That was the humble beginning from which was later to evolve the most powerful body of political opinion in India. Sitaramayya, the official Congress historian says : "Great institutions have always had small beginnings even as the great rivers start as thin streams. At the commencement of their career and course they progress rapidly, and, as they widen, become slower and steadier. By the confluence of their various tributaries, they are enriched as they flow on, both in volume and in content. The evolution of the Indian National Congress presents the same phenomena. It had to cut its way through mighty obstacles and, therefore, entertained modest ideals. As it gained a foothold on the affections of the people it widened its course and absorbed into itself several collateral movements, wedded to the solution of social, ethical and economic problems. Its activities were in the earlier stages naturally characterized by a sense of diffidence and doubt. At it attained man's estate, it became more and more conscious of its strength and capacity and its outlook was soon widened. From an attitude of prayerfulness and importunity, it developed self-consciousness and self-assertion. This was followed by an intensive campaign of education and propaganda, which rapidly resulted in extensive organization of the country and campaigns of direct action. Starting with the humble object of seeking redress of grievances, the Congress ere long developed into the one accredited organ of the nation that proudly put forth its demands. Limited as its range of vision was in the early decades to matters administrative, it soon became a powerful and authoritative exponent of the political ambitions of the people of India. Its doors were thrown open to every class of citizens and to every grade of society. Though in the beginning it fought shy of problems that were described as social, yet in the fullness of time it recognized no such compartmentalism of life ; and surviving the traditional and time-honoured demarcation of life's issues as social and political, it has developed a comprehensive ideal in which life is considered as one and indivisible."

That was the body from which had sprung some of India's greatest sons. Dadabhai Naoroji, the grand old man of India; Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, who had gone before him; Gokhale who was dead; Tilak, who was still alive. That was the body which Gandhi was to dominate one day.

* * *

THE origin of the War, if analyzed too literally, would be traced to the murder at Sarajevo of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand. It happened six thousand miles away from the India over which the genius of Lord Hardinge presided. It was quite clear that a million Indian troops were not fighting for the neutrality of Belgium, nor did the roar of the *Emden's* guns rouse Indian feeling at the time. It was rather because India saw in Great Britain the champion of liberty and freedom, that India gave so freely to the British War Exchequer. Gandhi, that disciple of Ahimsa, contrary to his best convictions, had thrown in his lot with his rulers for justice, for democracy, for goodwill among nations, which he thought the Empire stood for, and which Britain was fighting to achieve.

It was an ironical situation. The Lord Bishop of Calcutta had admitted that it was hypocritical to pray for victory over autocracy in Europe and at the same time maintain it in India. Somehow India never saw it in that light at the time.

It must not be thought that this was India's first contribution towards strengthening the imperial might of England. There had been maintained in India a steadily growing military expenditure, which the people of India had no other alternative but to bear. During forty-five years — 1859 to 1904 — Indian troops were engaged in thirty-seven major and minor military expeditions. There were ten wars — the two Chinese, the Bhutan War, one Abyssinian, two Afghan, one Egyptian, one Burmese, and two Tibetan. As a result of this "the frontier of India was shifted from the line of the Indus to the western slope of the Suleiman range and from Peshawar to Quetta." Upper Burma was annexed and Tibet was twice invaded.

Besides these there were twenty-seven minor expeditions, to which must be added the sending of troops to Malta and Cyprus in 1878 and the facing of an expenditure of over two million pounds sterling to combat the alleged Russian menace in 1884. This is only a rough estimate of India's contribution to Britain's imperial policy ten years before Britain launched out to avenge the wrong that had been done to the neutral Belgian territory. The Indian National Congress had voiced, in what manner it could, the protest of a nation whose resources were being drained in order to plant the Union Jack more firmly on Empire soil. But what was a solitary, unheard voice that cried out midst the booming of guns that roared to the tune of *Rule Britannia?*

With the war, a new sense of moral values seemed to have swept over England. A convict released to go to the front could return amidst the ranks of survivors, distinguished for bravery by that highest of all decorations — the Victoria Cross. Why could this change not also be reflected in England's attitude towards India? Gandhi's faith in England's new spirit could not entirely be misplaced. Following the mismanagement of the Mespot campaign, a full-dress debate took place in the Commons, in which the Secretary of State for India, Sir Austen Chamberlain, unsuccessfully withstood the onslaught of the young Montagu. Austen Chamberlain resigned and the young man of thirty-six stepped into India Office. Unlike others, who held that important post before or since, Edwin Montagu was familiar with Indian conditions. Five years before he had made an extensive tour of India and in a speech he made at the Guildhall, he dealt a death-blow to that over-rated prestige to which the British Empire was said to owe its continued existence. He saw clearly that England would not hold India by Conservative statesmanship, but only by the free will and consent of those whom it governed. On the 20th of August of the same year, 1917, he made his epic pronouncement with the full assent of His Majesty's Government — a pronouncement to the interpretation of which can be

traced much of the bitterness that has followed. The goal of British policy in India was for the first time laid down in what then appeared to be a clear, crystal-like, concise declaration. It ran: "The policy of His Majesty's Government is that of the increasing association of Indians in every branch of administration and the gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the progressive realization of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire."

It was as if a new star had suddenly appeared on a dark night to twinkle brightly over the Indian horizon. It had hitherto been undiscovered by the political astronomers. Like the Pole star, it gave the Indian world a sense of direction. Here then was evidence of that good-faith in which Gandhi believed. The Montagu pronouncement was to be a landmark in the relationship between these two countries of the Empire. The dawn had come, Gandhi thought, as he reviewed this declaration of British policy, which lent itself to a variety of interpretations. Even though the pace at which India was to move towards responsible government was slow and mean and grudging, it did not detract from that original gesture, which Montagu made out of courage and sympathy and foresight, and which the British Government adopted, uncertain, as it still was, of the result of the War into which they had taken a headlong plunge.

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VII

OUT OF THE SHELL

GANDHI'S PROMISE TO GOKHALE NOT TO START satyagraha in India until he had travelled all over the country and gained experience, was faithfully kept. When C. F. Andrews asked him whether a time would come for such a movement in India, he was reluctant to give a precise answer. He seemed unwilling to pronounce an opinion. Nor did he take any active part in the Congress of 1915 which he attended. He declined to enter Indian politics, and when the elder Nehru and others, who had heard of his activities in South Africa, urged him, he said that he did not wish to step in at the moment and that he would rather wait for the right time to come. He was content to be regarded as a specialist on South African affairs, on which he framed resolutions for the Congress and spoke and made some revealing statements. But on all matters which went to the root of India's struggle for freedom he preferred to remain a silent spectator. Even so, on those few occasions on which he rose to speak either on the Congress platform or elsewhere, the way he swayed a

cosmopolitan crowd made them feel that he was different from those who had spoken to them before. Almost singular in his way of thinking, a little more sure of himself than the others, he caught the imagination of the listeners not so much by crisp epigrams and choice phraseology, but by a sincerity which held his listeners spell-bound and commanded their respect. He was something fresh and novel in Indian politics. In his speech there was a clarity of expression which made every point lucid, definite, certain. He was natural. He did not strive after effect, but he gripped the Indian mind.

There were two occasions on which Gandhi came out of his shell. The one was at the opening of the Hindu University at Benares. It was an event of first class importance, and there had come to Benares the pick of Indian princes and the Viceroy. The streets of the holy city were lined with cordons of police, who paraded the city in order to preserve law and order and to make the person of the Viceroy safe from any possible attack. There was a meeting which all Indian Princes attended. The Maharaja of Darbhanga presided, and on the raised dais sat the great ruling chiefs of India, with their expensive jewellery and in their extravagant robes. Each one was vying with the other in pomp and majesty, as if they had met for the sole purpose of showing off their jewels and their wealth.

Gandhi went to this meeting out of curiosity. He had no other motive. As he sat and listened to the lip service that prince paid to prince, he became uneasy in his chair. At last he rose in that great assembly of vested interests — a somewhat unknown person — and with the President's permission began to speak on a matter that worried him intensely. He spoke of the police vigilance in honour of the Viceroy and the hordes of policemen that swamped the city. "Rather be shot a thousand times," he said "than be followed by a pack of policemen."

A hushed assembly turned round to see this stranger in its midst. A murmur ran through the whole crowd. On the platform there was confusion, and prince conferred

with prince as to the identity of this Mr. Gandhi of whom they had never heard. They were sure he was of no consequence. Only Mrs. Besant who sat on the platform remembered those Kathiawari features as being those of a young man who had recently appeared at the meetings of the Congress—a child in politics she said to those around her.

Gandhi finished with the Viceroy and his police guard. He then went on to tackle the princes themselves. He told them how empty was their pomp and how unimportant they really were in the India that mattered. The President unaccustomed to such gross impoliteness—for the Princes never spoke to each other except with the utmost courtesy—did not know how to handle the situation. It was unprecedented and had come as a complete surprise to everyone. But this unknown insignificant little man was carrying the crowd with him They cheered him. He spoke their thoughts. If only they could think freely and speak like him without fear ! Those on the platform were too dumbfounded to do or to say anything. Eventually the President was seen to get up and leave. He was followed by the other princes while Gandhi stood there still addressing a meeting which had lost its Chairman, its sponsors, its honoured guests.

It was a spectacular achievement. It was also his first great impromptu speech. His personality clearly emerged from it. The self-imposed restraint had gone, and he let loose a power of invective, such as he has seldom invoked. It gave those present an idea of the fighter in him. Mrs. Besant, who was left on the platform, got up and tried to restore order out of the chaos that followed. She remonstrated with the speaker for his lack of tact and good sense, but it was too late. Gandhi had spoken and the Princes had left. The meeting was already dissolved.

There is no mention of this in Gandhi's autobiography. Nor is there anything but a very brief mention of it in any of the other biographies. But the incident is nevertheless a true one vouched for by those who were present. Looking back on it now, these eye-witnesses

remember how amazed they were at this unbridled outburst. Some of them had never seen him before. No one except a very few had heard him speak. Scarcely anyone was aware of his presence in the place. How different it is today when the presence of the Mahatma anywhere makes a whole audience, however large, instinctively conscious of his presence.

The other occasion was when he consented to go to Champaran, because the peasants had sent word to the Congress of the oppression they suffered. Gandhi went because their complaint was similar to that of the indentured labourers of South Africa. It was his first Indian experiment, and he was a little hesitant in making it.

Champaran is a comparatively unknown district, north-west of the province of Bihar. Bihar itself is towards the east of India. Nearly a hundred years ago there had come to it a host of indigo planters, who gradually began to have a hold on the peasantry and to force them to grow indigo, even though this was not profitable to the peasants. Other cultivation suffered in consequence and the wages from indigo cultivation were very nominal. On a few occasions the cultivator had rebelled against this compulsion, but all such risings were severely crushed.

The trouble began when synthetic dyes made indigo cultivation almost valueless, and the planters had to close down their factories. There were heavy losses and the planters wanted to shift these losses on to the cultivator by compelling him to execute a new lease, the terms of which were inequitous. It meant in fact that there would be compulsory enhancement of rent at a time when cultivation was valueless. The tenants protested, but the interests of the planters were so well protected by the government that the peasants dared not seek any judicial remedy without seriously endangering their property and their person. Moreover, the planters had secured their position by a clause in the Tenancy Act, which saved this enhancement of rent from being regarded as illegal.

When Gandhi arrived in Champaran in April 1917, he intended to stay there a day or two and view the situa-

tion. He had included Champaran in a tour of Calcutta, Patna, and other places. But when he got as near to it as Patna, Gandhi knew the work in Champaran "might take even two years" and he was prepared, if necessary, to give it that time. Naturally his reception at the hands of the authorities was far from cordial. Firmly but politely he was advised to leave the district. It was the sort of attitude which made him more obdurate.

Gandhi collected his co-workers round him and set out towards Champaran. On the way he was served with a Government Order asking him to refrain from going to Champaran and to leave the district. Gandhi refused to do this and was, thereupon, summoned to appear the next day before the Magistrate and stand his trial.

The news of Gandhi's trial had spread rapidly through the district. There was consternation among the higher circles because no one had ever disobeyed a Government Order. They were more amazed when he pleaded guilty to the charge. These were tactics to which the authorities were not accustomed. They viewed with suspicion a prisoner who deliberately defied an order and then pleaded guilty to the charge.

Not content with having upset all the calculations of the prosecution, he made his first statement in an Indian court explaining his reasons for disobeying the order. He gave his reasons for entering the district, and said that his intention was to render "humanitarian and national service." He added: "As a law-abiding citizen my first instinct would be to obey the order served upon me. But I could not do so without doing violence to my sense of duty towards those for whom I have come." Later in that same statement we get a glimpse of his self-assurance. Though almost unknown in Champaran and by no means a leader of any great consequence, he said as early as on the date of that trial: "I am fully conscious of the fact that a person, holding in the public life in India a position such as I do, has to be most careful in setting an example."

What was the position he held in the public life of India at the time of the Champaran incident? He was not by any means an All-India figure nor was he regarded by the great majority of men as a man of any political standing. Gandhi had himself refused to be associated actively with India's political struggle. It was only as an authority on South Africa that he was respected in the Congress — and South Africa was such a vague place in those days. Yet the confidence with which he spoke of his position in the public life of India revealed his faith in himself and in his ability to enter the Indian scene whenever he desired. Coming events had cast their shadow before. Yet that statement was not without its little philosophy. For he ended by saying: "...I have disregarded the order served upon me not for want of respect for lawful authority, but in obedience to the higher law of our being, the voice of conscience."

Gandhi finished. The Magistrate looked a trifle perplexed. He cleared his throat in the orthodox legal fashion. He moved restlessly in his chair. He stroked his chin. The law of God and the voice of conscience, he reflected, had never been cited in his court by a prisoner. To his one-track, legal mind it appeared to be a question of jurisdiction. Could a case based on the law of God be tried in Champaran? If so, by whom and how? He fumbled for the books of reference which were not there. He had always been given to understand that the High Court of Justice was the supreme Court. But did that Court administer the law of God? In a hundred and fifty years of British Justice and Administration, no one had pleaded so strangely. Faced with this dilemma he thought it proper to postpone judgment.

Next day the same Magistrate informed Gandhi that His Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor had ordered the case to be withdrawn. Gandhi was at liberty to conduct the inquiry, free and unhindered.

What had happened to the prestige of Britain and the Empire?

The next year saw Gandhi in Gujerat, where in the district of Kaira there was an unexpected shortage of crops. It was the unwritten rule of revenue assessment that when a crop did not come up a quarter of the full harvest, the rent payable to the Government was suspended for that year. The dispute at Kaira was about the quantity of the crop. The Government alleged that it was above the quarter mark, while the cultivator disputed this and claimed to be exempt from the rent. This dispute had come to a head in Kaira, and it was the question which Gandhi had to solve.

But Kaira had a deeper significance. Never before had the peasant questioned the authority of Government on the matter of assessment. Whatever the Government decided was final and irrevocable and the only remedy available to the peasant was the ineffective remedy of representation and petition. But this had never succeeded. Only sometimes the Government would promise to look more carefully into the grievances of the petitioner. But the assessment would always stand as it was and the peasant had to pay the rent or quit.

Kaira was, therefore, the first rural and mass challenge to authority. Champaran had been a non-political achievement. Gandhi had excluded the press from it. It was devoid of all publicity. Kaira was spectacular, symbolic — the first direct expression of the masses. The old methods of negotiations were discarded. There were no chosen representatives running round the out-houses of the Secretariat in the hope of securing an interview with the third secretary to Government. There was no more humble submission in the petitions they drew up. There was no petition at all. The retort of Kaira to the Government's demand of taxation was definite and emphatic. Under Gandhi's leadership and that of another figure who emerged into India's political life about that time—Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel—the peasants became resolute in their demand. They did not dread the confiscation of their land. They were not afraid of being sent to prison. Something had happened to make these

timid people, who had been trampled upon all through their lives, stand up and offer resistance to authority which was hitherto unquestioned. It was a great blow to the prestige of Government, for no amount of imprisonment would secure the obedience which the Government were once able to compel. Most unexpectedly the authorities recognized the claims of the peasants and suspended the tax on the poorer of the peasantry without making any ostentatious announcement about the suspension. Kaira was, therefore, another personal triumph for Gandhi and he learnt from it that Satyagraha appealed to the Indian mind.

* * *

It was now April 1918. Chelmsford was in Delhi and the War was in its fourth year. He had summoned the Indian leaders to a conference, partly to recruit more intensely for Britain, partly to make the Indians feel they were important.

To this conference Gandhi went with much uneasiness of conscience. His discomfort was partly because of a rumour that England was negotiating some secret treaty, which was not an honourable thing to do, and partly because the Ali brothers, leaders of Moslem thought in India, were at that very moment in solitary confinement for having expressed political opinions, which protested against England's participation in that part of the war which was waged against Islamic Turkey and the Holy Land. But after certain assurances from the Viceroy, which eased his conscience, he went to Delhi.

It was not a very historic conference, nor did it make any great contribution to the national life of India. That veteran Indian leader, Pandit Malaviya, had said something about obliterating all distinctions and making the soldiers they enlisted feel equal to anyone else fighting beside them. Gandhi had contended himself by seconding a resolution moved by the Gaekwar of Baroda, declaring India's loyalty to the King-Emperor, who had sent a message to the effect that "the need of the Empire is India's opportunity." He had spoken one sentence at that Conference.

They were the only words he uttered, but they were historic, for he spoke them in Hindustani, the first time that at any Viceregal meeting anyone had dared to speak in the language of the country. Translated it meant : "With a full sense of my responsibility, I beg to support the resolution."

The Conference broke up in an unnecessary blaze of glory, and Gandhi visited a few towns in his effort to recruit. The villagers of Kaira to whom he went first asked how his appeal for volunteers was consistent with his avowal of non-violence. Gandhi was at a loss to explain. However, when he came back to his newly formed Ashram, he suddenly took ill. The vision of death came near him for the first time and he imagined that he was nearing his end.

Meanwhile, Vallabhbhai Patel, the Sardar, came rushing to his bedside with the news that the war was over, and that Germany had hoisted the white flag. But midst the physical pain he suffered, he did not realize the significance of this news. He only knew how his body was limp and tormented and how difficult it was to adhere to his vows and refrain from all those things which the doctors considered most essential in order to build up his strength—milk, beef-tea—all this which he would never touch. It was fortunate that his wife very timely suggested that his avowal was only to abstain from cow's milk. Gandhi acceded to medical advice to substitute it with the milk of the Goat. Goat's milk and Gandhi ?—and Low, Strube and the political cartoonists of the world had got one more subject to caricature.

VIII

DIGRESSION

THE WAR WAS OVER AND THE SOULS OF THE LIVING cried out for the dead. There was something sad about crowds that were celebrating the signing of the Armistice. The men and women who danced in the streets of Paris were not really happy. The people who waved their Union Jacks outside Buckingham Palace, and sang "Land of Hope and Glory" were conscious of the absence of those who were not spared to rejoice with them. In the homes of the vanquished there was an even greater wailing. No one knew how dark would be the future that lay ahead. They only knew that the wounds of the living would take a long time to heal. Those who were too old to fight saw a generation, to which they themselves had given birth, wiped off the face of this earth. It had vanished from sight. No one knew where it went or why. It was like the end of a nightmare that was grim and ghostlike and the memory of a son or a husband haunted some poor little soul who had made her greatest sacrifice. The Arc de Triomphe was a little ashamed of itself. Admiralty

Arch preferred to have its gates closed. In spite of the victory there was a great mourning. It was not only a national mourning. It was the sorrow of a whole civilization, almost of a world. Philip Guedalla described it well when he said: "...Though the thunder of the War died on the distance, a shattered world still rocked to the long swell. The clouds hung low over a world of broken lives in which eight million men had died, of endless vistas of annihilation, towns without recognizable remains, the sea-floor littered with dead shipping, and a lunar landscape of inhuman surfaces where fields had been. Death, disease, and devastation stalked almost uncontrolled among the scared survivors with the crash still ringing in their ears, as they surveyed a world whose map was a delirium of fragmented empires."

In Russia the revolution had already broken out. The streets of St. Petersburg were washed in purple blood. The Czar had fled, but had been captured and murdered. It was as if there had been a major earthquake, uprooting some of the mightiest trees, in those parts of the world, which were once great empires. As Europe awoke after the Armistice, it wondered why the guns were silent that morning, and whether this quiet that prevailed was the end of the war or the end of the world. They had fought for honour and glory. Now they fought in the streets for black bread and a morsel to keep body and soul together. Many a man had returned home to find that it stood there no more. Everything had vanished in the twinkling of an eye—a twinkling that lasted four long years. The little tree he had planted and which he had fondly nursed for many long years had withered. His favourite dog did not rush out to greet him. Something had happened to this world. Every corner of Europe was a landmark of someone who had fallen there. The crosses that were planted on the battlefields of Europe were so many crucifixes on which they had pinned their martyrs. The only difference was that when counted by the millions, the price of martyrdom had fallen. The eight million dead had equally made their sacrifice. The flower of manhood

had died. The soul of man remained tortured. The pawn value of the Victoria Cross stood at a few shillings only.

It was not like this in Europe alone. The evil of the War had spread to every corner of the world. Life seemed so uncertain that men were content to live for the moment saying "Hell" to the morrow. There was a rush to conquer the key positions and a false sense of prosperity had taken hold of a world whose days seemed to have been numbered. New ideas of pleasure came into existence. New professions were created. Even the people one met and spoke to, did things different from what they used to do before the War. Money meant nothing except what it could buy at that moment. The inflation of the mark in Germany showed that you could sit on a pile of a million mark notes and still starve for a loaf of bread. Gold had remained a somewhat cherished possession, but even that would offer little security when the scientists of the world were working at full speed because someone had said that it could be synthetically produced. Fortunes were made overnight and lost as easily. The war had thrown up a precarious crop of millionaires. Theirs was blood money, made in a number of cases by those who had contracts to supply raw material or food that was to be used in the war. Bribery and corruption were rampant.

Indian mentality seemed happy in these uncertain post-war surroundings. Speculation had made and lost many a fortune. The rich man of yesterday was trying to make a bed on a bench in the park. A pauper was trying out his new Rolls-Royce. The standard of living of the middle-classes was artificially raised and altogether there was a false sense of prosperity prevailing in India. The presence of a few millionaires amongst us made us appear a rich nation and the Indian princes with their extravagance completed the picture. No one thought in terms of the masses, whose poverty remained unchanged. The average annual income of the Indian, when the war was over and the boom period began, was estimated at four pounds. Four pounds a year! Compare that with the dole and you will get an idea of the poverty of India.

All over the world there was a general re-shuffling of political ideas. Cobden and Gladstone were long since dead. They were as lifeless as the models that stood in Tussauds. New faces appeared on the front pages of the morning paper. New creeds, hitherto unheard of, were claiming pride of place besides those which once held the world in sway. It was the exciting age of Communism and Fascism, and the old theory of laissez-faire and the old ideas of democracy were being carried away in a back-wash. It was a restless world that the war had thrown up. The wave of nationalism which spread over it was only a phase of that same restlessness. The war had altered the frontiers of Europe. It had distorted the map of the world. But the British Empire still remained as large as ever. There was in fact more red on the map.

India was one of those red bits that went to make up the Empire. Far away from the scene of corpses, it did not feel the effects of the war to the same extent as the countries on whose territory it was fought. India heard of the war chiefly through the pages of the papers it read, but the great majority that could neither read nor write did not know of it. They did not know where Europe was. Was it any nearer than the sun and the moon and the stars to which people went but never returned? And why should there be a war? Was one king wanting to be more powerful than the other? And what happened then? They sat and listened as they would to a fairy tale told at the village fair.

One must bear in mind all these facts when attempting to value the importance of the coming of Gandhi. One must have a true perspective of India at the time Gandhi arrived on the scene to begin his domination of Indian politics. It was even to him a new country. The few thousand Indians, who had followed him in South Africa, were like a drop in the ocean when compared to the millions in India. His dominant feeling at studying Indian conditions was one of painful surprise at the appalling poverty of India. A hundred and fifty years of British rule had done little to allay the sufferings of the

masses. Instead, he thought, the presence of the British was responsible for them to a large extent. The heritage of the masses was not property but poverty. It was debt that passed down from father to son and the system of usury that prevailed made it impossible for the individual to shake off the burden of debt under which he was born, and which hung round his neck for the rest of his life, until it finally choked him and he died.

The Government of India was disgracefully bureaucratic. Viceroys came and went every five years. They had hardly time, midst their social rounds to the Indian Princes and their visits to hill resorts to get to grips with the Indian problem, and when they got somewhere near it, it was usually time for them to retire. There was also that loyal band of Empire builders which poured in from every part of the British Isles to carry on the tradition that had been handed down to them by their fathers. There was that *esprit de corps* among them as there was among those who wore the same old school-tie. They had only one ideal in life—to make money as quickly as possible and then to spend the rest of their days on a farm in Sussex or in a little cottage on the Cornish coast, contributing occasionally to the columns of the *Times*, when India figured in the news. The more decent among them carried out their ideal with as little injustice to the Indian as was possible, though always bearing in mind their main objective, which was to make money and to make it quickly. When their wives came to India it was only at great discomfort and personal sacrifice. They cursed the weather when the days got hot, swore at the servants because they did not speak English, and counted the days on their calendar when they would be sailing "home" again. They would never give birth to children in India, because that would deprive them of caste. The victory of the Allies had put a premium on the 'pucca sahib.' It was something to be born a white man, but it was still better to be born in the country of white men.

Englishmen became sure of themselves. The war had given them that confidence. They were also more

arrogant in their behaviour. They felt superior because of their recent victory. And they argued that if they could bring a strong German Empire to its knees, what could they not do to a weak, poverty-stricken India. It was a great thing to be a little white God in the days after the War.

Indian fathers began to plan their sons' future. Business was all right and quite respectable, but how much better it would be if their sons could mingle freely among their rulers and take part in all the pomp and majesty that was associated with the British rule. India had realized all too quickly what it meant to have the patronage of the British. It seemed to justify the humiliation and the injustice that they had suffered. Perhaps God had really guided the white man to the 'heathen's home.' Perhaps there was such a thing as the white man's burden. Perhaps the All-knowing and the All-mighty had destined that the fate of three hundred and seventy millions should be in Britain's hands even as the fate of Europe had fallen into the hands of the Allies.

The Congress was the only spokesman of India. But it was somewhat limited in its appeal, for it spoke of things like Independence and Home Rule, whereas the educated Indian was generally of the opinion, largely due to an English-controlled and Government-inspired press, that it was an advantage to train in the shadow of Britain. The Congress, therefore, was looked upon as something dangerous — something intoxicating, exhilarating, almost narcotic and not quite the right thing for a healthy and prosperous nation. In one word it was "Bolshevic"—and that word in India at that time meant something terrible. It brought up visions of bloodshed and of prisons. It implied that the rich would be looted by the poor of all their money and that their women would be ill-treated and their children would starve. All this "Bolshevism" implied and there were rumours that the Congress organization was under the secret pay of Soviet Russia. It was one way of discrediting the Congress.

Moreover, it was the time to make some real money in India. The boom was already in sight and the bulls had swamped the markets. Should a nation waste its time at such a stage and worry about unimportant things like liberty and freedom? Such were the thoughts uppermost in the minds of those who were a little sceptical of this one-time barrister who had been causing a lot of trouble in South Africa and who was likely to do the same here in India.