IX

1919

CHAMPARAN AND KAIRA WERE NOW FAR BEHIND. 1919 had appeared on the calendar, and the Government of India had brought into existence the Rowlatt Acts, which tried to replace in the hands of the Government that power which had temporarily been vested in them when the Defence of the Realm Acts were in force. The effect of the Rowlatt legislation was summed up as : "No pleader, no appeal, no argument."

The opposition in India to this autocratic power, which the Government claimed for itself, was chiefly on a matter of principle. It is one thing, the Indians said, to have extraordinary powers in an emergency period. The Defence of the Realm Acts had justified themselves. But to give the same power to the bureaucracy as a permanent safeguard was to threaten the civil liberty of the people. It was as if the Star Chamber had been revived in India, when it had been stamped out of existence in the country of its origin. England had paid for its Bill of Rights and France had paid even more dearly for its

liberty with the Revolution. But the Government of India had forgotten the lessons of history. Stubbs seems to have been shelved by the high authorities that inaugurated the Rowlatt legislation.

It seems somewhat incongruous that the Government should have fought so hard to acquire powers which they did not once have occasion to use. It was a greater pity that, so soon after India's gallant contribution to the War, they should have mistrusted those same people who had gone to their help in the hour of Britain's need. It hurt Indian feelings that so close upon victory, Britain should distrust and protect itself from its greatest ally.

When the bill was brought into the Supreme Legislative Council it was a mere formality. It had already been decided beforehand that these bills should come into force. The Viceroy, being present, had the privilege of hearing the rhetoric of that fine speaker, Shastri. The Indian *Hansard* will one day be read to great advantage by the students of English literature, and among the classics of that period will be numbered the speeches of Shrinivasa Shastri.

There is a beautiful story attributed to this most brilliant parliamentarian of our time. It is said that, at one of the Viceregal parties, a new Viceroy who was taken aback by Shastri's command over the English language turned to him and remarked : "How is it that you speak English, which is not your mother tongue, so brilliantly? Some of our best men who go to Oxford and Cambridge don't speak it so well."

And Shastri is said to have replied a little hesitantly: "Well, Sir, I really don't know. I suppose it must be the two thousand years of culture behind me."

"Oh yes! Yes," the great Englishman vaguely answered.

This story has not been confirmed, but does it to anyone who knows the mind of an English bureaucrat need confirmation ?

It was this same Shastri that was attempting to convince the government not to bring the Rowlatt

legislation into existence. Shastri did not succeed. The Government of India were in no mood to listen to speeches when they had already made up their mind.

It was then that it came to Gandhi in a dream that he should call upon the country to observe a *hartal*, a complete closing of all business, as a sign of mourning for the passing of the liberty of the Indian people. The date fixed for the *hartal* was the date on which the legislation came into force. To see a vision was one thing. To translate it into action on the scale of an All-India demonstration was quite different. "What was it," says Sitaramayya, "that had endeared this comparative stranger in the country to all provinces and commended his equally strange programme of satyagraha to the people all over?"

You find the answer in "India 1919." It is the official answer.

"Mr. Gandhi," it says, "is generally considered a Tolstoyan of high ideals and complete selflessness. Since his stand on behalf of the Indians in South Africa, he has commanded among his countrymen all the traditional reverence with which the East envelopes a religious leader of acknowledged asceticism. In his case he possesses the added strength that his manners are not confined to any religious sect...His readiness to take up the cudgels on behalf of any individual or class whom he regards as being oppressed has endeared him to the masses of his countrymen. In the case of the urban and rural population of many parts of the Bombay Presidency, his influence is unquestioned, and he is regarded with a reverence for which 'adoration' is scarcely too strong an equivalent. Believing as he does in the superiority of 'soul force' over material might, Mr. Gandhi was led to believe that it was his duty to employ against the Rowlatt Act that weapon of passive resistance which he had used effectively in South Africa."

And from so reliable a publication as "India" this has to be read with respect.

The day on which the Rowlatt Bills were to come into force, Delhi heard about it sooner than any other

province and there was a complete *hartal* held all over that province. It was the 30th of March — the day originally fixed for the *hartal*, but was later changed to the 6th of April, though too late to stop the demonstration in Delhi. Gandhi had inaugurated this with a fast. It was the most appropriate gesture that a leader, who believed in the purification of the body in this struggle of the soul, could make.

A fast ! It shocked the politicians. It worried the statesmen. It brought a sneer on the faces of the bureaucrats at Delhi. "A fast!", they cynically said. But there was something in the simplicity of that gesture that appealed to the Indian mind. The Indians liked it. Though simple it was dramatic and striking. It was different from any thing else that they had known before. It symbolized sacrifice. Man had *denied* himself on the eve of the struggle for liberty. It could have happened anywhere and at any time. But it had actually happened in India.

That day shooting took place in Delhi. How else could the Government have answered? How else could they have proved that the Rowlatt legislation was necessary for the peace of this country ? But the hero of the day was the Swami, who led the procession through the streets of Delhi, and as the soldiers came from the opposite direction and threatened to shoot, he bared his chest. They did not shoot.

This was serious, the Government thought. They were not at home with non-violence. The cynics did not laugh any more.

The other great centre of storm was Bombay. Though not the capital, it was the key city of India. The Gateway of India had appropriately been erected in this cosmopolitan town that stretched its arm into the Indian ocean, its lighthouses giving the first signal to ships that here was India.

It was of its kind a great city. Like Shanghai, it had acquired for itself a reputation in the East. It had no outstanding features, except that on a clear night, you could see from Malabar Hill a panorama of twinkling lights

on the edge of the water — blue, glistening in the pale moonlight, quiet, peaceful and almost as still as the night. In the distance the tall chimneys of the mills stood up like the spires of some church where man offered his work to the gods. These tall, upright, dark silhouettes stood against the lighter blue of the sky, tapering heavenwards like a finger raised in warning. They were pointing towards God. In the foliage that had clustered together in many a part, lay hidden the house of some rich Marwari banker, or some Parsee who had amassed a fortune, or an English official or a Jew from Baghdad, or a "Nabob" or diamond merchant. It was a cosmopolitan city, but all was quiet at that hour of the night. Unlike Paris there were no boulevards on which at night people sat and sipped cognac. No *trotoirs* on which women strolled from street-lamp to street-lamp, their yellow tickets in their worn-out bags. Unlike New York it had no clip-joints, unlike London no bottle-parties. There was only a district over which hung the red lamp, as blatant and symbolic as the three brass balls that hang over the pawn shop. The tourist, that passed through, looked for the Zoo and the Tower of Silence and the drive over Malabar Hill, and then sank into a chair to have a cocktail at the Taj, which is as well known as Shepherd's of Cairo. He had tried to see the burning ghat and a *masjid* but with little success. He had looked in vain for an old fort that dated back to the Moguls, or the caves of Ajanta or a river like the holy Ganges. But Bombay had none of these. It had only houses with red tiled roofs depicting a civilization of brick and mortar that had been washed pale by the monsoon. It rained in Bombay for three months in the year and it rained hard. It poured for days on end, washing the streets clean till the dirt of the whole city had passed through the gutters. Sometimes the sewers burst when it rained too hard. Sometimes the streets were flooded when the drainage could not stand the strain, and all traffic was at a standstill when the water came almost knee-high. Plague and typhoid often broke out in the city proper, and the people with their limited

knowledge of public hygiene were content to look upon them as an act of God. The share-market was perhaps the barometer of the culture of its people. But in spite of limitations it was the merging of different strains in its blood stream that made Bombay the powerful city of India and the gateway of the East.

There was a long beach sheltered by the two arms that stretched out round the bay. It was not like the beach at Deauville or Miami or Brighton. Chowpatty knew no sophistication. It was strewn with the empty shells of cocoanuts in which a brisk trade went on. Cocoanut milk made a cool drink after the dust and heat of the day. Midst these shavings and the litter sat the lower middle class, who had gathered there to watch the sunset and to wait for the blue hour to appear. It was on this same Chowpatty beach that Gandhi's satyagraha demonstration was held.

Gandhi's call to action shook even this city of Bombay from its complacent slumber. The prudes that lived in their red-roofed houses were a little shaken to find that the even tenor of their existence was put entirely out of gear because an eccentric man talked of "the rights of the people." Those in authority, conscious of the power of the government and the ruthlessness with which they could crush these childish efforts to disturb the peace, looked upon the movements of Gandhi with mild contempt, believing as they did that it was only a passing phase in Indian politics — a somewhat unconventional phase perhaps, but a phase nevertheless. Gandhi would probably be arrested and that would be the end of all this babble about liberty and freedom. Or perhaps the government did not even think it worth while giving Gandhi so much importance. But the clash had occurred. The clash between authority and the people. Gandhi, who was on his way to the North, had been arrested and brought back to Bombay only to be set free. He arrived when the city was roused to fury. Impatient crowds, who had gathered because of the *hartal*, wanted something to replace their work which was suspended. In India

when the people were at work they were in their shops or their mills or wherever their place of work was, but when they were out of a job they gathered in the streets in large numbers, moving aimlessly from place to place. When Gandhi arrived on the Bombay scene, it was too late. The mounted police had charged into them. There was a panic and when some minutes later the crowds dispersed, he saw the bodies of his countrymen strewn over the streets, some dead, some badly wounded. He experienced a strange feeling when he saw what had happened. It was a feeling of horror. But he was not afraid.

X

ONWARD CHRISTIAN SOLDIER !

THE UNREST IN INDIA SPREAD. NEWS CAME FROM all quarters of riots and disturbances. There were outbreaks of violence. The people, who were carried away by Gandhi's appeal, had not adopted his method. They had preferred a shorter cut even though it caused them more suffering and more physical pain, for the Government had in many places retaliated with the brute force at their command. It was not merely the police, armed with lathis and mounted on horseback, that were turned on the crowds, but also, as in the Punjab, the military that had been called out.

Amritsar in particular was conspicuous. The story of Amritsar is one which has two versions. It does not matter how unbiasedly one tries to tell it, the Englishman will feel more sympathy with his version as the Indian will with his. With this reservation, I prefer to give the Indian version. It is the version of those who suffered. It is the story which Gandhi believed to be true and in

this book it is only fair that I should state the facts which Gandhi believed, and which he acted upon. It was Amritsar that led him to take an active part in the politics of India. His domination over Indian politics was soon to follow. The details of this Amritsar story are not and never have been in dispute. It is the interpretation put upon the facts by the two sides that differs. The things that will differ will be the motives, fears, forethought and malice. These will lead to different conclusions. The Englishman and the Indian cannot be expected to see eye to eye on Amritsar. Blood is thicker than water.

Let us examine the facts. The Punjab is the stronghold of the martial instincts of India. It is the recruiting ground of the Indian army. The Punjabi is by instinct a fighter. He is made that way. His physique makes him suited for the task. This significant fact was known to the authorities as it is to anyone who has taken any reasonable interest in India.

There were two personalities in this Amritsar incident whose names sound strangely similar. There was the Governor of the Punjab, or to be more precise the Lieutenant-Governor, whose name was O'Dwyer. He was knighted as Governors always are. The head of the military section was General Dyer. Much later, when the Congress met at Lahore, some enthusiastic young man with a flair for rhyme and metre was responsible for the poster which hung at the entrance to the city and which read :

We welcome you to the land,
Dyed red by Dyer
And oppressed by O'Dwyer.

It seemed as if the fates had conspired to have these two persons on the scene at the same crucial moment. The Governor was particularly keen that this home of India's martial forces should not be polluted by the politics of the Congress. He was not too keen on allowing the Congress to hold its meeting in the Punjab. He had already received news of the demonstrations in other parts of India. The happenings in Delhi on March 30 and

the happenings in other parts of India on April 6 had been disastrous. O'Dwyer, therefore, decided to nip civil disobedience in the bud, and on the 10th of April, the District Magistrate of Amritsar, which is situated in the Punjab, sent for the two local Congress leaders, Dr. Kitchlew and Dr. Satyapal, a lawyer and a doctor respectively, arrested and removed them to an unknown destination. As these two were entrusted with the arrangements for the forthcoming meeting of the Congress, the Government thought they had frustrated the Congress ideas.

But the Government had misjudged the enthusiasm of the people for Gandhi and the Congress. When the people heard of this inexplicable disappearance of two of their leaders, they gathered in great numbers and decided to march towards the house of the District Magistrate to ask him for an explanation. There was, it is hardly necessary to say, a great deal of excitement. It was not as if they were going to pay a social call, but they were, nevertheless, unarmed. Even so, the psychological effect of a whole host of people marching towards his house must have been unnerving, for the crowd marched on shouting the names of the leaders. As he sat in his house, surrounded by his escort, the unfortunate magistrate heard the shouts coming nearer. A little restlessly he paced up and down his room. His conscience was not too clear. He was afraid of what he had done and he gave instructions to the military guard at the level crossing, which separated the city from the Civil Lines, not to let that crowd pass under any circumstances. When the crowd came to the level crossing, it was, therefore, fired upon. That was a mistake. There were several injured and one or two deaths. The crowd was enraged beyond all calculation. What else did the authorities expect ?

The crowd carried the dead and the wounded back into the city. They thirsted for revenge. The white man was to them the cause of death and destruction. And they took their vengeance on the first white men they could lay hands on. They marched into the National Bank of India and killed its manager. A ghastly, brutal

murder with no personal motive whatsoever. Thus an innocent Englishman was killed. There were others who were picked at random. Five Englishmen were killed that day and, for the first time since the mutiny in India, a terror ran through the white people. India was out for blood, they thought. The panic was widespread and at once the white population gathered behind the strong walls of the Fort, seeking refuge from the wrath and vengeance of the Indian people. Their fears were not unfounded. A bank had been set fire to. A railway goods-shed and some buildings had been burnt.

Besides—and this was too much for the prestige of Britain—an English woman, a Miss Sherwood, had been knocked off her bicycle in a lane in Amritsar, and though Indians themselves were the first to go to her help and to give her all assistance and to admonish the hooligans who were responsible, the fact remained that an English woman had been knocked off her bicycle in some part of the Empire. What would the House of Commons have to say and what answer would the Secretary of State for India give to the people of England ? ONE ENGLISH WOMAN ! At the hands and mercy of the "natives" of India ! It was too much for England and even the most meek among them began to see red and to cry for vengeance.

To compensate for this loss of prestige, martial law was formally declared on April 15. It is pertinent to add that the military had virtually taken control of Amritsar before the proclamation of martial law. On the 13th, which happened to be a Hindu New Year's Day, a public meeting was held in Jallianwalla Baug in honour of the festival. It is a fact which had never been disputed, that this huge crowd which had assembled in this bottle-necked enclosure, was entirely unarmed. There was not any form of violence possible, nor was there any motive behind this meeting. It had been openly advertised and there was no mystery about it. There could be no secrecy about a meeting where some twenty thousand were present and among whom there were large numbers of women and children.

As to what followed, I quote now from Sitaramayya's *History of the Congress* which gives the authoritative Congress version "...General Dyer entered the place at the head of a force composed of 100 Indian troops and 50 British, while one Hansraj was lecturing to the audience, and gave orders forthwith to fire. His own version as given later before the Hunter Commission was that he ordered the people to disperse and then fired, but he admitted that he fired within two or three minutes of the order. In any case, it was obvious that 20,000 people could not disperse in two or three minutes, specially through that narrow outlet, and when 1,600 rounds were fired,—and the firing stopped only when the ammunition had run out—the casualties were, even according to Government's version, about 400 dead, while the wounded were estimated at between a thousand and two. The firing was done by the Indian troops, behind whom were placed the British troops,—all on an elevated platform, in the Bagh. The greater tragedy really was that the dead and dying were left to suffer the whole night without water to drink, or medical attendance, or aid of any character, Dyer's contention — as it came out later—was that the city having passed under the Military, he had tomtomed in the morning that no gatherings would be permitted and, as the people openly defied him, he wanted to teach them a lesson so that they might not laugh at him. He would have fired, and fired longer, he said, if he had the required ammunition. He had only fired 1,600 rounds because his ammunition had run out.' 'As a matter of fact,' he said, 'he had taken an armoured car but found that the passage to the Bagh would not admit it, so he left it behind.'——"

What else did Dyer do ? He cut off the gas and the electric supply. He ordered public flogging. He promulgated the Crawling Order by which anyone wanting to cross the lane, in which Miss Sherwood was attacked, had to crawl on his belly to do so. Third class railway tickets were not allowed to be issued. Not more than two persons were permitted to walk on the pavements. All

bicycles were commandeered. A public platform for whipping was erected. It was only worthy of the days of the Inquisition. Yet to all of which came the reply "YOUR ACTION CORRECT LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR APPROVES."

What did Dyer have to say ? As he sat before the tribunal of the Hunter Commission, self-assured and sheltered by the Act of Indemnity that was passed to legalize the atrocities he had committed, he was asked by Mr. Justice Rankin, the English judge from the Calcutta High Court : " Excuse me putting it in this way, General, but was it not a form of frightfulness ? " It was a pertinent question from an Englishman, even though it was at the expense of British prestige. Dyer answered : " No, it was not. It was a horrible duty I had to perform. I think it was a merciful thing. I thought that I should shoot well and shoot strong, so that I or anybody else, should not have to shoot again. I think it is quite possible I could have dispersed the crowd without firing, but they would have come back again and laughed, and I should have made what I consider to be a fool of myself."

Note that reply, which for its conceit is unsurpassed by anything I have known. A horrible duty—a merciful thing—shoot well and shoot strong—and he could have dispersed that crowd without firing. Rightly then did he say and to his credit with honesty, for the man is dead now : " I wanted to crush the morale of that people." It was vengeance—red-vengeance that he was seeking.

It has been said by many who have tried to defend the action of Dyer that no one felt sorrier for it than Dyer himself. He was only performing his duty. His duty ? His duty to whom ? To his God ? To his Christ who had said " Thou shalt not kill " ? To his King and Country ? To himself as a soldier ? Or was it just to glorify Government House and the Officers' Mess, O'Dwyer and his own Commander-in-Chief, in whose eyes he wanted to appear a hero and not a fool ? To whom did he owe that duty ? Or was it perhaps that he was bringing a humanizing influence to bear on a heathen civilization ?

I have heard it said that Dyer was a broken man

because he was deprived of his command, and to a soldier that is worse than the penalty of death. It may be so, but we who know little of that higher code, where to be deprived of one's command is regarded as a punishment greater than death, would have been content to have had the lesser penalty inflicted on him—the ordinary common law penalty that is inflicted on any individual who is guilty of having committed that same offence. And when those who knew Dyer tell us that the General was a broken man for the rest of his days, one has reason to believe that the ghosts of innocent women and children whom he shot dead in cold blood with their backs to the wall, must have haunted him for the rest of his life.

One very significant fact was that the Amritsar incidents were not known even to the most well-informed of the Congress leaders for quite some time. A strict censorship had been exercised in the Punjab. Not till a month, did the highlights of the Congress know what had happened in Amritsar, and not for some four or five months did the rest of India know. Would they have stood for that in England ?

Amritsar revealed a mentality on the part of our rulers which staggered Gandhi. It was not only South Africa that was henceforth to be his province, but India as well. Sad as he was at the sorrow of his people, he knew that the issue of freedom would have to be fought out one day and it would then be fought to a finish. Before he was acquainted with the happenings at Amritsar, he had already suspended civil disobedience. He spoke of his " Himalayan miscalculation." This remark of his has often been brought up against him. As he explained later, it was only that he had miscalculated the moment for starting civil disobedience in India. Now that the facts of Amritsar had come to light, he preferred to wait until the masses imbibed the fundamental principles of non-violence before he revived civil disobedience. His immediate aim was to teach the masses the meaning of satyagraha. With that idea in mind, he began to recruit volunteers to spread his gospel.

XI

DEEP REGRET

TOWARDS THE END OF THAT YEAR THE AMRITSAR Congress was held. Motilal Nehru presided. That Congress was a landmark in Gandhi's career. The cry of "*Gandhi ki jai*" had been heard before, but Amritsar made it a household phrase. It had never been shouted so loud. It indicated the support he had rallied round him.

Two personalities came into conflict at this Amritsar Congress. C.R.Das, the Bengal lawyer, who had a powerful following, wanted to reject the Montagu-Chelmsford scheme which had just become law, and Gandhi was in favour of supporting it. It was a strange irony that later, when Gandhi resolved to reject the scheme, he found the same C. R. Das on the other side. On both occasions in this Gandhi-Das controversy, it was Gandhi who triumphed. There was something in the persuasiveness of his arguments that went to the hearts of the delegates in spite of the more brilliant presentation of the case by the Bengal lawyer.

The Congress session at Amritsar was very important. The future of the Congress would be shaped on the resolutions it passed. Amritsar was uppermost in the minds of the thirty-six thousand, who attended it. It was not likely that in an atmosphere charged with such excitement and fever, the Congress would pass a resolution condemning the mob violence of the masses themselves. The delegates were, therefore, a little staggered when Gandhi brought forward such a resolution. The subjects Committee, which scrutinized the resolutions that went before the full body of delegates, had thrown it out. It had read : "While fully recognizing the grave provocation that led to the sudden outburst of mob frenzy, this resolution expresses the deep regret of the Congress at, and its condemnation of the excesses committed in certain parts of the Punjab and Gujerat resulting in the loss of lives and injury to person and property during the month of April last."

Deep regret and condemnation ! These were strong words. None had thought there was anything at Amritsar or elsewhere for which the Indian should feel deep regret. Surely it was for the Government to express this sentiment. Midst the excitement that prevailed, it was unthinkable that any blame should be attached to the masses. But Gandhi had not forgotten the murder of the Bank Manager and the burning of the bank and other-buildings. That was not satyagraha, and he said to those who listened to him in rapt attention, that it was impossible for him to remain within the Congress unless they recognized and concurred with his point of view. His speech was couched in simple words. No rhetoric, no flamboyance, no vitriolic outbursts against the Government. Instead, it said that we were sorry for our excesses ! That in face of Dyer's slaughter of innocents, that in face also of the Crawling Order and the countless other humiliations, which the people had suffered !

It was the passing of this resolution that set the tone of the Congress. It was as if in a little pool of water was reflected the whole beauty of the heavens. Other amazing

resolutions were passed. A welcome was extended to the Prince of Wales, who was to come to India. Co-operation was offered to the new reforms. At the same time "Swadeshi" was made into something real and lifelike. The spinning wheel of Gandhi had come in the wake of Tolstoi's plough. "Do not return madness with madness," Gandhi said, "but return madness with sanity and the whole situation will be yours." It was on that note that the Congress dispersed, inspite of Amritsar, inspite of Michael O'Dwyer,* inspite of Jallianwalla Baug and the Crawling Order, inspite of all that had happened in that year. The teachings of Christ, reflected in the method of Gandhi, were thrown back in the face of the Christians, who had forgotten their religion, their civilization, their gospel and their God.

And the year 1919 faded away.

* As these pages go to press, I learn that Sir Michael O'Dwyer met with a tragic death at the hands of an Indian at Caxton Hall.

XII

NON-CO-OPERATION

THE NEXT YEAR SAW A STRANGE REVERSAL OF Congress politics. Das and his colleagues were for co-operation, while Gandhi was planning an all-India movement, which would paralyse the whole machinery of Government. It was to be called the non-co-operation movement.

The ground for non-co-operation was the Khilafat question, which arose out of the resentment felt in Moslem India, when the Sultan of Turkey was deprived of the Holy Land at the end of the War. Turkey had fought on the wrong side in the Great War. In the conflict which raged in the Near East, Moslems would be fighting Moslems in a purely Christian War. The Moslems of India were naturally reticent about fighting their co-religionists to glorify their Christian allies. The Moslem took his religion seriously, and had the agitation in India persisted, it would have hindered the recruitment of Moslem soldiers who formed a large part of the Indian contingents. To

appease the conscience of Islam in India, Mr. Lloyd George that genius for making promises, assured them that Great Britain was not fighting to deprive Turkey of the sacred territory which was under the Sultan's sovereignty. These lands—for religious reasons—had to remain under the Caliph's suzerainty, if only because that land was holy. This assurance satisfied the Moslems and they went to Turkey and fought. When the War was over, there was some sort of doubt about what Mr. Lloyd George really meant to say. Britain had gone back to its old tactics. When the day came to divide the booty, the chief victors split up that Asiatic portion of Turkey between them by making themselves the guardians of the holy land, which came under their mandate. His Majesty the Sultan was "nothing better than a prisoner."

It was too late now to save Turkey from falling into European hands. The War was over and no more soldiers were needed by Mr. Lloyd George and the Allies. The Moslems themselves could do little in India. However, when the leaders of Indian opinion met at the Amritsar Congress, they were conscious of the tragedy that had befallen the people of India. Innocent people had fallen at the hands of the oppressor. Coupled with the Khilafat grievance, it gave the Indians a chance to unite.

The great leaders of the Khilafat movement were the Ali brothers. They made an instinctive appeal to the Moslem masses, and together they mustered a following among the followers of Islam in India, which could contribute greatly to the strength of a movement which Gandhi had in mind. Gandhi saw this opportunity quicker than any one else. He had only just scored a brilliant triumph at Amritsar. The Congress had dispersed midst the cries of "*Gandhi Maharaj ki jai.*" But it had been only a Hindu cry. There was still a great part of the population of India, which was not so willing to cheer a man who was essentially a Hindu. How much better, Gandhi thought, it would be if the whole of India

cried with one voice, whether it was his own name they shouted or that of the country as "*Vande Mataram,*" or even that of the Ali brothers. It was not important whose name they shouted. But they must shout with one voice.

The Khilafat was an immediate, concrete issue, on which an appeal could be made to the Moslems of India. The issue of freedom was still vague and it did not crystallize itself in the minds of the people as would this betrayal of the British Prime Minister, the symbol of our rulers, who had gone back on his word and deprived the head of Islam of his Holy Land. Mr. Lloyd George had apparently promised more than was in his power to give. For the division of Turkey was as much in the hands of France as of Great Britain. And the Viceroy, speaking with the full authority of the British Government, could now only express the "profound sympathy" of His Majesty's Government with the Moslem cause. "*Profound sympathy*!—just to make it sound as if he meant it.

A deputation was rushed to England, but Mr. Lloyd George pointed out that the same treatment had been accorded to Turkey as to the other countries that fell into the hands of the victors. They had all been divided! Two days later—on the 19th of March—a national mourning was decreed in India, as a protest against the treatment given to Turkey. On this essentially Moslem scene, Gandhi appeared. It was a daring thing to do. The Hindu and the Moslem did not often think alike. But Amritsar and the Khilafat question had brought them together. Yet was India ready for non-co-operation? That was the question to be debated by the Congress and they looked to the veteran, Tilak, to help them to make this very vital decision. It is difficult now to say what Tilak would have done or said at that time. He could have caused the only real opposition to Gandhi. For it was Tilak, who first talked of Indian independence in terms of the masses and laid down a policy for the Congress, which till then was content to regard itself as a debating society. It was Tilak

the masses knew long before they knew Gandhi. Tilak was a great force in the awakening of the Indian people. But as if the fates had decreed it, Tilak passed away on the eve of the Congress session and the road was made clear for Gandhi at Calcutta. He had now only to contend with Das.

Non-co-operation became the burning question of the day. With the press at his disposal, Gandhi made sure that the delegates who came to the Calcutta Congress were already familiar with the main subject under discussion. He did not want to spring it as a surprise on them. When they came to Calcutta the delegates had arrived at no conclusions. They were still open to conviction. They had hoped Tilak would be able to guide them when the time for decision came. But Tilak was no more and there was only Gandhi and C. R. Das between whose arguments they had to choose.

There were many resolutions discussed at Calcutta. But it was only Gandhi's resolution they were really waiting for. It ran :

"In view of the fact that on the Khilafat question both the Indian and Imperial Governments have signally failed in their duty towards the Moslems of India and the Prime Minister had deliberately broken his pledged word given to them, and that it is the duty of every non-Moslem Indian in every legitimate manner to assist his Moslem brother in his attempt to remove the religious calamity that has overtaken him, and in view of the fact that, in the manner of the events of the April of 1919, both the said Governments have grossly neglected or failed to protect the innocent people of the Punjab and punish officers guilty of unsoldierly and barbarous behaviour towards them, and have exonerated Sir Michael O'Dwyer who proved himself directly responsible for most of the official crimes and callous to the sufferings of the people placed under his administration, and that the debate in the House of Lords betrayed a woeful lack of sympathy with the people of India, and the systematic terrorism and frightfulness adopted in the Punjab, and that the latest

Viceregal pronouncement is proof of the entire absence of repentence in the matters of the Khilafat and the Punjab, this Congress is of opinion that there can be no contentment in India without redress of the two afore-mentioned wrongs, and that the only effectual means to vindicate national honour and to prevent a repetition of similar wrongs in future is the establishment of Swarajya. This Congress is further of opinion that there is no course left open for the people of India but to approve of and adopt the policy of progressive non-violent non-co-operation inaugurated by Mahatma Gandhi, until the said wrongs are righted and Swarajya is established ; and inasmuch as a beginning should be made by the classes who have hitherto moulded and represented public opinion and inasmuch as Government consolidates its power through titles and honours bestowed on the people, through schools controlled by it, its Law Courts and its Legislative Councils, and inasmuch as it is desirable in the prosecution of the movement to take the minimum risk and to call for the least sacrifice compatible with the attainment of the desired object, this Congress earnestly advises the surrender of titles and honorary offices and resignation from nominated seats in Local Bodies ; the refusal to attend Government levies, durbars, and other official and semi-official functions held by Government officials, or in their honour ; the gradual withdrawal of children from schools and colleges owned, aided or controlled by Government, and, in place of such schools and colleges, the establishment of national schools and colleges in the various provinces ; the gradual boycott of British Courts by lawyers and litigants, and the establishment of private arbitration courts by their aid for the settlement of private disputes ; the refusal on the part of the military, clerical and labouring classes to offer themselves as recruits for service in Mesopotamia ; the withdrawal by candidates of their candidatures for election to the Reforms Councils, and refusal on the parts of the voters to vote for any candidate who may, despite the Congress advice, offer himself for election ; and the boycott of foreign goods ;

and inasmuch as non-co-operation has been conceived as a measure of discipline and self-sacrifice, without which no nation can make real progress, and inasmuch as an opportunity should be given in the very first stage of non-co-operation to every man, woman and child for such discipline and self-sacrifice, this Congress advises the adoption of Swadeshi in piece-goods on a vast scale, and inasmuch as the existing mills of India with indigenous capital and control do not manufacture sufficient yarn and sufficient cloth for the requirements of the nation, and are not likely to do so for a long time to come, this Congress advises immediate stimulation of further manufacture on a large scale by means of reviving hand-spinning in every house and hand-weaving on the part of the millions of weavers who have abandoned their ancient and honourable calling for want of encouragement."

That was the full text of Gandhi's non-co-operation resolution. It was a great thing to surrender titles, to refuse to attend the Government functions, to boycott the Courts of Law, the educational institutions, and foreign goods, and above all to urge soldiers to refuse to offer themselves as recruits for any service in Mespot. Gandhi had also advocated that voters should refrain from exercising their right of voting. When the division was taken, Gandhi won by a great majority. One thousand, eight hundred and eighty-six voted for him and only eight hundred and eighty-four against. He had scored another great victory in politics and he made the attention of the Government pivot round the Congress. Non-co-operation had come into being. C. R. Das, in spite of his brilliance, could not shake the popularity of this man, who was going on from strength to strength.

* * *

IF non-co-operation had come into being at Calcutta, it took final shape at Nagpur towards the end of the year. The triumph of Gandhi was even greater at Nagpur. It was not enough that he had the non-co-operation resolution re-affirmed at Nagpur. He had got his old opponent, C. R. Das, to sponsor it, and when Das stood up midst

a crowded assembly to move the acceptance of non-co-operation, there was little doubt in the minds of the student of Indian politics that Gandhi had reached the summit of his career and that he spoke with the authority of the whole Congress, as no one man had done.

To describe Nagpur as a triumph for Gandhi was to under-estimate his achievement. It was not just the *coup d'etat* effected by a politician. It had gone beyond the region of politics. In this land of poverty and of religious fervour, you heard for the first time of a Mahatma. It seems as if the Soul of India was reincarnated and it was Gandhi who was given the honour of embodying it. Across the skies was written in letters of gold : "Mahatma Gandhi *ki jai.*" It was the cry on the lips of millions of people. The cry of "Vive la France," when heard in the streets of Paris is the cry of a free people. That of "Mahatma Gandhi *ki jai*" was the cry of those who were yet struggling to be free. Only those who have heard it know how awe-inspiring that cry is. Like the song of the Volga boatmen, it came from afar, growing louder as it approached and fading away once more in the distance.

Mahatma Gandhi ki jai !
Mahatma Gandhi Ki !
Jai !

India was on fire.

* * *

THE movement which Gandhi launched had in one of its phases struck at the root of England's prosperity. The boycott of foreign cloth hit the Lancashire textile industry---a blow which, though aimed at the capitalist class of England, struck the English working-man as well. Britain sat up and took notice of the happenings in India, when the Indian national movement began to affect its trade and to create unemployment in the North of England where there was already so much depression.

But there was also a constructive side to this boycott of foreign cloth. The Khaddar cult was something essential to Indian prosperity and to the amelioration of

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the masses, which was Gandhi's primary aim. The boycott of foreign goods implied that India should become swadeshi-minded, and swadeshi was defined by him as "the spirit within us, which restricts us to the use and service of our immediate surroundings to the exclusion of the more remote." There was, therefore, something more in it than a mere political advantage. The psychological effect was to make Indians Indian-minded and conscious of the struggle that was going on between India and her rulers. It became the symbol of the oppressed, the symbol of those who were fighting with body and soul for the liberation of their country and their people. But it was also an effort to relieve the economic distress among the masses, who, because of climatic conditions, were unable to earn a living for nearly half the year. Khaddar was a source of income to them, Besides being a means of saving them from the enforced idleness of many months.

It has been said that it is an exaggeration to regard Khaddar as a means of relieving the economic condition of India. The profits made out of Khaddar are negligible. But when you bear in mind the poverty of India and the low standard of living which has been forced on its people for many hundred years, you begin to realize what difference those few odd rupees a year make to an agricultural labourer who has taken to the spinning wheel. If the estimate of Mr. Findlay Shirras, which is regarded by Indian experts as farthest off the mark, be taken to be the earning per head of the average Indian agricultural labourer, and which is estimated by him as approximating seven pounds a year, two extra pounds a year does seem to make an appreciable difference. And these two pounds could be made by spinning a penny-worth of khaddar a day.

There were several other reasons why hand-spinning was pre-eminently suited to the needs of India. They are to be found enumerated by C.F. Andrews in his collection of Mahatma Gandhi's ideas. As he puts it, "Khaddar is immediately practicable because it does not require any

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capital or costly implements to put in operation. Both the raw material and the implements for working it, can be cheaply and locally obtained; it does not require any higher degree of skill or intelligence than the ignorant and poverty-striken masses of India possess; it requires so little physical exertion that even little children and old men can practise it and so contribute their mite to the family fund; it does not require the ground to be prepared for its introduction afresh, because the spinning tradition is still alive among the people.

"It is universal and permanent, since, next to food, yarn alone can be sure of always commanding an unlimited and ready market at the very doorsteps of the worker, and thus ensures a steady, regular income to the impoverished agriculturist. It is independent of monsoon conditions and so can be carried on even during famine times. It is not opposed to the religious or social susceptibilities of the people. It provides a most perfect ready means of fighting famine. It carries work to the very cottage of the peasant, and thus prevents the disintegration of the family under economic distress. It alone can restore some of the benefits of the village communities of India now well-nigh ruined. It is the backbone as much of the hand-weaver as of the agriculturist, since it alone can provide a permanent and stable basis for the hand-loom industry, which at present is supporting from eight to ten million people and supplies about one-third of the clothing requirements of India, but uses chiefly mill-made yarn. Its revival would give a fillip to a host of cognate and allied village occupations, and thus rescue the villages from the state of decay into which they have fallen. It alone can ensure the equitable distribution of wealth among the millions of the inhabitants of India. It alone effectively solves the problem of unemployment, not only the partial unemployment of the agriculturist but of the educated youth aimlessly wandering in search of occupation. The very magnitude of the task requires the marshalling of all the intellectual forces of the country to guide and direct the movement."

That was the great constructive argument in favour of Khaddar, which Gandhi had advanced and which immediately distinguished the swadeshi movement from any other political movement of its kind. It was not just a destructive force that he had let loose in India. He was rather building up the character of the people, even as at the same time he destroyed those forces which stood in the way of Indian progress and Indian freedom. Let us appreciate this fact, for there were many who called the non-co-operation movement the work of a madman and a maniac.

The more amazing side of non-co-operation was the enthusiasm with which it was met. Gandhi had asked for ten million men and a crore of rupees, (a little under a million pounds sterling) in order to launch this campaign. It was an exorbitant sum and in the poverty of India, it seemed as if it would never come. Money was after all only in the hands of the rich, and would they part with it to cause chaos and disorder and to dislocate the machinery of commerce on the smooth working of which their prosperity depended? Yet the money came and the men also. The word of the "Mahatma" was respected. From the most unexpected quarters came large sums of money. It staggered the shrewdest experts of finance, who had predicted that this venture would be a failure. It showed that many of those, who were living in the lap of luxury and who had all things in life that money could buy, were willing to part with their riches for an ounce of freedom. Where all that money came from, one does not still know. It is a secret that will be buried with those who gave it. But the fact that there was so much given to launch a campaign against the Government and against the British rule in India perplexed the men in power — the Dyers and the O'Dwyers and those in high places in the hierarchy of the bureaucracy of the day, who believed that the rich would always be on their side if not the poor.

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THE clouds that had gathered in the skies burst in several places. The old Duke of Connaught as an ambassador of good-will arrived in India in place of the Prince of Wales. His speech might have been a landmark in the history of India and the Empire, had it been made a few years earlier. But his words were lost in the fury of the raging storm, and his visit to India was boycotted in a way in which the authorities had never expected.

Opening the new Indian Legislatures, the old Duke said: "I have reached a time of life when I most desire to heal wounds and reunite those who have been disunited. An old friend of India I appeal to you all — British and Indians — to bury along with the dead past the mistakes and misunderstandings of the past, to forgive where you have to forgive and to join hands and to work together to realize the hopes that arise from today."

These words of his, memorable inspite of the little effect they had on India, belonged to an old world and an Empire over which Queen Victoria had presided with dignity. Then the ideals of the Indian people were different. Then they had made no sacrifice for England in the Great War. Then they were not aware of the perfidy of the British statesmen and they believed the word of an Englishman. Then they had not witnessed the blood-curdling spectacle of their countrymen oppressed in the way in which they had been now. Then too there were no Crawling Orders, no General Dyers to trample them down. His Royal Highness the Duke of Connaught had made his speech too late. He made it to an India that no longer believed in the word of Britain. That faith was gone. And gone for ever.

XIII

THE TONE OF 1921

THERE WAS AT A SAME TIME A CHANGE OF Viceroys. Lord Reading succeeded Lord Chelmsford. England had spared its Lord Chief Justice to preside judiciously over the destiny of India. He announced on his arrival that he would not hinder Mr. Gandhi in his programme, so long as non-co-operation did not exhibit any violence. Gandhi gave that assurance. He even went to the extent of asking Mohamed Ali to withdraw or explain away a speech, which could be construed as being violent. The "apology" was made and there were many who thought that Lord Reading had scored an early triumph and that he had really brought the strong-hand-in-the-velvet-glove to bear on the political situation in India. In the out-houses of Government House they cried "Hallelujah."

But the clash between authority and the people had occurred in more than one place and both the Government and the people were to blame for the excesses they committed. Riots broke out all over India, in some places

causing grave disturbances. They were in turn crushed by the most ruthless measures that the Government could adopt. Crowds were fired upon in more places than one and strange as it may seem, the situation became more intolerable in those places, specially in the south, where the Congress and Khilafat workers were not allowed.

A little later, Mohamed Ali made another speech in which he said that it was unlawful for any faithful Moslem to serve from that day in the Army or help or acquiesce in its recruitment. That was a very daring thing to say and the Government began to see the seeds of sedition bearing fruit. Soon there would be open rebellion and quick measures were taken to arrest Mohamed Ali and to prosecute him at once. But the Congress under Gandhi's leadership took up the challenge. Arrest and imprisonment they had long been waiting for. Here was the moment to strike. So the speech of Mohamed Ali with all its implications was repeated from a thousand platforms and non-co-operation was once again in full swing.

Amid these happenings the Prince of Wales arrived in India with more messages of good-will. He arrived in November 1921 to show the Indian people that Britain was not afraid. Already the Duke, his uncle, had deputized for him in the August of the year before, when the new Assemblies were opened. Now came the scion of the Royal House in person. On the day he arrived there were great disturbances in Bombay. The day had been declared a *hartal* day and shops were closed, not as on days of rejoicing, but as on days of mourning. The police clashed with large crowds that were rioting in the streets and the military were called out. The people had gone mad and they did not care what happened to them or to anyone else. Here was a chance they had been waiting for and not even the persuasion of Gandhi could curb them from giving vent to their feelings. The white man had fallen from his exalted place in the heavens. The fear of God had entered his soul. A terror reigned in India. Gandhi, seeing what the people had done to his ideal of non-violence, said and rightly : "Swaraj stinks in my nostrils."

Wherever the Prince went the reception was the most hostile. It was then that the Congress volunteers were declared illegal and, on the eve of the Prince's visit to Calcutta, wholesale arrests were made. Some of India's greatest men were in gaol as guests of His Majesty. They included Pandit Motilal Nehru and his son Jawaharlal. C. R. Das and family, Lala Lajpat Rai and several others. It was like a select house-party in a political Ascot week. Only Gandhi was noticeably absent. But India knew that he would soon follow in the wake of his best friends.

There was a feeling of intoxication all over the country. Jawaharlal Nehru describes in his autobiography this feeling more accurately than I myself can. He says :

"We were full of excitement and optimism and a buoyant enthusiasm. We sensed the happiness of a person crusading for a cause. We were not troubled with doubts or hesitation; our path seemed to lie clear in front of us and we marched ahead, lifted up by the enthusiasm of others, and helping to push on others. We worked hard, harder than we had ever done before, for we knew that the conflict with the Government would come soon, and we wanted to do as much as possible before we were removed.

"Above all, we had a sense of freedom and a pride in that freedom. The old feeling of oppression and frustration was completely gone. There was no more whispering, no round-about legal phraseology to avoid getting into trouble with the authorities. We said what we felt and shouted it out from the house-tops. What did we care for the consequences? Prison ? We looked forward to it; that would help our cause still further. The innumerable spies and secret-service men who used to surround us and follow us about became rather pitiable individuals as there was nothing secret for them to discover. All our cards were always on the table.

"We had not only a feeling of satisfaction at doing effective political work which was changing the face of India before our eyes and, as we believed, bringing Indian freedom very near, but also an agreeable sense of moral

superiority over our opponents, both in regard to our goal and our methods. We were proud of our leader and of the unique method he had evolved, and often we indulged in fits of self-righteousness. In the midst of strife, and while we ourselves encouraged that strife, we had a sense of inner peace.

"As our morale grew, that of the Government went down. They did not understand what was happening; it seemed that the old world they knew in India was toppling down. There was a new aggressive spirit abroad and self-reliance and fearlessness, and the great prop of British rule in India — prestige — was visibly wilting. Repression in a small way only strengthened the movement, and the Government hesitated for long before it would take action against the big leaders. It did not know what the consequences might be. Was the Indian Army reliable ? Would the police carry out orders ? As Lord Reading, the Viceroy, said in December 1921, they were puzzled and perplexed."

"What I admired," continues Nehru, "was the moral and ethical side of our movement and of satyagraha. I did not give an absolute allegiance to the doctrine of non-violence or accept it for ever, but it attracted me more and more, and the belief grew upon me that, situated as we were in India and with our background and traditions, it was the right policy for us. The spiritualization of politics, using the word not in its narrow religious sense, seemed to me a fine idea. A worthy end should have worthy means leading up to it. That seemed not only a good ethical doctrine but sound, practical politics, for the means that are not good often defeat the end in view and raise new problems and difficulties. And then it seemed so unbecoming, so degrading to the self-respect of an individual or a nation to submit to such means, to go through the mire. How can one escape being sullied by it ? How can we march ahead swiftly and with dignity if we stoop or crawl ?"

That was roughly the feeling rampant in India when the arrests were made. Who cared ? Was prison a

thing to be ashamed of ? It had become the hall-mark of the patriot and when they began to select the guests, imprisonment was universally coveted. No wonder the noble Lord Chief Justice said that he was a little "puzzled and perplexed." And that was the real value of this non-co-operation movement. It puzzled and perplexed the Government. It brought to a standstill the work of those who had exploited India for so many years. It strengthened the moral fibre of a people, who were weak and bent under the burden which they were made to carry. Now they fought like real men — like men who had some guts inside them. Yet no one had any clear idea what they were really fighting for. Swaraj! What did that word stand for ? Did it mean the same to all those who preached it ? Dadabhai Naoroji had coined the word and Gandhi had once defined it as 'self-government within the Empire, if possible — without, if necessary.' But did even the Mahatma know what it stood for ? I am afraid no one knew. No one wanted to know at that stage of the struggle. Much more important was that the masses had awakened to fight for an undefined conception, which they could not quite understand, but which they knew was better than the oppression they suffered.

A critical analysis of the first non-co-operation movement may prove a little unsatisfactory to the historian of the future, if he should analyse it in cold blood, with only logic and reason. That would not be a fair criticism. History is never based on reason. It is based rather on the feelings and emotions of the men who lived at that particular period. Nehru says : "We ignored the necessity of thought behind the action; we forgot that without a conscious idealogy and objective the energy and enthusiasm of the masses would end largely in smoke." Even so it did not matter. It was this smoke that was blinding the forces of Imperialism. In that Gandhi had succeeded beyond all expectation even though it broke his heart to see that the Indians had forgotten all he had asked them to remember. Non-violence was completely

forgotten by those who went out in the streets and rioted. Non-violence was forgotten in the excitement that followed after each firing. Non-violence, they thought, would only prolong the struggle and they wanted to take the law in their own hands and strike while the iron was hot. It was as if a tamer of wild animals had found out too late at the circus that his animals were no longer under control. And Gandhi rushed from place to place trying to preserve order. India was in such a state of turmoil that he could not be in all places where his presence was required.

An abortive effort was then made to bring the two sides to terms. It was of little avail. The Government were particularly anxious that the Prince should at least have one decent reception, but the *hartal* was more effective in Calcutta than elsewhere and even the butchers closed down, leaving the Europeans to feed themselves on tinned food. It was hardly a fitting way to celebrate the coming of their future king. Nothing could change the minds of the people now. The royal message which the Prince brought was not heard in India. The assurances of high officials were scorned at. Speeches no longer satisfied the Indian people nor did they restore that confidence which they had lost in their rulers. The only word they might perhaps still have respected was the word of Mahatma Gandhi. He had promised swaraj within a year, and although the year was fast running out they still believed in him, yet everyone knew it could not come so soon. What greatness it must be that even failure did not shake the faith of the people in him. He had shown that he was different from all the others. His utterances were all sincere. His method was a little idealistic, but he stood by it no matter what happened. There was courage in him and a perseverance that was bound to succeed. Any child could go up to him, for he was a lovable man. He was like a new messiah that had sprung up to bring the millennium nearer to the people of India. He was a phantasy that walked in their midst. He was an ideal that spoke the word of God. Yet he

was of the people — of the poorest among them and this brought him closer to the masses than Tilak and Gokhale. A light shone on his whole presence and in the feverish excitement that prevailed and with the Indian background of religious fanaticism, the masses felt that here was a man to be worshipped. And they worshipped him. As one looked at India one felt like asking "*Quo Vadis* ?" Sitaramayya gave the answer beautifully, when he said: "It must unfold itself to a discerning vision, to a pure heart, from step to step, much as the path-way in a dense forest would reveal itself to the wayfarer's feet as he wends his weary way until the ray of light brightens the hopes of an all but despairing wanderer."

Thirty thousand men were already behind bars. Thirty thousand men ! And more were going daily to join them. Gandhi was still outside. The British feared a revolution if they laid hands on this overnight saint who was at the height of his power. They waited patiently for the appropriate moment.

One light shone brightly in the darkness of those days. It was the light of the bonfires that blazed in every city of India and which consumed large quantities of foreign cloth which were thrown into the flames by those who were carried away by the excitement of the moment. Young men who were standing by, as children would, to see a roaring fire, took off their coats and shirts and collars and into the fire they went. Saville Row suit turned to ashes in that melting pot just as easily as did the best Sunday suits made of English worsteds and cut by a local tailor. The smart men-about-town, who had only just returned from England with a wardrobe full of fourteen-guinea suits, and who would sack their *hamals* if they did not brush their suits properly, did not think it a sacrifice to throw these same suits into the fire. Non-co-operation had got them under the skin.

Even though most of the Congress leaders were in gaol, the Ahmedabad sessions of the Congress was held as a matter of course. Gandhi read the presidential

address on behalf of C. R. Das, who was in prison. But it did not really matter who the president was. It was Gandhi who virtually dominated the whole policy of the Congress and guided the destiny of the nation. He had become an All-India figure of great importance and his linking up with the Ali Brothers, who were called his right and left hand, was a shrewd move to bring about that Hindu-Moslem unity which was an essential preliminary to any movement in India which was to be on a country-wide basis.

The end of the year was fast approaching. There were many people of the opinion that Gandhi should have come to terms with the Government, when they were offered, for even if Swaraj had not come by the end of that year, he would have achieved a triumph which would have appeased the impatience of India. But that was not his method. His inner voice did not urge him to make truce with the Government and single-handed, for all his best advisers were not available, he carried on the struggle.

Let us take stock of his achievements during that sensational year — 1921. He had unified a nation of three hundred million odd people. He had hoisted a national flag in a part of the Empire where only the Union Jack had triumphantly flown. He had decreed that khaddar should be the uniform of the Congressman. He had evolved a cap which had a great political significance. He had brought about Hindu-Moslem Unity. He had shattered the smug complacency of the British raj. He had established himself in the hearts of the people. He had shown the Government the power behind him. It was not what he had done that worried the Government so much as what he could do. His word was almost law in India and the prestige of Britain staggered under the blow which Gandhi had dealt to it. He had taught a national self-respect. He had uplifted it morally beyond all question. Who would have dreamt that even in India a Hindu could preach in the holy precincts of a mosque? Or that an untouchable would be allowed to

enter the temple of God? Yet we saw this happen before our very eyes and we could hardly believe what we saw. There were only two kinds of people in India — the Indians and the Europeans — and for those few months it looked as if there had never been any communal problems or caste distinctions. And the man, who was responsible for bringing about this state of affairs, was the lone person of the Mahatma who had risen to heights he had never expected. It was his destiny, was all one could say. No man could by his own effort consciously achieve so much. That was why the masses clasped their hands and bowed to him wherever he went. There has been nothing like it except in the days of Christ. No dictator, no great man of Europe, no King has ever had that respect paid to him. It staggered the world that a man in the twentieth century, in an epoch that came so soon after the disillusionment of the Great War, should be treated like a prophet, when in reality he was only a man.

I have seen loyal English people cheer their King. I have heard the French at the sight of the President of the Republic. I have watched dictators saluted by men in uniform. But nothing in all this could compare with the way men prostrated themselves without any compulsion or coercion before a man, who was one of them and who never wanted to be anything else. This world will have to live very long to see this phenomenon happen again.

XIV

MAN TO MAN

So 1922 ARRIVED AND GANDHI WAS RIDING ON THE crest of a wave. The scene soon shifted to the province of Gujerat where at Bardoli the question of refusal to pay taxes had come up. Gandhi had determined to offer civil disobedience on the issue of the payment of taxes, the inequities of which were beyond question. The campaign was restricted to the village of Bardoli. It was, as he pointed out, an effort to rescue the birthright of the people — freedom of speech, freedom of association, and freedom of the press.

Before launching his campaign he sent a letter to Lord Reading. It was dated "Bardoli, the 1st of February 1922." This letter is important because it explains his whole point of view. It is a historic document and for that reason, I have reproduced it in full. It read:

"Bardoli is a small tehsil in the Surat District in the Bombay Presidency, having a population of about 87,000 all told.

"On the 29th ultimo, it decided under the Presidency of Mr. Vithalbhai J. Patel to embark on mass civil disobedience, having proved its fitness for it in terms of the resolution of the All-India Congress Committee which met at Delhi during the first week of November last, but as I am perhaps chiefly responsible for Bardoli's decision, I owe it to Your Excellency and the public to explain the situation under which the decision has been taken.

"It was intended under the resolution of the All-India Congress Committee, before referred to, to make Bardoli the first unit for mass civil disobedience, in order to make the national revolt against the Government's consistently criminal refusal to appreciate India's resolve regarding the Khilafat, the Punjab and Swaraj.

"Then followed the unfortunate and regrettable riots on the 17th November last in Bombay, resulting in the postponement of the step contemplated by Bardoli.

"In the meantime repression of a violent type has taken place, with the concurrence of the Government of India, in Bengal, Assam, the United Provinces, the Punjab, the province of Delhi and in a way in Bihar and Orissa and elsewhere. I know that you have objected to the use of the word 'repression,' for describing the action of the authorities in these provinces. In my opinion, when an action is taken which is in excess of the requirements of the situation, it is undoubtedly repression. The looting of property, assaults on innocent people, brutal treatment of the prisoners in jails, including flogging, can in no sense be described as legal, civilised or in any way necessary. This official lawlessness cannot be described by any other terms but lawless repression.

"Intimation by non-co-operators of their sympathisers, to a certain extent, in connection with hartals and picketing may be admitted, but in no case can it be held to justify the wholesale suppression of peaceful volunteering or equally peaceful public meetings, under a distorted use of an extraordinary law, which was passed in order to deal with activities which were manifestly violent both in intention and action, nor is it possible to

designate as otherwise than repression, action taken against innocent people under what has appeared to many of us as an illegal use of the ordinary law, nor again can the administrative interference with the liberty of the Press under a law that is under promise of repeal be regarded as anything but repression.

"The immediate task before the country, therefore, is to rescue from paralysis freedom of speech, freedom of association, and freedom of Press.

"In the present mood of the Government of India, and in the present unprepared state of the country in respect of complete control of the sources of violence, non-co-operators were unwilling to have anything to do with the Malaviya Conference whose object was to induce Your Excellency to convene a Round Table Conference. But as I was anxious to avoid all avoidable suffering, I had no hesitation in advising the Working Committee of the Congress to accept the recommendations of that conference.

"Although, in my opinion, the terms were quite in keeping with your own requirements, as I understood them through your Calcutta speech and otherwise, you have summarily rejected the proposal.

"In the circumstances, there is nothing before the country but to adopt some non-violent method for the enforcement of its demands including the elementary rights of free speech, free association and free press. In my humble opinion, the recent events are a clear departure from the civilised policy laid down by Your Excellency at the time of the generous, manly and unconditional apology of the Ali Brothers, *viz.*, that the Government of India should not interfere with the activities of the non-co-operators so long as they remain non-violent in word and deed. Had the Government policy remained neutral and allowed public opinion to ripen and have its full effect, it would have been possible to advise postponement of the adoption of civil disobedience of an aggressive type till the Congress had acquired fuller control over the forces of violence in the country and enforced greater

discipline among the millions of its adherents. But the lawless repression (in a way unparalleled in the history of this unfortunate country) has made immediate adoption of mass civil disobedience an imperative duty. The Working Committee of the Congress has restricted it only to certain areas to be selected by me from time to time, and at present it is confined only to Bardoli. I may under the said authority, give my consent at once in respect of a group of 100 villages in Guntur in the Madras Presidency, provided they can strictly conform to the conditions of non-violence, unity among different classes, the adoption and manufacture of handspun khaddar and untouchability.

"But before the people of Bardoli actually commence mass civil disobedience, I would respectfully urge you as the head of the Government of India finally to revise your policy and set free all the non-co-operating prisoners who are convicted or under trial for non-violent activities, and declare in clear terms the policy of absolute non-interference with all non-violent activities in the country whether they be regarding the redress of the Khilafat or the Punjab wrongs or Swaraj or any other purpose, and even though they fall within the repressive sections of the Penal Code or the Criminal Procedure Code or other repressive laws, subject always to the condition of non-violence. I would further urge you to free the press from all administrative control and restore all the fines and forfeitures recently imposed. In thus urging, I am asking Your Excellency to do what is today being done in every country which is deemed to be under civilized government. If you can see your way to make the necessary declaration within seven days of the date of publication of this manifesto, I shall be prepared to advice postponement of civil disobedience of an aggressive character till the imprisoned workers have, after their discharge, reviewed the whole situation and considered it *de novo*. If the Government make the requested declaration, I shall regard it as an honest desire on its parts to give effect to public opinion and shall, therefore, have

no hesitation in advising the country to be engaged in further moulding public opinion without violent restraint from either side, and trust to its working to secure the fulfilment of its unalterable demands. Aggressive civil disobedience in that case will be taken up only when the Government departs from its policy of strictest neutrality or refuses to yield to the clearly expressed opinion of the vast majority of the people of India."

I do not think that any Indian had ventured to write to the representative of the King-Emperor in such terms. There were no words like "humbly pray," no phrases like "May it please Your Excellency." It was to the point, though in no way discourteous to the person to whom it was addressed. That was one thing about Gandhi that everyone has been forced to admit, for whatever may be the provocation, and however strong his case, he always presented it with dignity. He never forgot his manners.

The seven days' ultimatum had not expired, when in the United Provinces, at Chauri Chaura, where a Congress procession was on its way, mob violence took place. The crowd completely lost all sense of responsibility, and chased twenty-one constables and one sub-inspector into a police station and then set fire to it. They were burnt to death—the most disgraceful act that could have been committed. The tragedy of it was that it was committed by the Indians. That was the end, as far as Gandhi was concerned, and without any hesitation and on his own initiative, he called off the whole civil disobedience movement. His inner voice had spoken and he could not go on any longer. Gandhi had thrown in the towel, because his own side did not play the game according to the rules he laid down. He had given up the struggle when it was at its fiercest and when his chances of success were the greatest.

Why did he give it up? Why could he not isolate this incident and make Chauri Chaura pay for the crime it had committed? Why should India suffer for the sin of a tiny insignificant part of it? Why should the freedom of three hundred and seventy millions be sacrificed for the

misadventure of a few hundreds ? What about the sacrifices of those who were in gaol, of those who had given up their secure jobs to throw in their lot with Gandhi ? What was to become of them now ? Had he not betrayed their cause ? And they all shook their heads, knowing that he had made the greatest mistake of his life—the greatest mistake in the history of the Indian struggle. But nothing worried Gandhi. He did not care if his political days were numbered. After all, it was his responsibility and he wanted to shoulder it in his own way.

The high officials of the Government smiled once more. They had won a most unexpected victory. Gandhi's prestige had fallen in the eyes of the people, they thought. This was their moment to strike. In the Congress Committee, Dr. Moonje had moved a vote of censure against which Gandhi did not permit anyone to speak. Nor did he defend himself. Although the motion was not carried, there was little doubt that his stock had fallen and there was a rift in that solidarity which was once behind him. The Government chose this appropriate moment to arrest him and he was charged with sedition. It was the 13th day of March.

XV

TRIAL

TEN O'CLOCK IN THE EVENING, IN HIS BATH, THE Mahatma heard of his arrest. He was soon ready. The whole Ashram was waiting to say its farewell and a sad gloom had come over his followers though he himself was full of high spirits. Individually he took his leave of each in turn. At his request his favourite hymn was sung. And in the next moment he was in the company of a fellow prisoner on his way to Sabarmati Jail to await his trial. It was to take place the next day. The charge of sedition was backed up by three articles he had written as editor of his paper *Young India*. They were entitled : "*Tampering with Loyalty*," "*A Puzzle and its Solution*," and "*Shaking the Manes*." From Gandhi's point of view, to select these three articles from among the many he had written, was to single them out for distinction, for which of his writings were not seditious ?

These articles must be examined one by one. The first was written at the time when the Ali Brothers were accused of having tampered with the loyalty of the

soldiers and were arrested for that offence. In this article, *Tampering with Loyalty*, he says : "I have no hesitation in saying, that it is sinful for anyone either as soldier or civilian, to serve this Government, which has proved treacherous to the Mussalmans of India and which has been guilty of the inhumanities of the Punjab. I have said this from many a platform in the presence of sepoys. And if I have not asked individual sepoys to come out, it has not been due to want of will but of ability to support them. I have not hesitated to tell the sepoy, that if he could leave the service and support himself without the Congress or Khilafat aid, he should leave at once. And I promise, that as soon as the spinning wheel finds an abiding place in every home and Indians begin to feel that weaving gives anybody any day an honourable livelihood, I shall not hesitate, at the peril of being shot, to ask the Indian sepoy individually to leave his service and become a weaver. For, has not the sepoy been used to hold India in subjection, has he not been used to murder innocent people at Jallianwalla Bagh, has he not been used to drive away innocent men, women and children during that dreadful night at Chandpur, has he not been used to subjugate the proud Arab of Mesopotamia, has he not been utilised to crush the Egyptian ? How can any Indian having a spark of humanity in him and any Mussalman having any pride in his religion feel otherwise than as the Ali Brothers have done ? The sepoy has been used more often as a hired assassin than as a soldier defending the liberty or the honour of the weak and the helpless. The Governor has pandered to the basest in us by telling us what would have happened in Malabar but for the British soldier or sepoy."

Later in the same article he says : "His Excellency's reference to the sedition of the Ali Brothers is only less unpardonable than his reference to the tampering. For he must know, that sedition has become the creed of the Congress. Every non-co-operator is pledged to preach disaffection towards the Government established by law. Non-co-operation, though a religious and strictly moral

movement, deliberately aims at the overthrow of the Government, and is, therefore, legally seditious in terms of the Indian Penal Code. But this is no new discovery. Lord Chelmsford knew it. Lord Reading knows it. It is unthinkable that the Governor of Bombay does not know it. It was common cause that so long as the movement remained non-violent, nothing would be done to interfere with it.

"But it may be urged that the Government has a right to change its policy when it finds that the movement is really threatening its very existence as a system. I do not deny them that right. I object to the Governor's note, because it is so worded as to let the unknowing public think that tampering with the loyalty of the sepoy and sedition were fresh crimes committed by the Ali Brothers and brought for the first time to His Excellency's notice.

"However, the duty of the Congress and Khilafat workers is clear. We ask for no quarter ; we expect none from the Government. We did not solicit the promise of immunity from prison so long as we remained non-violent. We may not now complain, if we are imprisoned for sedition. Therefore, our self-respect and our pledge require us to remain calm, unperturbed and non-violent. We have our appointed course to follow. We must reiterate from a thousand platforms the formula of the Ali Brothers regarding the sepoys, and we must spread disaffection openly and systematically till it pleases the Government to arrest us. And this we do, not by way of angry retaliation, but because it is our *Dharma*. We must wear *Khadi* even as the brothers have worn it, and spread the gospel of Swadeshi. The Mussalmans must collect relief for Smyrna and the Angora Government. We must spread like the Ali Brothers the gospel of Hindu-Muslim unity and of non-violence for the purpose of attaining Swaraj and the redress of the Khilafat and the Punjab wrongs."

Sedition had become the creed of the Congress ! That one sentence was enough to satisfy the legal guilt of the prisoner. But seldom had he uttered so much vitriol,

this otherwise silver-tongued exponent of the Congress and the Indian people. The old Gandhi of the days of compromise was not to be found in this article. Instead it was a bitter, disillusioned, one-time admirer of the British Empire that was speaking out his mind. It was also a much more powerful Gandhi, for he knew what an immense following he had in this country, where only a few years ago he was comparatively unknown.

The next of the three articles was directed against Lord Reading, who had said in reference to Congress activities that he was perplexed and puzzled. Lord Reading had gone on to ask : " What purpose is served by flagrant breaches of the law for the purpose of challenging the Government and in order to compel arrest ? " And Gandhi in his article replied : " We seek arrest because this so-called freedom is slavery. We are challenging the might of this Government because we consider its activity to be wholly evil. We want to overthrow the Government. We want to compel its submission to the people's will. We desire to show that the Government exists to serve the people, not the people the Government. Free life under the Government has become intolerable, for the price exacted for the retention of freedom is unconsciously great. Whether we are one or many, we must refuse to purchase freedom at the cost of our self-respect or our cherished convictions. I have known even little children become unbending when an attempt has been made to cross their declared purpose, be it ever so flimsy in the estimation of their parents."

The third article was in a more journalistic vein—"*Shaking the Manes.*" It was in answer to the threats of the late Lord Birkenhead and the same Mr. Montagu who had once before shown a spark of great statesmanship. Birkenhead had said that Britain had lost none of its " hard fibre." And Montagu had reiterated the threat in clearer language : " If the existence of our Empire were challenged, the discharge of responsibilities of the British Government to India prevented and demands were made in the very mistaken belief that we contemplated retreat

from India, India would not challenge with success the most determined people in the world, who would once again answer the challenge with all the vigour and determination at its command." And Gandhi answered : "...and if the present custodians of the British Empire are not satisfied with its quiet transformation into a true commonwealth of free nations, each with equal rights and each having the power to secede at will from an honourable and friendly partnership, all the determination and vigour of the most determined people in the world and the hard fibre will have to be spent in India in a vain effort to crush the spirit that has risen and that will neither bend nor break. It is true that we have no 'hard fibre.' The rice-eating, puny millions of India seem to have resolved upon achieving their own destiny without any further tutelage and without arms. In the Lokmanya's language it is their 'birthright,' and they will have it in spite of the 'hard fibre' and in spite of the vigour and determination with which it may be administered. India cannot and will not answer this insolence, but if she remains true to her pledge, her prayer to God to be delivered from such a scourge will certainly not go in vain. No empire intoxicated with the red wine of power and plunder of weaker races has yet lived long in this world and this 'British Empire,' which is based upon organised exploitation of physically weaker races of the earth and upon a continuous exhibition of brute force, cannot live if there is a just God ruling the universe. Little do these so-called representatives of the British nation realise that India has already given many of her best men to be dealt with by the British 'hard fibre.' Had Chaura not interrupted the even course of the national sacrifice, there would have been still greater and more delectable offerings placed before the Lion, but God had willed it otherwise. There is nothing, however, to prevent all those representatives in Downing Street and Whitehall from doing their worst. I am aware that I have written strongly about the insolent threat that has come from across the seas, but it is high time that the British people were made

to realise that the fight that was commenced in 1920 is a fight to the finish, whether it lasts one month or one year or many months or many years and whether the representatives of Britain re-enact all the indescribable orgies of the Mutiny days with redoubled force or whether they do not. I shall only hope and pray that God will give India sufficient strength to remain non-violent to the end. Submission to the insolent challenges that are cabled out on due occasions is now an utter impossibility."

This was the evidence against Gandhi in the lower court before the magistrate, who decided that a *prima facie* case had been made out by the prosecution, and the two prisoners, Gandhi and Shankerlal Banker, were sent up for trial to the Sessions Court.

"Your Name?" asked the judge in the Sessions Court.

"Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi."

"Occupation?"

"Farmer and weaver."

There was something very brave, almost modest, and certainly very beautiful about that reply of his, which staggered the judge, who paused to ascertain whether the Mahatma was jesting in court. But there was no trace of mockery on his face. Yet when you pause and think now in cold blood, what else could he have said? Could he have called himself a politician? Could he have said he was a prophet or a seer? Could he have called himself a Barrister-at-law, when the Inner Temple soon after his conviction on a criminal charge struck his name off the rolls of that most honourable society? His was an immortal answer, which those, who heard him, will never forget. Farmer and weaver! In these two words he summed up his whole philosophy of life, his creed, his religion. In them we saw his vision. He had associated himself with the masses of India that day. He *was* India —that India which was made up of hundreds of millions of farmers and weavers. It was then that one began to realize the truth of the Rev. J.H. Holmes's remarks on what he calls the Christ of Today. "This man," says Holmes, "holds absolutely in his hands today the destines

of his people. When Gandhi speaks, it is India that speaks. When Gandhi acts, it is India that acts. When Gandhi is arrested, it is India that is outraged and humiliated. More truly, I believe, than any other man, who has ever lived, this great Indian is the incarnation of a people's soul." It was that soul of India that was to be found in its farmers and its weavers. Where else could it be?

Gandhi spoke slowly, clearly, emphatically. And the learned counsel turned to each other and paused and thought. One remembered at that time yet another man who some two thousand years ago stood in the Court of Pontius Pilate and whose name was Jesus of Nazareth. One felt as if another Christ—the Christ of the Aryan people—had come to stand his trial, for as he entered the court room of the Sessions at Ahmedabad some days later "the entire court rose in an act of spontaneous homage" to this frail, serene, indomitable figure in a coarse and scanty loin cloth.

I can visualize the court room in that dusty city of Ahmedabad where never such a trial was held before or since. Outside in the compound the police and military stood rigidly at attention. A somewhat unnecessary precaution when you bore in mind the man who was being tried. It was no trial of a violent revolutionary but of a disciple of *Ahimsa*, a believer in soul force, a farmer and weaver with a flaming desire for truth.

While Gandhi took his seat in the dock, the court remained standing. Later came the Advocate General, who nodded to the prisoner at the bar. Punctually at noon, the judge, Mr. Broomfield, took his seat on the bench. The formalities of the trial were soon over, the charges had been read out, and the judge asked Gandhi whether he pleaded guilty or claimed to be tried. The Mahatma replied: "I plead guilty to all the charges. I observe that the King's name has been omitted from the charges and it has been properly omitted." Shankerlal Banker pleaded the same.

The Advocate General being deprived of the privilege of charging so distinguished a prisoner at the bar, wanted

to proceed with the trial in spite of the plea of guilty. It was a pity, he must have thought, to be deprived of such an opportunity at such a historic trial which would go down to posterity. But the judge was adamant and merely offered to let the Advocate General make what remarks he thought fit on the passing of the sentence. Gandhi smiled in his quiet way. The Advocate General made his remarks. And the judge asked whether the prisoner would like to make a statement on the question of sentence, before he passed sentence.

"I would like to make a statement," Gandhi replied.

"Could you give it to me in writing to put it on record ?"

"I shall give it as soon as I have finished reading it."

The judge agreed and Gandhi's voice was heard over the pinfall silence that followed.

"Before I read this statement I would like to state that I entirely endorse the learned Advocate General's remarks in connection with my humble self. I think that he was entirely fair to me in all the statements that he has made, because it is very true that I have no desire whatsoever to conceal from this court the fact that to preach disaffection towards the existing system of Government has become almost a passion with me and the learned Advocate General is also entirely in the right when he says that my preaching of disaffection did not commence with my connection with *Young India*, but that it commenced much earlier and in the statement that I am about to read, it will be my painful duty to admit before this Court that it commenced much earlier than the period stated by the Advocate General. It is a most painful duty for me but I have to discharge that duty knowing the responsibility that rests upon my shoulders, and I wish to endorse all the blame that the learned Advocate General has thrown on my shoulders in connection with the Bombay occurrences, the Madras occurrences and the Chauri Chaura occurrences. Thinking over these deeply and weeping over them night after night, it is impossible for me to dissociate myself from the diabolical crimes of

Chauri Chaura or the mad outrages of Bombay. He is quite right when he says, that as a man of responsibility a man having received a fair share of education, having had a fair share of experience of this world, I should have known the consequences of every one of my acts. I knew that I was playing with fire. I ran the risk and if I was set free I would still do the same. I have felt it this morning that I would have failed in my duty, if I did not say what I said here just now.

"I *wanted* to avoid violence. I *want* to avoid violence. Non-violence is the first article of my faith. It is also the last article of my creed. But I had to make my choice ; I had either to submit to a system which I considered had done an irreparable harm to my country, or incur the risk of the mad fury of my people bursting forth, when they understood the truth from my lips. I know that my people have sometimes gone mad. I am deeply sorry for it and I am, therefore, here to submit not to a light penalty but to the highest penalty. I do not ask for mercy. I do not plead any extenuating act. I am here, therefore, to invite and cheerfully submit to the highest penalty that can be inflicted upon me, for what in law is a deliberate crime and what appears to me the highest duty of a citizen. The only course open to you, the judge, is as I am just going to say in my statement either to resign your post, or inflict on me the severest penalty, if you believe that the system and law you are assisting to administer are good for the people. I do not expect that kind of conversion, but by the time I have finished with my statement you will perhaps have a glimpse of what is raging within my breast to run this maddest risk which a sane man can run."

The written statement then followed. It read : "I owe it perhaps to the Indian public and to the public in England, to placate which this prosecution is mainly taken up, that I should explain why from a staunch loyalist and co-operator I have become an uncompromising disaffectionist and a non-co-operator. To the court too I should say why I plead guilty to the charge of promoting

disaffection towards the Government established by law in India.

"My public life began in 1893 in South Africa in troubled weather. My first contact with British authority in that country was not of a happy character. I discovered that as a man and an Indian I had no rights. More correctly I discovered that I had no rights as a man because I was an Indian. But I was not baffled. I thought that this treatment of the Indian was an excrescene upon a system that was intrinsically and mainly good. I gave the Government my voluntary and hearty co-operation, criticising it freely where I felt it was faulty but never wishing its destruction. Consequently when the existence of the Empire was threatened in 1899 by the Boer challenge, I offered my services to it, raised a volunteer ambulance corps and served at several actions that took place for the relief of Ladysmith. Similarly in 1906, at the time of the Zulu revolt, I raised a stretcher-bearer party and served till the end of the 'rebellion'. On both these occasions I received medals and was even mentioned in despatches. For my work in South Africa I was given by Lord Hardinge a Kaiser-I-Hind Gold Medal. When the war broke out in 1914 between England and Germany I raised a volunteer ambulance corps in London consisting of the then resident Indians in London, chiefly students. Its work was acknowledged by the authorities to be valuable. Lastly in India when a special appeal was made at the War Conference in Delhi in 1918 by Lord Chelmsford for recruits, I struggled at the cost of my health to raise a corps in Kheda and the response was being made when the hostilities ceased and orders were received that no more recruits were wanted. In all these efforts at service I was actuated by the belief that it was possible by such services to gain a status of full equality in the Empire for my countrymen.

"The first shock came in the shape of the Rowlatt Act, a law designed to rob the people of all real freedom. I felt called upon to lead an intensive agitation against

it. Then followed the Punjab horrors beginning with the massacre of Jallianwalla Baug and culminating in crawling orders, public floggings and other indescribable humiliations. I discovered too that the plighted word of the Prime Minister to the Mussalmans of India regarding the integrity of Turkey and the holy places of Islam was not likely to be fulfilled. But in spite of the forebodings and the grave warnings of friends, at the Amritsar Congress in 1919 I fought for co-operation and for working the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms, hoping that the Prime Minister would redeem his promise to the Indian Mussalmans, that the Punjab wound would be healed and that the reforms, inadequate and unsatisfactory though they were, marked a new era of hope in the life of India.

"But all that hope was shattered. The Khilafat promise was not to be redeemed. The Punjab crime was white-washed and most culprits went not only unpunished but remained in service and some continued to draw pensions from the Indian revenue, and in some cases were even rewarded. I saw too that not only did the reforms not mark a change of heart, but they were only a method of further draining India of her wealth and of prolonging her servitude.

"I came reluctantly to the conclusion that the British connection had made India more helpless than ever before, politically and economically. A disarmed India has no power of resistance against any aggressor if she wanted to engage in an armed conflict with him. So much is this the case that some of our best men consider that India must take generations before she can achieve the dominion status. She had become so poor that she has little power of resisting famines. Before the British advent India spun and wove in her millions of cottages just the supplement she needed for adding to her meagre agricultural resources. This cottage industry, so vital for India's existence, has been ruined by incredibly heartless and inhuman processes as described by English witnesses. Little do town-dwellers know how the semi-starved masses of India are slowly sinking to lifelessness. Little

do they know that their miserable comfort represents the brokerage they get for the work they do for the foreign exploiter, that the profits and the brokerage are sucked from the masses. Little do they realise that Government established by law in British India is carried on for this exploitation of the masses. No sophistry, no jugglery in figures can explain away the evidence that the skeletons in many villages present to the naked eye. I have no doubt whatsoever that both England and the town dwellers of India will have to answer, if there is a God above, for this crime against humanity which is perhaps unequalled in history. The law itself in this country has been used to serve the foreign exploiter. My unbiassed examination of the Punjab Martial Law cases had led me to believe that at least ninety-five percent of convictions were wholly bad. My experience of political cases in India leads me to the conclusion that in nine out of every ten the condemned men were totally innocent. Their crime consisted in the love of their country. In ninety-nine cases out of hundred justice has been denied to Indians as against Europeans in the Courts of India. This is not an exaggerated picture. It is the experience of almost every Indian who has had anything to do with such cases. In my opinion the administration of the law is thus prostituted consciously or unconsciously for the benefit of the exploiter.

"The greatest misfortune is that Englishmen and their Indian associates in the administration of the country do not know that they are engaged in the crime I have attempted to describe. I am satisfied that many Englishmen and Indian officials honestly believe that they are administering one of the best systems devised in the world and that India is making steady though slow progress. They do not know that a subtle but effective system of terrorism and an organised display of force on the one hand, and the deprivation of all powers of retaliation or self-defence on the other, have emasculated the people and induced in them the habit of simulation. This awful habit has added to the ignorance and the self-deception of the administrators.

"Section 124 A, under which I am happily charged, is perhaps the prince among the political sections of the Indian Penal Code designed to suppress the liberty of the citizen. Affection cannot be manufactured or regulated by law. If one has no affection for a person or system one should be free to give the fullest expression to his disaffection, so long as he does not contemplate, promote or incite to violence. But the section under which Mr. Banker and I are charged is one under which mere promotion of disaffection is a crime. I have studied some of the cases tried under it, and I know that some of the most loved of India's patriots have been convicted under it. I consider it a privilege, therefore, to be charged under that section. I have endeavoured to give in their briefest outline the reasons for my disaffection. I have no personal ill-will against any single administrator, much less can I have any disaffection towards the King's person. But I hold it to be a virtue to be disaffected towards a Government, which in its totality has done more harm to India than any previous system. India is less manly under the British than she ever was before. Holding such a belief I consider it to be a sin to have affection for the system. And it has been a precious privilege for me to be able to write what I have in the various articles tendered in evidence against me.

"In fact, I believe that I have rendered a service to India and England by showing in non-co-operation the way out of the unnatural state in which both are living. In my humble opinion, non-co-operation with evil is as much a duty as in co-operation with good. But in the past, non-co-operation has been deliberately expressed in violence to the evil-doer. I am endeavouring to show to my countrymen that violent non-co-operation only multiplies evil and that as evil can only be sustained by violence, withdrawal of support of evil requires complete abstention from violence. Non-violence implies voluntary submission to the penalty for non-co-operation with evil. I am here, therefore, to invite and submit cheerfully to the highest penalty that can be inflicted upon me for what

in law is a deliberate crime and what appears to me to be the highest duty of a citizen. The only course open to you, the Judge, is either to resign your post and thus dissociate yourself from evil, if you feel that the law you are called upon to administer is an evil and that in reality I am innocent ; or to inflict on me the severest penalty if you believe that the system and the law you are assisting to administer are good for the people of this country and that my activity is injurious to the public weal."

Shankerlal Banker, whose only offence was to print these articles, did not say anything about the sentence. It would have been an anti-climax after that powerful dictum of the Mahatma, in which he passed judgment on himself—once by the rules of the law of his conscience, once by the rules of an Indian Penal Code.

Broomfield said in his judgment that it was impossible to ignore the fact that Gandhi was in a different category from any person he had ever tried or was likely to try.

"It would be impossible," he went on, "to ignore the fact that in the eyes of millions of your countrymen, you are a great patriot and a great leader. Even those who differ from you in politics look upon you as a man of high ideals and of noble and of even saintly life."

But as a judge in that Sessions Court, he had to deal with Gandhi only in one capacity. It was to administer the letter of the law. "I do not presume to judge or criticize you in any other character."

Later in that same judgment, Broomfield said : "It is my duty to judge you as a man subject to the law, who by his own admission has broken the law and committed what to an ordinary man must appear to be a grave offence against the State. I do not forget that you have consistently preached against violence and that you have on many occasions, as I am willing to believe, done much to prevent violence. But having regard to the nature of your political teaching and the nature of many of those to whom it was addressed, how you could have continued to believe that violence would not be the inevitable

consequence, it passes my capacity to understand.

"There are probably few people in India, who do not sincerely regret that you should have made impossible for any government to leave you at liberty. But it is so. I am trying to balance what is due to you against what appears to me to be necessary in the interest of the public and I propose in passing sentence to follow the precedent of a case in many respects similar to this case that was decided some twelve years ago. I mean the case against Bal Gangadhar Tilak under the same section. The sentence that was passed upon him as it finally stood was a sentence of simple imprisonment for six years. You will not consider it unreasonable, I think, that you should be classed with Mr. Tilak, *i.e.*, a sentence of two years' simple imprisonment on each count of the charge, six years in all, which I feel it my duty to pass upon you and I should like to say in doing so that if the course of events in India should make it possible for the Government to reduce the period and release you, no one will be better pleased than I."

His concluding remarks were with regard to Shankerlal Banker.

When he finished, Gandhi said in reply : "I would say but one word. Since you have done me the honour of recalling the trial of the late Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak, I just want to say that I consider it to be the proudest privilege and honour to be associated with his name. So far as the sentence itself is concerned, I certainly consider that it is as light as any judge would inflict on me, and so far as the whole proceedings are concerned I must say that I could not have expected greater courtesy."

Six Years !—it was a slice out of a man's life, and yet to say in all sincerity, as Gandhi did, that he could not have expected greater courtesy ! It was worthy only of a Christ.

His friends crowded round him. His wife too. It was to be his first long parting. Six years ! God knows what would happen in the meanwhile. But he said his

farewells—still full of life and courage and that indomitable will which would not yield. A car drove him and his fellow-prisoner to Sabarmati gaol. It was to seek the freedom, he had spoken of, that he was going. Six years was a long time ! Six years was the note on which that great trial ended. And Gandhi was snatched away from the vortex of Indian affairs, which he had dominated so long with his personality.

XVI

THE DUST SETTLES

THAT EVENING A DUST SETTLED OVER THE COUNTRY. It was the dust that had raged like a storm over the face of India, but now the storm had died down and the dust had begun to settle. It spread itself everywhere and as the Indian watched the evening sun set and the cool of the night approach from the distance, he became conscious of a tired feeling in his limbs. The bruises on the body began to show up even from his sun-burnt skin. The dark, blue spots felt tender and sore. The body appeared to have been battered and bruised though in the heat of the moment he had hardly been conscious of the blows that were inflicted on him. Only now did he realize the magnitude of his own suffering, the oppression which had attempted to crush him, the power and the might of those who still wanted to maintain the *status quo*. In the cause of freedom, India which had been a conglomeration of varied nationalities had unified itself into a nation. Some unity of purpose had come out of a state of being which had no aim, no focus, no logical

destination. The leader of the movement was behind bars. Freedom itself was to be found in chains.

There was an ironical smile on the face of Englishmen as they sipped their chota pegs at the Yacht Club with the sea breeze blowing on their ruddy complexions. Across that vast, open, endless expanse of water—beyond the horizon—stood their England mightier than before. Theirs was the kingdom of God. Theirs too was the kingdom of man. Those who had doubted it had paid for their doubts by the long terms of imprisonment which they were made to suffer. The Yacht Club was the barometer where the feelings of the Englishmen, who mattered, were registered. Once before it had draped itself with brooms on the occasion of the departure of a Viceroy. Lord Ripon had in their opinion betrayed the cause of Britain, though in reality he had only been a little sympathetic to India. Today they rejoiced at Gandhi's incarceration in a city gaol and at the thought that they could still go on as before—lords and masters in this part of the Empire where their will reigned supreme. The Yacht Club wanted to deck itself in all the Union Jacks that were in its possession, if only for the assurance that the time for any real anxiety had not yet come.

Over India had come an ominous silence. It was too sudden and too quiet to be true. The shouting in the streets had died down. India was a little hesitant of uttering the Mahatma's name loudly on the day on which he had gone to purge himself of the sins he had confessed and committed. For he had misjudged India's readiness for the struggle and was now atoning for it with a sentence of six long years.

What of the others? What about those who had doubted the opportuneness of calling off a struggle when it was at its height? What about those who knew that Gandhi had thrown away victory when it was almost in his hands? It was only now, as they pondered on the words he had spoken, that they began to understand the significance of that deeper meaning in them. Perhaps

it was wiser to pause and consider what they had achieved and what they were aiming at, instead of going on from one dubious success to another. They had come for the first time within reach of power and it was essential that they should have some constructive plans before that power came into their hands. Planning was necessary in the growth of a nation which was struggling to free itself. That was in Gandhi's mind when he cried halt after Chauri Chaura. He wanted to collect his thoughts before plunging again into the vortex of politics, and what better place could he find for quiet thought than the secluded cell of Sabarmati Prison, with the little river in the distance and the smoke of chimneys still in the air. This then was a special moment when the progress of freedom could be viewed from a distance in its true perspective.

Yet the question uppermost in the public mind was whether the popularity of Gandhi had waned. Had he failed the Indian people in the hour of their greatest crisis? Had he deprived India of its freedom? Had he not misjudged the time to call off the movement? Would it not have been better to have come to terms with the Government a few months ago when the Government had made a gesture? And what had happened to his promise of Swaraj within a year? That would surely be left unfulfilled. These were the questions asked in India by the great majority of people who were wavering between the Congress and British Imperialism. These were the questions to which one could find no satisfactory answers.

From Gandhi's point of view it was to clarify issues and to train the masses more thoroughly in the lessons of Satyagraha that he had called off the non-co-operation movement. He had an unerring instinct on which he invariably relied. He was not in a position to call it the inner voice. The "inner voice" had an authoritative tone about it, and "instinct" seemed to express more modestly the same idea. Whatever one called it, it was apparent that he now realized that the masses lacked discipline. So far he had relied on emotion. But was that the way to train a nation? Emotion had run away with

the movement. What Gandhi wanted to see firmly planted in the minds of the masses was a disciplined emotion, for there had always to be some ingredient of emotion so long as the masses remained untutored and uneducated. Without emotion it was difficult to stir the Indian masses. Yet too much of it may deflect them from their purpose. What was needed in India for the successful completion of the movement was disciplined emotion. Those who have listened to the music of Bach know what is meant by disciplined emotion.

To that extent, Gandhi had judged the moment correctly. The humility with which he surrendered took away the sting of defeat. He avoided that final clash which would have crushed the national movement. A voluntary surrender meant that even though progress was terminated, the principles and the ideals, on which the movement was founded, would remain intact and whenever the energy of the people, which was now stifled in the gaols of the country, would be let loose, the struggle could be renewed with greater force. So that even those who deprecated the manner in which the civil disobedience movement of 1921 was abruptly called off in 1922, were convinced in the light of later events and the subsequent outburst of nationalism, that Gandhi did the right thing in the eventful February of that year.

At that time, however, the issue was not so clear. The Working Committee of the Congress—those who were left to function—took upon themselves in the absence of Gandhi to review the whole question of non-co-operation. It had already become clear that although Das had given his assent to Gandhi and supported non-co-operation with all his heart, he was not content to give up the struggle at the dictation of Gandhi's inner voice. Das, the shrewd lawyer and a man of reason, found another man's instinct insufficient to influence his reason. If the non-co-operation movement had ceased as far as the masses were concerned, there was no reason why the intelligentsia should not carry on that struggle on a constitutional basis by seeking selection to the councils

and by attempting to paralyse the machinery of Government from within. That was the idea Das had in mind, in entire contradiction to the halt that had been cried by Gandhi.

Das was not alone. He carried with him some of the more influential members of the Congress, who happened to be outside the gaols. They were Pandit Motilal Nehru, Vithalbhai Patel and others. And Das scored a somewhat minor triumph, when the Congress Committee, after placing on record Gandhi's services to the cause of humanity by his message of peace and truth, reiterated its faith in the principles of non-violent non-co-operation. The idea was that after making such gestures as were necessary to preserve the prestige of Gandhi, they endeavoured to carry on the fight in spite of his expressed wish that non-co-operation should be abandoned.

Whatever excuses may be made now, it is obvious that a great section of the Congress did not see eye to eye with Gandhi at that time. It was also abundantly clear that Gandhi had not yet come to the stage when his word would without question, be obeyed. This then was a test of his greatness. People wondered whether he was now a leader in retreat. Time alone would tell. Meanwhile, to do him justice, the Congress Committee decided to tour the country and ascertain for themselves the real state of affairs. They were to report in the August of that year and the country and the Congress would then determine which path they were to follow.

About the same time in England, Montagu swiftly passed out of the Indian scene. His resignation was brought about by his disclosure of a document appertaining to the secret Treaty of Sevres and those, who were not so enthusiastic over his classic pronouncement four years ago, found the appropriate occasion to rid themselves of this dashing Secretary of State for India. Lloyd George too had poured oil on troubled waters when he authorized the despatch of the circular to ascertain the views of Englishmen on the question of Indianization. This was a *faux pas de luxe*. Those who were circularized

were virtually asked whether it would be better if their own jobs were done by Indians. As if this was not enough, he made the famous "Steel-frame" speech in which he eulogized the Civil Services as being "the steel frame of the whole structure of administration." The steel frame of the whole structure of administration! How well it sounded in the ears of those English women, whose husbands were assistant collectors of some outlandish district in the jungle or on the frontier, or wherever they might have been stationed. How proud they felt to be wedded to the steel-frames of administration when they knew all along that their husbands were merely the nuts and bolts. But it was the nuts and bolts which governed India more emphatically than ever, as the silhouette of Gandhi passed through the low gates of Sabarmati gaol to serve his years of simple labour.

XVII

THE CONFLICT

THAT SAME YEAR THERE OCCURRED A SCHISM IN THE Congress. It was over the question of Council entry. A section of the Congress wanted to offer resistance through the Councils and other legislative bodies and thereby paralyse the Government by offering opposition to the permanent executive which was in existence at that time. This section of opinion was led by Das and Motilal Nehru, and their attitude was referred to as the Swarajist revolt. This revolt came to a head at the Gaya Congress that same year, where Das presided.

At Gaya one saw the struggle between emotion and cold, calculating reason. The orthodox school, who called themselves the No-Changers and who relied on faith and emotion, wanted to adhere to the ideals of Gandhi whose politics were based on faith and instinct. The Swarajists, who were the rationalists, wanted to bring politics to earth from the giddy heights to which they had recently soared. And the amazing thing about Gaya was that though Gandhi was not there to defend

his attitude, there were enough men in the body of the Congress, who were prepared to stand by him in his absence. It was an astounding revelation to those who believed that Gandhi's days of leadership were over and that his popularity was on the decline. Here was a man who had failed to give them Swaraj inside of a year. Here was a man who had abandoned civil disobedience when only a few months ago he could have come to good terms with the government. Here was a man who, on his own admission, had committed Himalayan blunders. Even so, there was something about him that appealed to the people and they respected his word as if it was the word of a prophet. That was the moral of Gaya. Gandhi had made a lasting impression on India. Das tried to bring the delegates round to his way of thinking. Das tried and failed. Backed up by Motilal Nehru and Vithalbhai Patel, he seceded from the orthodox Congress and formed the Swaraj party. Bengal was the first province he tackled.

Das was sure of himself in Bengal. It was the province of his birth. He had made a name for himself there. Bengal would follow him wherever he went. His method of resisting authority from within the councils would appeal to the typical Bengali mind which he knew and understood so well. Das himself was a man who shone more in a debate in the Council than on a platform in the villages. He was an intellectual. It was not the applause of the masses that he heard when he pleaded for the freedom of his country. It was rather the cheers of the men of his own type and profession—of intellectuals with a college education, of young men who knew of the existence of parliaments, who believed in democracy and constitutional government and who had read and studied the history of the world and the struggle of humanity to free itself. It was the cheers of such men that Das wanted to hear and he knew he would not be disappointed. These were the thoughts that crossed Das's mind when after his defeat at the hands of the No-Changers, Das resigned his presidential seat at the helm of the Congress and formed

his own Swaraj party. The Gaya Congress, therefore, broke up in more senses than one and neither party was happy to see the national structure, which had stood so solidly together, now begin to crumble.

Das and Motilal Nehru were the chief leaders of this Swarajist revolt. They had a following which included Subhas Bose and other impressionable young men who had found something in the plan of Das and the elder Nehru which they could hold between their teeth and bite. To these comparative youngsters Gandhism was a vague philosophy, a religious credo, a beautiful vision and a glorious ideal, but not something they could call politics. Brought up in the school of thought which was different from that which was responsible for the illiteracy of the masses, they preferred the hard political dogmas that came from Das and Motilal Nehru to the idealism that came from Gandhi.

The Swaraj party functioned chiefly in two places. In Bengal Das led the revolt in the Legislative Assembly, while Motilal Nehru was the leader of the opposition in the Central Legislature which operated at Delhi. Under their very able guidance, the Swarajists met with unusual success. Perhaps there was something in what Das said which Gandhi and his followers had overlooked. Therefore, it became more and more evident that when Gandhi returned after his term of imprisonment, he would find a great rival in the person of C.R. Das. Even as he himself was the Mahatma, Das's name was now prefixed with an equally affectionate term of endearment. It was that of Deshbandhu.

Already this swaraj party had created deadlocks in more than one province. It had hindered the smooth working of the Central Legislature by making it imperative for the Viceroy continually to exercise his powers of veto and of certification. Token cuts were made to express disapproval of the Government's policy. The salaries of Ministers were rejected and diarchy was wrecked in several provinces. The Governor had to take over charge of the departments and ministerial governments was

made almost a farce. The continual exercise of special powers made it obvious that India was being governed against her will. It did Britain little good in the eyes of the world. These were some of the facts that came to light when the Swaraj party captured the legislatures and offered civil disobedience from within. Das was not wrong in departing from the beaten track laid down by Gandhi. Moreover, this revolt against authority, which took place during the years in which Gandhi was in prison, made the Indians remain conscious of the struggle. The complete cessation of civil disobedience might have made a return to non-co-operation very difficult. But transferred to the councils, the spirit of resistance was kept alive and though the masses did not themselves go into the Assemblies to offer resistance, they had the satisfaction of seeing the elected representatives of the Indian people carry on the struggle in a way which made the smooth working of the British Government in India a veritable impossibility.

It was about that time that Labour came to office in England and the eyes of Britain were opened by the Labour Secretary of State for India. India Office was not unaware of the formation of the new Swaraj party and the strong constitutional opposition which it was capable of offering. England had only recently taken to a new way of thinking and a new philosophy had been brought to light, if Socialism can be so called. It was under the influence of this more radical outlook on life that Lord Olivier stood up in that venerable House of Lords to tell the noble peers of the realm that the birth of Swarajism in India was to be traced to four cardinal facts, for all four of which Britain was entirely responsible. The first was the resolution passed by the Lords in support of General Dyer. The second was L. G.'s reference to the Civil Services as the steel-frame of the administration. The third was the raising of the Salt Tax against the most intense popular agitation and in direct contraction to the vote of the Indian Legislative Assembly, in whose hands the destiny of the Indian people would one day fall,

And lastly—and this is to my mind the most important detail, though Olivier saw it only from one special angle—it was the treatment meted out to Indians in South Africa that was also largely to blame. It would have been more correct if he had called it the "injustice" meted out to Indians as a whole—in India, in Africa and even in Great Britain where they went, some to study, others for business and for pleasure, but always to suffer the bitter humiliation that was offered to the dark man. Even so, that the House of Lords should have been awakened from its noble slumber to reflect for a moment on the problems of India and the causes which led to unrest in that far-flung outpost of the Empire, indicated the change that had come over the most orthodox of opinions.

At the same time, Calcutta, where the European community dominated commerce and industry and where Englishmen of the unrelenting type are still to be found, elected C. R. Das as the first Mayor under the new constitution. It was an event of great importance and may be compared with the election of La Guardia who came to clean up the muck and slush of American degradation. The election of Das as Mayor had almost the same significance. His term of office began at a vital period in Indian national history. He was able to carry out reforms which no one else would have dared at that time. Khadi, which was the official dress of the Congress, now became compulsory for the employees of the municipality. Education and health became the primary concerns of the city and for the first time the municipality became an active and living force in the community—a force which was felt to some purpose by the citizens of Calcutta. Das went so far as to re-name the streets and the parks after Indian patriots of our time. It was a welcome change from the names of Englishmen which constantly stood before our eyes. In every way, Das attempted to make Calcutta Indian-minded. Even the purchases which the municipality made, were, as far as possible, Indian. But the *piece de resistance* was the decision of the municipality to give a civic welcome to men like Gandhi

and Nehru and those others who in the future may happen to visit the city. This was a crushing blow dealt to British prestige in Calcutta — the first of a series which brought the Europeans of Calcutta somewhat belatedly to their senses, for it was an astonishing fact that though the victory of the Congress had made the Englishman elsewhere realize that his presence in India was becoming more and more precarious and dependent upon the will of the Indians, the Englishman of Calcutta, like Nelson, preferred to put the glass to the other eye.

Das's victory became complete at the special session of the Congress in the September of 1923, when under the presidency of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad,* a Muslim divine, who is also one of the most astute of Congress leaders, besides being one of its most brilliant heads, the Congress passed a resolution, which was a sort of compromise which would satisfy both the Swarajist revolters and the Gandhi No-Changers. The idea of this resolution was to try to cement whatever rift there might have been in the Congress since Gaya and to make it possible for both parties to remain within the framework of the Congress without causing offence. The resolution was to the effect that "Such Congressmen as have no religious or other conscientious objections against entering the legislatures are at liberty to stand as candidates and to exercise their right of voting at the forthcoming elections. And this Congress, therefore, suspends all propaganda against entering the Councils." Later, in the December of that year, when Mohamed Ali presided over the Cocanada Congress, he gave the impression that even Gandhi would not resist the idea of contesting the elections and of offering resistance from inside the councils. And even if this was a distortion of fact, for Gandhi had in a message to Mohamed Ali emphatically declared otherwise, it made it easier for Congressmen, who were wavering between rival loyalties, to support the Das idea without offending Gandhi. They had seen the effectiveness of constitutional opposition.

* Elected again President of the Congress for 1940.

That was the note on which the year 1923 ended. It was clear to the nation that in the absence of Gandhi who was in prison, it would have to choose between accepting the leadership of Das and Nehru, or wandering on its own without a leader, without a policy, without a defined goal.

Against all anticipation, Gandhi came out of gaol sooner than expected. In those two years he was content to serve his sentence without murmur and to accept the self-enforced withdrawal from the political arena. There were many who believed that, had he served the full term of six years, he would have lost that unique position he occupied in Indian politics and that in his place new mahatmas would have been born and the country would have regarded the original Mahatma as only one among many. Perhaps there was a star that guided his destiny. Perhaps he had willed that he should come out and resume the fight. Perhaps God in His infinite mercy had a plan for those dumb millions that were India. Whatever may have been the ultimate cause of Gandhi's return, he came back into headlines with a serious attack of appendicitis in the January of the new year. There was something spectacular about an otherwise ordinary illness from which anyone might have suffered. But with Gandhi it took the shape of a serious drama played at the dead of night in an operating theatre in the gaol at Poona, where against all his principles he allowed himself to be operated upon by an English I.M.S. surgeon, a Colonel Maddock, who had the honour of removing the most talked-of appendix in Indian or European history. What had happened to Gandhi, his devout followers wondered, that he should have given way to Western medical science, when he had urged so many others to be cured by fasting and will-power? What had happened to his control of mind over the body? What had happened to his faith in religion, which had now given place to his faith in surgery? Was he after all just another *man*? Where was that spiritual ascendancy over the body, which had earned him the name of Mahatma? And Gandhi

replied : "I plead guilty. Unfortunately for me, I am far from perfect. I am simply a humble aspirant for perfection. I know my way to it also. But the knowing of the way is not reaching its end. As I hold that my illness was a result of infirmity of thought or mind, so do I concede that my submission to the surgical operation was an additional infirmity of the mind. If I was absolutely free from egoism, I would have resigned myself to the inevitable ; but I wanted to live in the present body. Complete detachment is not a mechanical process. One has to grow into it by patient toil and prayer."

In utterances such as these he gave an indication of the power that was still within him and of the depth of his philosophy. He came desperately near yogism when he talked of man's attainment of complete detachment of mind from body, a detachment which would only come gradually by patient toil and prayer. Those who have seen a fakir walk barefooted over burning coal, or a man, sealed in an air-tight compartment and sunk into the river, come out of it alive, will know what I mean. Unfortunately, the idea that yogism is as much a figment of the imagination as the Indian rope trick, has made it the object of ridicule in the sophisticated countries of the West and relegated it to the sphere of sensationalism. But these things do happen in this part of the East which has always been steeped in mystery. It is the heritage of the Indian people—a heritage that had often been spurned as superstition and laughed at by those who are not accustomed to see these feats happen. It was this power of yogism which Gandhi was trying to acquire, when he spoke of the complete detachment which would give him that control of mind over body that was so essential to a man aspiring to spiritual ascendancy.

Meanwhile, Gandhi realized that he had to be content to live in the present body and not apart from it. That was the gist of his confession. It also showed how he was prepared to abide by the laws of science until he could afford to neglect them. In submitting himself to be operated upon by a surgeon and an Englishman at that,

he had swallowed a great deal of his pride. But what pride could a man have, who had stood at the bar of human justice and submitted to the laws of man, when in his heart he knew that his was a case which was beyond the jurisdiction of the ordinary court of law and outside the sphere of law as understood and interpreted by the statutes and edicts of lesser men ? Now he was only an ordinary prisoner like so many thousand others, who had fought for the freedom of their country and had gone to gaol. A sort of resignation had come over him of late. There was his confession of a Himalayan blunder, his acceptance of the sentence passed upon him, his resignation to the complete change of policy adopted by those who in his absence were guiding the Congress against his uttered word. And now, conscious of his mortal existence, this Mahatma, whom the people believed to be beyond reach of death, had confessed the natural, human desire to live in the present body.

* * *

A SICK man after his operation, Gandhi was released from prison. He came to a little beach outside Bombay proper where in the house of a Parsee gentleman he rested. This vast stretch of sandy beach, Juhu, was far away from the noise and bustle of the great city. Palm trees lined up in a natural curve, with the waters of the sea making a melodious roar which rose above the quiet that prevailed. Twelve miles away from Bombay, it kept at a distance those vast crowds of people which would have thronged to see the Mahatma after his absence of two long years. In the mornings he would gently stroll over the sands with his faithful secretary, Mahadev Desai, and some of his intimate friends who came to see him. But the great crowds did not get near him.

Although it had been built upon, Juhu remained in many ways somewhat primitive. Once it was a fisherman's village and even now, in the evenings, one could see the fishing nets spread out to dry and the dark shining bodies of the fishermen against the expanse of blue sky and water. Then the clouds that trailed across

would be tinged with gold, their edges aflame, but paling into a dim drab as the sun sank lower and lower into the horizon. And as Gandhi would watch this beauteous sight with the silhouette of the tall palm trees curving along the waterfront, the memory of those long days in the narrow precincts of the city gaol would die down and the bitterness within him would mellow. Then he would feel as if there was no word like sorrow, and the disillusionment, which might have worried him, at the thought of some of his trusted friends parting from him on vital issues, would no longer cloud his life. Weak though he was, he still retained that gentleness, which one had learnt to associate with him. Juhu brought out the best that was in Gandhi. It was the right setting for his temperament. Clad as he was in his simple khaddar shawl and in sharp contrast to the elaborate colour scheme of nature, he emerged by his sheer simplicity, from the richness of the colours to draw the attention of the stray passer-by. Nothing could obscure him, not the fury of the gods nor even the beauty of nature.

It was at Juhu, amidst such surroundings, that Das and Nehru came to their one-time undoubted chief who had unexpectedly returned from prison. They had differed from him on a question of policy. Aware as they were of the success of the Swarajist movement, a sense of loyalty to Gandhi made them go to him to see if they could change him to their way of thinking. Gandhi had been released unconditionally, and there were no fetters to his future conduct in politics, except the enfeeblement of his body. But he thought that immediate participation in the political struggle would be inconsistent with the calling-off of the non-co-operation movement. This attitude he maintained when Das and Nehru arrived at Juhu to pay their respects. Whatever may have been the difference in their methods, fundamentally they still stood for the same thing. There was never any question of doubt as to their ultimate goal, and in speaking of the Swarajist "revolt," it is necessary to stress that it was not in ideals, nor in aim that these two factions of the Congress

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differed, but in the method they should adopt. They both saw the same vision of a free India. Both stood as firmly for the liberation of the Indian people. Both regarded the British connection as detrimental to Indian interest—perhaps Gandhi was a little more tolerant. Both knew that the salvation of the country depended on the attainment of complete self-Government. It was only on the question of Council entry and participation in the legislative assemblies of the country that they differed and it was a pity that because of this difference of method the followers of Das and Nehru should have called themselves the "Swarajists" and those of Gandhi the "No-Changers." To the casual observer of Indian politics it gave the impression that these two parties were working at cross-purposes and that the No-Changers were satisfied with the *status quo*, which was far from true. It was perhaps a little unfortunate that so early in the day the most important members of the Congress could not see eye to eye on a question of method and policy.

The conversations that took place at Juhu cleared the air, and the tension, which the country felt over this so-called "split" in the Congress, was relieved when Gandhi adopted the attitude of live and let live. With his usual tact he was able to reduce this split to its very minimum, and he came out of the Juhu conversations a man with a larger heart. One could not help feeling that the Mahatma was also a diplomatic realist. His statement after his talk with Das and Nehru bore evidence of that. In that he said :

"After having discussed with Swarajist friends the vexed question of entry into the Legislative Assembly and the Councils by Congressmen, I am sorry to have to say that I have not been able to see eye to eye with the Swarajists. I assure the public that there has been no lack of willingness or effort on my part to accept the Swarajist position. My task would be much simpler if I could identify myself with it. It can be no pleasure to me to oppose, even in thought, the most valued and respected leaders, some of whom have made great sacrifices in the

cause of the country and who yield to no one in their love of freedom of the motherland ; but in spite of my effort and willingness, I have failed to be convinced by their argument. Nor is the difference between them and myself one of mere detail. There is an honest and fundamental difference. I retain the opinion that Council-entry is inconsistent with non-co-operation, as I conceive it. Nor is the difference a mere matter of interpretation of the word 'non-co-operation' but relates to the essential mental attitude resulting in different treatment of vital problems. It is with reference to such mental attitude that the success or failure of the triple boycott is to be judged, and not merely by a reference to the actual results attained. It is from that point of view that I say that to be out of the legislative bodies is far more advantageous to the country than to be in them. I have, however, failed to convince my Swarajist friends, but I recognise, so long as they think otherwise, their place is undoubtedly in the Councils. It is the best for us all... The question, therefore, before the country is not an examination and distribution of the merits of the Swarajists view and mine. The question is, what is to be done now regarding Council-entry as a settled fact ? Are the non-co-operators to keep up their hostility against the Swarajist method, or are they to remain neutral and even help wherever it is possible or consistent with their principles ? The Delhi and Cocanada resolutions have permitted those Congressmen who have no conscientious scruples to enter the Councils and the assembly if they wanted to. In my opinion, the Swarajists are, therefore, justified in entering the legislative bodies and in expecting perfect neutrality on the part of the No-Changers. They are also justified in resorting to obstruction, because such was their policy, and the Congress laid down no condition as to their entry. If the work of the Swarajists prospers and the country benefits, such ocular demonstration cannot but convince honest sceptics like me of our error, and I know the Swarajists to be patriotic enough to retrace their steps when experience has disillusioned

them. I would therefore be no party to putting any obstacles in their way or to carrying on any propaganda against the Swarajists' entry into the Legislatures, though I cannot actively help them in a project in which I do not believe. The purpose of the Delhi and Cocanada resolutions was to allow the Swarajists a chance of trying the method of Council-entry and that purpose can be served only if the 'no-changers,' with scrupulous honesty, allow the Swarajists full liberty to pursue their programme in the Councils, unfettered by any obstruction from them. During the state of probation, I should advise the No-Changers not to worry about what the Swarajists are doing or saying, and to prove their own faith by prosecuting the constructive programme with undivided energy and concentration. Khaddar and National Schools are enough to occupy every available worker who believes in quiet, honest and undemonstrative work. The Hindu-Muslim problem too will tax the best energy and faith of the workers. The No-Changers can justify their opposition to Council-entry, only by showing the results of their application to the constructive programme, even as the Pro-Changers must justify their entry by results. The No-Changers are in one respect in an advantageous position, for they can secure the co-operation of the Pro-Changers. The latter have declared their faith in the constructive programme, but their contention is that, by itself, the constructive programme cannot enable the country to reach the goal. In the prosecution, however, of the constructive programme outside the Legislatures, all — No-changers, Pro-changers and others, — can, if they will, work in union through their respective organisations if necessary."

It is not possible to pass over this statement of Gandhi's without some comment. It seems to sum up so perfectly his attitude, his character, his faith, his position at the time when he came out of prison to start the new era in Indian politics in general and in the Congress in particular. There was also in this statement a clear and definite exposition of his idea of non-co-operation.

It was, as he put it, an essential mental attitude resulting in different treatment of vital problems. So that in his attitude to Satyagraha he had not changed one jot. And he was now fighting for a fundamental principle not only of Congress politics, but of his own life. If the freedom of the Indian people was to be fought with the weapon of soul force, which he had introduced, then he was entitled to interpret it in his own way. But he was willing to stand out of the way to let others experiment. He was willing to concede the Swarajists a victory if they achieved one. He accepted Council-entry as a fact. He was not trying to obstruct those who had already gone into the fray. But he would not give the Swarajists his benediction, for they had strayed from the fold and he could hardly be expected to support them in the face of his deeper conviction and the convictions of those who followed him wherever he would lead them. There was also something modest about this statement of his. It was devoid of anything spectacular. It was in a different vein from his statements in court or his messages to the nation. "Khaddar and National Schools are enough to occupy every available worker who believes in quiet, honest and undemonstrative work." These were words which expressed that resigned frame of mind in which one found him. But he was resigned to his fate — to follow the plan which he knew God has made for him and which he knew would one day reveal itself. It was in moments like these that one saw him retire into his self, taking refuge in his God and in his soul. The halo round his head shone more brightly in the eyes of those who believed in him, even as it was completely lost from the sight of those who were wavering in their allegiance. He became quieter and was often steeped in prayer. He lived by himself in a world of his own, waiting for the inner voice to urge him on to greater and better things. He was not the man to force the pace against the plan of fate, against the expressed will of some of his most trusted followers, against the echo of his own inner voice. And yet one could not help noticing the sadness within

him at the crumbling of a structure he had so carefully erected. Solidarity within the Congress, unity between Hindus and Muslims—these were not to be achieved so easily midst the perpetual conflict of Indian communities. And as he walked along the sandy beach at Juhu, his heart wept for the things that were no more. He knew that in his absence and as a result of the oppression inflicted on the Congress this organization had gone to pieces. One day he would take the scattered bricks and build again, but in the process of rebuilding he would have to be more careful in the selection of materials, and more sure of his foundations. There was work ahead for him, but in the enfeebled state of his mind and body, he could not cope with it yet.

Das and Nehru remained equally firm. The lawyers had not budged an inch. The views expressed by Gandhi in the course of the conversations and those embodied in the statement had been considered by them "with the care and attention due to his great personality," but, with all the reverence they entertained for him and his opinions, they remained "unconvinced by his reasoning." They did not see how Council-entry was inconsistent with non-co-operation, but if non-co-operation was more a matter of mental attitude than of the application of a living principle to the existing facts of our national life, with special reference to the varying attitude of the bureaucratic government which rules that life, they conceived it to be their duty to sacrifice even non-co-operation to serve the real interests of the country. That was the attitude of Das and Nehru and one wondered at that crucial stage of the struggle, whether in the end it would be their voice that would be heard over India, or whether the three hundred and seventy millions would find their salvation in the message of Gandhi. It was too early to tell.