. Old woman in our village declares she witnessed entire incident.

Jan. 19th. Our new cook's food quite beyond description, and feel myself wilting daily. Former cook, Usman Khan, who has picked up a certain amount of European cooking and is very anxious to get back his job, adopts excellent method of attaining his end. Stands in front of us during almost every meal, and intones a solemn chant— " Tart, tartlitt, pudding, cake, savry, parridge, carn-flour " —which throws into strong relief the miseries of our present catering.

Some curious names in our village. One Gond girl is called " Matches ", another is " Bidi Katta ", or Packet of Cigarettes. One of the boys is " D. F. O. " (District Forest Officer).

Jan. 20th. Gurkha finally decides local witches are too strong for him, and departs.

Jan. 21st. Dull mail, enlivened by letter from pious body who had heard me speak on the short life of the Gonds. " Surely if we believe in Jesus, to die at 22 is not such a dreadful tragedy, is it? "

Jan. 26th. Appointed an Honorary Magistrate (Second class). In spite of the frightful shame of this, am at least deeply thankful that I didn't get a Third.

Feb. 2nd. Attend extraordinary ceremony known as the Laru, or sacrifice of a Pig to the Sun God. The Pig which had been shut up for three years and given the best food, is brought out, and three almost naked Hobbinols seize it and push it, head downwards, into a hole full of water which has been dug in the threshold of the house. They then bump the unhappy creature up and down to the rhythm of an obscene song, while the women throw dung all over them. The Pig, however, dies very quickly of suffocation, and it is all much kinder than an ordinary English pig-killing. Find I have made a glaring anthropological error

in my description of this ceremony in my *Phulmat*, but note with pleasure that Russell has made even more in his *Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces.*

Feb. 3rd. Perfect spate of Gonds who, having heard I have become a Magistrate, believe that I will now be able to rectify all the miseries of the past three decades. Learn more about the oppressive methods of local landlords and merchants in a few days than I have previously in as many years. On the other hand, police, landlords, liquor- and opium-vendors, merchants and money-lenders show a gratifying alarm which is, I fear, hardly justified, for it needs at least a Lord Chief Justice to deal with the scoundrels that inhabit Partially-Excluded Areas for the purpose of exploiting the Gonds and Baigas. The police of Bajag and Karanjia (our village is half-way between the two) get together and decide to use sinister tenant Ram Charan to compass my Ruin before I can do any harm. Sub-Inspector of Bajag, however, is foolish to say so in front of witnesses.

Feb. 4th. The Elections. For our part of the world, no fewer than five candidates—(1) A Gond landlord who has never visited the district and who claims to be an "Independent Loyalist", a curious claim in view of fact that his election cry is "Vote for me and the old Gond Kingdoms will be established and the Government will be abolished." Very sound: but possibly just a little more independent than loyalist; (2) The Congress candidate who has marked Socialist leanings. (3) A Congress rebel who dislikes his fellow Congressman and, of course, splits his vote; (4) An amorphous tailor and (5) an equally dim oil-presser. All candidates have precisely the same programme. Land revenue will be reduced by half; all oppression will cease: the old Hindu (or Gond) Kingdoms will be re-established; and if you vote for me, you'll live happily ever after. Not more than five per cent of the electorate know the candidates' names, all canvassing being done by reference to colour of the voting boxes.

"Who are you voting for?" we ask a group of villagers.

"For the red box," they say.

"Why?"

"Because they say it will be for our advantage."

We ask another group. They are for the green box.

"Why?"

"Because they say it will be for our advantage."

We ask another group who support the blue box. "Why?"

"Because they say if we put in the blue box, we will all be members of the Assembly in three years' time."

The Gonds were fairly hazy about it: the Baigas left the whole business severely alone. A leading Gond spent all day hiding in a dried-up stream because he was sure there was some catch in it. Many thought it had something to do with the land-revenue, and sent a family representative to do his duty. There was a great deal of innocent impersonation. But most of the Gonds said, "None of them will do anything for us, so let's vote for our own man, the Gond."

And so they did and he was elected.

Feb. 7th. Fearful storm bursts upon us and pours through our new roofs as though they were paper. Finally change cook and find, to mortification of my higher self, that properly-cooked food transforms me into an amiable optimist.

Feb. 8th. Go out in car, but have to stop every five miles and fill the carburettor or whatever it is with petrol out of a milk-jug. After the car has stopped for twentieth time on encountering slight upward gradient, sum up situation by declaring, "This car thinks of absolutely nothing but itself."

Feb. 9th. All the animals arrive from Karanjia, the chital-stag with fine head of horns, the rabbits greatly increased, doves, turkeys, chickens, cocks, geese, and the leopard-skin.

Feb. 11th. Magnificent stud-bull arrives, but proves complete failure at his work.

Feb. 13th. Friend sends parcel of old and broken toys. Curious how the charitably-disposed seem to think that broken toys and old Christmas cards are just what the poor like and need.

Feb. 15th. An ancient Gond comes with his face almost completely eaten away by syphilis. Arrange to send him to hospital for treatment.

Feb. 17th, Neighbouring Brahmin, hearing I am a

Magistrate, brings me the present of a cow, but begs me not to eat it. Large deputation of Gonds come, declaring that Shamrao and I have "equal eyes" and that before us all men are one. Feel flattered until we discover that this is simply leading up to a quiet touch.

Feb. 20th. Departmental Enquiry ordered into conduct of Police as Sub-Inspector going hither and thither ordering Gonds to have nothing to do with us and at all costs to keep their children from our schools.

Feb. 24th. Fall nastily ill with what turns out to be remittant malignant malaria and what I proudly claim to be a tic dolereaux in the left eye. Our medicine book says that in this illness "death camps on the patient's trial" (sic) which makes us feel very excited and important.

Feb. 26th. Fever steady at 102°. No remissions.

Feb. 27th. Villagers promise to sacrifice a white goat to hill-god Lingo if I recover. Touched by this, but feel worse.

Feb. 28th. Ancient Mussalman doctor comes on horse and gives me two very painful intramuscular injections of quinine in saccharine. Feel worse, and fever rises. Doctor departs.

March 1st. Panda Baba comes and points out to village that it's no good giving white goats to Lingo when the real reason of my illness is the hostility of the hill-god Lattri whose jungle we have invaded, to say nothing of his neighbour, the hill-god Battri. He recommends nothing so exotic (and so expensive) as a white goat, but four black chickens and drinks all round.

March 2nd. Feeling hazier and hazier, and pain in eye prevents me reading much, but go through all death-bed scenes in Shakespeare which greatly comforts me.

March 5th. Everyone convinced that this is the End. Tenth day of high fever with no remission whatever. Shamrao gives me another intramuscular injection.

March 6th. Fever suddenly comes down, but feel as weak and impotent as an Assembly resolution.

March 7th. Perhaps unwisely read lot of modern poetry and decide that W. H. Auden is better than I thought, but am confirmed in my old opinion that there is no one, really, to touch T. S. Eliot.

March 10th. Stagger up and open Museum. "It runs like a mouse," say the villagers of the Hornby train. Fully half of our people have never seen a train.

March 11th. Police Inspector comes and holds enquiry. Am cross-examined for two and a half hours by Sub-Inspector, but it does him no good.

March 29th. Go down to Mandla. On way, visit Dindori school and am delighted to see improving mottoes all round the walls. In one room the following occur in succession—"Pray to the God daily". "Tit for Tat". "Forgive your enemies". "Clean your teeth". "God save the King".

March 30th. Very enjoyable time staying with tea-planter in Mandla. Go with enormous Forest Officer to see Game Sanctuary. He shoots a peacock, and we see many herds of deer and pig. Pours with rain, and we only return with difficulty, but F. O's amiability and good humour undiminished. He strongly recommends us to keep an elephant.

March 31st. Spend much time being instructed in the Law and meet entirely delightful new D.C. In evening, dine on peacock, but the lemonade or something is very strong, for in middle of meal turn all dizzy and see two enormous Forest Officers eating two helpings of peacock instead of one of each—a sight which will haunt me to the last.

April 1st. Lovely drive back from Mandla through a fairyland of hills, all ablaze with "Flame of the Forest". Pleasure slightly marred by incessant conversation of driver which, like that of all drivers is entirely autobiographical, consisting mainly of accounts of the enormous tips given him by all his former employers.

April 2nd. Return from Mandla with stacks of official forms, three guinea-fowl and a crane.

4

1 December 1937

In Manki village (pronounced "monkey") which adjoins our own village, a very nice man got up one day from supper, jumped three times in the air, and died. The police

came and after long investigations (including something very like the Third Degree) arrested the man's wife, Koeli, for poisoning her husband. She is a young, charming, pretty girl: he was a young, delightful man. They were living apart; the girl had a new lover; but there was no possible motive for the crime. There is no need for a girl to kill her husband in order to marry someone else. In Mandla they follow the Oxford Grouper's advice—" If you can't get on with your husband, change him." But the poor child was arrested and taken off to jail. Not one member of her family would go near her after her arrest; she had to go all alone with the police to Mandla; there was no one to arrange her legal advice, no one to visit her or cheer her.

It is a terrible experience for an aboriginal to be in jail. 'If a Maria is sentenced to a long term of imprisonment,' says Grigson, 'he will beg to be hanged rather than be confined within walls: and few of the Wilder Bison-horn Marias survive long imprisonment.' The grim forbidding walls, the stone beds, the rule of silence, the attitude of suppliant and obsequious deference before officials, the absence of any kind of recreation, the lack of all religious comfort, the denial of human companionship, the appalling monotony oppresses and crushes them. Koeli was not an aboriginal, she was an " untouchable ", but she lived among aboriginals and could hardly be distinguished from them.

Soon after her arrest, I went to Mandla and obtained permission to visit her in jail.

I don't think there is any fear of the girl being hanged, but she seemed to have little idea of the serious position she was in, and spent most of her time playing with the children of an even younger girl charged with the same offence. The jail was full of alleged murderers and murderesses: they all looked such nice people—and were " putting on weight: they don't feel things as we do ", the Superintendent told me. But I shall never forget seeing, not that day, but another day, two young Gonds in handcuffs for what seemed a very admirable murder, of a Pathan money-lender. With great eyes, filled with bewilderment and fear, like small, timid, beautiful deer of the

forest, the two little Gonds were surrounded by enormous constables.

To revert—we stayed in Bombay till the end of September, enjoying every moment of that great and lovely city. And after London, I think I love Bombay best of all the cities I have seen. I spent a lot of my time in the Royal Asiatic Library working on my Baiga book, and in doctor's consulting-rooms. We also went to the Dentist. When I go to the Dentist, I go, of course, in a purely academic spirit. I say to the Dentist, "I just want to know, in the most disinterested spirit of scientific enquiry, how my teeth are." But I made the mistake of taking Shamrao with me. He is one of these "Direct Action" people; he has none of that simple faith in Non-Intervention as a cure for all evils that so distinguishes the White Races. "Can't you do something *now*?" he kept on urging the dentist. "Couldn't you use that drill? What about that pick-axe in your hand?" "No, no", I would say, "I am only here for a consultation." "No, doctor, do something *now*." For the first time in my life, I wished Shamrao well away. But I won in the end. The Dentist wanted to pull out nearly all my teeth; so I adjourned the court for another hearing. After all, there is always the chance that the End of the World may come before the absolute necessity for doing anything, and then how foolish you would look, having your teeth out unnecessarily.

We celebrated our return by one feast to the lepers (given by a Parsi lady in memory of her son) and another to the children of the village. Both of these went very well, but at the latter we found the Gonds and Meheras refusing to let their children eat with the little Chamars. This would not have happened five years ago. The untouchable children were made to sit on a pile of stones round a corner. So we did the obvious thing and sat down with them and ate from the same leaf-plates. You will hardly believe it, but this caused a regular sensation, which was intensified when I told the Mehera Archbishop that he would be re-born as a pig in his next incarnation as a punishment for his unbrotherly conduct. Our generous gesture has not, I'm afraid, had much effect, but I notice

that the Archbishop generally now looks a little uneasy when the conversation turns on eschatalogical topics.

I have two other pig stories. One day a man came to my court complaining that his wife had run away with another man. "That," he said, "I could have borne; but they took away my favourite pig." A pleasant picture—the happy couple fleeing through the moonlit forest glades, and on the lover's shoulder is a pole bearing a protesting squealing pig.

Another day I was called to a village called Bohi 25 miles away, where a man-eating tiger had devoured two of the citizens. I set off at once, on the Archbishop's horse, with Sundarlal my invaluable ethnographic assistant. It was an exciting, but most tiresome journey, just after the rains, the paths overgrown with grasses six feet high and often disappearing in swamps and marshes. We had to pass through the tiger-haunted jungle late at night, the carriers uttering wierd aboriginal noises and Sundarlal mumbling incantations. At last we arrived at a most adorable village, on the roof of the world, great long views of hill and jungle everywhere, and were greeted enthusiastically by wild unspoilt charming Baigas.

The next day, I watched the strange and thrilling ceremonies designed to close the jaws of the man-eater and to frustrate the witch who had sent him. It was a desperately serious business; seven of the most powerful magicians came to do battle with the forces of evil. The Tiger Spirit came upon a man, and he was transformed into a tiger: there was an exciting tiger hunt; and in the end nails were driven into rocks and trees. The next morning, I was standing in the forest when a large pig lumbered up to me with a leaf in its mouth which it dropped at my feet. I was rather moved by this—sort of Francis among the birds touch, I thought—and then forgot all about it. But no sooner had I returned home than I went down with a violent attack of fever. The local magicians waited on me, and soon diagnosed the cause—the witch of Bohi, annoyed at my presence in the village, had put magic in a leaf and sent it to me by her pig. They immediately took the necessary measures, and I recovered.

Our work continues as usual. School, dispensary, leper-

home, shop, court, and all the other things, are maintained. Some of our most valuable work has to be done very much behind the scenes, and can hardly be described here. I am working very hard on my ethnographic survey of the Baigas: the book has reached 625 pages and the end not yet in sight. We have just completed a very interesting tour in the wilds of Baihar and Niwas, where the Baigas are rather different to ours. The Government people have been very helpful over this work.

I could write a new book called "The Adventures of Phulmat", so varied have been the reactions to my novel. My senior paternal uncle has forbidden all the unmarried female members of our family to read it, and my name may no longer be used in his presence. A missionary friend in Bombay, interested in experimental psychology, lends the book to all the most prudish persons of his acquaintance. An elderly party, who had recently described me as "pure glamour", was immediately given the book as an antidote —and I lost one of my few admirers.

My two favourite pets have died, the magnificent brown mountain squirrel and the sagacious crane. It is a great joy to tame some jungle creature. You feel you have stepped right outside your normal social orbit—it's like getting a nod from a head waiter at the Cafe Royal. The squirrel lived in a tree outside my house, and came in regularly for meals. He would sit on my shoulder and share a cup of tea. The crane was even more friendly, and had a special devotion to Shamrao whom he followed about. He once ate a bottle of ammonium nitrate, but he took no harm: it actually seemed to stimulate him. He was very fond of coming and standing beside me while I was typing, and often did a bit himself. I rather encouraged him, because I've always wanted to test that bit about six monkeys typing all the works of Shakespeare in a million years. But they are gone—and their place is not filled by the owl (bad omen) that sits in the rafters of the house, the bat (good omen) who hangs from the roof, or the six-foot cobra that Shamrao killed under my bed.

We continue to see the wretched and enervating effects of the Raj Gond movement. One day, a man came to the court wanting to sue his wife for biting him. Another day,

a man complained that a neighbour had beaten his wife in his very presence. "Didn't you go to her rescue?" I asked. "How could I?" he said. "I was taking my food, and hadn't washed my hands." So he sat still and watched his wife being beaten. What would the old Gond Kings have thought of that?

And the great reformer, who started all the trouble, and exacted a levy of 4 annas a head from all our simple Gonds with pledges that they would be teetotal and near-vegetarian—he was the leading bidder at the auction for liquor-shop contracts at Mandla last month. The Gond Uplift money has settled the Reformer in as pretty a liquor business as anyone could wish for.

I might perhaps end this letter with two pictures that have kept me awake at night. One day, as we were going through a Baiga village, I saw a specially tumbledown house. There were some children playing in the courtyard. I called one of them and gave him an anna (equal to a penny). He looked at me in stunned astonishment, then ran indoors screaming with excitement, "*Dai! dai! paisa! paisa!*" (Mother, mother, money, money!). I heard the answer in tones no less excited. "Child, we must go and get it changed at once!" One anna was too large a lump sum for their pathetic economics. It must be changed into four pice, each one of them priceless to a Baiga!

And in Mandla Jail, a poor old Gond, trembling and quaking with fear, in for attempted suicide. "I had nothing to eat, brother, no one would give me work, I had no woman to love me, so I tried to hang myself." His case was dragging on before the customary bored indifferent subordinate Magistrate, and our damnable laws were keeping him (on the very hem of madness) in the jail for hearing after hearing of his case.

5

March 1938

Famous sculptress, Mrs Marguerite Milward, arrives, piping-hot from Government House itself, but adapts herself to changed conditions with amazing speed. Appoint Dhimrin the fisherwoman to look after her. By great good

luck, enormous hunch of venison (illicitly trapped and sent to us to keep our mouths shut, I imagine) comes in the nick of time.

Parade of all the beauties from half-a-dozen villages, and Mrs M. examines them with enthusiasm. At last chooses Jethia, Kartik's Mongolian-looking Gond wife and starts to model her at once.

The next day Mrs Milward chooses slightly porcine Brijlal, another Gond, but after setting up his face finds she cannot bear it any longer. Shamrao is given embarrassing task of explaining this to Brijlal, but a rupee soothes the wound.

She models Singaro, who provided me with much of the material for *Phulmat of the Hills*.

Expedition to Bohi with Mrs Milward. Very lucky on drive. Nearly run over an enormous nilgai, see herds of chital stags and peacocks, run into an alarming forest-fire and close the day with a tiger-scare. Feel like the proprietor of private zoo whose animals have really done their stuff, and carefully refrain from mentioning that we have never known anything like this before.

Rapturous welcome at Bohi, specially from drunken headman and old dowager with one tooth that sticks out in front like an antenna. Gond girls delighted to find that they can walk with ease under Mrs Milward's upraised arms.

Despite her habit of gazing abruptly into their faces to discover epicanthic fold, Gonds and Baigas love their visitor, and she is tremendous success.[1]

Returning from Bohi, Dhimrin is now entirely in charge of Mrs M. whom she treats as a slightly mental, but amiable, patient. Teaches her Hindi, but unfortunately chooses all the English words which have already been naturalized in

[1] Mrs Milward has herself described her visit in *The Asiatic Review*. "Verrier Elwin lived in a typical Gond hut backed up against the wild jungle and facing the sunset and distant plain; a wide verandah, a long room with all the front open to the elements, and in the centre a great desk covered with the Baiga manuscript piled high. . . . Later we all went for a tour of Baiga villages. . . . It was wonderful to see how Verrier Elwin tackled the people and how he made friends. Of Bohi I have unforgettable memories. Its wide village—green with huts on three sides, its little black scavenger pigs, its friendly fires in the centre with Verrier Elwin joking with all the men."

that language—*lalten, wastkut, bason*—One evening Mrs M., in slightly surprised tones, asks, "What *does* the word 'bloody' mean in Hindi?"

The cook's assistant feeling tired, lies flat on ground in the middle of dinner and invariably wipes the plates on his *dhoti* before putting them on the table; while Dhimrin, standing behind our visitor's chair, talks at the top of her voice throughout dinner about her personal disorders. But since Mrs Milward's knowledge of Hindi is limited to the words 'bloody' and 'bason', she fortunately does not understand.

Shamrao has been very busy with the dispensary and leper-home. I have had some work in my court and have at least saved the villagers from having to go 50 miles and back for each hearing to the ordinary courts. In a recent, quite simple, registration case, the applicant and four witnesses had to do an aggregate of 3,700 miles before their case was finished.

Visited by a duodecimo Matthew Arnold, the Inspector of Schools. After gazing at me for a bit, he exclaims, "Excuse me, Sir. I am a plain man. You are a poet. You must let me call you Rousseau!"

Heard story from Nagpur. Two Congress Ministers—one a pious "Evangelical" Hindu, the other a "Modernist"—touch on religion. The "Evangelical" remarks that he can never begin his day without an hour spent in prayer and meditation. "It would be much better," exclaimed the other, "if you spent it attending to your files."

6

A Typical Month in 1938

1st. Great commotion in Leper Refuge. Adri is accused of witchcraft and trying to make the other patients worse. Two women say they peeped into her hut and saw her actually changing herself into a tigress. 'The skin was ready and she was growling. She had no tail so we knew it was magic.' Adri certainly has very sinister appearance, so, after careful enquiry, we send her and her husband with letter of recommendation to one of the Protestant missions.

2nd. Evidently many animals still in our jungle, for aboriginals keep catching them. Panda Baba comes to see me with a gift of illicitly trapped venison. Respond to this by presenting him with a bottle of beer which he drinks suspiciously and with an air of disappointment, then turns to me and says, 'Now give me two annas for a bottle of real liquor, something that makes one *warm*.'

3rd. Having been appointed an Honorary Magistrate, don the dignity of Mr Nupkins and listen to a number of Gonds perjuring themselves before me. Assisted by polygamous Gond clerk. On asking him if he has brought his wife with him, 'Not all of them, Your Honour,' he says. Many curious oaths are taken—By the earth, by the sacred saj tree, by my maternal aunt—but the most curious is when an accused suddenly swears 'By the Magistrate's pen'. A rather unfortunate oath as the pen in question has just completed writing a hundred thousand words of fiction.

4th. Set out on an ethnographical expedition to Rupnidadar. This involves a preliminary car journey of sixty miles over roads where we frequently have to get out and take soundings to see if we are on them or not. This would normally taken ten hours, but after twenty miles reach a small river, and trying to cross it unfortunately press accelerator instead of brake. There is a loud crash, car stops dead, and water pours over the floor-boards. Summon villagers fortunately at hand and they push car up the bank where we discover we have broken the main electric cable. Long pause for quiet meditation over this, as we are a hundred miles from nearest garage. Then Shamrao suddenly leaps to his feet, gets his electric torch, removes the wire from the bottom and after miracles of adjustment gets the car going again. It is now night, and very dark and cold. No supper and feel toothache beginning. Drive on for thirty miles which takes five hours, then meet a leopard. In the excitement of this stall the engine and the cable breaks again. Shamrao and the cook work hard for an hour, and at last car moves again and goes on till we reach destination long after midnight in icy wind, and only available shelter a hut whose walls appear to have been eaten by goats.

5th. Awake in agony of toothache, and go on for another ten miles on foot till we at last reach charming Baiga village and are greeted by large crowd of affable, slightly bottled Baigas, who insist on calling me the new Raja of Central India. Hastily swallowing some aspirins, divert their attention to the safe and solid topics of schismogenesis, diachronic change and cyclothymia, in all of which they are naturally profoundly interested.

In the evening a fine exhibition of Baiga dancing, and some songs, no doubt intended complimentary, about the English.

The ever-touring Englishmen have built bungaloes
All over our sweet forest.
They drive their trains with smoke.
O look at them, how they talk on wires to one another!
With their wires they have bound the whole world
together for themselves.

And a little later,

The train comes puffing into the jungle.
In one car rides the King,
In another rides the Queen,
In a third is the sahib with shining spectacles.
The train comes puff-puff-puff.
The King and Queen are puffing too.
The sahib with shining spectacles
Gives presents to the Baigas.

This sahib, who is now a well-known Commissioner in the Province, has cost me a pretty penny by his example of generosity, which the Baigas never weary of recounting.

6th. Toothache unabated, and face swollen to such a size that I can hardly pronounce the blessed word 'exogamy'. This naturally reduces my prestige among the Baigas and I decide to go home and have the tooth Seen To.

8th. A witty story from Nagpur. A Minister, asked how a certain "untouchable" candidate had fared in a recent bye-election, replied, 'O the electorate simply swept him in.'

11th. Several patients come fifty miles for treatment in the Dispensary with apparently quite incurable diseases, but Shamrao unembarrassed and doses them all heavily with mag. sulph. which does them a lot of good. What

they want, however, is injections; a youth with a fractured arm is particularly insistent in demanding them.

12th. Cook startles us today by announcing a ' Buttocks Savoury ' for supper. He is inordinately proud of the few English dishes he knows. The other day a discussion in village as to what kind of sahib I was. The Commissioner had recently visited us. There was no doubt about *him*—he was a *pukka sahib*. An Indian official had also been—he was a *dal-bhat sahib*. But what was I? Our cook solved the riddle. ' He is a *savoury sahib*,' he declared.

13th. In middle of night roused by news that Juna, beautiful young Gond girl, recently married to one of our boys, has been taken violently ill. Find her unconscious with, apparently, acute cerebral malaria. Shamrao and party of magicians stay with her all night, but she is still unconscious in the morning.

14th. Shamrao having gone to sleep, go to see patient and find hut filled with magicians who are sitting round fire in which iron instruments are glowing red-hot. They have already disfigured the girl's face with these and are about to attack the rest of her body, but I throw them all out, and send the magicians packing. These, however, merely retire to a neighbouring house where they crouch over their winnowing fans, and soon arrive at a diagnosis. Some time ago Juna's elder sister went into a house where a gun was kept in a corner. She was carrying a lamp. As she approached the gun the lamp went out, this clearly indicating that there was an evil spirit, Banduk Deo, living in the gun. Banduk Deo jumped on the girl and when she next went to see Juna, accompanied her. Banduk Deo only attacked Juna, she left the ' carrier ' alone. Juna dies at sunset without regaining consciousness, and is buried within the hour. The family are poor and the husband away, so it is a sad little funeral, in the dark, hurried and ill-attended. During the night, hyenas dig up the body, and in the morning nothing is left save the girl's beautiful hair strewn above the desecrated grave.

15th. Juna's husband returns. Directly he approaches the house Banduk Deo attacks him also. Taking the precaution of first eating a heavy meal, he goes completely mad and remains so for several days. In the afternoon, a

girl coming from the well, a pitcher of water on her head, passes the spot and is attacked. She falls to the ground in agony.

16th. One of the lepers is seized by the furious spirit and dies before nightfall. In the afternoon a wedding procession passes the spot, and the bride is attacked. There is now a real panic, and people from the neighbouring houses begin to shift their things. It is not easy to calm everyone down, but at last it is done, and Banduk Deo seems to leave the village.

17th. Visit neighbouring village with a view to opening a primary school there. Violent hail-storm catches us, and we take shelter in house of what turns out to be the local Garpagari, or Hail Averter. Find him sitting placidly in his doorway muttering incantations and blowing hail-stones in the direction of our own village. The hail soon passes, and we go home, where we find our crippled friend Tutta, who is also a Garpagari, in a great state of rage because, he says, someone has been blowing hail at our village. 'But I blew it out again at once,' he says, 'and it did no damage.'

18th. Pet monkey gets loose, and embarks on long-meditated scheme of destruction. After tearing a pillow to pieces and breaking a small chair, it eats my copy of Malinowski's *Sex and Repression in Savage Society*, and promptly goes mad. Attacks my person with a complete freedom from all inhibitions and I fall heavily to the ground to the secret delight of the village.

20th. Middle-aged Gond landlord comes to school, and sits with tiny children learning to spell. Tells us that he was swindled by a money-lender who persuaded him to put his thumb-print on a document he couldn't read, and is determined to prevent a repetition of the disaster.

24th. Syphilitic barber dies. He is all alone save for a lame father, and none of the Gonds may touch his body, not because he was syphilitic but because he was a barber. So Shamrao and I with two very brave villagers (who risk excommunication for it) carry his body to the grave. He is very light.

25th. In the middle of the morning, tremendous clamour in jungle, and presently Gond girl appears running towards

our house with a great cloud of bees above her. People rush for shelter, but a courageous constable who is visiting us takes two of our blankets, throws one over himself and one round the girl, and sits down with her in the middle of the swarm. He makes her keep absolutely still, and after a little while the bees fly away. Her body so covered with stings that it looks like a field of wheat; Shamrao removes them and rubs in some lotion. Everyone declares her certain to die, but in a day or two she recovers.

27th. Toothache persevering so persistently that decide to go to Nagpur and see about it. Start with Shamrao early in the morning. Stop for ten minutes in small Tehsil town and are surrounded by an eager crowd. In this brief space am given the following commissions: (1) to persuade the Commissioner to withdraw twelve criminal cases against a certain oppressive landlord; (2) to ask the Principal of one of our Colleges to cook the marks and allow a youth who thinks he has failed to pass his exam.; (3) to get someone a job as a Railway Guard; and (4) to petition Government to reduce the land-revenue by half. No time to explain that even if I could I would do none of these things, so content myself with nodding cheerily at one and all, and pressing the accelerator.

28th. Go in state of utter terror to the best dentist in Nagpur, our Provincial capital. Dismayed to find dirty, ill-lighted and cobwebby waiting-room, whose walls are covered with amazing selection of diplomas, photos of Jawaharlal Nehru and the King, diagrams of the human mouth in health and sickness, and some very alluring coloured prints of amorous couples in what seem to be anticipatory attitudes. Not quite so bad as the Chinese combined Dentist and Barber whom I once visited in Raipur (going for a hair-cut I got into the wrong chair by mistake) but nearly. Dentist himself, however, very efficient and charming. Have taken precaution of bringing with me chaperone highly connected with Government to see that I am treated right, but on getting into chair find with horror that dentist is an ardent Congressman. All now depends on whether he will work off his feelings about Government on my person, or whether he is truly imbued with the gentle and non-violent spirit of Mahatma Gandhi. Hastily chang-

ing my political coat I remind him of my friendship with the latter which seems to please him, and he begins to pump enormous quantities of stuff into my gums, laughing heartily every time I make a remark. This far from normal reaction to my conversation almost makes me forget the solemn task on which we are engaged, when suddenly he wheels round upon me, an expression of sadistic fury contorting his amiable features and thrusts a great Pincer into my face. Pushing him away, I declare that I am not yet psychologically adjusted, but in a minute or two shut my eyes tight and bid him do his worst. There is a loud rending noise and when I look again dentist is waving an enormous tusk to and fro, and all is over. Dentist asks only five rupees for this, which rather hurts my feelings. In view of all it meant to me, it hardly seems an adequate charge.

29th. In spite of agonizing toothache, go in the morning to see the new Messiah who is visiting Nagpur. He has chosen, I think mistakenly, to stay with an Inspector of Boilers. Go with Hindu friend in some trepidation, but find enormous crowds surrounding the house, and only with great difficulty push our way into a sort of pantry. Here great baskets of creature-comforts for the Master are arriving every moment, and we sit on dirty mattress until very efficient person, perhaps the I. of B. himself, takes me by the hand and says I can have Just a Minute, but I must go at once. I am pushed into a big room, packed with beautifully dressed young women, and see the Messiah, a sleek elegantly attired person in an easy chair, whose feet are being massaged by a youth in full European dress. The Master raises a hand in blessing, and I achieve what is not quite a genuflexion and yet not quite not a genuflexion, and nearly fall over. Conversation is impossible as the Master has not spoken—probably very wise of him—for the past twelve years. We stumble out, and as we go Hindu friend remarks, 'It almost makes one feel there is something to be said for the lean and strenuous personality of Jesus.' In the evening dine with the Governor (H. E. Sir Hyde Gowan). Am in such an ecstasy of toothache that I cannot see how I am to get through the evening. But while dressing take twenty-five grains of aspirin and follow this

with six cocktails taken very quick, with the result that I feel on top of the world all through dinner and am only slightly embarrassed on coming to and finding myself telling H. E. quite firmly exactly how the Province ought to be governed.

30th. Return, but on reaching Dindori, go down with sharp attack of fever and take refuge in police station, where I am put to bed. In delirium get my expressions rather mixed and hear later that I constantly demanded an ' aphrodisiac ', apparently in mistake for a ' diaphoretic '. The constables provide me with neither.

31st. Recover sufficiently to proceed and at last reach home in great content.

7

10 June 1938

The chief event of our hot weather months has been the opening of a new centre at Patangarh, nine miles north of Sanhrwachapar. Patangarh is a fascinating village on an abrupt hill in the midst of a wide clearing in the mountains. On every side are the hills, piled up on one another, of the Maikal Range. In the foreground is the magnificent symmetry of the Lingo Mountain. The sacred Narbada is only half a mile away and we can see its bright waters. A fresh wind is always blowing. Patangarh is at least five degrees cooler than Sanhrwachapar or Karanjia. Not only is the village beautiful, but its inhabitants are more delightful, more amusing, more friendly than any others—except perhaps the Baigas of darling Bohi in the Pandaria Forest. Most of our neighbours are Pardhans, the rather improper, gay, romantic minstrels of the Gonds. Phulmat of the Hills was a Pardhan. The Gond Puritan movement has made no headway *here.*

Patangarh is connected with Sanhrwachapar by a private road. We made it, breaking a score of laws, infringing a hundred rights. It is great fun making roads. It has three serious hills and a dozen water-courses, but quite half of it is much better than the local P.W.D. roads. It is also one of the most beautiful drives in the Province.

Going down from Patangarh to Sanhrwachapar is like

going from a cocktail party to a conventicle of Plymouth Brethren. The two villages are well contrasted. Sarwa is heavily wooded, sheltered, remote. Patangarh with its distant views, stands on the pilgrims' highway, exposed to every storm.

At Patangarh we have opened a Dispensary, School, Shop, Guest-House and our main " offices ". At Sarwa, we continue the School, the Leper Home, a small dispensary, the Dharmashala, and the bazaar. At present we are living in Patangarh and visiting Sanhrwachapar once or twice a week. In the cold weather we may reverse this plan.

The establishment of the new centre was arduous. The landlord first invited us to come, then gave us a notice to quit, then begged us to stay after all. An odd creature. Then we chose a really lovely site for the Ashram round a group of ancient trees, and we started to build. But it turned out that one of the trees was the home of Thakur Deo, and another the haunt of the village " Mother-goddess ". Within a week, two of our workers were down with pneumonia, an unprecedented series of whirlwinds (which are evil spirits throwing their weight about) had swept across our hill, and all the leading villagers had dreams of the goddess, distracted, her hair dishevelled, tears pouring down her face, rushing wildly to and fro as our buildings were erected.

So we picked the houses up bodily and put them elsewhere, in a site commanding equally lovely views, but without the trees. Here too we have bumped into a ghost, but we felt we had paid our tribute to local sentiment and could hardly be expected to move again.

The building itself was rather exhausting, being the hot weather. It began at 4.30 in the morning and went on all day. We lived in a tiny hut supervising it. When the walls were up, cyclonic storms swept up the valley and knocked them down. But now as the rains begin, the Ashram is more or less ready. But it leaks.

Fighting for a Reprieve.

You remember the untouchable girl Koeli who was arrested last November. She was sentenced to death by the Sessions Judge for poisoning her husband. I don't

believe she was guilty. She had no motive. The prosecution case depended on the evidence of one blackguardly little man who hated the girl. We have known the family for years; Koeli was a very nice, good girl, and why she should have committed a purposeless, entirely out-of-character murder, I cannot understand. Lord Peter Wimsey, of course, would have settled the matter in a few hours. How easy it is in books. In fact . . . I set out for Jubbulpore to arrange an appeal, and after driving a few miles was taken violently ill and had to return.

Everyone sentenced to death has a right of three appeals, one to the High Court, one to the Provincial Government (in this case the Congress) and one to the Viceroy. These are preferred automatically by the Jail authorities. The Governor of the Province has a right of clemency. Suddenly, on a perfervid April afternoon, a telegram arrived saying that Koeli's petition for mercy had been rejected by the High Court, and that if she was to be saved from the gallows I must act at once. Shamrao was ill in bed; I too had fever. But I managed to get the car out and away in half-an-hour. The 140-mile journey from Sanhrwachapar to Mandla has never been done so quickly; the Ford dashed in the dark over the appalling roads and by ten o'clock I reached the home of our admirable District Superintendent of Police. He and his wife were wonderfully good to me, but nothing could be done in Mandla. The next morning, I was away like an arrow to Jubbulpore where I learnt what could be done. My story now grows a little vague, because it is discreet not to say just whom I saw. But I urged the Ford on through the sweltering heat to Pachmari, the summer headquarters of Government. From Seoni to Chindwara I averaged 65 m.p.h. I reached Pachmari. I went to the proper authority. I learnt I was twenty-four hours too late. The Provincial Government had rejected the appeal for mercy.

However, I did what I could. I wrote a long petition, stuck a two rupee stamp on it, and sent it to the Minister. Then my host took me off to a cocktail party. (It was here that I was introduced to a Major's wife as an anthropologist. "And is anthropology", she said, leaning towards me with a confidential whisper, "very *prevalent* in Mandla

District?") *There the Governor's aide-de-camp arrived* with a message that His Excellency—it was Bomford—wanted to see me; he had been born, apparently, in Dover and knew my Aunt Agatha. I was to go to Government House at 8.30 next morning and have breakfast. What could have been better—even though I am not at my best dealing with Governors in the early morning. However, I went. H. E. was charming. I was determined to get him on Koeli's side. I told him about Mrs Milward and Bastar, from there we got on to Maria Gonds, from Maria Gonds to Baigas, from Baigas to bows and arrows, from arrows to the aconite that is smeared on them, from the aconite on arrows to the aconite Koeli was supposed to have put in her husband's soup. So there, quite naturally, we were. But H. E. too said it was very very difficult.

There was nothing more to be done. I had failed. I started home. By evening I was a few miles from Mandla. I had done 600 miles in 4 days and there was 100 to go. I was very sad and very tired. A bullock-cart with a load of bamboos swirled round in the road before me. Crash! A miracle at last—only the wind-screen and one lamp shattered. I was able to get home.

I have not yet heard the inner story of my petition, but the local paper had a veiled account of its progress through the Cabinet, and the quarrels it caused. For weeks nothing was done, and poor little Koeli waited. At last, the Governor himself intervened, exercised his right of clemency, and the girl was reprieved, receiving instead of death the appalling clemency of life imprisonment.

Work of the Mandal.

Our varied activities continue much as usual. The School at Sanhrwachapar is now recognized by Government. It has 80 children, 30 of them girls. We have altered and improved the buildings.

The Mehera Reform Movement has suffered from the opposition of the orthodox party, but a number of night-schools are functioning, and quite a lot of people have had to think.

The little Lepers' School, under the admirable Gulabdas, makes some progress.

The Leper Home is full. It is looking very pretty now all the trees are green. There have been no more tragedies, but Shamrao has had some terrible moments with verminous wounds.

My Court is no more. One of the first acts of the Congress Government was to deprive all Honorary Magistrates of their powers. I cannot help thinking that there were other reforms of greater urgency to which they might have turned their attention. Even without a Court, however, we are continually, and rather exactingly, engaged in settling every kind of quarrel and dispute. This work falls mainly on Shamrao who has an admirable knack of putting people in a good humour with each other.

I hope we will have a really good garden in Patangarh. We are making a big effort at the planting of fruit-trees this year, a hundred sweet limes, another hundred plantains, oranges, lemons, guavas, papaya.

We have had, of course, thousands of Gond and Baiga visitors, but very few from the outside world. An anthropologist, Miss Durga Bhagvat, arrived in a bullock-cart. A few days after our arrival in Patangarh, we had a memorable visit from Evelyn Wood. Evelyn was then Manager of the Sugar Marketing Board in Calcutta, and tired of it. His real home, like mine, is Bombay. He was a great help to us during a rather difficult time, and in two or three hours had become a complete villager, absorbed in local problems and disputes.

At Patangarh we are back in the police-circle of the old Sub-Inspector who caused us so much trouble in Karanjia. This corpulent futility has become even more hostile, impertinent and malicious than he was before. His predecessor, who also did a lot to damage our work, has at last been dismissed from the force for mental deficiency. This proves that I was not altogether wrong in my earlier complaints about him. It seems to me extraordinary that we should still be exposed to all this unpleasantness and poisoning of our existence by half-witted and blackguardly policemen. I suppose, however, it is inevitable. "Unless you are prepared to pay the usual bribes," said another Sub-Inspector to me, "what do you expect?"

Our old friend " Ram Charan " is at it again. Despairing of getting justice in the corrupt and pusillanimous law-courts of this district, I advised the people concerned to withdraw the criminal cases that were pending against him. This gave him a new lease of life. Supported at every turn by the Karanjia police, he began again his career of blackmail and extortion among the simplest and poorest Gonds. He tried to blackmail one Gond for Rs. 50. He took a chaprasi with him to another Gond and said they had a warrant of distress for his property, and removed Rs. 150 worth. He went to a third village pretending to be a policeman and extorted cattle and gold ornaments. He threatened a Gond woman with imprisonment unless she gave him her ornaments, and was taking her down to the Court. We rescued her, and he reported to the police that I had abducted his wife. The police have now made a case against Ram Charan for cheating, but they accepted bail of Rs. 300 from a village watchman who was not worth Rs. 50, which shows which way the wind is likely to blow.

Ram Charan is only one of many. I give you his story because it illustrates vividly and picturesquely the scandalous maladministration of these aboriginal areas. Corrupt policemen, lily-livered magistrates, a bored and indifferent bureaucracy expose these poor and simple people to every sort of exaction and oppression.

7

20 August 1938

This year we have found the rains delightful. Mud and malaria have generally made the monsoon a rather trying and dangerous time, but this year we have done well so far. This has been chiefly due, I think, to this charming village, and the really beautiful little Ashram we have made. The new houses are made of mud, walls nearly two feet thick, with great windows, instead of the old bamboo wattle covered with plaster.

The garden also has been a great joy. I got a number of things from the Government Horticultural Gardens in Nagpur, so cheap and so good that there has not been a

single casualty. The cannas have done specially well—a red variety was described by a Gond as "beautiful as a goat's liver". Dahlias also, both from bulbs and seeds, are flourishing, and some good roses—the Ladies Ashtown and Hillingdon not a bit disconcerted by their far from aristocratic surroundings, Glorie de Dijon, C. K. Douglas and the lovely carmine-lake Eugene Boullet.

We have planted out as usual some fifty plaintain shoots, most of which have come up very well, and distributed over five hundred papaya seedlings, and the customary boxful of beans, peas, tomatoes, cabbages, cucumbers, lettuce, beetroot, that is sent us every year by our friends the Pochas.

I enjoy this as much as any part of our work, and on the whole it is very successful. The famous Panda Baba now has a very good garden of fruit trees, and so have a score of others. When one of his guava trees died, Kartik—our Gond master—wept as if he had lost a child. Vegetable-growing has been less successful, partly owing to the wild and stormy nature of the country, but there are now a round dozen profitable vegetable gardens in existence.

The Congress Government has launched a scheme for fifty new schools for the aboriginals in this District. (I have been glad to see that they have adopted my word "Bhumijan" for aboriginals in some official communications; I wish it could become universal.) They have allotted six of these to us. What it means is that Government will pay the salary of one master. This means that we can again push forward with out educational work.

The two older schools, at Sanhrwachapar and Patangarh, are full of children, the first with a daily attendance of 56 and the second with 48. We have started also in Rusa, Madhopur and Jarasrung, but the numbers are poor at present.

Although my Court has been closed, we still have a great deal of "legal work" to do, though this now falls mostly on Shamrao. At least, our job is to prevent cases going to the Courts and to compromise them quietly at

home. This saves the people a great deal of money and anxiety. But it is far more exacting than running a regular Court, for everything has to be done by persuasion, and you have no authority save a moral authority which the accused, if he is really a bad hat, is not likely to respect.

My own small share in the work consists chiefly in writing and being tiresome to one and all. One of the more important I.C.S. people in the Province once said to me, "Your mission is to make a damned nuisance of yourself as much as possible, so that we don't forget our duty to the aboriginals." I haven't been nearly enough of a nuisance, but I have been writing pretty regularly, sometimes in the Press, more often privately, on nearly all the questions that affect the aboriginals, and we have brought to light a fair number of scandals and corruptions.

A very good Circle Inspector of Police has arrived recently. He at once sent the fat policeman at Karanjia (who had caused so much trouble) packing, took up two charges of cheating and one of personation against a notorious local oppressor, another case of cheating against the Gond reformer who had taken so much money from the villagers in the name of Government, suspended a Court peon, dismissed a head-constable, and is now being rather unpleasant to some notorious money-lenders. What hand Lord Peter Wimsey had in all this I had better not say!

But we have been rather glad to find that directly an efficient and honest policeman comes on the scene, he confirms everything that we have been saying for the last two years without anyone taking any notice.

Those who have visited the Ashram will be sad to hear that old Macbeth has been killed by a jackal together with all our really good poultry. Many doves have died of a strange disease, and so has the monkey's wife. *He*, however, is full of vigour and go.

The big aim, of course, is to banish fear from the hearts of the villagers. You can have no idea how afraid they are—of everything.

NOTE.

In the cold weather of 1938, Verrier's sister, Miss Eldyth Elwin, came from England and stayed with us in Patangarh for about four months. She was immediately accepted by the villagers and her love and devotion to them was so obvious that she quickly made many friends. Like Verrier, Miss Elwin is a keen supporter of Indian Nationalism, and she attended the Indian Congress meeting at Tripuri in 1939.

8

The Early Part of 1939

Eldyth Elwin's letters were always fascinating, and I give some extracts of those she wrote from Patangarh in August 1939.

The leper home is close at hand and is a most beautiful place. Banana trees and flowers grow between the little white houses, which are very cosy, especially in the evenings with their little fires. There is the school and dispensary, where Shamrao stands radiating love and hope as he injects one after the other. They come crowding up on their poor swollen feet and as he talks to them and jokes with them, smiles split their distorted faces. The little leper children run to him, five tiny lovely children. A beautiful boy had just developed the disease and had his first injection while his father wept aloud. In such a place there is visible tragedy, but at least they are cared for; they have food and clothing, cows and doves and friends.

For all round us there is that flame of pain, that burns brightly in almost all whom we meet. Disease sunk in them in abysmal hopelessness, cold striking like a piercing arrow with a numbness that a strip of cotton cloth does little to cure; and hunger is a stalking horse with thin arms and legs and wasted bodies. One sees this in the bazaar which gathers all over the Ashram hill, the women who are really young look old and wrinkled, almost all are thin. The "stalls" are tiny little heaps of beans and chillies, a few dried fish, some sweets and tobacco, some bangles and strips of cloth. But for all that it is a very social occasion and

people come from miles around to shop or sell or meet friends. I am still a show piece, some of the country folk never having seen a white woman. They are most intrigued with my stockings—where does she start to turn brown? Then one and another will steal up and gingerly pluck at my legs, squealing with excitement when the "skin" comes away.

This letter is very inadequate. I long to be able to make you see this village and its poor but loving and courteous villagers, who refuse to "improve", but who lodge in your heart. To show you Verrier and Shamrao, with all that there is to discourage them, ceaselessly returning good for evil and dispensing friendship with both hands. Verrier has been working ceaselessly over his book on the Baiga and he and Shamrao are very tired, but we are all well and send our love and greetings.

I was once taking a long train journey with a delightful woman, who had been hearing a good deal about our forest people. During the course of it I said to her, "My best friend in the jungle ran away with an engine driver, and travelled all over India on the cab of an engine disguised as a boy." There was a pause, and then a very cold voice answered, "Oh really! Did she come out on the boat with you?" So I am a little diffident of producing my stories, but will do my best.

Soon after I wrote my last letter I emerged into civilization. Packing up to go away revealed many curious secrets, such as the fact that Jai Gopal (Verrier's admiring shadow aged five) had hidden all Verrier's handkerchiefs in various holes in the mud floor of his house, from which he had to be persuaded to produce them! However after a feverish washing and ironing of clothes, Verrier and I set out, trailing clouds of dust to Nagpur to stay at Government House. We drove through the beautiful forest to Charbi, where we lunched with the D.F.O. and I had a rest on a tiger skin and a ride on an elephant, and then we went on to Mandla. What a beautiful place it is! With its lovely river with white temples gleaming on its palm fringed banks. We started on the Seoni Road and as we had no lights (they said in

the School, "The eyes of your car have gone blind") hoped to make a Dak Bungalow early. It was the road along which Phulmat had passed, and we saw the hill and village where they thought her a witch. The villages are always fascinating, but later with hundreds of bullock carts returning from market the dust poured in through the broken back window and we slowly turned dark brown; it was very trying. We crossed the holy Waingunga river at dusk and found the village of Kohwara and a little Dak Bungalow, where a bearded Mohammedan produced baths and supper and we went to sleep to the sound of a Temple bell.

Next day nearing Nagpur and impressed by our horrific looks, we stopped at a bridge, dived under it, washed in the river and changed our clothes—anxiously flicking dust from our luggage—before driving up between saluting sentries to Government House.

Sir Francis and Lady Wylie were charming to us, and we plunged into the interesting life of a Provincial capital; long walks taken by His Excellency and Verrier; tennis and cinema parties and innumerable calls. Sir John and Lady Ewart were also guests. He is Head of the Secret Intelligence Department in India, and we felt as if we were in the middle of an E. Phillips Oppenheim novel.

We paid a visit to the jail to see Koeli (the girl from our village undergoing a life-sentence for murder) who had grown fat, but had lost her jungle sparkle. It was a picture that stamped itself on my memory. The long line of women prisoners in white saris standing against a sun-bathed wall: a great tree, with chairs for us, and a little figure standing alone saying, "Yes Bara Bhai, no Bara Bhai" in answer to Verrier's questions. Her joy to see us, and to hear news from the jungle! The prison is 270 miles away from her home, so it is impossible for any of her friends to visit her.

How lovely was Jubbulpore when at last I got there, finding Shamrao and the old car to take me back to the jungle. There had been rain and the roads had been ruined, so it was hard to know if one could travel. We started for Patangarh, with one of the schoolboys who had been seeing

the wonders of Jubbulpore through lovely country, having tea by a river, past grey monkeys with black faces and the pink oleanders driving under the stars till the orange moon rose and showed us hills and plain and slopes of jungle. Near home we had a miraculous escape, in a spot where the road had given way, throwing the car off its tracks, shaking it as though it had been bombed.

At Patangarh there was the Old Lady, the "ayah" who looks after me and early morning little voices calling "*Bai*" (sister). It was good to be back.

There were many sick: pneumonia had followed measles. Crowds came to the Dispensary. Shamrao gazing over a selection of patients, all with strange and unknown diseases, cried, "I wish the masses didn't suffer so!" And how difficult to know what to do often when the disease was diagnosed. We did what we could. There was one family where everyone went sick. The Father, a gunia or magician, went thin as a bone with a terrible cough. The elder boy deaf and dumb, became jaundiced and faded to a skeleton. The lovely daughter of about 14 years developed heart trouble, and the little boys got bad fever and terrible pustulated itch, and the baby, a plump and merry little fellow, with a piece of the backbone of a snake round his neck to protect him from ill, looked like a famine waif, pitiful beyond words. The poor mother was desperate, and went from magician to magician for help, instead of coming to us. We went to them however and found them all sitting in a little inner room filled with smoke from the open fire. The skeleton boy was dragged out into the light for us to see, but we could do nothing for him and could only feel glad when he died. The others responded to Shamrao's injections, except for the baby, who, in spite of tinned milk, was too weak to survive. They had been terribly poor and under-nourished all their lives.

Sundarlal's (Verrier's anthropological assistant) little baby had been ill a long time. Since he was born he had suffered. His head was so big and his body so small and he had great brown eyes. When he wasn't with his mother he rode on the hip of his small uncle aged 9, and was often put down for a game of marbles when he would wail in a thin little voice. His father was away and we thought the

baby dying, but Sundarlal got back and the baby laughed for joy and held out his arms and was held by his father till they came to tell us "the child is dead". We rushed round to find them all desperately weeping beside the still body of the child. The women weep in the most beautiful way; it is almost like singing, and as they weep they compose the words. His mother wept, "My little son, because you were so delicate I held you always on my breast, but now I must lay you all alone on the cold earth. Before you came I was so ugly, but you came and made me a queen, your throne between my breasts, but now I must be as I was before." They wrapped him in white cloth, and his father taking him in his arms led a party down the hillside to the field. Only men go to funerals but they let me follow a little way off. We crouched in the field in silence while the grave was dug with a little cave to one side. Sundarlal laid his child in this with most tender care, hovering over him till he felt sure the little body was comfortable, and then coming away he covered his face. They all went to bathe ceremoniously at the well.

I have no figures, but infant mortality must be terribly high in these areas where only the strongest are able to survive.

You have heard from Verrier about the various forms of friendship in which the people indulge. I now have several Special Friends. One day I entered into friendship with three women of the village. During the afternoon they sat me on a bed outside their houses, and showed me how to dance the Karma, an aristocratic old lady beating the drum. At dusk they all came to my house and with the schoolboys filled it to the brim. A space on the floor was cow-dunged and a design in white earth traced upon it, and room was just left for us in the centre. Ahalia became my Nerbuddajal; our friendship being sealed upon the waters of the Nerbudda. This ceremony should have taken place in the river, as it was we gave each other to drink from a cup. We sat down opposite each other, and exchanged plates containing rice, dal, salt, matches, a rupee, a coconut and any gift we were making to each other. This we did three times; then we gave each other to drink, then we embraced in the manner of the country, leaning towards

each other from shoulder to shoulder, calling each other "Nerbuddajal". The coconuts were then broken and we put a little piece into each other's mouths, and distributed the rest to the company. From henceforth we must not call each other by our names, and must help and stand by one another all our lives. Jai Gopal's mother became my Mahaprasad—a very special form of friendship, but with a similar ceremony, without the water. She is shy and sweet as a young forest creature. Baigin, graceful and always my willing helper, became my Gulabphul or "flower of sweetness". This is a pretty ceremony, its distinctive feature being the placing of a flower behind the ear of the other. We gave each other gifts, my Gulabphul taking the silver dhar (earrings) from off her ears to give me. Jai Gopal then became Verrier's Gulabphul, trembling with excitement, standing on his toes to put his flower behind Verrier's ear with great dignity. The company then broke into song and dance—the aristocratic old dame giving a solo performance—and at last most of the boys spent the night rolled up in their rugs on the floor of Verrier's house, and a really delightful sight they were all lying in a row!

One day, startled by the boys' excited cries, we looked up to see advancing over the plain like prehistoric monsters, twenty great elephants. They were journeying from Sarguja State to Tripuri for the Congress procession. We were all thrilled. Jai Gopal rushed to meet them crying to the mahout of the largest elephant, "Here you are! Bara Bhai is here. Come along!" Verrier went out and invited them to spend the night in our village, which they did, spending the day eating large quantities of jungle, rice laid in the heart of a ball of grass and ten great chappattis and ghee. How our peoples mouths watered! All that food! People thronged the village and wherever the elephants went the entire Boarding School followed. At sunset they agreed to take us for a ride. I rode with the women on the Rajah's elephant; a great beast 10-12 feet high, and with the rest of them laden with boys and villagers we rode to the water two miles away and the great beasts stood round drinking and sighing. Then we swayed back in the dark all singing and piping, towering above the little huts. The Mahouts were wonderful old men and each

elephant had its special name. At dawn they were gone, leaving a treasured memory in the minds of us all.

On the darkest night of the year all the world goes to Amarkantak, bathes in the water at the source of the Narbada to wash away their sins. Many go because it is a great bazaar and they buy all they may for the year, or else they set up a shop and make and sell sweetmeats or bright punderas of gay wool for the girls to twist in their hair. In the middle of the bazaar between two tree covered hills, the Mother, or Mai, as they call her, rises from beside the place where are built some small white temples. Amarkantak is about 30 miles from us and almost all our village went, most of them gladly walking both ways, and there was no stopping the boys. We went one day at the beginning of the mela and found them camping on a little hill near some old temples. All the hill was covered with picnic parties, each with a fire. The Lamanas or gipsies were near us in their bright and full skirts and poked headdresses, with silver bells hanging over their faces. Camels were in a group at the top of the hill. Bulls and horses wandered in and out. There were palm trees and lights shone on the white temples with gay flags on their tips. Everyone was cooking—our Khansamah making dhal-bhat —the boys cook boiling huge cauldrons of rice. Baigas squatted nearby, leaf-pipes stuck in their turbans. Women greeted each other and wailed or laughed as circumstances permitted. Lorries lurched over the uncertain roads laden with pilgrims. Sadhus were many, some covered with ash, one all over knobs (some disease), one with masses of false hair piled up on his head like a bird's nest, ginger haired ones plainly drugged, women sadhus. Rewa State police strode about among the multitude. No officials had yet arrived from British India, and we were probably the only "civilized" people in that vast crowd.

We had a large audience while we ate and settled down for the night. We rolled up in rugs and slept on the hillside. Ram Kali slept with me, a nice warm little bundle, and at about 2 a.m. several of our women arrived by a belated bus and snuggled down beside me! Everywhere one looked there seemed to be a little mound that was a boy in a blanket. The jungle closed us in thickly outside, dense

and silent as the darkness overhead, but near us was dancing, songs, drums, and fires; women sang an incredibly dreary dirge, and from a temple came bells and recitations. We awoke to a tiny moon gleaming in the dawn, to camels silhouetted against the sky, to stretching boys and wood smoke, to a walk in the bazaar and a drive home along the bumpy road meeting hundreds more upon the roads. Bright-eyed aboriginals with their curls and red beads, their little axes over their shoulders, carrying bundles. Sometimes women on horses—a pageant of colour and romance and simplicity.

There were many amusing incidents in my house. One night I awoke to heavy breathing outside the window by my bed, and when I at last could bring myself to turn my torch to it, I encountered the gleaming eyes of three enormous buffaloes leaning against the wall. The Old Lady let out the most amazing yodel I have ever heard, and their owners came and removed them. Another night when a leopard was around, I was awakened by something jumping in through the window. My anxiety was only relieved by a loud miow beneath my bed. Rats loved my soap and handkerchiefs and scampered round my walls, so the Old Lady armed with a long stick, and letting out the strangest sounds, tried half the night to banish them, with little result. Sparrows built in our ceilings. One night coming home late I found what appeared to be a huge crysalis on my floor; it turned out to be a boy wrapped in a blanket who had quarrelled with his family so thought he would come and stay with me. It was always a sweet sight to find the Old Lady sitting on the path outside the kitchen in the dark, guarding a jelly that the cook was trying to set under the stars. The children were always with us and a great joy. Jai Gopal learnt how to kiss (which is not a practice of the jungle people) and made a great conquest by stealing up to one of our women visitors and softly kissing her cheek.

We had few visitors. All our English friends failed to come while I was there, but we had a few Indian ones. The D.F.O. Mr Kurian came with tents and an elephant. Then came the Deputy Commissioner, and finally the Minister for Finance and Forests, Mr D. K. Mehta, who

came with a large party including the D.F.O. and his wife and children from Jubbulpore, Dr Alvarez and the Naib Tehsildar and his wife. We had a big display for them of dancing in the school, etc., and Mr Mehta talked to a crowd in the garden and at Sarwa. We also made a great Indian feast and had to borrow all the brass plates in the village for the occasion!

Anthropological committees are difficult if amusing. One night we had two Pardhans and a Panka to supper. They started off well with a fund of information that was irrelevant but interesting enough to make Verrier want to start a book on the subject. Brought back to the point, the small baby of the chief spokeswoman started to cry and she had to lie flat on the floor till it was soothed. The father, a bit of a wag, with a long piece of cloth wound round his face and head, sat sideways on a deck chair commenting on the repast which he ate with relish. "How much food you eat!" We gave them some coffee at the end to see how they liked it, and their faces were a study. "After feeding us so well you give us this bitter stuff to spoil it all," he cried, but with looks of anguish he drank it.

It is rather terrible to see these people look at food. We once gave the lepers a goat and while it was being cut up they gazed with devouring looks upon each piece. It comes from generations of hunger. We asked the boys what they would like for a farewell feast. "Potatoes and chapattis" they said. That was all they asked.

Little pictures of village life stand out vividly. I remember walking through the village at Sarwa on the way that leads down to the well. At the turn on the path you come to a great tree in which were dozens of green pigeons, with wings of mauve and green and feathers of bright yellow and dove grey. At the top of the hill were two or three houses and they brought out a charpoi (bed) for us to sit down. The view was glorious—golden green forest behind and in front a sweep of plain and hill and close before us a long line of women with full water pots on their heads coming slowly up the hill. I went on into the courtyard of one of the houses and sat down to watch the women grinding grain and tossing it in a fan to get rid of the chaff. Others were shaking rice and picking the

stones from it. Little Indian hens and minute chickens picked hopefully about, a calf wandered about bewildered, naked babies sprawled in the sun, and an old woman was making mud bins in the sun, patting the mud till it was smooth and round. There was companionship in this leisured simple toil though we could not talk to one another.

I can't write much about the parting from Patangarh; it was too sad. We all wept together and I left them a silent group with tears pouring down their faces. As we turned the corner of the hill there was the cook running hard to give us a last salute.

How rich we are when we have such poor to love!

Jubbulpore is a beautiful place. The bazaar is a really thrilling one lined by old houses with lattices above. Temples in the middle of the road: crowds of people, tongas, bulls—sacred bulls don't seem very fierce happily. Part of the time we were there riots were going on and curfew was in force and the bazaar closed to us.

The Indian National Congress held its annual Session at Tripuri about seven miles out of the town. The road leading there winds between low hills, high on the tops of which are perched white temples, with long flights of steps leading up to them (one was built by a poor woman who saved the money to build it by grinding corn for other people). There are little lakes surrounded by clusters of queer black rocks which look as though they had been hurled there. The camp at Tripuri, which consisted of hundreds of small huts of bamboo and matting, laid out in streets, was situated on the banks of the Narbada, surrounded by hills. Gandhiji's hut had been built overlooking the river across to the jungle, where the elephants fed. There was an Exhibition of handicrafts, which Jawaharlal Nehru opened. There was a vast open space with tiers of seats at one end for the meetings. There was a building of sorts for the closed sessions, its pillars decorated with the national colours—green, orange and white. Women volunteers dressed in these colours also, drilled in an efficient manner. Men volunteers were everywhere compelling one to keep to the left: we even saw one or two with guns!

We had been invited to go there and to bring some of

our boys to give a demonstration of their tribal games and dances. It was thought that if people became enthusiastic about them they might be introduced into the curriculum of other schools in the province. As we got our papers a week late in the jungle we came down expecting to find that Gandhiji had already arrived, only to find that he was fasting, and that there was a serious split between his party and that of the President, Subhas Bose.

Verrier, Shamrao and twenty boys, settled into two of the huts. Electric light was laid on and water in a pipe outside. What joy our boys got from a tap! They washed all day long! Verrier however got fever and the fearful heat in his little hut made his illness a grim affair and he staggered to his feet too soon. Our boys had never seen a town, an aeroplane or a train, and it was a joy to see their faces when they did. Throughout the camp there were restaurants; erections of matting where the diners sat in rows on the floor and food was doled out to them on to leaves. We were all invited to one of these one day and it was a wonderful sight to watch our boys reaching their sixth helping. We could hardly get them away. We brought a cook with us for them, but I sampled a variety of these restaurants which on the whole were good. The boys gave a display of their dances and games one night to a crowd of about five thousand. They kept their heads splendidly and gave a display that impressed everybody. I was amazed at their dignity. They wore coloured turbans and peacocks' feathers, bells on their belts and their school clothes. Shankerlal Banker who arranged it made a speech and Verrier made another in Hindi. Shamrao commented on the programme, through a loud speaker.

* * *

Verrier and I accompanied Eldyth Elwin back to England, where we spent two months, leaving London for India again on 1 June.

9

A Brief Glimpse of June 1939

1st. Leave Victoria. Sent on our way by company of friends, including Margaret Moore with books and creature

comforts, Francesca Morcom with a most heartening parting present, Raghavendra Rao on his way to the India Office, Pamela Stent looking quite her best, and John Murray came running up but in time with a copy of *At Mr Murrays* which I had always wanted to read. Before departure go with Bernard Clarke and Leonard Schiff to the Cafe Royal, where they introduce me to a new teetotal drink called Vodka which they have discovered. Sip it and find the taste not unpleasant, a definite improvement on ginger beer.

3rd. Passing through Paris, taken by Wilfrid David to the Folies Bergeres. We have very little money, and he is determined that we shall have good seats. Remarkable picture of him waving his British Museum Reader's Card and declaring us to be representatives of *The Times* of Londres, in the end getting us the best seats in the theatre at the cost of half-a-crown.

5th. Embark on a boat whose name I have forgotten, and endure a fortnight of quiet misery, somewhat lightened by the business of correcting the proofs and making the index of *The Baiga.* A journey of unparalleled boredom.

18th. Reach Bombay long before dawn and am foolish enough to get up with the romantic idea of getting my first sight of the shores of India again. Shamrao more sensibly goes on sleeping. Suddenly all lights go out and the fans cease working, so that when I find my way back to cabin am met by a blast of heat that can scarcely be imagined. However, we get off at last, and have an unexpectedly easy passage through the customs, as one of the Inspector says with a broad smile—' Boxes full of presents for your Gonds, I expect, Mr Elwin '—and another comes up quietly and says, ' I too am a poet '. Why ' too '?

20th. Journey to Jubbulpore with enormous quantity of baggage, all of which is pushed by Shamrao and his friends into already crowded third-class compartment. I arrive late with Evelyn Wood to find a free fight in progress, Shamrao hurling other people's baggage off the rack and installing ours, they hurling off ours and installing theirs, and everyone enjoying themselves greatly. But not me. The usual frightful night now begins such as I have described before, but we arrive without disaster at Jub-

bulpore, and charter a motor-lorry immediately. This lorry is filled with kerosine, wheat, sugar, potatoes, onions, salt and our own baggage as well as a miscellaneous company of merchants who have no business there at all. But no one seems to mind and we drive and drive and drive till we reach Patangarh at 3 a.m. and at once go to sleep.

23rd. Tremendous storm breaks, and the rains—which have been delayed this year—set in with vigour. Rain pours through the as yet unacclimatised roof of my house, my bedroom has six inches of water. At bedtime the cook solemnly presents me with an open umbrella.

29th. Quickly get back into the good old atmosphere with a very exciting marriage by capture. Charming youth has long been looking for a wife, and at last finds one staying with friends in village. He and body of youths waylay her and her mother as they are going along road under our hill, and we get excellent ring-side view of whole affair. Boys chase the pair who begin to move off quickly. Mother hits our cook over head with her water-pot. He retaliates by seizing her sari and pulling it off, which somewhat naturally puts her out of action as she has to sit down in the grass to hide herself. They then take the girl by the arms and run her up to their house and lock her in. We go along presently and there is a tremendous din in the prison, and the mother now more or less clothed is standing outside screaming. Everybody assembles, enormously pleased. They feel the old days are back again. Girl breaks down door, but the bridegroom's party dashes at her and sprinkles turmeric all over her, and force a little food into her mouth. She gives in immediately as this is the sign that she is for all practical purposes married.

However, in the afternoon, as the more formal ceremonies are developing a rescue party arrives and there is another free fight, the defenders being hampered by a heavy lunch. Shamrao and I make peace, settle the bride-price, and within a few minutes everything is amiability itself, and I am called in to take the omens.

10

15 November 1939

I am writing to you, because I am convinced that, in spite of the War, the work of the Bhumijan Seva Mandal on behalf of some of the poorest and most neglected people in India must continue. If the Poles need the succour of humanity, even more do the aboriginals. A European, even at the seat of war, has a far better expectation of life than a Gond; and the diseases that ravage our villages are every bit as deadly as bombs or gas. Against the ultimate enemies of man, hunger and fear, poverty and death, we have tried to construct a 'Line' of love and sympathy, and it would be tragic if it had to be abandoned because of the madness that has overtaken Europe. So I make no apology for writing to you to ask you to send us once again munitions and supplies.

In February last the whole Vidyamandir visited the sacred source of the Narbada, Amarkantak, for the Shivratri Fair, and in March we took a party of 25 boys to give an exhibition of dancing at the Tripuri Congress. The manners of the boys and their attractive tribal dress created a real impression. A Congress leader said to me, "They don't look like primitives, they look like young princes!" and an English friend remarked that they might all have come from a first-class Public School. Unhappily during the hot weather, all our villages were swept by a disastrous epidemic of malignant measles which often developed into pneumonia; many of the Hostel boys caught the infection, one died, and others were removed by frightened parents. By the rains, however, the Hostel had recovered.

We have recently come across some striking instances of the way the aboriginals are exploited by outsiders. A certain merchant bought Rs. 180 worth of grain from a fairly well-to-do Gond with a large family and paid for it with two notes of a hundred rupees each. The "notes" were coloured factory labels removed from bales of cloth. The Gond, who could not read, accepted them with pleasure, thinking he had a bargain, and only discovered the fraud when he took the notes to a police station—not to complain

but to get change! A loquacious petition-writer told us the other day how he made a handsome living out of the unhappy aboriginals who found their way to the criminal or civil courts. "I take them away quietly," he said "and sit them down. The authorized charges are, of course, the first item of my bill. But I explain to my clients that they will not get very far with only that. Do they want their petition written with an ordinary pen, or a fountain pen? That is very important. They always choose the fountain pen, and that means a special charge of four annas. Then I have two books with me, a red and a yellow one—they are both law books. The red book is better: if I copy my stuff from that it is eight annas more than if I take it from the yellow book. They always pay. There is another little charge, anything from six to twelve annas, for putting *gur* or sweet-stuff, into the writing, and finally a rupee or so to ensure the petition reaching the magistrate at all."

11

4 April 1940

Although the War seems far away from here (we have no wireless, and we only got the papers announcing the declaration of war a week after it happened) we are not out of the war. For any consideration of war aims must include the rebuilding of the slums, the freedom of India, and a square deal for the aboriginal. Here we live permanently under war conditions. There is a black-out in the village every night. Far more deadly than the Messerschmidt, comes a flight of mosquitoes with a load of parasites that kill three million annually. We always have a rationing system, for the villagers never have enough to eat. For four months in the year the rains set up a great blockade of mud between these villages and the outside world. The Gond is just as down-trodden and oppressed as the Pole or the German Jew. Many years ago his kingdoms and great estates were taken from him by conquest or deceit. The Baigas, lords of the jungle, have been robbed of their ancestral home, deprived of their human rights, taxed and suppressed and regimented into decay

by the very people who now profess to stand up for the integrity of small nations. Nearly every wrong that the Nazi has inflicted on the Czech and Pole has been suffered by our aboriginals.

And that is what I mean when I say that Britain's war aims must include a square deal for the aboriginal as well as for India. And the 'war aims' of the Indian Nationalist should equally include normal human rights for the original inhabitants of India. That is why I believe it is essential that work of this kind should continue. Millions rush to man the armies of freedom in Europe: there is only a tiny handful of people to man the 'Line' of love and sympathy that must be maintained against the ultimate enemies—hunger and fear, poverty and death.

Since I returned from Europe to civilization I have been more and more convinced by this, and the attitude of the Gonds and Baigas has confirmed me in my feeling. An old woman put it very well. 'This,' she said, 'is how God equalizes things. Our sons and daughters die young, of hunger or disease or the attacks of wild beasts. The sons and daughters of the English could grow old in comfort and happiness. But God sends madness upon them, and they destroy each other, and so in the end their great knowledge and their religion is useless and we are all the same.'

Some of our friends have, of course, shown a very flattering enthusiasm. A party of Baigas came one day with a bundle of bows and arrows which they wanted me to forward to the British Government to aid in the war. When I told them that modern battles were no longer fought with these weapons they were much concerned. 'But if they use guns, people will really get killed,' they said. Some Gonds brought their old swords. A Baiga magician made what is called a 'thua'—an essay in sympathetic magic. He buried a thorn bush in the ground by a river and placed a heavy stone upon it. The thorn bush represented Hitler and the hole in the ground his grave; the stone was to prevent him ever rising again. And once when I was summoned to Nagpur, and the news went round that I was going to the war, I was seen off by a great crowd of people all shouting what they would do to Hitler's sisters and aunts, daughters and all his other female relations.

I mention this, not because I like it, but because it is of interest to note how even our more civilized people of the jungle can be affected by the barbaric mentality of Europe. But this is rather unusual. On the whole the war has affected our people mainly by the rise in prices. This has made things very difficult for us who have to feed 150 people every day, and we are finding now when we have to buy a thousand rupees worth of rice at a time what a lot of difference an anna or so in the pound can make. The other day we brought up from Jubbulpore a magnificent lorry load of stores, sugar and gur, oil and coconuts, salt and spices. Wheat, pulse and the smaller millets we can get here. Enormous rats have come to aid the enemy, and we have had to build great circular grain-bins on piles to keep them off. The store-room is now housed in a round African-like house on pillars in front of the Ashram.

Since my last letter we have carried on much as usual. We have opened four new primary schools, and have enlarged the Hostel with a new quadrangle, and it now looks very nice indeed. The Middle School has been well started and has been recognized by Government. Various crafts have been introduced, as well as archery, the Saila dancing and many Indian games. A thick wall of fruit trees and flowering shrubs has been planted right round the compound, but it will be some time before these mature.

The Leper Home continues; the chief addition has been the planting of a large orchard of about 200 fruit trees. Many of the older trees are already in fruit.

Out of the wreckage of the old Gond kingdoms, four survive. Of these the most notable is Sarangarh. Three years ago the Raja Saheb visited us at Karanjia and won all our hearts. This year he asked me to join his Christmas party. The journey was not easy, for the Mahanadi River curls round the State and cuts it off. But the beautiful forest road through Chauradadar and Lamni was in good order—in fact I only broke one spring—but when I reached Bilaspur I found that the road over the river was not ready and I had to make a long two hundred mile detour through Raipur. In the evening we reached a charming little village Nandghat by a river, where there was a bazaar. There our admirable new cook got busy,

bought two pice worth of a small fish like whitebait, a pice worth of lemon, two pice of cauliflower, a bit of old goat, and produced the most marvellous dinner. The next day we drove through Raipur and then east towards the Orissa boundary. I found to my delight that this part of Raipur was thickly wooded and hilly, and inhabited by Sawaras and Binjhwars, Bhainas and even Konds whom I had long wanted to see.

The way in to Sarangarh was lovely, through a barrier of hills and wooded park-land and forest, then into a charming little town, above whose roofs there suddenly appeared the towers of the palace against the sunset. It was a fantastic, dream-like vision, like some old French or Italian picture, the houses huddled along the street, the temples, the palace beyond.

It was a memorable week. I now saw for the first time what the Gonds must once have been and what they might be. You read much about the Princes, their corruption, their autocracy. I saw none of it in Sarangarh. It confirmed me in my belief that the old Gond kings were good rulers, just as today they make good landlords. I went all over the State, often by myself; everywhere I found a happy, contented peasantry, devoted to the Raja. I thought of our parody of democracy in British India, the corruption and intrigues of self-seeking politicians, and I must say I did wonder if it was really true—as so many people seem to think—that you can cure every human ill by giving folk the vote. But, of course, Sarangarh is exceptional; the friendly, kindly atmosphere (the police spend much of their time collecting statistics of ducks in various tanks: there is little serious crime) is largely due to the personality of the Raja who mixes freely with his people and obviously loves them.

There also I met the Gond Raja of Sakti, a representative of the Gond royal house of lovely Pandaria, the wealthy Gond Zemindar of Phuljhar, the Diwan of the Gond Raja of Raigarh. And I must not forget my special friend, the Yuvraj of Sarangarh, Nuresh Chandra Singh, who shared my love of photography and detective stories. At Christmas we were joined by Mr R. S. Pandit (Jawaharlal

Nehru's brother-in-law) the barrister, and the Maharaja and Raj Kumar of Khairagarh.

This was a new world to me, and I found it of greatest interest. But I was even more excited and charmed by my tours in the Sarangarh villages. The Raja Saheb arranged a great many dances for me to see: I took a lot of photographs; and I made an enormous collection of specimens. My bedroom looked like a corner of the Ethnographic Section of the British Museum, and there was much speculation how I would get it all into the car. As the charming rotund Raja of Sakti said one morning, invading me in his pyjamas, 'Anyone would think you had gone out of your mind!' But I hadn't and I got it all into the car. Back at Patangarh, we have opened a 'Sarangarh Exhibition' which draws throngs of villagers and causes much excitement. They love to see the familiar village things, different in shape and of a different colour.

I don't think there is much more to tell you, except that during a short visit to Bombay I spoke at the Thakkar Jayanti meeting, when a purse of a hundred and seventeen thousand rupees was presented to Mr A. V. Thakkar on his seventieth birthday. Thakkar is the leader of the anti-untouchability movement, a keen worker for the aboriginals, a great and saintly personality, and I was very glad of the chance to pay my tribute to him. Mr Rajagopalachariar (ex-Premier of Madras) was in the chair, and other speakers were Sardar Vallabhbhai, Mr Bhulabhai Desai, Mr N. M. Joshi, Prof Karve, Sir P. Thakurdas and Mr B. G. Kher (ex-Premier of Bombay), and it was a very interesting meeting.

What would the best of our village people have to say to you in Europe who are suffering so deeply on account of the war? I think it would be something to do with forgiveness. I have often been struck by the way people who have behaved badly, or who have wronged us, or who have slandered us, and declared war and hatred and preached it against us, have turned up whenever they have got into trouble themselves with a complete confidence that we would forgive and help them. I think the reason is that at least in comparison with village life we appear to them to live by reason and the spirit, and they take it for granted

that those who live so are bound to forgive. The difference between one man and another is his ability to love more and to go on loving. The real victory is to the nation that can love most and forgive most. And here I think that Europe will be hard put to it to equal the finest and most reflective minds of India which have a matchless power of charity.

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1 May 1940

April, says T. S. Eliot, ' is the cruellest month ', but this April has been very good to us, showers of rain keeping back the great heat that dries and withers the rest of India. We have all been well, and the work has gone on well.

The enlargements to the Hostel have been completed, and have made it a fine large school. It stands on its own hill with glorious views in every direction, and a healthy bracing wind. One of the new houses is called Christopher's House, after our friend Christopher Stocks. All round the new trees we planted are growing up, braving frost and heat alike. A new well has been made for the boys. In the March exams—for we have to submit to these abominations if we are to draw a grant from Government—over ninety-seven per cent of the boys passed. Crafts like spinning, mat-making, carpentry and so on made some progress. There is a regular attendance of 80 to 100 boys, which for this part of the world is remarkable.

A Leper Home has no history. There are no dramatic heroisms, nothing to catch the journalistic eye, but no one can fail to be moved by the sight of this company of doomed men helping one another to die with courage. They bear their appalling fate with great patience and even with cheerfulness. A few new lepers have come, but poor Sonwa is dying, tended devotedly by his wife. The headman Gulabdas and his wife continue to manage the colony and keep it spotlessly clean. The orchard is doing well, though it has had to face many viccissitudes of weather.

The four new schools that we opened in October are doing well. There are now ten schools altogether with about 350

children. In the Sanhrwachapar School there are more girls than boys.

We have had two bears, three monkeys, rabbits, pigeons. I gave some of these to the boys. The keeping of pets, so the Educational Department has recommended, is believed to have a mellowing effect on the boys' souls. The boys here however do not seem to be so susceptible to the influence of simple natural things as Wordsworth would have expected. Little groups of boys would get up at midnight, catch one of the unhappy pets, and cook and eat it in the jungle near the school. A grand time was had by all, and exciting stories of a tiger prowling round and killing the animals were put about, until we discovered the truth, and rescued the remaining animals and brought them here.

We were given a fine bull terrier pup, pure white and like so many white bull terriers stone deaf; but a grand dog. His name—Tiger.

In March H. E. the Governor and Lady Wylie spent a day at Patangarh, and visited the Hostel and the Leper Home. They came to Kabir Chabutra about 20 miles from here three days before and asked me to go up and see them. We spent the days discussing aboriginal problems and then they came down here and had a great welcome. The men at Karanjia, however, spread about a rumour that H. E. had come with fifteen lorries to carry off the people to the war, and so the whole of Karanjia went into hiding and one village on the route decamped with their wives and cattle into the jungle. But here, of course, everybody came and we had a very happy day.

Our only other visitor was Mr Amritlal Thakkar, or Thakkar Baba as he is called all over India. This 'angel who attends to things', who at the age of seventy spends his life travelling round India in the supreme discomfort of motor buses and third class railway carriages wherever the poor or wretched may be found, is the real father of our work, for it was a visit to his Bhil Seva Mandal in Gujerat that inspired us to start our Mandal here.

I went with Sundarlal to study the Agaria settlements in the wild zemindaris of Bilaspur. The Agarias are the primitive iron-smelters and blacksmiths, very timid people. I enjoyed the scenery of Bilaspur, but it was often very

painful to talk to the people, they sweated and trembled with fear. They were specially afraid of my camera which they regarded as a sort of X-Ray which could see through their skin to their livers—and as you know the liver is the point of attack for magic and witchcraft. In Raipur a man said to me after I had snapped him. 'You have taken all my strength and shut it up in that little box.'

To reach Bilaspur we have to drive over a terrible road —eighty miles of it takes over eight hours—and the dust comes breaking over the bows of the car in great waves, sweeping up through the floor, choking you and covering you with mess and dirt. Every ten miles the radiator has to be refilled with water. On this trip I broke two shock absorbers and a spring.

But I have been able to finish my monograph on the Agarias, though when Hitler will allow me to publish it is another matter. Some time ago I drew the attention of Government to the way the taxation on the primitive clay furnaces was killing the ancient industry of the tribe. Maitland, the Conservator of Forests, took the matter up at once and after the necessary enquiries had the tax reduced by half, from ten rupees a furnace to five. A great thing—to reduce a tax in war-time! Five rupees may not seem very much, but the earnings of one furnace were officially estimated as only thirty rupees, and the ten rupee tax represented one-third of the income of the furnace. The Agarias have other sources of income, but the total does not come to more than Rs 20 a head annually. So you can see that this is a considerable concession from their point of view.

At the end of February Shamrao and I went to Ranchi to stay with W. G. Archer. You must meet Bill Archer, the most generous, the wittiest, the best of friends. He is Census Superintendent of Bihar at present. He has just published an important and delightful book on Uraon folk-poetry, to the writing of which he was stimulated by our *Songs of the Forest*. But his book goes far beyond anything we attempted.

To get to Ranchi we had to go again along the Bilaspur road, and as usual broke a spring. There is no proper garage in Bilaspur, but at last we found someone who made

perambulators who thought he could fix the spring. There was nowhere to stay, for the dak bungalow was full, so we camped by the side of the river, and liked it much better. The next night we spent in striking contrast, in all the luxury of Sarangarh, where we had a marvellous welcome from the Raja Saheb (who is now my '*jawara*') and all the people at the Palace. He sent us on our way early the next morning with an enormous hamper. All that day we drove through the splendid mountain scenery of Raigarh, Udaipur and Jashpur. In the evening we entered Chota Nagpur and reached a town called Gumla. Here again the Dak Bungalow was full and of course there was no hotel or anything like that.

Identification with the masses is all very well, so long as there aren't too many of them, and you haven't just driven two hundred miles. We were very hungry and it looked like rain, so we were not too sure about camping out. A kindly Mussalman offered us a room in his house; we were just unpacking when we found he had also allowed a party of itinerant dentists to share it with us. In they came with a huge placard 'Good news has come to Gumla' and the most sinister instruments of torment. We evacuated ourselves in haste, bought some food in the bazaar and camped by the road. Here a seller of betel and supari took pity on us, and gave us a corner of his shop.

When we once made contact with Bill Archer, of course, everything was all right, and we spent ten days in some of the loveliest country in India studying some of its most interesting people. We had three days among the Hos, then we went up to the lofty plateau of Neterhat and saw the Asurs, then down to Ranchi and visited many Uraon villages. There is no room here to tell you about the fascination and delight of that trip and the many things we learnt. At the end I had the happiness of meeting the veteran anthropologist Mr Sarat Chandra Roy, but I missed my old friend Jaipal Singh who was at Oxford with me, and is now a leader of the Adibasi movement among the aboriginals.

We also went to Bastar which has recently made me Honorary Ethnographer to the State. I am going to spend some time there during the next two years studying the

tribes which are less 'civilized' than in other parts of this Province. I would also very much like to start a Leper Home there.

We have made three little houses in Bastar. One, which will be my headquarters, is at Chitrakot with a lovely view of the famous Falls, one of the most beautiful in India. The others are in little Muria villages. The main house cost less than Rs 200 (about £15), and the other two cost Rs 40 each or £3. That is a lot cheaper than anything we can do in Mandla.

Later History

Subsequent history may be briefly summarized. On 4 April 1940, Verrier married Kosi, a Raj Gond girl from a village twelve miles distant. On 18 October 1941, his first son was born, and Verrier named him Jawaharlal after India's great leader. Before he was a month old, the child was touring on an elephant in the wild mountains of the Abujhmar. Another boy was born in 1946 and named Vijay.

The war meant scarcity of food and material. The car had to be laid up; Verrier began to tour on foot; we had to close the Boys' Hostel, for it was impossible to get the grain to fill a hundred hungry mouths. But most of the work continued, though Verrier was absent for longer and longer periods on tour in the great forests to the south and east.

Every year during the rains, moreover, Verrier visited Bombay, and here he built up a circle of friends who have been of tremendous help in his work. I cannot possibly give a list of them all, but one or two must be mentioned. First, of course, is Mr Jehangir P. Patel, whose friendship meant for Verrier an enlargement of horizons, constant practical help, and the best company in the world. Verrier wrote of him in one of his Bulletins.

"J. P. in one mood might have stepped straight out of the pages of Dickens; in another he is one of the few men who has succeeded in re-creating in his own circle in India the atmosphere of a common Room in one of the older universities. His good sense, his sympathy and his shrewd criticisms have been of priceless value to us. And he is not

alone in his help. We have been more than happy in our friends, of whom there is a growing circle." In that circle prominent were Evelyn Wood and Maeve, who made him free of their house, and the people round the Silver Fish, the club which Verrier opened in 1942. There were many friends too in Bombay House, especially Mr and Mrs J. R. D. Tata—Mr Tata has made possible the publication of more than one of Verrier's Books—and Sir Sorab and Lady Saklatwalla, to whom *Folk-Tales of Mahakoshal* is dedicated. On the next floor is Miss Soonie Batliwalla and not far away Mr M. R. Masani, and at the bottom Verrier's special crony Mrs Vesugar and Professor Choksi.

Then there is the David family; Verrier knows and loves them all; his old Oxford friend, Frank Moraes and his wife Beryl who has helped Kosi and my wife so often in sickness or childbirth; Sir S. S. and Lady Sokhey; Stanley Jepson, to whom Verrier owes most of his knowledge of cine-photography; Dr A. P. Pillay; Dr and Mrs Gans, friends now for over a decade; D. R. D. and Pilly Wadia—D. R. D. being another great help on the photographic side; P. G. Shah; H. J. Bhabha the F.R.S., and his brother Jamshed; Sir C. D. Deshmukh, Governor of the Reserve Bank, who never forgets his days in the C.P. and can talk to Verrier's wife in her own dialect; Denys Scott; Miss Soonie Powvalla, who has often helped our village work; and Mrs "Pipsy" Wadia, to whom Verrier dedicated his book on the Marias and who has for many years supported his cause.

These are only a few of the friends whom Verrier sees most often when he goes to Bombay; I am not trying to make a record of all his friends, still less of those who have so generously supported the Bhumijan Seva Mandal.

I must not forget the Oxford University Press. Verrier now generally stays with R. E. Hawkins when he is in Bombay. Another member of the staff, Miss Barbara Smith, has been a tremendous help to him in all his books; and Verrier is never tired of telling how the Press has taught him accuracy and precision and how its help has enabled him to give so many books to the light of day.

CHAPTER VII

ANTHROPOLOGY

The Lilliputians 'came by Degrees to be less apprehensive of any Danger from me. I would sometimes lie down, and let five or six of them dance on my hand. And at last the Boys and Girls would venture to come and play at Hide and Seek in my Hair.'

—Gulliver's Travels.

It is a strange experience to visit the Scholar Gypsy's house at Patangarh. You go along, mile after mile, through village after village; when you arrive you see a house, just like all the other houses, and you go inside—and catch your breath. I have so often seen Gonds, and even English friends doing it. For the house is absolutely simple—any Gond could make it for himself—but it is perfectly proportioned; a long narrow room, with a row of big unshuttered windows, and a huge open porch (there is no door to it), verandah all round, and a bedroom at one end. The low walls are decorated in fantastic bas-relief, and since they do not reach the ceiling, they are surmounted by mud birds, bears, and elephants. The room is full of books, and everywhere you see things which ought to be in a museum—strange wooden figures, carvings, masks; every door is aboriginal—Verrier does not mind how often he bangs his head so long as it is on a Gond door. And through the windows you look over a great plain to the mountains beyond. It is a lovely room and most of Verrier's writing has been done in it.

The library naturally is not very big, but it has what we want. And there are a few treasures. There is a superb copy of Dalton's *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal*, which is now seldom found outside a big Public Library; a first edition (1660) of John Smith's *Discourses*, which long ago Verrier discussed with Dean Inge; a 1649 edition of the *Eikon Basilike*; the three volumes of Temple's *Legends of the Punjab*, of which he is very proud, for complete sets with Preface and Index are very rare; even the British Museum copy is incomplete. Verrier has Penzer's own

copy. In another line, we have a fine set of first editions of the Works of Mahatma Gandhi, including some of the rare 1921 pamphlets.

And as you open books in the library, you find pasted inside letters from many of the authors; scores from Laurence Housman; others from Naomi Mitchison, Dr John Rickman, Pearl Buck, John Haynes Holmes, Romain Rolland, Evelyn Underhill, Geoffrey Gorer; and of course many from anthropologists, Professor J. H. Hutton, Dr E. Evans-Pritchard in his books on Africa, Dr E. W. Smith in his book on the Ba-ila, Mr J. P. Mills in his books on Assam, Dr Ashley-Montague with pamphlets from Australia, Dr M. B. Emeneau in his *Kota Texts*, and a great many from Dr C. von Furer-Haimendorf in his own enchanting books.

Verrier did not, of course, begin as an anthropologist; indeed, he has said, 'I am not an anthropologist at all, but a man of letters who is interested in human beings'. There were many things in his early training at Oxford that have been very useful for cultural anthropology—the study of poetry and myth, of philosophy and psychology, the history of superstition, of comparative religion. And though Verrier mourns over the four years wasted in Christa Seva Sangh, I believe he owes to them his knowledge and appreciation of Hinduism, which at that time he studied so keenly, and which is an essential background to a proper understanding of the tribes.

It was appropriate, therefore, that Verrier's first ethnographic book should be about folk-poetry. It was called *Songs of the Forest*, and appeared under our joint names, with a Foreword by Sir Francis Younghusband, in 1935. Then Verrier wrote three books, which touched on anthropology, but could not be dignified as scientific works. The first was *Leaves from the Jungle* (1936), probably the most popular of his books, though Verrier now cannot bear to look at it ("it's too hearty and too pious", he says). It was prefaced by some words from Romain Rolland, who refers to 'this Oxford scholar, steeped in the classics . . . who hides under a penetrating wit and a malicious humour the fervour of his soul and the valour of his sacrifice'. 'In Africa Albert Schweitzer, the philosopher: in India Verrier Elwin, the poet.'

Then came a novel *Phulmat of the Hills* (1937), also published by Murray. His association with the firm of John Murray has been one of the happiest things in Verrier's life: the beautiful old house, where later I too was to receive a wonderful welcome, at 50 Albemarle Street, with its memories of Thackeray and Byron, was a place where he met people so diverse as Axel Munthe, Admiral Good-enough and Freya Stark; through Murray's he got to know Aldous Huxley and Gerald Heard: and he formed a life-long friendship with John Gray Murray, the youngest member of the firm. *Phulmat of the Hills* is a story of aboriginal life, about a girl who becomes a leper. It was reviewed by the famous writer H. E. Bates, whose opinion is worth recording.

"Mr Elwin's people are a primitive and remote tribe living in the forest uplands of the Maikal Hills—the Gonds—and they move against a background of strange witchcraft, primitive custom, and wild life that make this book a piece of the best kind of romance, rich in emotion but unsentimental, rich in colour but firmly rooted in fact, a romance that is also realistic and as frank, in its portrayal of love, as Maupassant.

"Mr Elwin's heroine is a Gond girl: Phulmat. She is extremely beautiful ("a girl of furious gold, aloof yet insatiable, alluring and yet in some strange way uplifting") and is in love with Gamira, who, according to the prophecy of a tribal festival is to die 'by the snake' within a year. But during that year other things happen: Gamira falls a victim to another girl, Adri, and Phulmat herself falls a victim to leprosy. The poignancy of such a situation, the whole central situation of the book, is very great and, for the novelist, very dangerous. It is as full of pitfalls as Gond life itself is full of superstitions, and in the hands of a lesser writer it might have degenerated into pure mush. But by a carefully regulated combination of simplicity, humour, and tenderness, and above all, a most beautiful frankness, Mr Elwin keeps the book where it belongs: on the plane of true realistic romance.

"Above all, he keeps it true to the tradition of the people he is describing; he sees that the love he describes is really love, frank, sensual, free, as the Gonds know it, and not as it is in the world of Europe and Hollywood. All the time, indeed, he keeps your hand firmly on the pulse of this obscure and remarkably fascinating people, whom he knows from the experience of years, and thus

gives us a book which is genuine in all aspects of fact and imagination."

After this, Verrier wrote two more novels; one was published, the other, *Traitor's Gain*, was turned down both by Murray and Kegan Paul and remains in manuscript to this day. *Traitor's Gain* is a terrible exposure of the economic and economic exploitation of the aboriginals under British rule, and no doubt was rather too strong in flavour. A *Cloud that's Dragonish* (1938) was well received by the reviewers, but was not a success financially. 'Here is that rare and refreshing thing', said *G. K.'s Weekly*, 'a novel of Indian life by a man who really knows his subject, instead of by some hysterical memsahib or too clever American globe-trotter . . . The characterization is superb . . . It will be a monstrous injustice if this book does not achieve a very high place in the public esteem, for it has everything to commend it'. Howard Spring head-lined it in *The Evening Standard* and said it was 'as individual and original a tale as he had read for a long time.' L. A. G. Strong, however, though admitting it 'interesting and well-written', criticized it for 'hesitating between fiction and anthropology and so failing to be wholly satisfactory as either'.

These books led Verrier to think of writing a serious treatise on the grand scale. He had toured long before among the Baigas in February 1934, and continued to collect information about them for a number of years. In 1938, his manuscript was ready; he sent it to John Grey Murray who decided, after much deliberation, that so costly a book could only be produced with a subsidy. This was provided by the Sir Dorabji Tata Trust, and at last—a week or so after the war began, in September 1939—the book was published. It was at once recognized as a great and important work. 'It is difficult', wrote Dr J. H. Hutton (Professor of Anthropology at Cambridge and since President of the Royal Anthropological Institute) 'to write in moderate and judicial terms of what is perhaps the greatest thing of its kind that has yet been done. Both from the ethnological and psychological point of view the work is most important'. S. C. Roy said, 'It takes the palm among all ethnographic monographs on Indian

tribes'. *The Statesman* described it as 'incomparably the greatest work ever written on an Indian tribe'. 'It is a human and fascinating book,' wrote Mr W. V. Grigson and added that he had twice taken the book with him on tour among the Baigas, showed them the book and talked to them of its contents. 'I can testify,' he says, 'to its great general accuracy, and its value as a key to their confidence. Far from resenting anything written in it, they are naively proud that so full a record of their life has been made'. Beryl de Zoete gave the book two columns in *The New Statesman*, speaking of 'this vast and entirely fascinating encyclopaedia' and saying that 'so extraordinary an achievement calls for extraordinary praise'. I will give another opinion, that of Dr Evans-Pritchard, the anthropologist celebrated for his work in Africa, who said the book is 'an important contribution to the ethnology of India and to social anthropology but there is more in it than that. His lengthy description of sexual life from childhood to marriage is one of the best and most detailed accounts yet written about the sexual life of a primitive people.'

Even more important, from Verrier's own point of view, than these formal appreciations were the new friends the book brought him. One was Mr J. F. Nicholson, Conservator of Forests in Orissa; another was Mr W. G. Archer, who was introduced to the book by Mr Arther Waley, and wrote to Verrier to say 'what a magnificent effort my wife and I consider your book . . . We think it likely to be one of the most vital and important books of our generation.' And thirdly, Dr B. S. Guha wrote to him,

> "I have had the pleasure of going through your great work on the Baigas recently and I can say without exaggeration that I have rarely been more profited by a book before. The usual writings on primitive people, even those by anthropologists, seem more or less to be gropings outside, but you have the rare genius of one who gives the impression of having penetrated the citadel and have brought back a picture which throbs with the heart's beating."

Soon after writing this letter, Dr Guha visited Verrier in Bastar and toured with him among the Marias and Murias, thus beginning a friendship and a work of scientific co-operation that may bear rich fruit for Indian anthropology.

Verrier has a tremendous admiration, as well as affection, for Dr Guha; "he has a beautiful mind," he has told me more than once, "clear, disinterested, incisive; if I could remove it and substitute it for the cumbersome machinery in my own head, I would do so at once. And he has tremendous drive and a great love of the aboriginals."

If Verrier would like to rob B. S. Guha of his brains, he would rob W. G. Archer of "his eyes, of his wonderful power of aesthetic appreciation, of his poet's soul." He admires C. von Furer-Haimendorf for "the courage that keeps him in the field for such long periods." W. V. Grigson, he thinks, is above all distinguished by his style: "he writes anthropology in the classic manner."

Among Indian anthropologists, Verrier admires Dr Ghurye of Bombay for his brain and power of stimulating research in his pupils; "unhappily he lacks the social gifts." But Professor Chattopadyay of Calcutta is "not only a first-rate scholar but a very charming person, and I like his politics."

After *The Baiga*, Verrier's next book seemed meritorious but dull. *The Agaria* (1942) is an account of an oppressed tribe of iron-smelters, but here too he reveals what C. von Furer-Haimendorf called his 'incomparable familiarity with the Central Indian aboriginals, and his flair for interpreting primitive mentality.' The book had a good press and is already out of print. It is dedicated to Mr and Mrs J. R. D. Tata—in token of our long friendship with them as well as a means of linking the great modern iron-work of India with its primitive forerunners.

All these early books dealt with the Central Provinces and during these years, too, Verrier was collecting material for his later folk-song and folk-tale books. But now an event occurred which was to greatly change the course of his daily life. He was appointed Hon Ethnographer and Census Officer of Bastar State. In May 1940, he left Patangarh with his wife Kosi on the long car-journey to Jagdalpur.

Verrier's three years in Bastar were probably the happiest in his life. In those lovely hills and among those simple and affectionate people, he found the peace that had been so long denied him. I think he also did his best work

there. As Census Officer he was able to tour all over that huge State, the size of Belgium; he had a beautiful little mud house by the Chitrakot Falls; he went by elephant into the Abujhmar, on foot through the Dantewara Hills, and everywhere in the northern Muria country.

His first book on Bastar was his *Maria Murder and Suicide*, which studies 100 homicides and 50 suicide cases of the Bison-horn Marias. Its publication was made possible by the generosity and enthusiasm of J. P. Patel. It has a Foreword by Mr W. V. Grigson, a friend of many years' standing who first inspired Verrier to go to Bastar, and was at the time Revenue Member of H.H. the Nizam's Government. Long ago Mr Grigson had been Administrator of Bastar.

> "'Elwin's researches,' he wrote in the Foreword, 'are providing a scientific basis not merely for social work among the tribes but above all for the great and complex task of administering the tribal areas in the tribesman's interests. The programme of any wise administration for these areas should be not only to enable the tribesman to hold his own in the world without losing his way of life, his virtues, his dancing, his songs and his laughter, but also once he has been secured freedom from fear, from want and from interference, to make his own special contribution to the free India that is to be. That contribution may well be restoration to the drab village life of the plains of freedom from the puritan and killjoy, and the revival of what Elwin in his pamphlet *The Aboriginals* has referred to as the 'art of recreation, an art which is lamentably absent from the ordinary Indian village'. That pamphlet is commended to all who desire to get a clear and sane picture of the whole tribal problem; it states both the creed of one of the finest and best-equipped minds now at work upon the problem, and the case for the scientific approach to it'."

Maria Murder and Suicide has already been quoted frequently in murder trials, where aboriginals have been accused, and has been consulted in appeals; I believe it has saved more than one from the gallows. For the book shows clearly how many aboriginal crimes are not due to wickedness, but to poverty, fear, fatigue or superstition. Verrier has an important chapter on prisons for aboriginals, a matter in which he has interested himself practically as well as theoretically.

But Verrier's great work on Bastar, *The Muria and their Ghotul*, has not yet been published though it was completed by the end of 1942. The Sir Dorabji Tata Trust again came to the rescue with a munificent donation, and the book is slowly moving through the press.

At the end of 1942, Mr A. N. Mitchell, who was then Political Agent for the Orissa States, invited Verrier to tour in Keonjhar, Bonai and Pal Lahara, and report on the condition of the aboriginals there and make recommendations. Verrier's report was printed, but is confidential; it may be said, however, that very great benefits came to the poor Bhuiyas and Juangs as result of Verrier's visit. Another result was that Verrier wrote a small monograph on the Juangs, which still awaits publication.

This visit first interested Verrier in Orissa, and later correspondence with Mr J. W. Nicholson, Conservator of Forests and talks with Mr H. V. Blackburn, inspired him with a desire to explore that beautiful and little-known country. In November 1943, he and Kosi accompanied Val Blackburn on an expedition to the Kuttia Konds; Verrier and Val climbed the Nimgiri Mountain; and Verrier fell in love with Orissa.

Two years earlier Baron and Baroness von Furer-Haimendorf had spent some weeks among the Bondos, a stone-age people living in the hills above the Machkund Valley. Their descriptions excited Verrier so much that he determined to go there too, and in December 1943 he made the first of several visits which have resulted in yet another book, *Bondo Highlander*, now in the press.

The year 1944 saw further Orissa activity, and also a tour of the Santal Parganas with W. G. Archer. Sir Francis Wylie, then Political Adviser to the Viceroy, invited Verrier officially to tour with him in the Dangs and study the situation there. The following year the Orissa Government appointed Verrier Anthropologist to the Province, and this official basis for his enquiries made them easier at a time when transport and supplies were difficult.

In Bastar Verrier was able to do a lot of touring by car; in Orissa he did almost everything on foot, he and Kosi covering many hundreds of miles across the hills. He has now completed *Bondo Highlander*; his study of the Saoras,

The Religion of the Lanjhia Saoras, is almost ready, and *The Economics of the Kuttia Konds* is on the way. A collection of over 500 legends is nearly ready under the title *Tribal Legends of Orissa.*

Verrier's output has been enormous, but no less surprising has been its variety. While the Orissa research was in progress, he found time to start a series which he rather pompously has called 'Specimens of the Oral Literature of Middle India.' There are six books planned for this series, and they are not little folk-lore books, but substantial works of 500 pages and more. The first, *Folk-Tales of Mahakoshal* is a collection of 150 tales, with introduction and notes; the second, *Folk-Songs of the Maikal Hills*, is a joint work by Verrier and myself; the third volume is *Folk-Songs of Chhattisgarh.* This third volume, which is dedicated to Sarojini Naidu 'in affection and admiration', has a brilliant Comment by W. G. Archer. In this he says that 'Verrier Elwin is to Indian poetry what Arther Waley is to Chinese,' for in these poems he 'has gone far to reveal the Indian sensibility in some of its most truly indigenous and spontaneous forms.' He praises the love-poetry specially, saying that he does not know of any 'which expresses a contemporary attitude quite so fully,' and he sums up his opinion: 'These translations are a fusion of two sensibilities—the collective sensibility of certain Indian castes and tribes and the alert sensibility of a scholar-poet, and it is because of this that they have given something new to contemporary English poetry.'

Verrier has always loved art in every form, and Mr and Mrs Archer have inspired and directed his appreciation of it. In 1946 Verrier put together his photographs, and the drawings he has had made of his specimens, into a really thrilling book *Tribal Art in Middle India*, which should be published in about a year.

In addition to these heavier books Verrier has, contributed many articles to learned journals like *Man, Folklore, The British Journal of Medical Psychology, Journal of American Oriental Studies.* A bigger task was the one Archer and he undertook when, after the death of S. C. Roy, they began editing *Man in India.* They at once got a new printer, a different paper and cover, new writers;

they greatly extended the range of subscribers; and achieved the considerable feat of bringing out quarterly numbers (sometimes rather late, it is true) right through the war.

These activities of Verrier's have begun to earn some reward. He won the Wellcome Medal, a very high honour, in 1941, and was the first recipient of the Roy Gold Medal in 1945. In 1944 he was awarded the degree of Doctor of Science by the University of Oxford; on the same day the degree was also conferred on another anthropologist, John Layard, of Malelkula fame. Here in India, Verrier was elected President of the Anthropology and Archaeology Section of the Indian Science Congress in 1943; in the same year, he was elected a Fellow of the National Institute of Sciences—India's Royal Society, and in 1945 became a Member of its Council. He is President of the Lokvarta Folklore Society, which is specially concerned with the folklore of Bundelkhand.

Verrier is a keen photographer and his pictures have improved very much. The Baiga illustrations, with a few exceptions, were not of high quality; they were taken with a Retina camera. So were the Agaria photos. Then Verrier got a Contax and improved tremendously. His lovely illustrations in *The Muria and their Ghotul* were taken with this camera. Now he uses a Leica, which he likes best of all, but so far has published none of his results.

In Bastar, Verrier took up Cine-Work and made a Maria colour-film which awoke an enthusiastic response wherever it was shown. *Camera in the Tropics* said of it, "It is quite obvious that Mr Elwin will in course of time produce films which will become famous, for he knows exactly what he wants to film and he has some exceptional subjects in the aboriginals for whom he works so hard to protect from the degrading influences of outside life." Indeed so good was his work considered that he was elected an Hon Member of the Amateur Cine-Society in recognition of *'his contributions to sub-standard cinematography.'*

Verrier's photography is marked by the qualities one finds in his writings—a passionate love of beauty and a desire to make the aboriginal attractive to the outside world. There is sometimes an absence of realism—that is true—

but as Verrier said long ago in answer to those who accused him of painting too rosy a picture of Indian Nationalism, 'There may be many tragic things in this beautiful but tragic land. But I will never believe that any good purpose is served by dwelling on these things for the edification of people abroad. India treats us with the utmost courtesy here, and the least we can do in return is not to blackguard her behind her back.'

No account of Verrier's anthropological work would be complete without some mention of the devoted little band of assistants whom he has trained over a period of many years. The leader of these is Sundarlal Narbada Prasad, who has been with Verrier now for twelve years; he has toured all over Bastar and the Central Provinces, in the remotest areas of the Agency Districts of Orissa and in the Orissa States and Chota Nagpur. He now has a very remarkable knowledge of aboriginal India. He is a man of great courage and determination, a real explorer, and above all he has a wonderful gift for making friends with the most suspicious villagers. Another assistant is Gulabdas, now getting rather old, but very faithful; his best work was done in Bastar, where his knowledge of the tribesmen astonished officials of many years standing. Then there is Chainu, the youngest of the party, who has a knack for getting people to tell him stories; Dindabhandu, another young man, who is the Oriya and Kui interpreter; and dear old Gandorbo, an excellent Saora interpreter, and a very nice person to have about. These men are devoted to Verrier and will go with him anywhere and face any hardships with him. Most people are terrified to go alone through the great jungles specially outside their own area, and it is by no means easy to find workers who will do what these have done.

Verrier's anthropological work has been criticized on three main grounds. The first is that he pays too much attention to sex. This view was put strongly by a member of the I.C.S. in *The International Review of Missions*. To that the reply is easy. It is, that Verrier does not by any means write a great deal about sex, and even if he did it would be a good thing. Out of about 2,750 pages in the seven major monographs he has so far published, only 280 pages

or just over 10 per cent deal with the subject. This hardly suggests that he is absorbed in sex.

But Verrier's researches in primitive sexology are of great importance. *The Baiga* was the first book on an Indian tribe to discuss sex freely and naturally; of his article on 'The Vagina Dentata Legend' in *The British Journal of Medical Psychology*, a leading psychiatrist has said that "it deserves to become a classic"; his study of the pre-marital sex life of the Murias, which will shortly be published, is probably the most thorough study of the subject ever made in any country. Evelyn Wood, in fact, prophesied that Verrier would be remembered not as the Indian Malinowski, but as the Indian Havelock Ellis. And in presenting Verrier with a fine copy of *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, Evelyn Wood added the following "Triolet on the Union of Anthropology with Psychotherapy."

Ellis to Elwin! Shades of sex:
Waves in one human spectrogram
In whose green heart may love annex
Ellis to Elwin.
Shades of sex,
Long may your bonds and lusts perplex
Those who hate fact—love holy sham.
Ellis - to - Elwin shades of sex—
Waves in one human spectrogram.

Verrier himself believes that there is no more important task than to free mankind of the social and moral superstitions associated with sex and he likes to quote Hirschfeld: "For thousands of years human folly has overwhelmed love with debris, pelted love with filth. To liberate love from this is to restore that vital human value which among all human values stands supreme." And another of Verrier's quotations is equally relevant.

[1] On this point a woman's opinion is worth giving. Writing on *The Baiga*, Mrs Marguerite Milward says, "The author's frank description of the intimate sexual life of the Baiga may be criticized by some. But if he had left this out or curtailed it the book would not present the Baiga as he is or show the enormous importance of sex to the primitive. . . ." His own apology is noteworthy: "Our picture of tribal life will be devoid of all contact with reality if we omit what is to the Baiga the most important and the most enthralling thing in life."

"The concealment of truth is the only indecorum known to science; and to keep anything secret within its cold and passionless expanse would be as prudish as to throw a cloth round a naked statue."

—*Westermarck.*

A second criticism concerns Verrier's plan, or supposed plan, for the future of the aboriginals. The missionaries published a substantial booklet trying to prove him wrong. A Bombay scholar devoted a large part of a very unfair book to attacking him. His views have provoked endless articles, letters, discussions. Well, it has all been for the best, for it has made people think.

The most common accusation is that Verrier, like all anthropologists, wants to keep aboriginals "as they are", in a sort of zoo, or isolated in a cage. To this Verrier once wrote a brilliant answer, which was printed in *The Indian Journal of Social Work* (1942), from which I take the opening paragraphs.

"One of the more puerile charges made against anthropologists in India is that they desire to keep the aboriginals in a sort of zoo in order to preserve them as specimens and material for the exercise of their science. Since this accusation has been made not only by reformers and politicians, but also by people of some intellectual standing, it is necessary to examine it.

"By a curious coincidence, I have just opened a copy of a widely-read English periodical, *Picture Post*, in which precisely the same charge is levelled against Mahatma Gandhi who wishes, of course, to keep the whole of India as a laboratory in which to conduct his experiments in *satyagraha*. A series of pictures illustrate the life, not of aboriginal India, but of ordinary Hindu villages and the letter-press describe how backward these are and how sunk in poverty and superstition. At the same time, it is explained that Mahatma Gandhi would keep these unhappy Indian villagers permanently in their backward condition through his dislike of modern medicine, modern industrialism and the ordinary fruits of civilization. We see a telegraph wire running across a landscape and are told that this symbol of civilization strikes a jarring note in the Mahatma's mind. The anthropologist may congratulate

himself on being found in such good company as the Mahatma, but actually neither can be called guilty.

" For what does it mean to put an animal in a Zoo? It means that you take it away from its traditional surroundings, you deprive it of its accustomed diet, you alter all its habits and you rob it of its freedom. But what is it that Mahatma Gandhi is fighting for? It is to restore to the people of India their own home and enable them to live in it as their own, to preserve their own customs untainted by Western influence, and to win for them their liberty. The attitude of the anthropologist is the same. He would give his life for the freedom of the aboriginals; he would fight to the last to restore to them their ancestral hills and jungles. He desires nothing better than to see them living their own lives, following their own customs, preserving their own rules of food and drink, delighted with their own simple pleasures in the glorious freedom of their hills. No one believes more passionately in human liberty than the anthropologist, for he is the true student and lover of mankind.

" But further it may be said that actually, even from the technically anthropological standpoint, there would be little scientific value in studying people who were artificially isolated in a sort of Zoo. The anthropologist—it cannot be said too often—is concerned with human life as a whole. He is not a specialist in primitive culture and the investigators of the last decade have tended to spend more and more time in the study of more advanced peoples. I need only mention the work of Mass Observation in England. To the anthropologist indeed the travail of people passing through a period of cultural change and the far greater complexity and interest of more advanced communities often seems of more significance than the comparatively static life of aboriginals, most of whom have now been fully studied and who generally present a considerable degree of sameness and monotony. If I wanted to have an Anthropological Zoo, I would not fill it with Marias and Baigas; I would have a very different company. I would put in one enclosure the whole of the Sevagram Ashram; in a pleasantly-furnished cage within speaking distance of the Mahatma I would confine the President of the Muslim

League. Some way off the office-bearers of the Bombay Purity League would draw crowds of sight-seers eager to watch them sip their lemonade. Elsewhere, carefully segregated, I would include a selection of Hindu Sanatanists as well as a sprinkling of the more diehard officials of the Indian Civil Service. Such types, which will soon be as extinct as the dodo, are of the highest sociological interest and certainly ought to be preserved. The mentality of Lord Linlithgow will surely be a matter of far greater interest and astonishment to the scientists of another age than that of some poor Santal. I would like to put Mr Amery too in my collection, but such specimens are expensive and the cost of transporting him from England in wartime would be too great.

"The position of the anthropologist in this matter is very widely misunderstood, and he has come to be regarded by many thoughtless minds as a sinister person who desires to deprive the aboriginals of the blessings of civilization and is primarily interested in sex. But the anthropologist is simply someone who observes more carefully, takes better photographs, travels more widely and works harder than other travellers and observers who have not had his technical training. Owing to the length of time he spends among his people and the intensive character of his observation, he generally becomes devoted to them and desires to see their highest interests preserved. It is a significant fact that all over the world these people, who presumably must know what they are talking about, are unanimous in declaring that unregulated and hasty acculturation has a degrading and ruinous effect upon primitive people.

"Mahatma Gandhi once said to a group of Christian Missionaries that it was useless to offer their would-be converts the bread of the gospel until they had provided them first with their daily bread to eat. I would say exactly the same thing to the politicians and reformers who are interested in the Indian aboriginals. It is a mockery to offer them the bread of religious and moral uplift until you have first provided them with enough bread to eat. Here again the policy of the anthropologist coincides with that of Mahatma Gandhi. That is what we would expect.

A Grigson and a Gandhi are alike realist in their approach; they each know the actualities and facts of village life."

And Verrier ends one of his more recent Bulletins: "We must fight for three freedoms—freedom from fear, freedom front want, freedom from interference. We must see that the aboriginals get a square deal economically. We must see that they are freed from cheats and imposters, from oppressive landlords and moneylenders, from corrupt and rapacious officials. We must see that they get medical aid from doctors with some sense of professional integrity. If there must be schools, we must see that these teach useful crafts like carpentry and agriculture, and not a useless literacy. We must work to raise the prestige and the honour of the aboriginals in the eyes of their neighbours. We must guard them against adventurers who would rob them of their songs, their dances, their festivals, their laughter.

'But whatever is done, and I would be the last to lay down a general programme, it must be done with caution and above all with love and reverence. The aboriginals are the real swadeshi products of India, in whose presence everyone is foreign. These are the ancient people with moral claims and rights thousands of years old. They were here first: they should come first in our regard.'

On the title-page of Keats' first slim volume of poems (1817) is a quotation from Spenser—

What more felicity can fall to creature,
Than to enjoy delight with liberty.

to make that possible for the aboriginals epitomizes our task.

The third criticism is a curious one. Miss Mayo roused people because she blackguarded India's civilization. Verrier rouses us because he praises and defends India's primitives. The ordinary man, who has never seen an aboriginal, simply cannot believe that there is anything to be said for him; to the ordinary Hindu, the fact that he eats beef and pork marks him as the most degraded of human beings. To correct this tendency Verrier long ago set himself to show the aboriginal as he really is. He certainly does not give an idealized picture: he describes murder, incest, dirt, villainy, wherever it occurs. But the picture he gives is undeniably attractive, for the simple reason that

the subject really is attractive. And Verrier insists that anyone who will remove from his mind his preconceptions and prejudices will see the aboriginal as he does.

Verrier would protect and isolate some of the aboriginals —only a very few of them—because he regards them as *better* than the surrounding population, and likely to be degraded if they are assimilated *too rapidly*. And for the great majority, Verrier advocates the widest schemes of education and development, so that they may take their place in an India in which, he hopes, there will be no aboriginals, no untouchables, no Hindus, Christians, Parsis or Mussalmans, but only human beings.

Verrier has always regarded anthropology in a very practical way. His book on the Baigas aimed at gaining them more forest for cultivation; his study of the Agarias was intended to revive the village iron-industry. In one of his Bulletins he writes, 'One of our tasks is to act as watch-dogs over the fortunes of our aboriginals, and it is astonishing what a heavy and sometimes a disappointing task that is. The most curious proposals are made in various parts of India to restrict the liberty and change the lives of the tribesmen. In one place it is proposed to withdraw their fishing rights; in another a tree from which they derive both oil and food is to be destroyed for fear its flowers may be used for the illicit distillation of liquor; in another the free right of the people to the wild mango trees or to the use of honey or to their favourite recreation of cock-fighting is threatened; and always there are a thousand petty oppressions and cruelties on the part of moneylender, landlord and subordinate official.'

IMPRESSIONS

Since my own judgement may be considered biassed, I think my readers will like to have it supplemented by the opinions of a number of very different people, whom I will now quote. In his *Autobiography*, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru refers to Verrier as " a brave and generous Englishman ". The famous Dick Sheppard wrote in a letter to Laurence Housman, " I completely fell to Verrier Elwin " (*What can we Believe?*, p. 251) and this more or less sums up the opinion of most of those who know him.

1

A noteable visitor to Patangarh was Dr Edwin Smith who came in 1938. Dr Smith was twice President of the Royal Anthropological Institute and one of the greatest living authorities on African ethnography. His visit was a great experience and, in spite of the wide difference in religious outlook, he and Verrier became real friends and have remained so. In a speech given in May 1939, Dr Smith gave an account of his experiences with us, from which I take the following extracts:

" When I went out to India on my first visit last October, there were three people that I was quite certain I must see. There were of course certain people that I hoped to see—some others that I wanted to see—and three that I felt I must see. These last three were: Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore and Verrier Elwin. I did see them all."

And after describing his visits to Gandhi and Tagore, he continues:

" I then went to see Verrier Elwin. After 24 hours in the train I landed at Jubbulpore and found him waiting on the platform for me. We were then about 120 miles from his place, but we both plumped for starting right away. The roads are pretty good in places, and we finally landed at his place after 11 o'clock that evening. Everything was in darkness and everyone asleep, including our friend

Mr Shamrao; but they soon came out and prepared omelettes and tea. At 12.30 we tumbled into bed. Next morning I was able to see some of the things round about, but the first sight that greeted my eyes when I woke up was a little brown boy—a jolly looking little fellow, certainly not overdressed, with a cheery good-morning. One of the things that struck me most was this: you saw Verrier Elwin—the great human being he is—and the most notable thing about his Ashram is the entire lack of shyness in the dealings of the people with him. I didn't dress or shave or anything hardly but what there was a little crowd of children about me. They came into the house, swarmed everywhere—on Elwin and Shamrao—and the elders came in with just the same simplicity and perfect friendliness. That is a very great thing and not the sort of thing one commonly meets when travelling. We were sitting at lunch one day when in tramped a number of boys, all painted up; some of them smeared with ashes and other things; one boy holding up his arm as if grievously afflicted: it was all part of a game in which they were showing off to us, but it was all perfectly natural.

"I was also struck with the extreme simplicity of the surroundings in which our friends live. As a matter of fact, I felt at home at once, as it was just the sort of surroundings in which I myself had lived as a pioneer missionary in Central Africa. The buildings were of the simplest kind: poles stuck in the ground, roofs thatched with grass (though they might have improved that part). There was practically nothing in the way of furniture—a few chairs and tables and a bed or two: in Elwin's room of course a glorious display of books, showing where his interest lay in that line. He told me they had tried once to establish a library at the school, but the books had mysteriously disappeared one after another—taken off to use as charms. I was also told that if one rebuked a servant for not clearing up old newspaper or letters lying on the floor, one would be told that printed paper wasn't rubbish. What optimists they are! We went over to see one of the schools on a hill opposite that where Elwin's house is. Everything is of the simplest, but the boys were lively enough and to all appearances extremely happy. We also

went to see the Leper Home, along a road which I do not recommend as one of the best roads. Away in the forest we suddenly came upon this little village which is the home for lepers. I saw a good many as I went about India and nothing is more poignant. Elwin and Hivale have about twenty-four. They have a village, with the huts in which they live along two sides of the street, with a dispensary at the end. You can see there this wonderful new discovery which has been made—these injections which bring relief, if not absolute cure, to so many of these unhappy people. There again the atmosphere was very simple and friendly.

" Another day I wanted to go and see the Baigas in their homes and Elwin, Shamrao and I went off in the car, Shamrao driving and Elwin in the back with a little naked brown boy cuddling up to him. We went through the plain first of all; then into the forest along a road labelled ' unmotorable '—and it was! We came to the village—an extraordinarily interesting experience. I had lived in Central Africa amongst most primitive people—even more primitive than the Baigas—and to see the likenesses was an extraordinarily interesting experience. They live in a sort of rectangular village, the houses being arranged on three or four sides of a square. We were greeted by the Chief. He told us that he was 100 years old at least. He might very well have been. He had reminiscences of the Mutiny or the time of the Mutiny. How many wives he had I didn't discover, but he boasted of twenty sons—he didn't say anything about daughters! He took us into the house and people came round to show us some of their dances: there were bandmen nobly dressed with ribbons and fantastic headdress. Men and women danced, I won't say with equal zest of the Africans, but they did dance in a pleasurable fashion. One could sense without any difficulty that Elwin and Shamrao fitted in with these people—no stand-offishness, but an atmosphere of perfect trust and friendliness between them. One of the reasons why I was so anxious to see Elwin was because his books reveal a most interesting personality; there are many things I would like to say about him and would say if he were not here! There is his remarkable personality and you can see how deep is his sympathy with these people.

"Those are the conditions under which Elwin and Hivale do their work. It is a beautiful work. There is always that love which is flowing out in every action, in every gesture that our friends are making—and that is telling on these people. They do realize that they have living with them two men who are their friends and out to help them in every way."

2

Mr A. C. Braine-Hartnell, who was a great friend of Verrier's at Oxford, and was for many years Professor of English at Chulalankarana University, Bangkok, dedicated his translation of the Pali poem *Chanda-Kala* to Verrier, with the following verses

Dear Verrier,
When I found this tale
Of the scholar-king who fell distraught,
And held his scholarship for naught,
And all his wit of no avail,

And left his throne, and kicked his crown
Away, and slapped his vizier's cheek,
And took his lute, and like a meek
Pilgrim, wandered from the town,

And walked serenely many moons
By forest paths, filling his time
By telling all his love in rhyme
To snatches of remembered tunes,

Until he came where Beauty sat
Enthroned, to bide his questioning,
And could not ask, poor foolish King,
Nor tell her what he would be at,

But there before her filled his heart
With despairing joy, until his fate—
But I must not anticipate
And tell the end before the start;

I thought of you; and so I made
This English version (for I flirt
With rhymes for pastime, to divert
You tedium in that forest glade

Where you have gone to look for One
Who also dreamed, and left His Throne,
And wandered on the earth alone,
Smiling and sad, under the sun.

I've wrought it with all gay device
I know, that you may find it fair,
You, to whom laughter is a prayer
And beauty is a sacrifice.

3

This was in 1936, and the tint of religious devotion in Mr Braine-Hartnell's poem correctly reflects the impression which Verrier in his early days made on his friends. Eight years later, Mr W. G. Archer wrote another poem, which brings Verrier up to date; yet even here, the sense of quest and absorption in a cause is evident.

For Verrier Elwin

Beyond the white fantastic mountains
The war is fracturing the foreign cities
The western style makes toys of the dead
And in the little brittle churches
The girls are praying with long hair
For the hours of the future and the sexless houses.

Among your burning hills, the lonely jungle
Roars in the summer. The sterile land
Rests; and news comes up like clouds
While you are active in the needs of peace
Saving the gestures of the happy lovers
The poems vivid as the tiger
Faced with destruction from the septic plains
And with your love and art delay
The crawling agony and the death of the tribes.

4

One of Verrier's English friends is the charming and brilliant woman who married Reginald Reynolds. Ethel Mannin has given her impressions of Verrier in two of her

books. In *Privileged Spectator*, she describes her early suspicion, which is shared by so many other people.

"Before I met Verrier Elwin I was disposed not to like him; he sounded altogether too good to be true, and far too good to be good company, this Oxford educated renegade from the Church, who lived in an Indian jungle with a primitive people called Gonds, to whom he endeavoured to bring the material advantages of Western culture—education, hygiene, medicine—without interference on the spiritual plane; this man who ran a leper colony and lived among the Gonds on an uncompromising level of equality. It sounded all very interesting but just a little super-missionary, and a picture I had seen of him wrapped in a blanket was not prepossessing. Then, too, when one has heard a great deal of unqualified praise concerning a person one is liable to conceive a quite irrational prejudice against that person.

"I hardly know what I had expected Verrier Elwin to look like. I had been assured that in India some years ago he had been 'the most beautiful looking creature you ever saw'; on the other hand there was that blanket picture of himself in his book, *Leaves from the Jungle*; he might be anything. I certainly had not expected anyone so charming, or, when the reserve of natural shyness had melted, so amusing. His humour emerges from his book, and it is not always a very respectable humour, either."

Ethel Mannin goes on to describe how she took Verrier to see A. S. Neill and his school at Summerhill, since the general outlook of the two men was so similar. 'He had an immense success at the school', spent an evening talking to the boys and girls, and at the end the two friends escaped down the road to the pub . . .

Ethel Mannin concludes,

"A whole book could be written on the fascinating subject of Verrier Elwin and his work for the 'People of the Soil' in the heart of India, but perhaps I have said enough at least to indicate not merely the nature of the work but the spirit of it. Verrier Elwin makes no attempt to convert these 'jungle children' to Christianity; he is not a superior white man out to educate for its own sake, to Westernize a simple people; like Neill in relation to his children, like the

late Homer Lane in relation to his young delinquents, he is *on their side*. He is concerned only with an education which will protect the Gonds and other tribes from exploitation at the hands of unprincipled officials, an education which will teach these superstitious, easily frightened people to stand up for themselves; like Neill with his children, he realizes to the full the importance of rooting out fear. He is anxious to preserve their dances, music, song, legends, their simplicity and freedom, their love of children, their lack of the 'usual Oriental inhibitions'. He believes that 'the primitive has a real message for our sophisticated modern world which is once again threatened with disintegration as a result of its passion for possessions and its lack of love . . .' 'This mud-hut philosophy bids us not to demand too much from life, not to set too much store on things, not even to expect too much from the immortal gods, but to love most where love will be returned, in the charmed family circle, in the friends who will stand by you till death. *A gay freedom of spirit is the most precious of possessions, and simplicity of heart the greatest treasure man or woman know.*'

"The italics are mine. I italicized these words because they sum up Verrier Elwin's philosophy for humanity at large, beginning with his beloved 'wild and glorious children of the forest.' These people have worked out a philosophy of life 'that can face poverty and disease, frustration and disaster, with unwearied courage.'"

In another book, Ethel Mannin makes the important point, to which I will return again, that the real significance of Verrier is, not that he is a saint, but that he is a sinner. He shows by his example that it is not only the ascetic, the reformer, the pious who can live among the poor and help them; a perfectly normal comfort-loving person can do it as well or better. Ethel Mannin discusses his marriage, of which she thoroughly approves, and says that she does not for a moment suggest that Verrier is to be admired 'because in full knowledge of all the possible social consequences, he had the moral courage to marry a Gond; for a man of his sincerity of purpose, believing implicitly in the universal brotherhood of humanity, such a course, when his heart dictated it, would not call for

courage.' Verrier's significance 'lies in the fact that here is a cultured, highly civilized man, a man who enjoys the good things of life, good wine, good food, comfort, the conversation of people as cultured and civilized—in the Western sense—as himself, who voluntarily adopts a life of poverty, hardship, and suffering, in the jungle. For years his health has suffered, with fever after fever; he might have returned to England and comfort years ago, with honour, resting on laurels already earned with much sickness and suffering and self-deprivation; yet because of his beloved 'people of the soil', as he calls them, he remains, and there can be no question of his returning.'

Another of Verrier's friends is D. F. Karaka, the brilliant journalist and novelist, a former President of the Oxford Union. He gives an account of Verrier in *This India* (1944).

"Elwin is in many ways one of the most interesting results of the impact of the West and East. A typical Oxford don, he began life under the influence of the Church, which he relinquished to practice and preach the greater Christianity, which had no trimmings and trappings, no ceremonial and prejudice, no chains to restrain freedom. He has been arrested in India though not jailed. He is in many ways more Indian than many Indians. He is more than just an orientalized western gentleman.

"Elwin has got India under his skin and in his blood. It is a strange grafting of one civilization on to another.

"Many people regard Verrier Elwin only as an anthropologist. They look upon him as a sort of bookworm scholar, a research student, but he is more human and more interesting than that. In spite of the secluded life he leads, he still retains that appreciation of good things without which the world would be too drab, too cold, too damned uninteresting. His conversation is varied and his interests are equally so. He has a versatile mind capable of turning to any subject. His background is still that of Oxford with its dreamy spires and the river and the Gothic environment

which belonged to his early days. Without that liberal and humane and mature influence I doubt very much if he could have got so near the Gonds as to be called by them, as he is called, 'Bara bhai' (Big brother). And that means so much in this country.

"There are only three faults in Elwin:—

(i) He has no commercial sense;
(ii) He is far too modest about his achievements;
(iii) He has too much patience with people far below his intellect."

6

The impressions of an anonymous visitor which were published in 1942 give some interesting details.

"Perhaps an outsider's notes on a visit to the Mandal at the end of April, 1938 may help to balance Verrier's accounts of his life, which are always too modest. The building of the new settlement at Patangarh had just begun, and so the time of the visit was not well chosen, particularly as there was for total accommodation only one abandoned hut, about twenty feet square, with a gap in the grass roof to let in the midday sun. But Patangarh village is on the brow of a steep hill, overlooking the saucer-shaped plateau through which run the Narbada and Seoni Rivers, and every breeze that blows is caught on that hilltop.

"On his way up from Pendra Road, the visitor had met Shamrao, distractedly hurrying to Bilaspur with some incomprehensible complication connected with housekeeping, the inadequacy of Dimra (a local fisherman) as a cook and general fluster over the arrival of 'company'. It was useless to try and turn Shamrao from his errands, for when the visitor explained that he would be perfectly content to eat Gond food, the purpose of the errand swiftly became one of safeguarding Verrier's health.

"The only person who seemed blissfully unaffected by all this was Verrier himself; and of course for the visitor's peace of mind he was right, because after fifty miles of hot dust from Pendra Road the roughest kind of comfort would be luxury. There were ancient chairs, a patch of shade, and the day was cooling into evening. Work on the new

buildings was in full swing with nearly the whole village employed; the men to set up the framework, and the women at the mud-and-grass filling, either built up as a wall or else plastered over a bamboo lattice. Children were everywhere, chiefly fetching and carrying for their parents. It remains a mystery to the visitor how Sham knew who was working on the job and therefore entitled to wages on pay-day, which was a ritual of considerable good-humour.

"As a concession to the visitor, Verrier took the first evening off from his duties as supervising architect, and settled down to give news and explain plans. The fisherman turned out to be not such a bad cook, after all; and a bed under the stars was pure joy. In the dawn, work began again in real earnest, and the visitor gave up trying to follow all Verrier's movements. An architect who is constantly adjusting his plans to suit his builders has to keep pretty close to the job. All day, except for three hours of the most intense heat when everyone rested, Verrier and Shamrao were tireless in organizing. Here was a crowd of people working all-out and systematically because the houses they were building would bring someone they wanted to live among them. The visitor had not seen work with quite that enthusiasm in India.

"It wasn't necessary for Verrier or Shamrao to stay on the building job to see that the work got done. Once the shape of the building was clearly laid down and the team spirit well started, they could be perfectly certain of the results day by day. So some expeditions were made: to the Seoni for a swim—a good excuse being that the women had to carry all water for baths at least half a mile uphill—to Sanhrwachapar, to visit the Leper Home and the School, also because the visitor wanted to see the old Ashram. Everywhere on the plateau, Verrier and Sham were pursued by villagers with innumerable questions, because the whole countryside seemed to be organizing itself for a better life—free from the rackets of merchants and petty officials. The visitor got the impression that the confidence between both *Bara Bhai* and *Chhota Bhai* and the people of the plateau was utterly complete.

"Verrier underrates his own power to inspire people to do things for themselves—judging by that visit. The

energy of both Verrier and Shamrao seemed to be endless: on one famous night a fire-light dance was arranged for the visitor, since Patangarh is mostly inhabited by the Pardhans whose dancing is famous among the C. P. Gonds. Both Verrier and Shamrao took a vigorous part in the dancing, which went on long after the visitor had gone to sleep in the middle of the party!

" In the visitor's recollections of day-to-day life in Patangarh two pictures always recur. Verrier proceeding slowly and deliberately on his way to see a family in trouble or a road under construction, and a swarm of children growing at his heels; likely as not one in his arms—Shamrao interrupting a vigorous quarrel between two girls, with the building-mud flying; Shamrao's smile slowly becomes infectious: the stream of *gali* becomes more good-natured though no quieter, and finally the quarrel dissolves in laughter.

" Wherever Verrier lives and tries to work, you will find a constant flow of children, which sounds very biblical but chiefly means that the new generation, which has not had time to acquire a distrust of the foreigner—particularly the Englishman—appreciates love wherever it finds it. It must be very difficult to do careful, scientific writing with the little devils around experimenting with your few desk-implements.

" Similarly Shamrao's abode is invariably clustered with people who need every sort of help and attention. One day there may be a witch finding sanctuary from an angry mob; another day you may see a woman covered with blood lying on his floor, victim of a drunken husband's temper. Always there is a stream of potential divorces seeking a reconciliation of their domestic conflicts. A village headman who has to send the revenue to the Treasury comes to get his money-order written in order to save the heavy ' fee ' charged for this service at the Post Office. A weeping family whose home has been burnt out sits in a corner; others come to hear the radio, to discuss plans for social reform in their tribe or village, to learn the ' truth about the war ', to borrow seed for field or garden.

" But Shamrao's chief work is in the Leper Home. It is one of the luckier facts about leprosy treatment that the

intelligent layman, after a period of training, can do invaluable work in checking this terrible disease. Ten years ago Shamrao took such training and ever since he has given the lepers the simple treatment that helps their bodies to fight the disease. He is also famous as a dispenser of simple medicines for fever, skin diseases and eye troubles.

"In the last year or so, while the friends have sometimes been separated for long periods, with Shamrao in Patangarh and Verrier in Bastar, their wives must have been of the greatest comfort to them, for it would be a lonely life in any of those wild hills, without a closer companion than the people of the tribes. Before they were both married, you would say that Shamrao took the daily work on his shoulders and Verrier laboured more at the long-range plan. Verrier maintained the imperturbable calm which quieted the worries inseparable from Shamrao's schemes and their occasional failures."

7

Verrier's relations with the aboriginals is nowhere seen more happily than in his friendship with Panda Baba, the Gond magician, now dead. When we first met him, Panda Baba had no land or bullocks and made his living by divination or by working as a farm-labourer. But he was a great personality and Verrier grew very fond of him. They went through the ceremony of friendship and thereafter were known as one another's *sakhis*. Verrier got him nominated to the District Council as a Gond representative and he was elected Vice-Chairman of the Local Board. After his death, one of our assistants Sundarlal Baghel wrote a little play to be acted at our school gatherings. It is so revealing that I will translate it here.

LINGOTI - DOST

(i)

Three Gonds are discussing Panda Baba; one of them is rather jealous, but the others are friendly enough.

SUNHAR: 'No, Amoli, why does that fellow Barnu, whom they now call Panda Baba, always go running to

Bara-bhai-Chhota-bhai's house?'

AMOLI: 'Who knows? One of them may be ill, and he has gone to do some magic.'

JAGNU: 'How ignorant you both are! This sahibs' caste does not believe in magic or ghosts as we do. They have herbs and medicines. Panda Baba goes there because he can sit on a chair and discuss things with Barra-bhai, God knows what. But he has a great time.'

AMOLI: 'What sort of great time? Do tell us.'

JAGNU: 'Well, they make him sit on a chair. He smokes in their presence and feeds with them, though they get his food cooked by one of his own caste. He can say anything he likes and they all laugh together.'

SUNHAR: 'Whatever can they see in him? A dog in the lane usen't to take any notice of him.'

AMOLI: 'You can't understand the ways of such people.'

(ii)

The same, six months later.

AMOLI: 'Listen, Sunhar. The other day I saw Panda Baba riding in Bara-bhai-Chhota-bhai's car. I hear they took him to Mandla. Now he doesn't go about in his loin-cloth any more.'

JAGNU: 'Why should he wear a loin-cloth? He is now a good farmer with bullocks and land of his own.'

SUNHAR: 'He may be anything, but have you heard how the school teacher, that Brahmin, insulted and abused him? I heard that Panda Baba's face had become small and that he was very ashamed of himself.'

AMOLI: 'Not at all. I was with him and saw everything that happened. Panda Baba went to this Brahmin to get a letter and saluted him properly saying, "May your feet touch my forehead, Maharaj." But, being used to sitting on a chair with Bara-bhai, he naturally sat down on one of the school benches, as the Pandit kept him waiting. At this the Pandit curses and swears at him for daring to sit in his holy Brahmin presence. But Panda Baba now doesn't mind if little men swear at him and just smiled and said, "Forgive me Maharaj; I have made a mistake."'

(iii)

Again six months later. Panda Baba has been made Vice-Chairman of the Local Board, which controls the schools, and one day he comes riding on a horse to inspect the very school where he was insulted. Now the Brahmin teacher comes running out to greet him.

PANDIT: 'Chairman sahib, Jayramji to you! Do let me tie up your horse in the school garden. We have already arranged gram for it to eat.'

PANDA BABA: 'May your feet touch my forehead, Maharaj! Why do you bother about the horse? My servant will look after it.'

PANDIT (*leading Panda Baba into the school, where all the boys stand up and repeat after their teacher the servile and obsequious greetings always accorded to Government officials. The boys sit*): 'Please sit here on this chair, Chairman sahib.'

After the inspection is over, Panda Baba is served with food in the Brahmin's own house, and then,

PANDIT: 'Could you help me to get an increase in my pay? Have pity on a poor man.'

PANDA BABA: 'I will certainly do what I can.'

JAGNU (*who happens to be present*): 'But don't you remember that this is the very same teacher who so insulted you because you sat on a bench, only a little while ago?'

PANDA BABA (*smiling*): 'Even an elephant with four legs sometimes stumbles, so how should a two-legged teacher not make mistakes?'

8

In 1943, two distinguished American journalists, Herbert Mathews and Sonia Tamara, raced towards Patangarh. Sonia Tamara got there first and wrote three 'stories' about Verrier and the aboriginals. She sent them to us in their actual telegraphic form, and I will reproduce parts of one of them in the curious code journalists use.

"PRESS NEWYORK HERALD TRIBUNE LONDON DATELINE JUBBULPORE IN CENTRAL PROVINCES stop verrier elwin Briton whos given his life to study and welfare of indias aboriginal tribes worlds ancientest peoples

has strange story stop hes one interestingest men eyeve met stop quite a legends grown around him stop eyed heard about him in delhi bombay hyderabad stop whenever eye said eye wanted see indias aborigenes in their jungle eye was told quote you must see elwin hes only man who knows them intimately hes gone native with them unquote wasnt easy reach elwin stop six monthsve year he travels in thickest jungle by elephant studying tribes stop during hot and rainy season exmarch octoberward he settles with his wife kosi whos aboriginal of gond tribe and eighteen month son named jawaharlal for nehru but commonly called kumar in gond village patangarh stop tis in patangarh that eye found him after motoring six hours under blazing sun through plains yellow with ripe wheat and jungle said be thick with wild beasts stop but tigers leopards outcome only in night and eye saw none paragraph elwin is tall fairskinned grayeyed man with large friendly face long hair stop he wears shirt and trousers never any shoes except when goes to town stop lives in large mudbarn that stands high up on hill commanding magnificent view over plains and distant mountains stop little furniture therein but bookshelves well stocked stop eye asked him once whether natives were impressed chiefly by his grayeyes quote no he said simply quote they talk most about my learning stop they come look at books and eye tell them that eye could buy wife with price of one volume of oxford dictionary unquote verrier widely known now in western world too as scholar and anthropologist stop 1932 he went as social worker to central provinces oneve indias poorest most neglected areas and came across gond aboriginal tribes stop hed found his lifework stop hes been among aborigenes ever since stop three years ago he married kosi pretty dark gond girl with lithe limbs tiny hands everready smile stop they were married according millenary old gond rites dash after the official ceremony provided in india for marriages between christians and nonchristians stop brides and bridegrooms bodies were painted yellow with turmeric for twondhalf days they were raja and rani dash king etqueen undash and couldnt touch earth with feet so that boysnd girls had carry them stop seven times they walked round pole tied together and holding hands stop ancient songs were sung

during long ceremonies stop all details of rites were later faithfully recorded by elwin for sake of anthropology stop as he says himself twas markve particular honour to him and of affection that gonds agreed marry their daughter to stranger stop even so kosis family was automatically excommunicated after marriage then readmitted into community after paymentve penalty in formve feast paragraph twas simplicity truthfulness helplessness of aborigenes in face of civilized laws and rapacity of moneylenders and landowners that conquered elwin stop he came help them and became so interested therein that couldnt leave them quote tis my country now he says eyell die amidst these people unquote hes done much work restore their selfconfidence give them back joyve life that was outdying under impact of civilization stop hes not working alone stop he has with him shamrao hivale indian as devoted to aborigenes as he is stop eyeve seen affection baigas and gonds have for elwin stop when our car stopped in one their villages men women children outpoured talked volubly smiled babies put into his lap stop when magician performed before goddess he made elwin upget partake in ceremony stop baigas who distrust strangers because strangers have taken their lands their woods away exthem have spoken to elwin without reticence stop hes recorded their lifestories their customs rites intimatest habits has translated their songs riddles proverbs stop he and shamrao are aborigenes counsels doctors teachers judges stop they look upon these primitive people as upon their children whom they want shelter against sharks exouter world stop 28164

sonia tamara"

9

The following cartoon by Denley and the clerihew verse appears in Mr G. A. St George's *With Love and Brickbats* and is reproduced here by kind permission of the publishers, Messrs. Thacker & Co., Bombay.

Mr Verrier Elwin
Deserves and may well win
Renown in the world of letters
For recording the life of our
moral betters.

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION

I HAVE now known Verrier for eighteen years. I can claim to know him more intimately than any other human being, and that knowledge and intimacy has taught me to love and adore and respect him more than anyone else in the world, in spite of many qualities which as an Indian I find hard to get over. Many of the simple Gonds and Baigas actually believe that Verrier and I are true brothers. Others explain our relationship by saying that we must have had the same parents in a previous birth. We are usually spoken of by a sort of double title Bara-bhai-Chhota-bhai (Big-brother-Little-brother), and no villager dreams of writing a letter to just one of us but always in our joint names. So far in this book I have allowed Verrier himself or some of his friends to tell the story, but now I myself must try to describe him and estimate his character.

That is not easy, for Verrier's character is extremely complex and, as the reader of this book will see, he has changed considerably during the past two decades. I have watched him in various capacities—as a most loving, loyal and gentle friend and husband and father. But I have also seen him as a hard and determined enemy of those who have tried to meddle or interfere wantonly in the lives of his people. I have seen him enjoying himself in the most exalted company, yet equally at home among his 'gentle savages', where within a few minutes the shyest and most suspicious people are treating him as one of themselves.

To the casual observer who had seen Verrier in 1928 he will today appear greatly changed, though to anyone who has lived with him all the time he is still very much the same in essentials. Then he was very young and handsome with a little clerical stoop, a childlike faith in everyone and a childlike smile. That has gone; he has broadened and toughened. During these years he has often changed his mind. At one period he was devoted to khadi, but he does not wear it now because—though he admits it may be useful elsewhere in India—it is of little value to

the aboriginals, to most of whom it is taboo to weave. At one time, he considered the aboriginals were not Hindus and that the best way to get a square deal for them was to form them into a separate minority. But his researches—certainly not any special pro-Hindu sentiment—forced him to change his mind, and he came to see how aboriginal religion fits into the comprehensive Hindu scheme; for many years now he has urged that the aboriginals should be classed as Hindus at the Census and that they should trust the major community to give them an honourable place in the social scale. Formerly, as this book shows, Verrier was engrossed in active politics; he was, of course, forced to drop that by Government, but even so I do not think it could long have survived his greater devotion to literature and science. But this does not mean any diminution of his attachment for our national cause or of his hatred of every kind of oppression and exploitation, either of nation by nation or of class by class. In outlook he is nearest to the Congress Socialists. And as a matter of fact, as I but few others know, he worked hard all through the years the Congress was in jail to get help for people and towards a gaol delivery—but always behind the scenes. He believes that the most valuable work for our country can be done off the platform and specially that an Englishman should not be in the headlines but working humbly and in penitence among the poor. He has turned to the politics of simple people, and how often—and at what cost—he has struggled to get an unjust fine reduced, a foolish or unnecessary law altered, a corrupt official removed, justice for some poor man in the courts.

But, of course, the greatest change has been in Verrier's attitude to religion. When I first knew him he was almost a religious maniac. Today he has no religion at all, believing neither in a Supreme Being nor in the future life. But his scientific interest in religion remains, and he is at present engaged on what may be the most important of his books, a study of primitive religion among the Lanjhia Saoras. His attitude today may be compared with that of C. F. Andrews as expressed in the letter quoted on p. 105 There Mr Andrews describes how the sight of cow-worship filled him with loathing and disgust. But if Verrier had

the luck to witness such a ceremony, he would chortle with delight and grab his camera. Afterwards he would talk to the priests and try to find out exactly what they meant by the rite, what mantras they used, and what effect it had. It is not his business, he feels, to condemn; he has abandoned the outlook of the priest, who sits in judgement on others, for that of the scientist who tries to understand them.

Has Verrier 'gone native'? In his house he has a notice which was given him by a railway official. It runs—

NOTICE

This Waiting Room is only for the use of 1st Class Passengers who conform to European habits.

And though Verrier treasures this as an example of the snobbery and intolerance of the ruling race, it has a certain point, perhaps even for himself, for it is easy to become slack and slovenly in a village. And the first respect in which Verrier has *not* gone native is in a hard and unyielding strain in his nature. He *will* have things done properly; he is very impatient over details; he can't bear people sitting about and doing nothing; if someone comes to see him he must come to the point at once. Especially since the beginning of the war, Verrier has driven himself very hard; it was as if he has told himself that since he was not called to fight on the battlefield he must fight with double energy at home. Yes, there is a hard side to Verrier, which often baffles the normally sentimental Indian, and I am often distressed at his refusal to make allowances for idleness or inefficiency or to make exceptions to rules. But when one sees him quite as hard on himself as on others, one forgives him. One of his enemies once said to me, 'We may say all sorts of things against Elwin, but no one can deny that he is tough.'

And in that toughness too he has perhaps retained something of his Western nature. We are apt to go to pieces when we are attacked, or to defend ourselves frantically, or to give up our work if we get ill or if people go against us. There can be few people (who are not professional

'public figures') who have been so tremendously praised or so viciously attacked as Verrier, and I who know him so well am in a position to say that he is equally indifferent to either praise or blame. He may be pleased or annoyed for a moment, but is at once absorbed in his work again. Remember how for all these years he has been under fire from every side; he has known hatred, suspicion, criticism, abuse; he has been harrassed constantly by the police for his politics, by Bishops for his religion; and it has taught him to live within himself. Although he is so affectionate and sensitive, he is marvellously self-dependent; it is the blame or praise that we give ourselves, he says, that matters in the long run. He is a perfect example of the old saying: 'The Cambridge man walks down a street as if he owns it, the Oxford man as if he doesn't care who owns it.'

Verrier's humour is another thing which not all Indians appreciate. Our Indian humour is rather obvious and strictly limited in its scope, but Verrier's is not only often extremely subtle, but it spares nobody and nothing. It has been compared to the humour described by George Meredith as 'a furry kitten which steals out now and then for a roll-over', but there is no doubt that the kitten sometimes delights to scratch. Verrier ended *Leaves from the Jungle* with the priceless remark that 'if he was not worthy to ask the prayers of St Francis, he might at least invoke the aid of Mr Pickwick.' And if Dickens exists in some heaven of his own he has undoubtedly answered Verrier's prayer: the spirit of Pickwick has filled his life—the ability to laugh at himself as well as others, a quaint humourous self-depreciation, a delight in odd contrasts; he has the typically humorous attitude to life. That has helped him to endure many annoyances and to face out many a crisis. His favourite prose authors are Dickens, P. G. Wodehouse and Thurber. He is a real authority on Wodehouse, being able to quote whole passages from many of his books, and during his tour with Acharya Kripalani in 1931 the only book he had with him was *The Pickwick Papers*.

Verrier has not 'gone native' in food and drink. He loves Indian food and enjoys a meal at the Purohit or the Sardar *Griha quite as much as a banquet at the Taj*. When I say he is not typically Indian in his attitude to food and drink

I do not refer to the *kind* of food; I refer to our *attitude* to food. Most Indians seem to be ashamed of admitting that they are interested in food; it is the mark of a great man to be indifferent to such a mundane pleasure. But Verrier regards good food as part of the art of living; that is one of the things he so admires about J. P. Patel, that the latter—like A. E. Housman—regards a meal as a work of art, to be planned like a campaign: J. P. gave a wonderful lunch at the Taj to Verrier and his publisher R. E. Hawkins on the occasion of the publication of one of his books—we had a unique Bouillabaise a la Marseillaisse, a Piccata de Veau Marsala and a Gateau Moka. This is the sort of thing Verrier really appreciates, but he can also enjoy a dish of rat and red ants at a Bondo festival or sit down with the Murias to a feast of pork and millet. Wine too in his view is not a degrading indulgence, as most Indians think, but an element of high culture, and there is no more determined opponent of Prohibition than Verrier. Particularly he waxes indignant against those who would deprive the starving aboriginals of the palm-wine which supplies them with much needed vitamins and the liquor which is their one tonic after malaria. He regards Prohibition as a rich man's fad; the rich can easily afford substitutes—when they get weak they can get an invigorating tonic from the chemist, when they get bored they can go to the cinema—but the poor man has nothing but his simple pleasures, and to rob him of these is a sin.

But in other ways few Europeans have more sincerely and genuinely identified themselves with our country. Politically, Verrier is a hundred per cent with us. Culturally, he loves our art, our literature, our dancing, our mythology. He is completely at home in the simplest Indian family. His ways and habits are naturally very simple. He can take his bath in Indian style; is perfectly happy sleeping on the floor; can eat with his fingers without embarrassment; can use an Indian lavatory, in fact is now rather troubled by a commode; his objection to sitting on the floor for meals is physical rather than racial —he finds it difficult to reach over his large fanny to the *thali*. In clothes and personal possessions, he is almost as simple as C. F. Andrews. The red tie he has used for the

last five years he 'borrowed' from Evelyn Wood; as I write he is wearing a set of rather ill-fitting cast-off shirts and shorts given him by an Army officer. Even at Oxford, he tells me, when in College Chapel they came to the line in the hymn that goes

'And raiment fit provide'

his friends used to turn and look at him. Fifteen years ago Verrier took an oath that he would go barefoot whenever it would not make him conspicuous; he has kept this oath and now cannot bear to put on a pair of shoes. Normally he never wears a hat; his dress in the jungle, that is for most of the year, is a shirt and a pair of shorts—the cheapest and simplest dress that can possibly be worn. Often the shirt is patched or torn and he says, 'If only I had a beautiful brown body like yours I would certainly never wear anything but a loin-cloth.' But when he goes into a city, he dresses as well as he can, puts on a dinner jacket when required, and is as conventional as possible. This has sometimes caused misunderstanding, but personally I think it is a real virtue that he will not make capital out of a parade of simplicity of life.

To the ordinary European *bara-sahib*, of course, Verrier is damned because he has married a Gond wife. Even some friends who had forgiven him his pro-Congress activities refused to have Verrier and Kosi in their houses for many years. But I must say that on the whole Verrier's European friends treated him very well; those who didn't, ceased to be his friends, for Verrier has no use for anyone who does not treat Kosi just as if she were an English wife.

Verrier then has not 'gone native', but he has certainly 'gone Indian'. He belongs to us. As he once said at a luncheon party of I.C.S. and Army people, thereby nearly causing a break-up of the function, 'If there was a war between India and England I know which side I would be on.' It is his dearest ambition to be the first European to be naturalized as an Indian once India is a really free country.

I have never met anyone with less racial feeling. He just never thinks of himself as an Englishman or as a 'sahib', unless he has to make a joke about it. Our vil-

lagers completely forget his colour or that he is different from them. So do I and so do many of his Indian friends. And I would ask my Indian readers, of how many of your English friends do you feel like that? Even the most sympathetic are sympathetic *Westerners*. Verrier is simply one of us. He is not one of those English people who are professionally 'nice to Indians', who go out of their way to flatter us, who are sincere enough but have their roots in Europe or America. Verrier in fact may be very nasty to us, and why not? For he has his roots here. He has never assumed the privileges of a member of the ruling race; he has been chased by the police just like one of our own revolutionaries; he has been insulted and ostracized just as our people have been; he has identified himself with us completely. Once when the Deputy Commissioner held an Uplift Rally and invited Verrier to sit on a chair at his right hand, Verrier refused and went and sat on the ground next to the village watchman.

Verrier is not very good at small talk or at doing the little things that often please people. He is apt to be indifferent and forgetful. When he is writing a book he neglects his correspondence completely. He does not suffer fools gladly. He hates going to call on people. In fact he doesn't like meeting people at all; he prefers the company of old and tried friends. When he is concentrated on something, he is quite impossible—his son Jawaharlal is just the same. But when there is something important to be done, he will do it even at the risk of his own life. Once, when I was away, without any hesitation, he carried the dead body of a leper to his grave when everyone else was afraid to do so. He helped to carry the stinking corpse of a syphilitic untouchable to the pyre and himself set fire to the wood. Once he drove in the middle of the night over one of the most dangerous mountain roads in India to save me and my wife from staying the night in a town where cholera was raging. He once went bail for a young Bengali revolutionary, himself fetching him from the lock-up, and kept him in his own house for a month, being subjected to daily surveillance by the police in consequence. When an oppressive Punjabi policeman arrested a little Gond girl on a false charge of theft Verrier went to tremendous

trouble to save her—and succeeded. He has fought for many people in jail and out of jail.

Verrier has no racial feeling and he has no class feeling either. It is an amazing experience to be with him on tour. He lives in a little hut of leaves and branches in the middle of the village and people throng it all day long. Sometimes they come and just lie down and sleep, completely familiar. He is equally welcome in their own houses. One of my Pardhan friends said to me, 'Why shouldn't I welcome him to my poor hut? He isn't ashamed of our poverty, he doesn't even notice it, and is happy to sit on our broken cots or ragged mats. The people whom we consider our enemies, the officials and landlords, dare not enter his house, even though they may drive up in their cars. But we can walk straight in wearing our loin-cloths and he will get up from his chair and embrace us as if we were Rajas and say "Sitaram, little brother". That is why we open our hearts to him and tell him our secrets.' And another said, 'In his presence no one feels the weight of his burden.' And another, 'Bara-bhai and Chhota-bhai are thorns in the feet of our oppressors. Before they came here the moustaches of the officials turned up; now they hang down.'

Dani, who appears so often in my book on the Pardhans, a wild-looking Pardhan poet and magician, once described to me Verrier and his house, which with its museum and masks and pictures always impresses the aboriginals greatly. 'When we go into the house, we at once feel happy and pleased with ourselves. It is the mountain-like Bara-bhai who is responsible. He seems as huge as a hill, but after all we love our hills and are not afraid of them, nor are we afraid of him. Yet we cannot go so fearlessly into the presence of a constable. But those masks that hang on the walls, with their great teeth and wide open mouths and beards and savage looks—as children we were told that they really came alive. I would never go into the house alone even by day. But Bara-bhai sits there alone and sleeps among them without being frightened.' The site of Verrier's house is an old cremation ground, and Dani continued, 'Ten years ago we used to burn our dead where Bara-bhai now sits, and at first when he made his house

no woman with a baby at the breast would come in without an iron sickle tied to her waist for protection from the ghosts. Now they are not afraid any more, but who knows whether the ghosts have not entered the ghosts and images that Bara-bhai has all round him. When he is away the house and garden seems dark and empty, no—even the village itself is lonely.' Verrier has a wonderful power of creating atmosphere, and like Dani I too feel happy and exhilarated when I am with him.

One of Verrier's most useful qualities as an anthropologist is his power to put himself out of the picture, to fade into the background and remain as an observer. 'O we needn't worry about him,' once said a Baiga when he visited a village. 'It's not a sahib, it's only Bara-bhai.' And I have so often seen Konds, or Saoras, or Bondos, or Murias going on with their festivals or ordinary occupations just as if Verrier was not there. He says that the best anthropologist is the "invisible man".

And Verrier not only loves the poor but also the failure and the sinner. 'That is obvious,' he said to me, 'being a sinner—if you like that word—myself.' Laurence Housman has written of his 'abounding charity towards human nature'. 'The beauty of his work,' he says, 'lies largely I think in the intimacy of personal contact and self-identification with the needs and sorrows—and also with the failings of others—which seems to be natural to him and the key to his efforts.'

Verrier is very impatient in little matters, but in scholarship and in big things he knows how to wait. He will say, 'That will take five years to investigate properly' or 'I may get some recognition when I am sixty'. I had a terrible time when I was writing my book on the Pardhans. He made me check and re-check every statement, and made me write and write again my chapters and then see that every comma was in place. He quotes the example of Addison who used to hurry all the way from Magdalen to the Clarendon Press to correct a comma in proof and a story of Sir George Gordon's that he had once written a pamphlet for the Oxford University Press with one word wrong—and the Press had destroyed the entire edition rather than send out to the world a faulty publication.

Verrier himself rewrote his *The Muria and their Ghotul* three times; he told me, 'Writing is as much a physical labour as ploughing a field or digging for a well; you must keep on at it and at last you will get the living water.' He has not been able to eliminate all misprints from his books, but anyone who wants to see the result of his patient and thorough work should examine the numbers of *Man in India* before 1942 and after.

One year the most violent attacks were made on Verrier; you might say his very life and reputation and future were threatened. He took no notice at all; he went quietly on with his work. But at the same time, his friend Christoph von Furer-Haimendorf wrote to him pointing out a number of mistakes in his preliminary Bondo manuscript. Verrier could not sleep and altered his whole programme, embarking on two long, exhausting and expensive expeditions to discover whether he was really right or wrong. In the end he decided that on some points he was wrong, and altered his manuscript accordingly, and on others he was right. He then set to work, at a time when he was in very poor health and typed the whole book of over 350 pages.

In some ways Verrier is a horrid snob, not socially but intellectually; in others he is remarkably humble. He is ready to learn from anyone and always ready to admit he has been mistaken. Once a half-witted Excise Inspector insisted on an interview. At the end Verrier said, 'Well, I have learnt something—to investigate whether the aboriginals have any ideas about the marks on the palms of their hands.' The Inspector was a professional palmist!

Verrier is a wonderful friend. Whether it is a Raja like Sarangarh, who was his *jawara,* or a simple peasant like Panda Baba, who was his *sakhi,* or a politician like the late E. Raghavendra Rao, or a millionaire like Mr J. R. D. Tata, he will never hear a word against them; once he has given his affection and confidence he will give it always. The very varied character of his friends puzzles some of our narrow-minded people. They cannot understand how Verrier can at once love Acharya Kripalani and stay in the house of Mr and Mrs Stent. They think he must be insincere because Sir Francis Wylie values his friendship or

because he takes the greatest pleasure in the company of Mr and Mrs Hemeon or Mr and Mrs Archer—both of the I.C.S. They are darkly apprehensive of his intimacy with Mr Ozanne or Mr Jayawant of the Indian Police. But that is all nonsense and the stupidity that comes of a lifetime's habit of suspicion. Verrier has official friends, and scientific friends, and revolutionary friends, and a whole lot of other ordinary people whom he just likes; he says, 'There is one sacrifice I will not make, and that is to cut myself off from good company.'

Verrier has been compared to Robert Louis Stevenson, who—it will be remembered—himself lived among primitive people for many years and loved and described them with great insight. In the Introduction to the edition of the *New Arabian Nights* in our library, Lloyd Osbourne says,

> 'Of course, he was no saint. One would do his memory a poor service by endowing him with all the perfections. . . . On occasions he could swear vociferously, and when roused he had a most violent temper; he loved good wine and the good things of life; he often championed people who were not worth championing, impulsively believing in them, and getting himself, in consequence, in a false position. . . . But no human being was ever freer from pettiness, meanness, or self-seeking; none ever more high-minded or sincere; and none surely was ever possessed of a greater indulgence towards the erring and fallen. In this, indeed, one does see a saintly quality. There were no irreparable sins to Stevenson; nothing that might man or woman do that was not redeemable; he had an immeasurable tolerance, an immeasurable tenderness for those who had been cast by the world outside the pale. . . . Intolerant of evil; almost absurdly chivalrous; passionately resentful of injustice; impulsive, headstrong, utterly scornful of conventions when they were at variance with what he considered right—his was a nature that was sure to be misjudged and as surely ridiculed by many. The Greathearts of the world have always seemed "erratic", "affected", and "unbalanced" to the timid and envious souls who have jotted down these supposed deficiencies for posterity.'

There is no question of comparing Verrier's writing with the great literary genius of Stevenson, but otherwise the above passage might well have been written about Verrier

himself. These are the qualities that have made him a great anthropologist. Some of my readers may regret my account of his early life, the religious enthusiasm, the political excesses. But I believe they all have had their part in producing the scientist and scholar whom we know today.

I hope I will not be thought sentimental if I end this record with a story. Sometimes when I go into Verrier's house at Patangarh, which is dedicated, as few houses have ever been, to the service of the poor, I am reminded of the tale of Chandra Gupta and his throne, which we were taught as children. Centuries after the great Chandra Gupta was dead and his palace had disappeared and his throne had become a mound of grass-covered earth, a group of village boys were sitting there tending their cattle. A quarrel flared up and murder might have followed had not one of the boys been suddenly possessed by the spirit of the ancient Raja and he pronounced a judgement which at once satisfied the combatants. The elders heard of the incident, and the story goes that afterwards, whenever there was any dispute in the village which the panchayat was unable to decide, the people would come to the place and allow one of the boys to be possessed by the spirit of wisdom that still haunted it.

So in his simple mud house, entirely created by the simple Gonds and decorated by their own artists, the Scholar Gypsy has written almost every word of his passionate and loving pleas for the welfare of his beloved people. Not a single word has been written idly. He has more than once recalled how A. E. Housman had the ambition that one day a soldier should carry *The Shropshire Lad* into battle and that the book should stop a bullet and save his life, saying that his own hope was that his books would save the aboriginals from some of the deadly bullets that modern 'civilization' aims at their heart. Who knows whether years after, if the Governments of the future are selfish and inconsiderate of the problems of these simple people, robbing them of the land and turning them into coolies, one of them will not rise as a prophet and standing above the ruins of this house, become inspired by the spirit that has dwelt here and cry out passionately to the world for redress and justice.