"Will it take years to bring about Hindu-Muslim unity?"

"I do not think so. There is no disunity among the Hindu and Muslim masses. The disunity is at the surface, and this counts so much, since those who are at the surface are the people who represent the political mind of India."

"Do you envisage the possibility of doing away with a national Army when 'Purna Swaraj' is obtained?"

"As a visionary, yes. But I do not think it is possible for me to see it during my lifetime. It may take ages before the Indian nation may accommodate itself to having no army at all. It is possible my want of faith may account for this pessimism on my part. But I do not exclude such possibility. No one was prepared for the present mass awakening and the strict adherence to non-violence—aberrations notwithstanding—on the part of the people, and that certainly fills me with some hope that Indian leaders will be courageous enough in the near future, when they will be able to say that they do not need to have any army. For civil purposes, the police may be considered sufficient."

"Do you not fear a Bolshevik invasion in the near future?"

"I have no such fear."

"Are you not afraid of Bolshevik propaganda spreading into India?"

"I do not think the Indian people are so gullible."

"What good do you see in Bolshevism?"

"I have not really studied Bolshevism to that extent. If there is anything good in it, India would have no hesitation to take it and adopt it as its own."

"Would you agree to become the Prime-Minister of the future Government?"

"No. It will be reserved for younger minds and stouter hands."

"Supposing the people want you and insist?"

"I will seek shelter behind journalists like you."

"Will you abolish all machinery if 'Purna Swaraj' is achieved?"

"Not a bit. Far from abolishing it, I am likely to order much more from America, and who knows I may give preference to British machinery instead?"

"Will you return to the Ashram before Swaraj is attained?"

"No, I propose to see the Ashram but will not live at the Ashram till my vow of 'Purna Swaraj' is fulfilled."

"Do you not envisage the possibility of non-violence becoming an effective weapon in solving international complications?"

"I consider that non-violence will become such a weapon, supposing that the army is in India, as there may be in other nations in the world. First, there is a change in ideas. Action is a slow process. Nations will rely more and more on consultation and arbitration, and progressively less and less on armies. Armies may gradually be reduced to spectacular things, just as toys, remnants of something that is past and not as instruments of protection of the nation."

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SOON Lord Irwin left. His term of office was over. He had done enough in the last year of his Viceroyalty to leave his mark behind. He had promulgated more ordinances than any other Viceroy before him, but he had shown a spirit towards the Indian people which marked him out as a man different from the others. When many of the landmarks which have been thrust upon us, in the shape of statues and monuments, will come down in a free India, there will be a few that we will still keep, and I think one can say with reasonable certainty, that of Lord Irwin which stands at New Delhi will remain with us. He may have fought on the other side, but he fought cleanly and squarely. He was a gentleman to the tips of his fingers, and even the most nationalist among the Indians would like some memory of this Yorkshire Christian who came our way. I feel that he loved this country with the same zest as he loved his

own. He tried to understand it, when others in his position would have been content to crush it with armed force. He fought within himself the grim struggle of the Christian and the Viceroy. It is for the brief moments in which the greater Christian in him triumphed that we shall never forget him.

And so with the tide he ebbed away. He had just seen Gandhi once more before he left. Under the cold stone of the Gateway, the people of India saw him for the last time. He had done one thing for his countrymen who were in India. He had made them like him, unafraid of expressing their sympathy.

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THE P. and O. liner had gone out of sight and a new regime in India began. No more inappropriate person could have been chosen to succeed Lord Irwin than Lord Willingdon. It was so obvious an error of choice that one wonders why no one from among His Majesty's advisers saw the mistake that was being made. Almost in an instant the atmosphere in India was changed. One realized all too painfully that the Willingdons at Delhi would be ever more artificial than the Willingdons at Madras and Bombay. Lady Willingdon would now be Vicereine. Often I wonder whether in the making of these great appointments of State, the wives of the officials are taken into consideration. Because I feel that among the Viceregal regimes in India, Lady Willingdon must somewhere find a place. So much was she a part of Viceroy's House that one could not fail to overlook her.

The Willingdons brought back with them the unwholesome atmosphere of domination over India. If they had fitted into the scheme of things during their other terms of office in India, they were now anachronisms in the India to which they had returned. More pompous than ever, more unreal after their long stays in the Government Houses of the Empire, more unsympathetic, more dictatorial, they killed in one brief hour all the friendliness which Lord Irwin had created in five long

years. Who cared now whether mauve was her ladyship's favourite colour? Who cared whether Lord Willingdon still wore his brown and white shoes? And yet these still seemed as much a part of the Willingdons as they ever were. In fact we began to understand what exaggerated importance we had attached to these trifles. Elaborate ritual and pageantry, for which the Indian had to pay in the end, no longer impressed the Indian. The needs of India were different. And what was more, this new India to which they had come back was capable of expressing itself more forcefully than ever before.

The first great mistake that Lord Willingdon made was to omit to see Gandhi. It was against all expectations, specially as Gandhi was in Bombay at that time. It may have been that Lord Willingdon was only carrying out instructions from Whitehall, but wherever the blame lay, a definite change of policy had taken place as one Viceroy left and another arrived. It was going back to the theory that Gandhi was only one leader among the innumerable leaders in India. Yet he was the only one who could deliver the goods. One remembered the vague gestures of Lord Willingdon as Governor of Bombay, when he had told Gandhi that Government House would always be open to him. A decade had passed and if Lord Willingdon had grown in importance since then and become a Viceroy while he was only a Governor before, the importance of Gandhi in India had increased a hundred fold or more. Lord Willingdon was far too short-sighted to see beyond the tip of his nose.

With the coming of Lord Willingdon, the old trouble began. There was evidence gathering in every town in India which showed that everything possible was being done to undo the good that had been done by the Gandhi-Irwin pact. There were flagrant breaches of the pact till the climax was reached when the peasants of Bardoli asked for time to pay the one lac of land revenue remaining over from a debt of twenty-two lacs the rest of which they had already paid. The coercive methods adopted by the

Government made Gandhi write to the Government of Bombay, only to receive the stereotyped rebuff of officialdom. Not satisfied with this reply Gandhi wrote to the headquarters of the Government and his letter to the Home Secretary is a remarkable piece of literature. In it he says:

"You might be unable to interfere with the working or not working of the settlement by Local Governments, or your interference may not go far enough according to my view of the settlement. The time has, therefore, perhaps arrived for the appointment of a permanent board of arbitration to decide questions of interpretation of the settlement and as to the full carrying out of terms by the one party or the other. I would, therefore, like you to consider this suggestion."

Really this man Gandhi was going to a bit too far, the Englishman in India thought. It was one thing if the English gave something to the Indians out of grace, even if it was freedom that they wanted, but one had to put one's foot down when they started talking about impartial tribunals as of right. Was not the Government of India impartial enough? That was the gist of the Government's reply, if not expressed in so many words. As Gandhi wired finally on August 11 . . . "In naked terms, this means that the Government should be both the prosecutor and the judge with reference to matters arising out of a contract to which they and the complainants are parties. This is impossible for the Congress to accept." In this telegram he gave indication of his inability to keep to his promise of sailing for England to represent the Congress at the Conference. The Viceroy was not much moved. Anglo-India rejoiced once more. It is what they were waiting for. Lord Willingdon had fulfilled the prophecy. As Gandhi put it in a public utterance, "The great civilians here do not want me to attend the Conference, or if they do, they do so under circumstances which a national organisation like the Congress can never tolerate."

That was the point Gandhi made emphatically clear. It was not that he wanted to shirk going to the Con-

ference, he said time and again, nor had he at any time insisted on a Board of Arbitration, nor was he trying to set himself up at the head of a parallel Government. He, therefore, explained his point of view to the Viceroy and asked if the pact was at an end. The Congress and Gandhi were still very keen on its observance. London had also realized how barren the Round Table Conference would be without any Congress representation. So Lord Willingdon switched on his best diplomacy, said that Gandhi had failed to observe the pact by declining to go to the Conference, and made a gesture of peace by promising to refrain from adopting special measures. Gandhi saw the opening for peace, wired for an interview and before long a special train was on its way to Bombay to enable Gandhi to sail on the first available boat for England. And so the name of M. K. Gandhi appeared on the passengers list — HOMEWARD BOUND.

His departure from Bombay was like a royal departure, when Kings were Kings in this ancient land of ours. At Aden they hoisted the Indian National Flag for him. At Port Said, he received from the people of Egypt a genuine and touching message. And so it was at Marseilles and Victoria. No Viceroy has landed on the shores of his own England and caused so much excitement. He went, however, to live in the East End, midst the squalor and poverty of the great metropolis — this representative of the Indian people, this essentially poor man of India. He had not changed one bit. Even as he went up the steps of Buckingham Palace to meet His Majesty, the flunkeys of the royal Court must have wondered how times had changed that the "naked fakir" had at last come to speak with the King. He wore no court dress for the occasion. He went in a loin cloth and a shawl as was his wont. And so amidst much excitement and preparations for a general election, the second Round Table Conference began.

Gandhi's was the most anxiously awaited speech at the opening. Not one jot ruffled by triumph or excitement, he delivered it in his usual cool, dignified manner. He

was most apologetic when others, in his place, would have blustered loud. He said :

"I am but a poor humble agent acting on behalf of the Indian National Congress ; and it might be as well to remind ourselves of what the Congress stands for and what it is. You will then extend your sympathy to me, because I know that the burden that rests upon my shoulders is really very great. The Congress is, if I am not mistaken, the oldest political organisation we have in India. It has had nearly 50 years of life, during which period it has, without any interruption, held its annual session. It is what it means — national. It represents no particular community, no particular class, no particular interests. It claims to represent all Indian interests and all classes. It is a matter of the greatest pleasure to me to state that it was first conceived in an English brain. Allan Octavian Hume we knew as the Father of the Congress. It was nursed by the great Parsees, Pherozeshah Mehta, and Dadabhai Naoroji whom all India delighted to recognise as its Grand Old Man. From the very commencement the Congress had Mussalmans, Christians, Anglo-Indians, I might say, all religions, sects, creeds, represented upon it more or less fully. The late Budruddin Tyabji identified himself with the Congress. We have had Mussalmans as Presidents of the Congress, and Parsees too. I can recall at least one Indian Christian at the present moment. Kali Charan Banerjee (an Indian Christian), than whom I have not had the privilege of knowing a purer Indian, was also thoroughly identified with the Congress. I miss, as I have no doubt all of you miss, the presence in our midst of Mr. K. T. Paul. Although, I do not know, but so far as I know, he never officially belonged to the Congress, he was a nationalist to the full.

"As you know, the late Maulana Mahomed Ali whose presence also we miss to-day, was a President of the Congress, and at present we have four Mussalmans as members of the Working Committee which consists of 15 members. We have had women as our Presidents;

Dr. Annie Besant was the first, and Mrs. Sarojini Naidu followed. We have her as a member of the Working Committee also; and so, if we have no distinctions of class or creed, we have no distinctions of sex either.

"The Congress has from its very commencement taken up the cause of the so-called 'untouchables.' There was a time when the Congress had at every annual session as its adjunct, the Social Conference, to which the late Ranade had dedicated his energies, among his many activities. Headed by him, you will find in the programme of the Social Conference, reforms in connection with the untouchables taking a prominent place. But in 1920, the Congress took a larger step and brought the question of removal of untouchability as a plank on the political platform, and made it an important item of the political programme. Just as the Congress considered Hindu-Muslim unity, thereby meaning unity amongst all the classes, to be indispensable for the attainment of Swaraj, so also did the Congress consider the removal of the curse of untouchability as an indispensable condition for the attainment of full freedom.

"The position the Congress took up in 1920 remains the same to-day, and so you will see that the Congress has attempted from its very beginning to be what it has described itself to be, namely, national in every sense of the term. If your Highnesses will permit me to say so, in the very early stages, the Congress took up your cause also. Let me remind this Committee that it was the G. O. M. of India who sponsored the cause of Kashmir and Mysore, and these two great Houses, I venture in all humility to submit, owe not a little to the efforts of Dadabhai Naoroji and the Congress.

"Even up to now the Congress has endeavoured to serve the Princes of India by refraining from any interference in their domestic and internal affairs. I hope therefore, that this brief introduction that I thought fit to give will serve to enable the Sub-Committee and those who are at all interested in the claims of the Congress, to understand that it has endeavoured to deserve the

claim that it has made. It has failed, I know, often to live up to the claim, but I venture to submit, that if you were to examine the history of the Congress, you would find that it has more often succeeded, and progressively succeeded than failed.

"Above all the Congress represents, in its essence, the dumb semi-starved millions scattered over the length and breadth of the land in its 7,00,000 villages, no matter whether they come from what is called British India, or what is called Indian India. Every interest which, in the opinion of the Congress, is worthy of protection, has to subserve this interest, and if there is a genuine real clash I have no hesitation in saying on behalf of the Congress that the Congress will sacrifice every interest for the sake of the interest of these dumb millions. It is, therefore, essentially a peasant organization, and it is becoming so progressively. You, and even the Indian members of the Sub-Committee, will perhaps be astonished to find that to-day the Congress, through its organization, the All-India Spinners' Association, is finding work for nearly 50,000 women in nearly 2,000 villages, and these women are possibly 50 per cent. Mussalman women. Thousands of them belong to the so-called untouchable class. We have thus, in this constructive manner, penetrated these villages and the effort is being made to cover every one of the 7,00,000 villages. It is a superhuman task, but if human effort can do so, you will presently find the Congress covering all of these villages and bringing to them the message of the spinning wheel."

Yet somehow, Gandhi in London was a disappointment. He did not fit into the scheme of things. His dress, his manner, his thought, his mode of life were different from his surroundings that the incongruity of the situation obscured everything else. Somehow too, cast in a civilization so foreign to him, he showed signs of discomfort. He was not happy about his arrival. Perhaps it would have been better if he had not come at all. That the Round Table Conference would never satisfy him was a foregone conclusion. That he should have walked into

the failure with his eyes wide open, made his position a little untenable. He had come to England as the sole representative of the Congress, and one wished he had not shouldered so much responsibility. Much better if he had remained a symbol of the Congress and of India, rather than taken on the role of delegate, which he could neither play to his satisfaction, nor to the satisfaction of those, who were his fellow delegates. That was the great mistake he committed. By being equal with the others, he laid himself open to attack, which was unavoidable. Looking back on it, I wonder whether he regrets it now. But in the excitement of the hour and with his desire for peace, who can blame the man?

To the common people of England, Gandhi was only an amusing sight. What they read about him in their national papers did not help to change their opinion. The correspondent of one important London daily said: "Today I saw Mahatma Gandhi walking down the Mall with his loin-cloth wrapped around his head." That was the danger to which the British public necessarily exposed itself. Lack of knowledge on their part was probably excusable, but gross mis-statements, exaggerations, untruths fabricated by those who were specially deputed to cover Indian news, were ungallant, and from the point of view of the Indian people, who suffered thereby, they were most unfortunate.

Moreover, the general election in England was beginning to attract the attention of the English people. The Labour Government of Mr. Macdonald was soon to go out and England was to see the lessee of 10, Downing Street leave by one door as Labour Prime Minister and return by the other on a National ticket. England was under such circumstances in no frame of mind to bother about the internal problems of India.

However, the point on which this second Conference revolved, was the representation to be given to the depressed classes. In the hierarchy of caste, these untouchables were at the bottom of the ladder. Years of prejudice had brought this isolation upon them, and

years of foreign rule had perpetuated it. Unless something was done at this crucial stage of the new reforms, untouchability would become a permanent institution.

There were two conflicting theories on untouchability. The moot point was which of the two parties should be trusted. It was said on the one hand that in a predominantly caste-Hindu India, some provision would have to be made to safeguard this "minority," who had suffered much at the hands of its co-religionists. If Britain was to leave India to the caste Hindus, who were in majority, it was incumbent upon it to make some provision for those who constituted the depressed classes and who would be routed as the Jews were in Nazi Germany. Therefore, the untouchables must have special representation. They must be assured of a certain fixed number of seats if only that the voice of the untouchable could be heard in the legislatures of the country. That way, some thought, the depressed classes would in time become a community with free and equal rights. Gandhi took another view. He would not agree to special representation, for this would perpetuate their "depressed" condition and make it impossible for the untouchables to be absorbed into the greater Hindu community to which they belonged and from which they originated. To relegate them to the status of a minority was to give official recognition to a distinction in social class, which had originated through an unfortunate combination of circumstances and superstitions and which it was his ambition to eradicate from its roots.

These were in brief the two main theories for the removal of untouchability in India. The question was—could the *harijan* in the face of what he has suffered in the past put that implicit faith in his caste brother, which Gandhi would have him do? This was a question which could not be answered abstractly. It was for the individual, who had suffered, to decide for himself which course he would rather follow. It does not admit of logic or reasoning, so much as of faith and trust, and it seemed that with all the influence Gandhi wielded over Hindu

India, there was sufficient justification for the untouchable to apprehend the results of a complete surrender to the caste Hindu. They could trust Gandhi and perhaps Nehru and some of the others in the Congress fold. But what about the rest? What would happen to the untouchables when the caste Hindus came to power? Some of them were such orthodox people that they felt an instinctive aversion to mixing with the *harijans*. It was something more than the superciliousness which makes two Oxford men smile at the presence in their midst of a Reading Scholar. It was something that penetrated deeper into the skin—something in line with the colour bar, the Nordic Aryan's hatred for the Semite, the Anglo-Saxon's disgust at the sight of a slimy Latin, or a Frenchman's contempt for a drunken Englishman. These are some of the real dislikes of mankind. That of the caste Hindu for the *harijan* was likewise a major dislike of man for man.

As the arguments shaped at the Conference, it soon became obvious that it would come to no agreement. Ramsay Macdonald then stepped in at the dramatic moment to say that he would undertake to make an award, if all the delegates would put their signature to his award, and with a flourish of trumpets, though without the assent of the delegates, he closed down the Conference, giving the "privilege" to Gandhi to move a vote of thanks to the Chair! "We have come," said Gandhi, "to the parting of the ways. I do not know in what direction my path would lie, but it does not matter to me. Even though I may have to go in an exactly opposite direction, you are entitled to a vote of thanks from the bottom of my heart." Abruptly the Conference ended. The internal problems of Great Britain were so urgent that India soon became a secondary affair. So much more was at stake in England itself. Parties, policies, prime ministers were likely to change. Could they really be concerned at such a time about India?

The presence of Gandhi in London had done little for India and far less for England. It had given the Government the breathing space they required to make

the change from the policy of Irwin to that of Willingdon without making the consequent breach of the settlement too obvious. It gave a chance to the Government to say "You see we told you so." They had created sufficient proof to show that there were internal factions in India and these warring communities could be held together only under the flag of Britain and by the terror of its booming guns. *Divide et impera* ! "Divide, my son, and you will still rule," the Englishman said to his son.

Gandhi was on his way back. The situation was more serious than he had allowed himself to believe. The children of the East End interested him perhaps a little more than they should have and one waited with impatience for him to give the word, while he was still writing his farewells from the ship to these dead-ends kids. The year was drawing to a close and with it the news from India became graver and graver. The strong-hand-in-the-velvet-glove was brought into action again and Willingdon was gathering up all the rope he had allowed Gandhi and the Congress. Before Gandhi arrived on the shores of India, there was a general round-up, in which they arrested among others the great frontier figure, Abdul Gaffar Khan, and Jawaharlal Nehru. When the ship came alongside the Ballard Pier, Gandhi had little idea of the trouble that awaited him.

I remember my father describing to me the scene of Ballard Pier. He had gone to the Mole in his official capacity—as the man in charge of His Majesty's Customs. He saw the crowds that had gathered to receive the Mahatma on his return—crowds such as he was not accustomed to see. He watched the Mahatma on deck, waving to his friends ashore. Gandhi was in high spirits and hardly knew what had happened in his absence. The more depressing news had been withheld from him. Then the gangway was put up and Gandhi's intimate friends were allowed on board. He greeted them and seemed full of life, like a man who had returned from a beautiful holiday and was still oblivious of his return to reality. Suddenly he broke away from the group of friends

on deck. He stood alone—a solemn, morose figure looking blankly into space and down on to people below. His thoughts were far away. All the joy had vanished from his face and his eyes did not sparkle any more. The trouble in India had begun once again.

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It is not necessary to repeat it all over again. By now it had become the usual story of strong measures on the one hand and stronger determination to resist them on the other. The break had inevitably to follow. It was unnecessarily preceded by lengthy correspondence on both sides, which was bound to lead nowhere except to the end which both had in view. India and Britain had now become two distinct quantities. India was no longer a minor disturbance in the Empire. An entire nation had to be reconciled with.

The Government had said that Abdul Gaffar Khan was plotting to overthrow the British and as evidence they put forward his refusal to attend a Durbar on the North West Frontier. If that was evidence, one could have gone all over the country and found a thousand plots hatching for the overthrow of the Empire. But the real trouble was that Britain was afraid of losing its hold over vested interests in India. Already too much had been risked in getting Gandhi to England and the change in the personnel of the British Government gave immediate effect to a quick reversion to the pre-Irwin policy of the strong-hand-in-the-velvet-glove. There were not many Englishmen in India, who could say as Lord Irwin had, when he left India : "I can wish India nothing better, and so I would say to you, and to all those in this country that I have tried to serve—'In your thinking, in your speaking, in your doing : God be with you'." Lord Irwin had really tried to understand India, but he did not carry with him the rest of his tribe. A letter circulated confidentially by one of the representatives of the European commercial community at the Conference tells the true story of the failure of this conference—a sordid, mean tale which reflects little to the credit of the Englishman.

This letter is better known as the Benthall Circular. It read: "We went to London determined to achieve some settlement if we could, but our determination in that regard was tempered with an equal determination that there should be no giving way on any essential part of the policy agreed to by the (European) Associated Chambers of Commerce in regard to financial and commercial safeguards, and by the European Assocation on general policy. It was obvious to us, and we had it in mind throughout the Conference, that the united forces of the Congress, the Hindu Sabha and the (Indian) Federated Chambers of Commerce would be directed towards whittling down the safeguards already proposed.

"If you look at the results of this last session, you will see that Gandhi and the (Indian) Federated Chambers are unable to point to a single concession wrung from the British Government as the result of their visit to St. Jame's Palace. He landed in India with empty hands.

"There was another incident, too, which did him no good. He undertook, to settle the communal problem and failed before all the world.

"The Muslims were a solid and enthusiastic team : Ali Imam, the nationalist Muslim, caused no division. They played their cards with great skill throughout ; they promised us support and they gave it in full measure. In return they asked us that we should not forget their economic plight in Bengal and we should 'without pampering them' do what we can to find places for them in European firms so that they may have a chance to improve their material position and the general standing of their community.

"On the whole, there was one policy of the British nation and the British community in India, and that was to make up our minds on a national policy and to stick to it. But after the general elections, the right wing of the Government made up its mind to break up the Conference and to fight the Congress. The Muslims, who do not want responsibility at the Centre, were delighted. Government undoubtedly changed their policy and tried to get away

COLLEGE LIB

with provincial autonomy, with a promise of Central reforms. We had made up our minds that the fight with the Congress was inevitable ; we felt and said that the sooner it came the better, but we made up our minds that for a crushing success we should have all possible friends on our side. The Muslims were alright ; the Minorities Pact and Government's general attitude ensured that. So were the Princes and the Minorities.

"The important thing to us seemed to be to carry the Hindu-in-the-street as represented by such people as Sapru, Jayakar, Patro and others. If we could not get them to fight the Congress, we could at least ensure that they would not back the Congress, and that, by one simple method of leaving no doubt in their minds that there was to be no going back on the Federal scheme which broadly was also the accepted policy of the European community, and we acted accordingly. We pressed upon the Government that the one substantial earnest of good faith which would satisfy these people was to bring in the Provincial and Central constitutions in one place. Provincial autonomy could not be forced upon India, the Muslims alone could not work it. Congress Provinces facing a bitter Centre present grave political difficulties; each province would be a Calcutta Corporation on its own. So we joined with strange companions ; Government saw the arguments, and the Conference, instead of breaking up in disorder with 100 per cent. of Hindu political India against us, ended in promises of co-operation by 99 per cent. of the Conference, including even such people as Malaviya, while Gandhi himself was indisposed to join the Standing Committee.

"The Muslims have become firm allies of the Europeans. They are very satisfied with their own position and are prepared to work with us.

"It must not, however, be supposed that when we agree that reforms are necessary, we advocate democratic reform in every province. All that we mean is such change in the system of Government as will improve its efficiency."

This was the sort of thing that nationalist India had to contend with. First the treachery of those who would fight to the bitter end with all the resources at their command to preserve their hold over India. Then the gullibility of those minorities, who never realized that the Government were making stooges of them. If ever there was one great Empire-building slogan to which we had no answer it was "Divide and Rule." Somehow that was as true now as it was when it was coined. Yes, Britain always succeeded in the policy of divide and rule, because we had got into the vicious circle of having no unity because we were not free and of not being free because we had no unity. The odds against the Indians were great and many believed that swaraj would never come within their lifetime. Who could take the long view that at least our children would be born free? Posterity was such a chilly prospect.

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SOMETIMES I have wondered why out of the British connection so much pain has come. More than any other race the Indians are a docile people. They are usually content to serve.

The idea of Empire is not restricted to the British. But elsewhere the conquered have merged into the blood-stream of the conquerors. The British would never allow that.

I remember reading somewhere of a little episode which I have never forgotten. In the twenties France had completed the colonization of Morocco and added new territory to its Empire. This was part of the great colonial plan which Marshal Lyautay had in mind. But Lyautay believed that colonization should be something different from conquest. The one implied absorption the other the imposition of might. Some years passed and a great banquet in Paris was given to the Marshal. To this banquet were invited representative people from every corner of the French Republic. To it also came the great chiefs of Morocco. It was a historic and momentous occasion in the history of France. Many speeches were

made that day, but the most dramatic moment of the evening came when one of the Moroccan chiefs got up to speak. Midst the silence that followed the applause, he began: "*Moi je suis francais.*" And the applause broke out again. For the French people this sentence had great significance. A conquered nation—or to be more precise, a colonized nation—had merged into the national stream of the French Republic. What was so magnificent about this utterance was its spontaneity and its undoubted sincerity. Those who have seen a French colonial walk down the Champs Elysees, feeling as if it belonged to him, will realize what I am trying to say. That is one of the great things we coloured men will always say for the French People. The French do not pretend, but they have the same respect for a negro of a French colony as they have for the most blue-blooded of Frenchmen. *Il n'y a pas de couleur dans le loi francais.* There is no such thing as colour in the law of France, nor any other distinction.

Our Indian Maharajahs have attempted to emulate the Moroccan Chief. Not so long ago, when war threatened Europe, and when the Congress and the people of India had expressed doubts of participating in such a war one of the Indian Maharajahs sent a striking message of loyalty to the King, which was splashed over the front pages of all the English papers. But it was hardly the same thing, because it was so obviously for effect. One rightly asked what difference it would make to Britain if one Indian Maharajah was ready to fight on its side, when the rest of India would stand aloof. And how would he fight and with what? What had Indian Maharajahs ever done, that they could now turn the scales in a great European War? The point was rather—what would the *people* of India do? Would they in the hour of crisis feel and say : "We too are English"? Could they pretend to say it ? I am afraid not. That is the difference. It is the difference between absorption and conquest, and we will always remain conscious that the British come to us only as conquerors.

The English way of entertainment, as compared with the French, has chiefly been confined to arrests and detention during His Majesty's pleasure in His Majesty's Prisons. Not quite the sort of atmosphere where a guest could say *Moi, je suis anglais.* Gandhi was accustomed to these fluctuations of fortune—from being the guest of the British people in London to being their guest in prison in India. Between his landing on the shores of India and his arrest and detention, scarcely a week had passed. How fickle was the generosity of Britain !

XXV

UNTO DEATH

TWO MONTHS PASSED AND AS PYARELAL SAYS IN HIS book :* "The light came at last in a flash." I quote these sentimental words because India reacts like that to the Mahatma. One talks in terms of light and darkness as one would only of a superman. It shows how this country had begun to respect the ordinary matter-of-fact decisions of Gandhi as if they were inspired by divine motivation. Perhaps they were so inspired. One could never be quite sure. As a result of this "flash of light" he wrote to Secretary of State, Samuel Hoare, and expressed his determination to fast unto death if separate electorates were created for the depressed classes when His Majesty's Government made its "award." It is now known that when the Prime Minister made the award, not much attention was paid to Gandhi's letter. Gandhi had given the British Government a month's notice, at the end of which he launched out on his epic fast. It was a daring challenge by a man, no longer in his youth, to a nation that had so long harboured a great social crime.

* "The Epic Fast."

It was also a challenge to Britain, for he wanted to show the British that his word still counted for something in India.

You ought to have seen the country on the morning of September the 20th—touched as it were by a spark, electrified into action, unified at one call from him. All over India there was fasting and prayer. The high-lights of the Congress were to follow his example if only as a day's self-purification. Said Gandhi that morning in a statement: "This may look childish to the onlookers, but not so to me. If I had anything more to give, I would throw in that also to remove this curse, but I have nothing more than my life." And he meant it. The question that arises from Gandhi's fast is: Is this fast not a form of coercion? It is the Gandhian view that it is not. "Love compels; it does not coerce." Many of us cannot appreciate that point of view. When a man of his importance in India threatens to fast to death, then that fast, in so far as the Indian people are concerned, is as coercive as the presence of a million armed men on any of the frontiers of Europe. Only the language of it is different. No man nor body of men could live down the blame of being responsible for the death of a man like Gandhi, by declining to alter his position for Gandhi's sake.

Yet this coercive fasting is not inconsistent with the doctrine of Satyagraha. Satyagraha has been defined, time and again, as non-violent but active resistance. But it is resistance all the same. The circumstances of Gandhi's case make it a coercive measure. But the Orthodox Gandhian point of view still maintains that fasting is in no way coercive. It is a question of interpretation and one cannot deny him the right to interpret his own philosophy.

While on the subject of the coercive nature of a Gandhian fast, the more recent Rajkot affair must not be overlooked. Briefly let us review the events that preceded the fast. There had been a move in the Indian States to demand for the people of the States a reasonable measure of representation, so that when Federation came into

effect, the people of the states, like the people of British India, would have a say in the conduct of affairs of the government of the country. Under the Federal scheme, no provision had been made to safeguard the interests of the States' people, nor could the British Government, who have no sovereignty over the States, have compelled the Indian rulers to divest themselves of a part of their sovereign rights. Under the circumstances such rights as the people of the States might acquire in a Federal India could come to them only if they fought for it themselves. The organization in the Indian States, which corresponded to that of the Congress in India is known as the Praja Mandal. The latter is, of course, a less known and less influential body. But it works in conjunction with the Indian States' Peoples Committee of the Congress and is in fact guided by it. Gandhi and Vallabhai Patel had recently turned their attention to the States' question. Rajkot was made a test case. It was symbolic of the struggle of the people of the Indian State. There had been much exchange of correspondence between the Sardar and the Thakore Saheb of Rajkot. As a result of correspondence and of personal meetings, an agreement had been arrived at, which was accepted by both parties. There was to be no struggle in Rajkot. Later, however, influenced by his right-hand man, Virawala, the Thakore Saheb wanted to retract from the position to which he had committed himself. The situation was very difficult, because basically it was a gentleman's agreement, binding morally, though not legally. This breaking of the Thakore Saheb's word was enough to make Gandhi fast on the Rajkot issue. He could see no other way of compelling, by love or by force, the Thakore Saheb to keep his pledge. So Gandhi's fast began. Chronologically it does not belong to this part of the book. In point of time it belongs to the period which followed the acceptance of office by the Congress. Not many days, therefore, were allowed to pass before the whole press and public opinion of the country almost unanimously suggested that it was a case in which the paramount power, (which term is now used

in India for the British Government in relation to the Indian States) should interfere. The Viceroy stepped into the controversy and he recommended arbitration by Sir Maurice Gwyer, the Chief Justice of the Federal Court. Couched as it was in the form of a Viceregal suggestion, it left the Thakore Saheb no alternative but to accept. It was the wish of the paramount power. The Thakore Saheb accepted the Viceroy's suggestion. He had no other alternative. And Gandhi broke his fast. Sir Maurice Gwyer decided in favour of Sardar Vallabhai Patel in his interpretation of the terms of the agreement which he pronounced a completed agreement. Virawala, however, played his last cards rather well. He was not a man who cared for Gandhi. Gandhi's fast had undoubtedly brought Rajkot into notorious prominence and Virawala, who was not afraid of the consequences, created ingenious obstacles and the matter came to a standstill. Suddenly Gandhi took the country by surprise by announcing his decision to renounce the Gwyer Award. He gave as his reason that although his fast in itself was not coercive, his appeal to the paramount power and his acceptance of that help was tantamount to bringing coercion to bear upon the Thakore Saheb. This was a very subtle interpretation of his philosophy of non-violence. On the one hand he still maintained that fasting was not in itself coercive but only that in the Rajkot affair his end was achieved not by a change of heart or by love-compulsion, but by the sanction of force, which was embodied in the Viceroy's suggestion.

That is the Gandhian interpretation of the Rajkot fast. A certain sense of modesty as to his own greatness and his growing power over this country precludes him from seeing the other point of view. Though fasting under normal circumstances may not amount to coercion, the sanction behind it in Gandhi's case — which is his own greatness—turns this fast into the highest form of moral, if not physical, coercion. It would be different if the man who was fasting was not the Mahatma. We have seen the methods of a hunger-striker. They have not always

been successful. Many, who have died in the attempt, are forgotten men. Some have succeeded and perhaps in these cases it would be accurate to say that fasting does result in the "conversion" of the other man. What other explanation could be given? But what Gandhi fails to realize is that although in his own opinion he associated himself with the poorest and the humblest of the country, he, nevertheless, occupied in India a unique position, such as has not been held before by a single individual and is not likely to be held ever again in this country. Circumstances have combined to make him the living incarnation of the soul of the Indian people. Such a man necessarily coerces when he fasts.

Let it not be thought that we disapprove of coercion. Jawaharlal Nehru once expressed the same idea to me and there are many others who agree that when Gandhi fasts he uses a most powerful weapon. It is only to show two different points of view on this modern form of Indian political tactics, that the question as to whether fasting is or is not coercion is discussed.

But to go back to the epic fast of September 20, 1932. Almost at once leaders of all sections and parties got together to see what steps should be taken to remove untouchability in India. It was clear that the Macdonald Award could not be accepted. Hindu orthodox opinion had to take the initiative and, by sacrificing some of its privileges, bring about a new and healthier outlook. There followed a breath-taking change in Hindu religion, it would be more accurate to say, in Hindu social customs. The depressed class controversy was settled and one saw the unbelievable sight of temples being thrown open to the *harijans*. Never before had an untouchable been allowed to pollute even the shadow of it. Now, temple after temple opened its doors to him. On the question of representation, the Gandhian point of view was upheld and on this very vital matter a substantial agreement was reached. Gandhi triumphantly broke his fast.

One must look back over the years and be familiar

with conditions in India to appreciate the significance of his achievement. The presence of untouchables in our midst had been looked upon as a fact which could not be denied and which could never be altered. Early in the history of India they had come into being because human labour had to be employed when modern sanitary conveniences were all unknown. The nature of the work these people did was enough to ostracize them from all society. This led to their segregation and with time they became a community, which was not fit for any other work but that which their ancestors had done. At the same time Hindu priests stiffened the ideas of morality and of cleanliness and incorporated in them the new prejudice that contact in any form with the untouchable was pollution of the worst kind. It was a regrettable state of affairs. Like cattle, these people were herded together in the worst slums of the city. They lived in the stink and the stench of the gutter in which they worked. Their lungs did not breathe a drop of fresh air. There was nowhere they could go without fear of being shunned. This humiliation, which was their heritage, made them withhold from the things which were the birthright of man, because they knew that there were other people, stronger and more powerful, who had made it impossible for them to live life in the fullest sense of that term.

The '*harijan*' question has always been regarded in India as a social question. Treated, as such, efforts have been made to educate public opinion in favour of the eradication of this evil. That was the method of social reform. But there was also another point of view. Even as the Mahatma refused to allow the perpetuation of their status, which would inevitably follow if the depressed classes were given separate electorates, there was a section of opinion, more realistic and theoretically Marxian, which believed that the solution of the problem of untouchability was only part of the greater and only problem of this country—the problem of the economic emancipation of the masses. Once that was achieved in

India, there would be no room for vested interests, for superstitions, for prejudices, for poverty — for any difference in opportunity in the lives of men. This may be a far-fetched ideal — socialism in its most abstract but complete form — but there were men in this country who had the courage to believe in it. Perhaps it was due to the courage that Gandhi has inspired in them. For a cause like that of the untouchables, he had shown that he was willing to sacrifice his life.

XXVI

NEARING THE PRESENT

THE NEXT FEW YEARS PASS SWIFTLY AND IT IS difficult to chronicle events chronologically. The things that are happening in India are too recent and give us little time to ponder over them. We lose our sense of perspective as the image draws nearer. India has changed into something real. We can touch it. We can think in terms of ourselves and speak of our opinions, of our policy, of our future.

So much has happened in the last six years that I find it difficult to sort out the things that are permanent and lasting from the things which are merely transitory. What may seem important to us today from among this mass of detail may be of little importance when we look back on it through the years. Therefore, it is only possible to touch upon a few of these details which I consider typical of the moment. Ours is not merely a political fight against British imperialism. It is also a fight for self-preservation. This instinct has crystallized itself into a national struggle, which has been shaped and

re-shaped from time to time by the genius of the Mahatma. If we still cling on to the Empire, it will be of our own free will. Britain may one day still be able to claim to have the brightest jewel, not in its Imperial Crown, but in the free Commonwealth of its Empire.

This brings us to one important question with which we are faced. It is the question of the moment — the acceptance of Federation. Not so long ago I read how Britain was determined to adhere to the Federal scheme in its entirety without changing so much as a comma from the bill which had been passed by Parliament. Yes, Britain was quite determined. But of late Britain's determination is one thing, its powers to carry out that determination quite another. When Hitler was planning to regain the lost frontiers of Germany and Mussolini was shipping troops to Addis Ababa, Britain had expressed its determination never to allow such things to happen. Hitler would never step into Czechoslovakia. Nor Mussolini into Abbyssinia. That was Britain's determination, but it was whittled down and in the end Britain stood only for appeasement. Since then Britain has committed itself to a war which will continue for sometime. It has not only involved itself but the whole British Empire. India shares part of that commitment without its own consent. One does not know what the end of it all will be, but it is certain that before long Britain will have to revise its attitude towards India. The days are over when the Englishman could wave his little Union Jack, sing "Rule Britannia" and really believe that the sun would never set on his Empire. India is aware of this, even as Britain knows that it would be foolish to attempt to thrust Federation on a people who are unwilling to work it in its present form. Federation has to go back to the melting pot in which it is hoped it will be shaped anew, even as the Viceroy recently said, to suit this country's real requirements.

A detailed analysis of Federation is not necessary, nor is it possible within the scope of this book. Those who are interested in its finer points have the Government

of India Act to study. Those who do not want details should be content to believe that it is a scheme for the government of India, which creates a federal structure out of British India and the Indian States, which, *with reservations*, will be the paramount legislative body governing the destiny of the whole Indian people. The reservations are the bone of contention, for so long as it is arranged that the voice and opinion of the representatives of the people can be made ineffective by nominated members and by executive authorities, acting in so-called emergencies to safeguard the peace of the country and to preserve law and order — the federal scheme is not of much use to the people of India. The real point at issue is whether Britain will go so far as to give real power to the people as opposed to those who are merely the spokesmen of capitalism and the preservers of vested interests. If a "popular" government is possible under the Federal scheme, there is every reason to suppose that Congress will work federation at the centre even as it has worked autonomy in the provinces. As Federation stands, however, we accept the Congress view that it is unworkable in India. The charge levelled against it is that its unworkability is inherent in the scheme itself. The privileged position of the States, the scheme for representations, the safeguards, the provision for commercial discrimination, the method of indirect election intended to split the British-India representation, the communal award, the financial safeguards, the undemocratic States-representation and above all the complete lack of provision in the Act itself to ensure that this new scheme will achieve its original purpose of giving India the status of a self-governing commonwealth within the Empire, which had been promised to us for the last twenty years and to which we were told we were gradually moving —all this makes it impossible for any self-respecting Indian to give his support to a Federal scheme and to work it with all his heart.

It is not only for our own people — the people of British India — that we are now thinking. Federation

is to embrace the people of the Indian States as well and if we in British India have fought for the things that democracy has stood for. it seems hardly possible that we should now align ourselves on the side of autocracy, to trample down our fellow-countrymen in the Indian States. The Congress is aware of the complete absence of democratic principles in the governments of the majority of the Indian States. Both Gandhi and Sardar Vallabhai Patel have made the future of the Indian States' people a matter of concern to the Congress and the country. The question they have brought into prominence is — What part are the people of Indian States to play in the contemplated Federation? It is not enough that we in British India should enjoy a substantial measure of self-government, when the time comes, if our fellow-countrymen, who by accident of birth happen to be subjects of an Indian State, are to remain in that same political servitude from which we have only just managed partially to extricate ourselves. It is, therefore, intended that before Federation is accepted, the larger Indian States should be turned into constitutional monarchies, like England, dependent upon the will of the people. On the analogy of this, the smaller and insignificant states, whose rulers are no better than zamindars and are without the resources or the organization necessary to build these States up as constitutional monarchies, will eventually have to be absorbed either into British India or into the larger States, whichever might be geographically convenient. This absorption would be undertaken after due compensation had been given to those petty rulers, who might for the sake of expedience have to be deprived of their sovereign power. There does not seem to be any possible alternative for these small and widely-scattered, indigenous kingdoms. Had they been geographically more closely situated, one could have united them into one large Indian States.

These are the plans which the Congress has in mind for ensuring that the people of the Indian States will in a Federal India be allowed to take a fair share in the government of their greater country. It is difficult to tell

whether, after remodelling, Federation will be acceptable to the Indian people and whether the high-lights of the Congress will work it or whether the drive from the left will insist on something completely new. When the time comes, India may be in a frame of mind to work it, provided it can do so honourably. But one cannot forecast the fate of Federation with any certainty, for we live in an age when the whole world changes rapidly from day to day. We have seen a whole people go to bed one night as Czechs and wake up next morning singing "Deuchland Uber Alles." How can you prophesy in a world like this?

* * *

As I look upon India today I realize that we are gradually coming into our own. During the Congress regime the whole atmosphere of officialdom disappeared from the Secretariats. We have access to the men who handled our affairs. When you stepped into the Secretariat during the Congress regime to call on the ministers, you felt that you were a member of the public and that the ministers were your "humble servants." Public service was then an honour and a distinction. When the Congress took office we knew the names of our Home Members, our Finance Members and our Prime Ministers. They were not names that had made headlines in the past. So many of them had come from humble walks in life. School-teachers, small-town men, simple folk, landlords, who had sacrificed their holdings, and sometimes well-to-do people, who had sacrificed security and comfort for the sake of their country's freedom. Since then the Congress ministries have resigned from office on the war issue, but in the future Congress Governments will no longer be regarded as an experiment, and they will become a permanent feature of our life. They have grown up out of the struggle and we have seen them working in nine provinces gallantly fighting to avoid the mistakes that are natural to a party in the first blush of its growing power.

To the sophisticated western mind these men provided

gentle amusement. The average Englishman wondered how they would handle a knife and fork at a social banquet. But such was the order of the day that these trifles of etiquette were not important any more. We had shorn off much of the superficiality of living. Our concern was for the more fundamental things of life. This country cannot afford to retain the luxuries in which a hundred and fifty years of British rule have indulged.

The self-imposed and self-enforced cut in the salaries of the ministers, who accepted about a sixth to a tenth of the salary due to them, was staggering to many who had looked upon the Congress ministers as a bundle of opportunists. But these sacrifices have been made before our very eyes, and we believe because we have seen. The highest public salary of any Congress official of the Government was Rs. 500 a month. It gave place to a somewhat peculiar state of affairs, for a Secretary to Government, who worked under a Congress Minister, got as much as six times the salary of his immediate superior. Asked how such a system could ever work satisfactorily, a Congress Minister said: "After all I am only a servant of the public."

Officials in India draw salaries which this country can hardly afford. The Viceroy gets many times the salary of the Prime Minister of England and a quarter as much more than the President of the United States. Consider at the same time the wage-earning capacity of the average Indian, which is about a fiftieth of what the man-on-the-dole gets in England. A Governor of a Province in India, however small, gets much more than a Cabinet Minister. These figures in so far as India is concerned are not inclusive of allowances. Says the publication in the "Congress Political and Economic Studies" Series, entitled "Salaries of Public Servants": "The Governors of the Presidencies of Madras, Bombay and Bengal, draw allowances on various accounts which amount to Rs. 5,61,500, Rs. 5,15,600 and Rs. 5,86,800 respectively." Do you wonder we grumble a little about the way Indian

money is spent by our rulers? Our sense of values has, therefore, changed. Titles are not recommended. Attendance at extravagant Government House functions is not deemed necessary for the fulfilment of a Minister's duties. It is on the contrary discouraged. Although our Ministers no longer throw themselves at the feet of the Governor, the tendency is to respect him and all other Englishmen with whom the Ministers in the course of their work come in contact. But respect must always be mutual and mutuality is a condition precedent to the paying of respect by Congress Ministers.

During the days of Dyarchy in India we had men of a different calibre at the helm of Government. They were Indians too, but their outlook was one of perpetual worship of the white rulers. They knew that they were ministers on sufferance, without power, without the respect of the people, mere puppets who had been placed in high office by the British Government. On one occasion, a member of the public went to a Minister in the Bombay Government on a trifling matter, which did not require very much thought or attention. Even so the Indian Minister was not keen on committing himself without consulting his English Civilian Secretary. It was then suggested by the visitor that to save him the trouble of having to come again, the Minister could send for his Secretary immediately and dispose of the matter. The Minister hesitated and finally said in a plaintive sort of way: "I'll send for him, but will he come?"

I do not say that this is anything more than a trifling incident. Only we, who have watched the sudden change, can appreciate and understand its full implication. I do not say that Congress ministers are all that can be desired. A great deal of weeding out will have to be done by and by. The incident in the Central Provinces showed that the Congress was finding it necessary to enforce discipline within its ranks. Likewise a committee has been appointed to look into the question of corruption within the Congress. There are a number of people who get carried away by power and who use that power to

their own personal advantage. But it is to the working of the Congress Ministries as a whole that we must look to get a fair idea of the Congress regime. When one looks at it from that broader point of view, one has to concede that the Congress has done great things for the country and that it has done them with courage with both hands. Those, who were sceptical, look upon this changing India with awe and admiration. Those who were despondent have begun to hope. Those who were confident that the Congress would fail, are a little ashamed of themselves.

I remember visiting for the first time one of the finer men in the Bombay Ministry. He was the Finance Member and his name was A. B. Latthe. No one seems to know what his initials stand for. It is not as if it was Stanley, or Ramsay or Neville. A quiet unassuming little man, elderly, his hair almost snow-white and unbrushed, he would pass unnoticed in a crowded railway compartment. There is an amusing story about Mr. Latthe which bears repetition. I cannot vouch for it, but I have printed it before and he continues to be friendly! It is said that not many years ago, when he was in the service of an Indian State, he gave a cheque to a prominent Parsi businessman in Bombay. The cheque was for a large sum and the Parsi gentleman suggested that it would be safer to cross the cheque. Mr. Latthe is '*alleged*' to have dipped his pen in ink and promptly drawn a large cross on the face of the cheque. Can one imagine the British Chancellor of the Exchequer doing this even in his undergraduate days?

As I entered his room in the Secretariat he was leaning back in his chair and tugging at a little '*beedee*', the Indian equivalent of a cigarette and sold twelve to the anna. I had gone to see him because I wanted him to explain to me his great scheme of rural reconstruction. As he looked at me he seemed to be perpetually engrossed in that vision of the future which was ever before his eyes. It was the vision of an India that was tall and strong, economically reconstructed and politically free. That was the India that men like Latthe were out to create.

in his control, every year, came the fabulous sum of some twelve and a quarter crores of rupees. I told him that it must be a grand feeling to see so much money pass through his hands. "I never see or touch any of it except on paper," he smilingly replied. Even so it was something that we should have reached a stage in our political struggle when we could feel that our money passed through Indian hands and through Indian control.

Sometimes he looked at me and through me, as if I were made of glass. He was always looking beyond and afar — past to-day and to-morrow into a future which was long and lasting. He was the man in whose hands lay the destiny of a hundred and seventy-five lacs of people — more particularly the eighty lacs who constituted the more destitute portion of Bombay's rural population. Their very lives were in his trust — lives which were on the borderline of life and death. For that was the grim tale of our rural people — a tale which he hoped to tell in a different way, when his scheme of rural reconstruction was completed.

Often we speak of rural development, but it is an ambiguous term, for it may imply only a new system of irrigation. Latthe's idea was to develop the economic condition of the masses. He explained his scheme to me.

The first and perhaps the key problem of the cultivator was his accumulated debt. For years, from generation to generation, this debt has sucked his life-blood. He could never rid himself of it, however much he tried. It was his heritage. To combat this, legislation was necessary. There would then be a compulsory scaling down of debt. It would be brought down to a limit which is within the paying capacity of the agriculturist on an instalment basis. This agricultural debt was estimated at about eighty or ninety crores. It was the debt of the cultivators, not of those who were rent-receivers. In the scheme which was to be put into effect, only the debts which were under fifteen thousand rupees would be helped. If over that sum, they would not come within the new legislation. Rural boards would be created for the

adjustment of these debts and these would be formed entirely from among the rural areas, because the people on such boards would be familiar with the question before them.

Debts divided themselves into two main classes. Those which had been contracted before the depression period and those which were more recent. The depression was roughly judged to have begun from about the year 1930. For the former type of debt, any interest paid in excess of six per cent. would go to mitigate the debt. In the case of those contracted after 1930, the real debt as distinct from the debt on paper would be ascertained. Also the Debt Adjustment Board would judge the paying capacity of the debtor. It would be reduced to eighty per cent. of his paying capacity. Then the debt would be divided into so many instalments. If it was even then impossible for the agriculturist to meet his debt, some provision was to be made to ensure an easy process of rural-debt insolvency.

That was the cure. There was also provision made to ensure that no more fresh debts of a similar nature would be contracted. That was the prevention. For this, the Government would make it possible for co-operative societies to function more actively than they did before. They proposed to give the cultivator the necessary credit. But this credit was solely for the purposes of production. For marriages and religious ceremonies, the co-operative societies would give no credit. This was not all. Co-operative societies would also market the produce of these cultivators. So that there would be organized production and organized marketing of produce. For all this there would be a band of workers, trained at various centres, who would instruct the *ryots* in their new way of living. To start with, there would be a thousand centres. But he hoped that there would be, in good time, a worker in every little village.

That was the scheme, in very simple terms, of a Congress Finance Minister. It was an eye-opener to many of us, who wondered what the Congress was doing

that was different to what had been done in the past. The days were over when the presentation of a stud-bull by the Viceroy was regarded as a contribution to the rural life of the country. That belonged to an old regime and to an antiquated school of thought. The presentation of stud-bulls by the high Government officials and by the elite of our landed gentry had done the *ryot* little good. Here then was the real thing. You may call it rank socialism, you may call it the ray of hope, you may call it the five-year plan. But one thing was certain that here for the first time was something real — something that you could touch and feel was bread-giving — something that would go towards the improvement of this impoverished country of ours.

As I left the Finance Minister's room, something inside me began to say: "Here is life once more. Here is the urge to live. Here is a sorry and sad past fading away. Here is the dawn of great things to come." I have seldom felt so stimulated. And yet as I left, he was still tugging at his *beedee* — twelve to the anna — looking a million years away.

This was only one isolated picture of the Congress in office. But it was a representative picture. Individual provinces had their individual problems. But it was the general working of the Congress that was so stimulating. It contrasted so well with that of the few provinces in India, such as Bengal, where the Congress was not in power. Wherever I went in India, I felt the growing power of the Congress, and as I look back upon it, I realized that in the background of every great Indian achievement there lurked the shadow of the man who made all this possible. Gandhi was the source of all our inspiration.

* * *

ONE day I went to Bardoli. Geographically unimportant, strategically insignificant, this little village has carved out a name for itself, which will go down in the annals of our history. One remembers the struggles of the past — the sacrifices — the sorrows, and then one recalls the victories that followed and their significance.

Symbolically, therefore, one cannot overlook Bardoli. It crystallizes the doctrines of Ahimsa, of non-violence, of civil disobedience, which have made it possible for us to put our foot on the first step of the ladder which may one day lead us to Swaraj.

There are only two houses of any importance there. One is a ginning factory, the out-house of which was our resting-place for the night, and the other was the Ashram across the road, where stayed the one man whose uncanny vision guided the destiny of our people. Nowhere could one find so much in so little. Nowhere did I find such a conquering spirit. Not far from Surat, Bardoli took a long time to reach. Things moved slowly in that part of the world. Time had not that great significance it should have. But what was an hour here or an hour there to a people to whom all hours of the day, the month, the year seemed so much the same. When some event of importance was in sight as when the Bombay Ministers were on a visit to the Mahatma, they waited for it patiently, without fretting, without murmur, without protest. These suffering people, who had sacrificed so much for a glimpse of the promised land, have with their sacrifices written the story of the Indian National struggle. You could see their faces bearing the scars of the wars they had fought — wars for the liberation of humanity. You could see their eyes reflecting the agonies of this world — the poverty, the squalor, death, disease, which once destroyed them as we destroy vermin, and which they hoped one day to be able to conquer.

That was the great lesson of Bardoli — this moral uplift of a down-trodden and fallen people. They had shown a courage, which compelled attention, a self-assurance which defied cowardice, a determination which made failure impossible. There was general happiness all round, which made me wonder whether I really was living in the same world in which Hitler was threatening the peace of Europe. How far away all these gruesome and ugly things were ! How far away the black wings of death, that swooped over some street in Prague and

destroyed the images of God and man that once stood in the churches and the temples, in the streets, in the homes, and even in the hospitals. Bardoli seemed a heaven compared with all that. And how easily satisfied these people were. Money had a different value in this part of the world. With a thousand rupees you could almost live comfortably to eternity. I had only eighty rupees on me and yet I felt disgustingly rich. There they celebrated the fixing of a wage at four-and-a-half annas a day, because it only cost two annas to live and they never got so much before. I felt, as I lighted each cigarette from my tin, that it was the equivalent of a substantial part of someone's meal. Life was so intensely real that there was no time nor opportunity nor inclination to dabble in unreal things. Art, music, letters — these were out of place in this world of reality. It was the land first, the land second and the land last. That was food—that was life — that was hope — that was the future. These people were attached to the land as we would be to our dearest ones. Their sentiments were almost economic. They thought in terms of oxen and harvests and a square meal instead of colours and sounds and speeches. How else could they think, when life was a perpetual borderline existence? So too, love, sex and morals were only secondary relations — secondary to their relations with the soil, for the land was the one great passion of their life.

Some four miles away, along a road which brought back to me memories of a ride on a camel's back, there was a thanksgiving meeting which two of the Ministers attended. It was to celebrate the coming of freedom to a class of agricultural labourers, who, although free persons in the eyes of the law, were by custom and usage reduced to a status of medieval serfdom. Those affected by this custom, peculiar chiefly to Gujerat, were a tribe of aborigines, called Dublas. Very dark in complexion, with shining jet-black hair, they had been reduced to this status for generations now. Father, mother, children were bound to their masters, body and soul. The Latin

word "servus" could have had no better translation. Now these people would be free once again. Such was the work that had been done by the Congress of which we knew but little.

There were only three people, whose word was law in this part of the world —- God, the Mahatma, and the Sardar. The beauty of it was that they spoke with one voice and had the same message for the people. That was why-to-day, in the twentieth century at the end of the thirties, we saw happening the sort of things that some twenty years ago we would have forecasted only as miracles. The liberation of the Dublas and acknowledgement of this freedom by those who had them in bondage was only one such miracle. For it was because of the respect they have for the Sardar and the Mahatma that they parted with their most staunchly guarded privileges.

Tired and weary, we returned to Bardoli and dined at the Ashram. Our meal was simple but wholesome. Sliced melon, raw tomatoes, two or three types of *Shakh*, a sweet, rice, milk and chapatis. You could eat as much as you wanted. There was no barrier of caste, creed or religion. No one was entitled to sit in any particular place. There were no A.D.C's, frantically looking through the precedence list to find out whether the Home Member or the Finance Minister should sit on the Sardar's right. How different it was from the regime that was gradually fading away.

All this was Bardoli. If Swaraj has come anywhere in India, it has come to Bardoli. The American motto of "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity" was translated into life and action there. The working of Co-operative Societies, the gradual rise to power of the masses, the growth of a sense of civic responsibility, the acquisition of ideas of cleanliness — all these are to be seen in this little village of Bardoli. When the lands, which were confiscated at the time of the Satyagraha movement, were restored, the ultimate triumph of these people was reached. It was amazing to see how patiently they had waited for it. That triumph was not merely restricted to villagers of

Bardoli. It was the symbolic triumph of India, of Satyagraha, of Gandhi and his non-violence. The people of Bardoli had supplied the driving force and the moral power to make this triumph possible. It was because of this that we paid homage to this tiny little village.

* * *

I ATTENDED for the first time in my life the annual session of the Indian National Congress in the March of 1939. It was the fifty-second session and was held at Tripuri. Not many people had heard of that village until then and even the residents of Jubbulpore, which was the nearest town six miles away, were not conscious of its existence. But, for one brief week, Tripuri had been converted from a little, barren, uninhabited village into the symbolic capital of India, in which had gathered the representatives of its people. It had been elevated to the status of a great city to which the eyes of a whole country had turned. It was a city built of straw matting. It could have been blown away in an hour by the mildest of storms. Yet it had temporarily erected its own post-office, a bank, several book-stalls, innumerable shops, a *Khadi-bhandar*, water and light supplying apparatus, restaurants catering for various communities, car-parks, committee-halls, offices for the executive, whole camps of huts built of straw to house the delegates, other huts for the leaders, which were protected from the noise and the dust, office for the President and other executive officials, a press-camp, open baths, food-stalls, microphones, a Parliament house of straw, and sanitary arrangements, which would meet the requirements of over two hundred thousand people. This conversion from a village to a city of importance was to last for a week or two after which Tripuri would revert to the obscurity from which it sprang, with only a stray peasant walking to and from his daily work to stir the dust.

It was my first experience of a Congress session and I was a little unsure of myself. Playing for safety I had accepted the invitation to stay with a friend in Jubbulpore. It was that comfortable bed each night,

away from the noise of the moving crowds, the dust and the heat that made a great difference. But all day was spent at Tripuri — from early morning to late hour of the night. My host was a government official. The car in which I drove to Tripuri each day belonged to one of the Indian States. And Tripuri was of course the Congress Nagar. It was a strange mixture. Somehow the host, the car and the Nagar blended in this new India., No loyalties were ruptured. The road to Tripuri from Jubbulpore was unreal in its setting. The black, rounded rocks along the narrow, winding road reminded you of the entrance to some pre-historic cave. The only touch of realism, ugly though it was, was in the chalked advertisements, which appeared on the large black boulders. One read: "Castophene for Constipation." It read persistently so for nearly two miles. What a thing to go to Tripuri for! One could not help smiling at the naivete of the people and their utter lack of sophisticated propriety, which resulted in grotesque advertisements. But when you take the broader view of life and take into consideration also that only six per cent of this country is literate, that early objection to the sight of Castophene on the rocks dies away. One realizes it is only the enthusiasm of a people who are moving faster politically than educationally.

That same afternoon I took my seat on the ground along with hundreds of pressmen who had come from India and abroad. Everyone sat on the ground. It was the only way the Congress ever sat. Straw mattresses were between the earth and us. The pandal in which the Committee of the Congress assembled that day, was the centre of attention. It was for all intents and purposes the Parliament of the nation. On a raised dias, well-padded with cushions, sat the President and the high command. As each mounted the rostrum, there was cheering varying with the popularity of the individual. I saw a pretty scene when Sarojini Naidu, affectionately called the Nightingale of India, embraced on the dais an old Marathi lady, who, in spite of her simple attire, turned out to be a dowager Maharani. It made a pretty picture

that touched the heart. It was Mother India in all its resplendent glory.

One watched with awe and reverence the galaxy of leaders who had gathered together in the service of their mother land. Only the Mahatma was conspicuous by his absence. He was still in Rajkot, having broken only that morning his sensational fast. But if you wanted to see the men who really mattered in India, as apart from the Viceroys and the Governors, you would find them mounting the rostrum, one by one, and taking their seat on the padded cushions.

There was Jawaharlal Nehru, the Sardar, the learned scholar Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad, the parliamentarian Satyamurti, the eminent lawyer Bhulabhai Desai, Babu Rajendra Prasad, the Chelsian Acharya Kirpalani, the quiet and unassuming Pattabhi Sitaramayya, the dynamic Frontier-Gandhi in the person of Abdul Gaffar Khan, the brilliant Rajagopalachari from Madras, the suave Govind Vallabh Pant from the United Provinces and the two Bose Brothers, Sarat and Subhas. Subhas Bose was, of course, the President of that session. He had put himself up for office for a second time against the wish of the Mahatma and the orthodox Congress. Surprisingly enough he was returned successful, but it was a victory that was short-lived, because the numerical majority, which he had obtained at the election, was not stable enough to withstand the onslaught of the powerful and able forces that were launched against him at Tripuri.

To go into the matter of Bose's re-election as President and to discuss this question in the only way it can be discussed, would necessitate hurting the feelings and divulging the secrets of many people. It is with a certain reticence that I have refrained from commenting upon it. It is the only course open to me. These events are so recent that it would not be fair to pass any final judgement on them. When Bose resigned later at Calcutta, my feeling was that the inevitable and the expected had happened. He had ventured too much in face of an opposition the force of which he did not correctly appraise.

There were certain people who thought the attitude of the high command towards Bose was similar to that which one would have expected in Europe from a Fascist dictator. Theoretically, this may or may not be true. Practically, taking into consideration the circumstances of the case and bearing in mind that no one man, with the solitary exception of the Mahatma, is indispensable to the Congress, one could not help feeling that Bose's resignation was sure to come. The tragedy of Subhas Bose was that he was too ambitious. He had yet to realize that there were other men in this country who had made greater sacrifices without thought of reward or gain, who were more competent to discharge the office of President of the Congress and yet who were hesitant of taking up the great responsibility of that high office. Individually they were more powerful than him, collectively they could eclipse him totally and reduce him to a cypher. So long as the Mahatma lives, there is no possibility of any man, however great, wresting from him that position of undisputed leadership which he has held for many years.

But we turn to talk about less controversial things. The one figure that stood out at Tripuri in a class by himself was the uncrowned king of the Frontier, Abdul Gaffar Khan. To me he was a most awe-inspiring sight. For sheer personality he overshadowed all the others. The other leaders stood like puny men beside his commanding presence. Not the Mahatma with all one's affection for him, not Jawaharlal Nehru, not the Sardar, could cut half as striking a figure. Gaffar Khan brought back to mind all the great men of action, the soldiers of yesterday and the heroes of the day before — the Wellingtons, the Joffres, the Fochs. He too was a soldier to the tips of his fingers. The way he stood with his hands on his hips, he looked a conqueror striding like a colossus from some vantage point, viewing the hordes of men of which he was the undisputed chief. When India gets her freedom he would be the right person to become the commander-in-chief of its forces. And yet the wonder is that this strong man from the North-West Frontier of

India, who has lived his life amidst a civilization of tribal warfare, where tribal feuds were once almost of daily occurrence, where man shot man for a loaf of bread and did not recoil in the eating of it, and where the law of the land was : "An eye for an eye; a tooth for a tooth"—that this strong man with all the martial resources at his command should come and bow and humble himself in the presence of the Mahatma. Well might one say that non-violence had gloriously triumphed.

Those who do not know India have often said that there is much in it which mystifies and baffles them. But what when those like me who were born and bred here are completely perplexed? It baffles us even more — we, who thought we knew something of the country in which we have grown up from little children into young men. What answer can we find for ourselves, except that we do not understand? But we have reached a stage in our lives when we do not always want to understand. Perhaps in future we will take greater care to convince ourselves, but of the past we can only say that we believed in it in blind faith without asking for conviction. We are a people who have the courage of our faith even though we may not have the courage of our convictions. It is an incredible story, but it is true and I vouch for it. It is the only story of the Indian people.

* * *

THE climax of Tripuri was the open session. I cannot describe it better than I did in a short despatch I wired to my paper, *The Bombay Chronicle*. I had never seen anything like it in all my life. It was as if I was wandering in a world that was new to me — wandering, because I was dazed. That despatch read:

"Two hundred thousand men, Khaddarclad, Gandhi-capped, and women are gathered under the canopy of the heavens. Out of rocks is carved out a most imposing dais, high up and bearing the Tricolour of a nation fighting for its liberty. It is dusk and the grey spreads like a pall over the evening, tinging the edges of the horizon in those brief moments before the darkness envelops it all. The

Fezes of The Wafd delegates, who are the guests from Egypt, add a touch of colour and stand out against the background of white Khaddar. One can barely see the great leaders. But some stand out even at a distance. From the press benches in front, we get little idea of the people behind. Far back, many thousands of rows behind, is perhaps the last man. When this world is shown pictures of Nazi rallies under the Swastika of Adolf Hitler, one should also see how a down-trodden but democratic nation has arisen, at last, to walk over the face of this earth, its head held high and its self-respect regained. This dazzling sight is soul-stirring. Even the most blue-blooded among the English must generously concede, after seeing this glorious sight, that India has regained her soul. One becomes conscious of the rise of an oppressed proletariat, which has fought for its freedom to achieve at last a place among the free nations of the world. This then is the answer to a nation's prayer and the result of a long struggle for the liberation of humanity. *Vande Mataram.*"

XXVII

TODAY AND TOMORROW

ONCE I FELT VERY UNCOMFORTABLE IN INDIAN surroundings. I missed that coterie of intelligent, modern young people, whom I knew at Oxford, in London and in Paris—the capitals of Europe and the harbours of intellectualism. I had with many other young men of my generation acquired a taste for pleasure in the widest sense of the word, appreciating most the things in life that were sensuous, though not necessarily sensual. Ours was not an aesthetic appreciation of beauty, which could come under Matthew Arnold's idea of Hellenism, but it was certainly far away from Gandhi's conception of Brahamacharya. Our life was anything but one of self-abnegation. On the contrary it was so full of the desire to live in the senses, experiencing great loves, great lusts, great emotions and tasting continually the sort of things in life, which made you smack your lips if only for the joy of retaining some trace of it, that we could not possibly have time to see that greater ideal in life which consists of "giving" to others. I do not profess to have qualified

to wear the garb of an ascetic to-day, but even that little which has changed in me makes me feel more for my countrymen than I did before. Today I feel human and natural in the company of my own people, more so when I am surrounded by the very same dumb millions I once dreaded approaching. I find in myself a power—however small—to help these people and the desire to help becomes more powerful than ever. It may sound horribly sentimental, but it is so.

I remember how beautifully happy I felt at that same open session of the Congress at Tripuri. It was different from the feeling one experiences when walking down the Champs Elysees with the floodlit Arc de Triomphe in the distance. Paris in the spring ! Gay-lit cafes from which one heard faint strains of music and the chatter of conversation ; the syncopation of a hundred hooting cars ; the scent of perfume from a *modiste* shop in the *rue Royale;* the choir singing in the Sacre Cœur ; the voice of the *prima donna* lifting the roof of the Opera; the smell of the metro; the cooked frogs at Fouquets; the furniture of the Louis's; the brandy of Napoleon; *bouillabaisse;* silver foxes ; high-heeled shoes ; the bar of the Ritz in the *Place Vendome;* Manuel Pizarro at the Villa Rosa; the promenoir of the Folies Bergere ; the statue of Venus in the Louvre; little cigarette shops with the red diamond light; mannequins in the *rue de la Paix;* the El Grecos and the Mona Liza. Or London—on some November evening in the fog down Piccadilly or in the side streets of the West End, pausing a little at Shepherd's Market to look at the small, unassuming house where Michael Arlen wrote *The Green Hat*; the bleak outlook from Hampstead Heath on a misty day; Epsom on Derby Day; the Royal enclosure at Ascot ; Rolls Royces at the first-night of a West End play ; Diana Wyniard as she comes out of the the stage door ; the Berkeley Grill ; the sight of your own article on the feature page of the *Daily Herald.* Or Oxford !—the beginning of term ; the tail-coats hurriedly turning into the little lane of the Union ; the front quad covered with snow ; Addison's Walk ; the river in Eights

Week ; Sir John Simon at the Presidential debate ; Einstein at Christ Church ; Magdalen Choir cracking through the dawn ; bicycles in the High ; tattered gowns ; scholars reading at the Bodleian ; a twenty-first birthday party; the sight of your picture in the *Oxford Isis*—all these have given me a feeling different from the one I experienced while squatting on the mattressed floor of Tripuri. But for Gandhi, I might have missed the whole meaning of Tripuri, and I would, I realize now, have been the poorer for that loss.

I remember, when that first day's open session was ended, I was hurrying to the Telegraph Office to shoot off my message to my paper and I got caught at the exit which was crowded by peasants. I waited my turn. Near me two *kisans* were discussing the meeting. They had understood nothing, but were impressed. They spoke in Hindustani and one said to the other : "*Bahut lok, bahut lok—ek hazar admi hoiga.*" Terrific crowd ! Terrific crowds—there must have been a thousand people.

A thousand people ! How typical it was of their limitation. The kisan could only count that far. He had never had a chance of counting beyond. If Einstein suddenly discovered that time was equal to eternity plus two days, could we, ordinary people, grasp the significance of those two days? To us they would be superfluous. Eternity we understand, because though infinite, it is finite in our conception. And though we could understand eternity, eternity plus two days would be too much. In almost the same way, the peasant knew that a thousand was the limit of his conception. Beyond that, whether it was two or twenty or a hundred thousand, it was still only a thousand. Yet we could count a hundred thousand people that day. Once I would have laughed scornfully at this story ; now I can appreciate it. Once too I would have told it as a bitter commentary on my own people ; now, I tell it feeling a trifle sad.

Gradually I have come to realize that our problems do not require the approach of a sophisticated mind. Our needs are such that we have to call cabbage cabbage,

even when it is *sauerkraut*, because basically it is cabbage just the same. Somehow, we have to think in terms of basic principles and raw materials. They are our only salvation. The condition of India does not allow it any luxuries. The deeper I go into the heart of India, the more I realize how far it is from enjoying life, such as we have seen elsewhere. Even in the worst slums of Europe and America, there is that ray of hope which has never penetrated rural India. How many an unemployed man on the dole in England has felt that one day his luck will change and that he will yet turn the corner of depression to walk the rest of his life on the broader and cleaner avenues of prosperity. This feeling may have no justification, but it is there all the same. The glamorous stories of many people, whose lucky star has led them to the doors of fame, rocketing them from complete poverty to wealth, from obscurity to the front page are the opium on which so many poor people continue to live. Not so in rural India. You cannot go to the villages of India and hold out the prospect of hope, when you know that life in its fullest sense can never come to these doomed alley Even the missionaries who have come to India realize that all they can ever do for the Indian masses is to teach them to pray for their souls. Poor comfort—when you come to think of the loaf of bread which has been denied to them in their lifetime.

Yet, realizing all this, I feel that something can be done and has been done for the people of India. I feel more than ever the urge to do what little I can myself. It is an achievement when I bear in mind the background of my life—a small achievement perhaps, but nevertheless an achievement. It may be that we are only working for posterity, for we can never get anything more than a glimpse of the promised land. Perhaps, we can just see this country of ours on the threshold of its freedom, but there is the consolation that our children and our grandchildren will live in the freedom and the self-respect which has been denied to us. Bearing this in mind I have learnt to appreciate that spirit of colossal sacrifice

which underlies the life-work of the Mahatma and those who have, like him, devoted their energies to the service of their country. Their example has stimulated others. One begins to understand why it is that young men, who could live their lives in the normal comforts of their fathers' homes, have enlisted in the service of their country, doing voluntary work of most menial kind. That is what one finds everywhere in India. There is a spirit which makes no service too low for the greatest amongst us. Appreciating as they do the comforts of life, they are willing to play even a small part in the greater cause of the liberation of the people. They have their faults. There is a weakness of the flesh for petty gain and power. But these are to be found in any nation that has lived so long under foreign domination and which now sees the opportunity of grabbing the key-positions. But it is the broader aspect of the Indian struggle that is encouraging. One cannot help feeling that as a result of the national struggle, this country has gained in character. And that when the Indian walks in the wider streets of the world, he will be able to hold his head high, because he has fought for freedom—the greatest of man's possessions.

This is the most significant fact about the India which has grown up with me. Wherever I have gone, I have seen the change that has come over the people. Even though we realize that much of what we are fighting for will be withheld from us for at least a generation, we have progressed far enough to be able to look back upon our progress with a certain amount of pride and satisfaction. And it is not only that we can look back so much as that we can look forward also. We see the vision of a free India become a reality even as we see the struggle that has yet to come—the fighting inch by inch because nothing can be taken for granted.

Gradually we have become conscious of a national existence. We have learnt to think in terms of this national existence. It is reflected in many things which we do both consciously and unconsciously. To that

extent we feel the Mahatma's power over us in as much as he is symbolic of that consciousness. In art, in literature, in the cinema, in painting, sculpture, architecture, music, dance and drama, even in commerce and industry, in the way we conduct ourselves, the thing we do and say, this national consciousness is noticeable reflected. There has been a general cultural and religious revival of things that are Indian, which has its origin in the national upsurge which Gandhi began. I do not say that without Gandhi we would not have had Tagore, but that because of Gandhi we are able to understand and appreciate Tagore and other symbols of Indian culture. It is the regaining of our self-respect that is reflected in these various forms of self-expression. Gandhi has released tremendous forces which for years had been stifled because of the domination of a foreign culture and a foreign rule. Tagore is perhaps a world figure and cannot be compared, but to a lesser degree we have other symbols of this cultural and national revival. Uday Shanker in dance, innumerable young men who have made a mark in Indian painting and sculpture, others who have expressed themselves in writing, the various exhibitions of art which have been held in India, institutions which have sprung up all over this country which dominate the world of industry and commerce and shipping. The whole atmosphere of the country is changed because of them and those who have watched this change happen, realize its true significance. There is something about this atmosphere that is like fresh air. You can breathe in it freely. It is like coming out into a glorious garden after years of incarceration in a prison cell, as if with the liberation of the body there was a corresponding and simultaneous freedom of spirit. We seem to find life where there was only slow decaying death.

Not so long ago, I went to the pictures to see *Mr. Smith Goes To Washington.* It had a very simple theme—that of a young man who was elected senator because those who put him in office, believed he would be only an echo of their voice. There was for the sake of

the plot the usual clash between boyish ideals and the selfish interests of fellow politicians who worked for graft and self-aggrandisement. All that was not important, nor am I drawing any parallel. But there were moments in that picture which were unforgettable in so far as they conveyed to us that feeling of freedom which was the heritage of a free American nation. A great deal of this effect was no doubt to be traced to Frank Capra's direction, but wherever the credit lay, I remember how stimulated I felt when in the echoing, lonesome hollow of Lincoln Memorial, young Jefferson Smith stood, his head uncovered and suitcase in hand, looking on with awe at the statue of that President of the United States, who crystallized for him the idea of liberty which we in India were in our own way fighting to achieve. That was not all. Standing nearby were an elderly man and a little boy not more than seven years of age. The boy held the old man's hand and read the inscription on the wall. "Fourscore and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. . ." The voice of the boy penetrated my soul as in the solemn silence of that memorial, those words were uttered by one of a generation that had yet to blossom into manhood. And as he came to the end of that immortal Gettysburg speech, a little tired, for he was only a kid, the older man with greater emphasis finished the words "and that government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth."

That was only a shot from a Hollywood film. For me, however, it had great significance. Whereas to the American people it was only intended to serve as a reminder of their free estate, these vivid scenes stimulated us to the very core. So it was too when we in India saw *Juarez*, though later we found that the most telling passages in the Mexican President's speech were cut from the picture. We are able to appreciate these pictures because freedom and democracy mean something to us. It is the result of this change which Gandhi has brought

about in our sense of values. Today we walk on the face of our country knowing that it is poor but that it is our own. We know that a new order has come into being, an order which has been ushered in by men, who have once been beaten and trodden upon, but who have risen from the ground and walked triumphantly on.

I recall the days of my youth when such a word as freedom we hardly heard. My mind swiftly flies across the long span of years and vaguely hits upon a certain afternoon, when I remember leaning on the verandah of our bungalow at Mazagon, watching one of our servants being dressed up in khaddar clothes and a Gandhi cap in order that he could safely get to the other end of the town. It was during the height of the first non-co-operation movement. I do not remember the month or the year. I only know that it was the first time I heard the words "Mahatma Gandhi." Nor did I think it was of any importance at that time. My only interest was in the servant's masquerade as if a white Russian was making a dramatic escape from the revolution. It was only an isolated incident, but I have never forgotten it. Every thing seems to go back to that afternoon and stop. Perhaps it was the beginning of my national consciousness, even though it belongs to a chapter I would rather entitle "Make Believe."

There are other great social changes that are to be traced to the advent of Gandhi. There has been a decided change in the status of women, which dates from their entry into the political arena. Women today play a prominent part in our affairs and share in the sacrifice that this country is often asked to make. It is almost unbelievable to see Indian women step out from the zenana and walk straight into politics in the short space of a decade. All over India their presence in the open is encouraged and even the most orthodox do not shudder at the emancipation they behold.

I have seen at Congress meetings whole troupes of women working ungrudgingly all day if only to supply the crowds with drinking water. I do not claim that this

is any great national service, but when you see girls who come from comfortable homes and from good, respectable families, some of whose fathers (as for instance in the case of the Advocate General of Bombay, who earns approximately Rs. 15,000 a month) are men who are not only rich but who also occupy high positions in India, you begin to look for the motive that has prompted such girls to do voluntary service for the Congress in the shape of carrying water to thirsty crowds in the sweltering heat of the country.

Among the more enlightened Indian women two stand out for recognition—Sarojini Naidu and Vijayaluxmi Pandit. These are products of national India. With a certain liberty of expression pardonable on such occasions, I might call them "the daughters of Gandhi." I think they are wonderful women and I always feel a sort of juvenile adoration for them. I look upon them as typical of the womanhood that has evolved in India—intelligent, hard-working, self-sacrificing, kind and human, always sparkling with the freshness of life and very sincere. To be in their company is like reading the poetry of John Keats.

One other great social change is in the status of the untouchables. For thousands of years they were the victims of superstition and orthodoxy, tyranny and obscurantism, living their lives in the filth and stench of a Dherwada and a Kumbharwada. Although I have recently heard a man like Dr. Ambedkar, who belongs to the depressed classes and represents them on the platform and in the assemblies, criticize the Congress in a scathing manner for the things it has left undone for the untouchables, I feel that even this embittered man will in his heart acknowledge that the social freedom which he enjoys today and which his class have to some extent acquired, is to be traced to the work of the Mahatma. In the heat of many a discussion, when issues relating to the Scheduled classes have been raised, it is natural for Dr. Ambedkar and his followers to become intensely critical of the Mahatma and the Congress. But Dr. Ambedkar

knows that he owes some gratitude to the man who has made it possible for him to be what he is today—a free and equal man in the hierarchy of Hindu caste. The opening of the temples to the untouchables is symbolic of social as well as spiritual freedom. It is all part of the awakening—the first streaks of light that herald the new dawn.

The feeling which we experience in the India of today is comparatively a satisfying feeling. It has helped to mellow the bitterness within us. It is reflected in our attitude towards the Englishman with whom we come into contact. Perhaps some credit must also go to the new type of young Englishman that has come in our midst. He realizes, as his predecessors did not, that the old order has changed yielding place to new. India has fulfilled itself in many ways. He sees how gradually the British domination is fading into comparative insignificance. He watches the empty ceremonial of state functions and knows that it is not enough to keep an Empire going. He has found out that in the India of today it is not with the protection of the British Army that he must live but with the good-will of the people. He realizes that he has now no other alternative but to play by our rules.

When the last war ended and the Allies had successfully but not so gloriously triumphed over the enemy, a little tablet was erected by the French at the spot where the Armistice was signed. Translated it says: "Here lies the criminal pride of the Germans, vanquished by a free people, whom they tried to enslave." We want no such record of victory. We do not want to glorify a sad and sorrowful past. We want to erect no monuments which will harbour the hatred which we once felt. We are more generous than those who out of a fable erected a monument to the Black Hole of Calcutta. We want rather to erect a monument of peace, to those who helped to bring about an honourable peace, if peace will ever come. It would be a memorial as much to the Christian in Lord Irwin as to the Indian in Gandhi. It would

be a monument to all the unknown soldiers that have fought in this long war for the liberation of a large section of humanity. Some day too there will come to life a generation of Indians able to speak of "a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal." They will picture then the little figure of the Mahatma stalking over the Indian scene. They will remember him throughout the ages as the man that made a new India possible.

I once expressed to Humayun Kabir, a distinguished contemporary of mine at Oxford and of whom it has been said that he writes some of the finest Bengali prose, this idea of our being raised out of dust by the Mahatma and made into men. I knew he would understand the imagery. Sometime passed and he wrote to me enclosing in his letter a few lines, which crystallized my thoughts for me. Speaking of the Mahatma's influence over our country he said:

"A puny figure strides upon the scene
Of vast and elemental suffering. Strides
Against a background where slow death
Paints in dull phantasmagorial grey
The end of all endeavour, hope and faith.
Some secret magic transforms the scene.
The static, dead and slothful continent
Thrills to song of hope, of forward urge.
The momentum gathers, the masses shake
And strain and quiver for the onward march
From slow decaying death to resplendent life.
A lonely figure stands upon the sands of time,
Stands upon the shores of India's timeless space,
Draws upon its vast and primeval wells
Of granite suffering and immemorial hopes:
Launches India's resistless caravan
Into adventures new, a perilous path
Where from life's substance must be carved
New values, new direction, order new."

When I finished reading these lines, I felt that the Mahatma's life has had some meaning.

EXACTLY a year has passed since the Congress met at Tripuri. It is a year that has moved on rapidly from one sensation to another, with the ticker-machine gallantly keeping pace with events all over the world. As I look at my book of cuttings I realize how hopelessly impossible it will be for the historian of the future to assimilate the material.

From our point of view, the news from abroad is summed up in one headline sentence — WAR DECLARED. That seems to be the culminating point of the news from Europe. All other news from Europe fades into comparative insignificance.

During the last days of peace, if peace it could be called, I sat at home listening to the radio as it flashed messages from every station in the world. I would get up in the middle of the night and switch it on again to see if any stations were alive and if they had anything new to say. In those few days I was further away from India than I have ever been. I thought in terms of those I had known in Europe and wondered whether I would ever see them again. I visualized the gloom over London and Paris and in the homes which would be sending their sons to fight for humanity and liberty and those glorious things for which this war was apparently being fought. I thought also of that day at the Union at Oxford when David Graham moved that "This House will under no circumstances fight for its King and Country." Would those who voted for that resolution be fighting now? Would I myself fight if it was my country?

I only knew that I wished more than ever to be there to see England and more particularly France in the hour of their crisis. These are moments in the history of the world which must be experienced if we are to say that we lived in those moments at all. But I was not destined to be in Europe then. Instead I was to see a picture of indifference which was at that moment almost indecently shocking. India as a whole was indifferent to the declaration of war. I do not think the majority of the people were aware of its significance, and those who

were, were only concerned with the effect it would have on prices and commodities and industry in one form or another and the stock exchange. The human aspect was only secondary to the commercial and industrial. Such was the mental attitude of the class of Indian that is called the average man-in-the-club.

I felt sure that the Congress and the Mahatma would give the right lead to the country and that they would present the situation to us in its correct perspective. The Congress did not disappoint us. The Working Committee's resolution on war which bore the stamp of Jawaharlal's drafting was something after our heart. It showed a generosity which was in keeping with our best traditions. Yet it was cautious, carefully worded and dignified in tone and utterance. It did not bargain for privileges, but at the same time it did not presume, as I mistakenly did, a change of heart on the part of Britain in its attitude towards India. The Congress had learnt by experience not to presume anything. Jawaharlal struck the right note and expressed his own and the Congress official opinion, when in a statement from Rangoon he said : "The war is going to change the face of things. The old order is dead and cannot be revived. . . I should like India to play her full part and throw her resources into the struggle for the new order." This was also the gist of the Congress resolution. We felt that for once we could take part in a righteous war on the side of Britain. It had been made abundantly clear that India condemned the Nazi aggression. But we felt that we should have some assurance that the principles we were called to fight for would also be applied to us and that at the end of the war we should share in the triumph of the liberation of humanity. We did not want to remain an anachronism when the rest of the world had moved with the times.

Political events moved fast and the representative of the Crown parleyed with the representatives of the people. Fifty-two Indians, picked from the galaxy of talents and interests in this somewhat mixed country of ours, made the pilgrimage to Simla only to find that they

could not worship in the Imperial temple on equal terms. In reply to the Working Committee's demand for a clarification of Britain's war aims and a statement of British intention with regard to India, Britain made a disappointing reply. Zetland and Linlithgow made it clear that Britain still wanted to shelve the issue and that it would not commit itself to the granting of India's freedom when the war was over.

The war, therefore, has changed the whole aspect of things. When I returned to India two years ago, the atmosphere was peaceful and there were no traces of the unrest that prevails today. Congress was in office and at many vital points there was harmony between the ministers elected by the people and the permanent officials of Government. Now the position is again altered. The responsibility of government has been thrown back on the Governors in all the provinces where the Congress ministries were in office. The resignations of these ministries became imminent once the country was pledged against its will and without its consent to a war, however righteous that war may have been.

The Congress attitude is very clear. It is obvious that the Congress want to co-operate with Britain if co-operation could be given honourably and if there was some assurance that at the end of the war there would be complete independence granted to this country—independence of a kind which is not fettered by innumerable qualifications. The way Britain has behaved after the last Great War cannot be easily forgotten and the Congress have necessarily to take all reasonable precautions.

However, for the present, Britain has turned down this offer of willing co-operation. Already the various acts and ordinances and budgets that have followed in the wake of the declaration of war, have indicated that in the absence of willing co-operation, Britain intends to enforce co-operation. A situation has, therefore, arisen which has given rise to a conflict of interests and the eyes of the country are turned to the Mahatma, because it is he who will decide in the near future what action

this country and its national Congress will take in answer to the attitude that Britain has taken up.

There is a school of thought, led chiefly by Subhas Bose, which wants to plunge the country into a campaign of direct action, the consequences of which I shudder to contemplate. But the influence of the Mahatma has made any premature decision impossible. When this country is ready for civil disobedience, which is the form of direct action contemplated, then alone will he give it the lead. In the meantime, the emphasis is in the direction of preparation for satyagraha. Non-violence must be understood by the people, and only when it is infused into their blood-stream will this country be declared ready for action. Not till then. Such was the verdict of Mahatma Gandhi—a verdict that was almost universally endorsed by the delegates at Ramgarh.

Earlier in the book I have referred to Gandhi's restraining influence over India. This has never been so evident as it was at Ramgarh, and those who attended that Congress sessions and who were in a position to feel the pulse of the country say that, but for Gandhi, the Congress would have voted unanimously for a resolution calling upon the country to start immediately a campaign of civil disobedience. The hitch to-day in launching such a direct-action campaign is that the people are too willing and the danger is that though they may now accept the method of non-violence in principle, they may, once the struggle has begun, take up the attitude that violence is inevitable. And Gandhi does not want to make the mistake of finding that the people have not yet imbibed the fundamental principles of satyagraha. If he was sure of his people and sure that, whatever the provocation, they would remain non-violent resisters, he would start civil disobedience within a week. And it is only because he has not that feeling of assurance that he is holding on to the reins and pulling back a force that wants to go forward. We witness, therefore, the strange contradiction of a people being held back by its national leaders because the Mahatma does not want to precipitate the next struggle.

The apparent contradiction disappears when you bear in mind the nature of the struggle that is to come. It is to be entirely different from the others. It is not intended to be a mere protest against Britain's Indian policy. It may be provoked by these factors and the resumption of civil disobedience may be immediately traced to such causes, but the end in view is not of a transitory character. The Mahatma has clearly said that the coming struggle is to be a final one. It is not merely to obtain a few concession that he will start another country-wide campaign, but to get for us at long last the essence of freedom. There is a touch of finality about his conception of the next struggle for freedom—something that will alter fundamental conceptions of government and make new and decisive changes in its character. India will be governed *de facto* and *de jure* by the Indian people instead of from Whitehall as it is now. There will also be a constitutional change which will be recognized by the people of England as much as by the people of India. Gandhi is emphatic of the constitutional aspect of the change, and his methods will remain non-violent even though they may appear a trifle unconventional. If the coming struggle is to end in a victory for India, then it must carry with it the ultimate acknowledgement of those who are called upon to divest themselves of power. A struggle intended for such an end cannot be too hastily begun, and whatever may be the tempo of the people, he will not be hustled into any form of action which he might later have cause to regret.

What stands out at the moment, even as it has done all through his political life, is his insistence on non-violence. Non-violence is undoubtedly his greatest contribution to India and to the world. Satyagraha with all its implications has been the one weapon he has used in this fight for the liberation of his people. No other country has made it bid for freedom in this essentially non-violent way. Not Russia, nor France, nor Ireland. There have been lapses due to the fickleness of human

nature and the weakness of character among his followers, the excitement of politics and the climatic conditions in which we live. Tempers get easily frayed in the tropical sun, but it is the general tone of the struggle that has remained remarkably non-violent. Chauri Chaura and other such instances make us now feel ashamed. The more the masses will be educated and the more they imbibe the philosophy of Gandhi, the more chance there is that in the future these will not recur. But even this chance Gandhi does not want to take and the mood of the country is such that Gandhi will think well before he plunges it into civil disobedience. Gandhi wants, even as many of us do, that when the full story of the Indian struggle is written and handed down to posterity, we should have reason to feel proud that we belonged to a period in the history of our country when this new force of non-violent resistance was evolved and that it should bs an example to the world, which is now rocking in the arms of the fiercest violence that has sprung up on the surface of civilization. And not till his inner voice tells him that India is ready for such a non-violent struggle will he begin civil diobedience in India.

There is one other reason which prevents him from acting immediately. He has not overlooked the present internal condition of India. When you look back through the years and see the unity that existed between the two major communities in 1921, you begin to feel the strength of that united and national effort. Then the Khilafat was the one burning question of the moment and the Ali brothers and the Mahatma were so close that you would hardly see them apart. There was a oneness of purpose and mind that fired the imagination of the whole country. One spoke and thought in terms of one people. There were no divisions and sub-divisions amongst us. Today there is a different tale to tell. From an eminent Muslim leader, Mohamed Ali Jinnah, we hear for the first time that there are two nations in India and that culturally and in every other way they have nothing in common. "The Hindus and Muslims have two different religions,

philosophies, social customs, literatures. They neither intermarry nor interdine and indeed they belong to two different civilizations which are based mainly on conflicting ideas and conceptions," says Jinnah, and therefore he has put forth an idea of carving out of his great country of ours two states—a Hindu and a Muslim State. The latter is to be called Pakistan. This attitude of Jinnah although it has not the support of the majority of Muslims in India is, even so, unfortunate. It means that our ranks are to some extent divided and the discord that it gives rise to throw this country open to the danger of communal rioting, if Gandhi were to launch his campaign of civil disobedience now. The gulf has been fully exploited by Britain, and the result is that at the most crucial stage of the national struggle, the question of freedom is obscured by the communal problem. Nothing more unfortunate could have happened, and wherever the blame lies we have to face the fact that we are at the moment, because of our lack of unity, weaker than we would otherwise have been.

It is not possible to examine Jinnah's idea at great length. Nor do I feel that this idea has gained sufficient ground in this country to compel such a critical examination. The more enlightened Muslim opinion, which is also the opinion of those that are nationalist rather than communal at heart, is expressed by the present Muslim President of the Congress. In his presidential address at Ramgarh he said : "I am a Muslim and I am proud of that fact. Islam's splendid traditions of thirteen hundred years are my inheritance. I am unwilling to lose even the smallest part of this inheritance. The teaching and history of Islam, its arts and letters and civilization are my wealth and fortune. It is my duty to protect them . . . But in addition to these sentiments I have others also, which the realities and conditions of my life have forced upon me. The spirit of Islam does not come in the way of these sentiments. It guides and helps me forward. I am proud of being an Indian. I am

part of the indivisible unity that is Indian nationality. I am indespensable to this noble edifice and without me this splendid structure is incomplete. I am an essential element which has gone to build India. I can never surrender this claim. . . Eleven hundred years of common history have enriched India with our common achievements. . . Everything bears the stamp of our joint endeavour. There is indeed no aspect of our life which has escaped this stamp. Our languages were different but we grew to use a common language ; our manners and customs were dissimilar, but they acted and re-acted on each other and thus produced a new synthesis. This joint wealth is the heritage of our common nationality." Thus spoke Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, a devout Muslim who touches Islam at every phase of his life and existence. He shows how there is nothing in Islam that is inconsistent with the idea of an Indian nation. The Indian that has grown up in the last fifty or hundred years bears the stamp of a joint endeavour by these two major communities. You cannot now separate the two and still hope to preserve the edifice. And that is something that is lacking in Jinnah's theory—this realization that what we are today is because of a joint endeavour. Apart from the impracticability of dividing this country, it would be a pity if this great country of ours were to be broken up into fragments which can have no place nor position in the great world order that will come to this world when there is peace again on earth. It was great disappointment to many young men of my generation who had looked up to Jinnah with a certain respect, which his manner commands, that it should have fallen to his lot to come forward with an idea of creating two nations in India. O Iago ! Iago, the pity of it, Iago. Let them intermarry, let them interdine, so that at least their children and their children's children will grow up to think in terms of a common life and a common ideal rather than that they should undo the work of many generations who have served and sacrificed their lives in the service of what they and we have learnt to call "our mother country."

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Such is the state of affairs in India today. When we demand from Britain the right to our independence, we do so with the full realization of these shortcomings. They do not alter or affect the national demand. I doubt very much if that determination to be free will ever change. It is the message of the Mahatma that has been ingrained in our soul. In that spirit do we await the morrow.

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