JOURNEY WITHOUT END

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An Autobiography

by

FRANCIS A. WATERHOUSE

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

THIS is a true story, remembered and set down without exaggeration. There is one point, however, about which I must ask the reader's indulgence. In the spelling of place names, especially of villages, I have used the spelling known to me.

F. A. W.

CHAPTER I

WHERE the Pennine range of mountains reach Derbyshire stands Kinderscout, and in the their most southerly limit in the Peak district of shadow of this stark elevation lies the village of Hayfield. A motorist of to-day setting out from Hayfield could traverse no less than five counties in the course of a day's run—Derbyshire, Lancashire, Yorkshire, Cheshire, and Staffordshire. A little less than fifty years ago a little boy stepped over the borders of three of them almost every day.

Since those days I have travelled in four continents, but the impression of my childhood on the Derbyshire moors has never faded ; in a life of battle, murder, and numerous escapes from sudden death, the memory of those years has remained, and indeed there were aspects of my boyhood that seemed to point almost prophetically to the future.

A life full of surprises opened auspiciously, for I was a week late in arriving on the scene of my adventures. It was Christmas time, and Dr. Ash had told my parents to expect me on 14 December. My mother was delighted, for, as she told us afterwards, she would be well enough to supervise the cooking of the Christmas dinner, and that year there was to be a goose. But Nature decided to play one of her tricks, and it was a week later before I made my humble bow—on 21 December 1888, thereby nicely 'cooking the family goose.' However, I was able to provide my father with a good story which he told with considerable relish for many years afterwards.

My father was a country vet, and he had inherited the house from his father before him. It was a large old-fashioned house with twelve rooms, and downstairs in the

big dining-room a stone plaque had been built in over the fireplace to remind future generations that it was my great-grandfather who built the house—John Waterhouse and his wife, Sarah. Down the road was the church, and it was always a source of family pride that its registers recorded the name of Waterhouse as far back as 1682. A small bridge took the main street over the River Set, and Hayfield in those days was a typical North-country village. When I returned a few years ago I found factories for the printing of calico and the weaving of cotton, as well as an enormous artificial reservoir which supplies water for Stockport some twelve miles away.

The duties of a country vet are very different from those of a vet in a town, for whereas the latter is mostly concerned with cats and dogs, in the country it is more often cows and sheep. A vet in the country is the natural ally of the farmer and livestock breeder, and in that respect he may be regarded as a definite link in the country's defences. His skill means money to the farmer, and he is consequently a man of some local importance.

Two brothers, both subsequently to lose their lives in the War, quickly followed me into the world, and with Mary Ann, the indefatigable and resourceful maid-of-all-work, we made a busy and, I think, happy household. Routine was strict, for my father was a stern disciplinarian. He was also the kindest and most generous of men and was loved and respected throughout the district. Every morning the three of us were put into an enormous bath, while at breakfast nobody was allowed to touch any food until grace had been said; nor was anyone allowed to leave the table until my father had dismissed us with a blessing. I can see him now, coming to the table and asking my mother if she had put out everything that would be needed, for once he had said grace we were forbidden to fetch anything else.

At the back of the house and across two fields there was a slaughter-house, and in the course of his work my father had occasion to visit it fairly frequently. Naturally this was out-of-bounds for me, but it was not long before I found my way there. I know I ought to feel ashamed of myself, but

I was strangely fascinated by its grim associations, while the sight of so much blood left me completely unmoved. I must have been a horribly sadistic little boy, but the experience served me well in after years, when I was to see more blood flow than comes to the lot of most men. One afternoon, after there there had been a hue and cry for me all over the house, I was discovered in this charnel-house, soundly smacked, and forbidden ever to go there again.

Hardly a week passed before I was up there again, and I was to pay dearly for my disobedience. On a ledge in the roof was a leather satchel holding three or four long butchers' knives, and as one of the men put up his hand to take one of these knives, he dislodged another, which struck my hand as it fell. To this day I carry the mark. The knife had cut an artery, and I was bleeding profusely. With commendable presence of mind, one of them jerked my arm up, and, pressing it close to my body, he hurried me home, where I was greeted by an astonished mother. The faithful Dr. Ash was summoned, and no sooner had he seen me than he pulled a long face and announced that I must be rushed immediately to the infirmary, and that meant going to Manchester, a distance of sixteen miles. There was no train for two hours, so Jane, the mare, was harnessed to the trap. It was an anxious journey, with my father's attention divided between maintaining Jane's speed and glancing at his small passenger, and all the time Dr. Ash kept my arm bent double.

I was in that infirmary for fourteen weeks, and when at last I came home it was considered a sufficient occasion to warrant a party to celebrate the event. I could hardly consider myself the hero of the day, but I was certainly the chief centre of interest. I was now six years old and going to school at the Church School, presided over by the genial Mr. Beardwood, whom I remember with gratitude in a world of hard knocks.

But more trouble was on the way. It all started one morning when I refused to take my turn in the bath and set up a howl. My father dismissed the matter, assuming

that some soap had got in my eye, but at breakfast he commented on my lack of appetite, and at school good Mr. Beardwood asked me what was the matter. He sent me home again before lunch, and as I was still crying, Dr. Ash was sent for. After much deliberation it was decided that I had developed typhoid, which was to put the whole house in disorder for a long time. Old Mother Bowden, the village nurse, who had brought me into the world and who used to say that she would see me out of it, was detailed to look after me, and while I was convalescing my father engaged a Punch and Judy man to come over from Glossop and set up his apparatus outside my bedroom window to amuse me.

One of my visitors was my Aunt Mary, my mother's sister, and this lady was to play a large part in my life. Her husband was the landlord of the Grouse Inn, exactly half-way between Hayfield and Glossop, but although she was such a near neighbour, she hardly ever came to the house. I don't think she and mother hit it off too well, but I can remember her coming in to see how I was getting on. Whether I took her fancy I can't say, but she didn't stop at inquiring after my health. She told my mother that she thought it would be a good thing for me to go and stay at the 'Grouse.' Mother was a little upset about this, thinking, no doubt, that once there I should not come back, but Aunt Mary assured her that at the end of a month I could come home. She pointed out that the air would do me good, and that I could roam at will over the moorland surrounding the inn. For my part I was all on Aunt Mary's side, and I could see that my father was impressed. In the end Aunt Mary won, and I was soon to find out that this was no solitary victory. Indeed, it became increasingly obvious that Aunt Mary always won, but at that moment I was content to know that I was to have the freedom of my beloved moors, and it was a happy boy who put his suitcase into the trap that was to take him to the 'Grouse.'

The Grouse Inn stands high. Those three miles from Hayfield are a long climb, while beyond it is an easy run

down into Glossop. To-day, the 'Grouse' is the goal of hundreds of holiday-makers and week-enders, who come up for a whiff of air and doubtless a tankard of beer. Even in those days business was brisk—so much so that when my uncle died he is reputed to have left £167,000. I know that he received an offer of £6000 from a brewery, but he preferred to keep the place a free house and it seemed that he was wise in his generation. Attached to the inn was a farm, which also proved a valuable asset. As far as I can remember there were about forty head of cattle. There were also numerous servants, and in charge of these servants was a man of the name of Enoch Enoch. I remember my uncle once remarking to him that if Enoch walked with the Lord, Enoch Enoch must have been on either side of Him. Be that as it may, Enoch Enoch was a rum bird and anything but a saint. And it was into his hands that I was placed by my aunt, who, strange to say, regarded this man almost with affection—or with as much affection as her austere personality could command.

Aunt Mary was true to her word. I had to get up at six o'clock in the morning, but I was allowed to wander at will in the country and given a free hand, provided I kept out of the public rooms. I was also allowed to go and watch the cows being milked, with disastrous results, for one of them took such an active dislike to me that she lifted me and a can of milk into the air, sending me back to bed badly bruised.

Mr. Enoch, as I respectfully called him, used to take me with him to set the rabbit traps, and sometimes I would go with him to collect the catch. On one of these occasions he noticed me counting the rabbits and asked me how many there were.

"Thirty," I said.

"No, no," he replied, "there are only eighteen."

Being a well-brought-up boy I disdained any argument and thought no more of it. It appeared that no rabbits were required in the inn, and Enoch was told he could take them into Glossop and sell them in the market. In those days rabbits fetched threepence each. I accompanied

Enoch on this expedition, and the first thing I noticed in Glossop was an enormous tent. When I drew Enoch's attention to this, he told me that inside this tent was a circus. As soon as we had disposed of the rabbits, Enoch mentioned that he had to go and see a friend in the town, and that if I promised to keep my mouth shut he would give me sixpence to go to the circus.

This was a treat indeed, but as we approached the pay-desk, I had my first glimpse of a lion, and I was so frightened that I tried to get away. But Enoch was determined to get me *out* of the way, and he knew that once he had me inside he was free. Anyway, he persuaded me to put down my sixpence, and in I went. Now I knew very well that there had been thirty rabbits, and Enoch had only declared eighteen. I also knew that we had sold thirty, which gave Mr. Enoch three shillings for himself. Of this money he had given sixpence to me, and when I met him again after the show, I, young as I was, knew what had happened to the remaining half-crown.

"Mr. Enoch," I said with youthful indignation, "you have been drinking."

Any unnaturalness in such a remark is dispelled when I say that I had heard my aunt repeatedly tell Enoch that he was not to drink beyond the beer that was supplied to him at the inn. He was, indeed, very well looked after, and was allowed as much beer and tobacco as any man could reasonably want. But Mr. Enoch was not a reasonable man, and his wants in this respect were abnormal. When it is remembered that beer in those days cost twopence a pint, it was not difficult to be merry on half a crown, and Mr. Enoch was distinctly merry that afternoon.

My admonition alarmed him considerably. But he held the trump card.

"If you tell your aunt that I've been drinking," he said, "then I shall have to tell her you've been to the circus."

That was enough for me. Not a word. Encouraged by his diplomatic victory, Enoch paused outside an inn on the way home and sat down to rest, saying he was tired. He

gave me a penny to buy some sweets at a shop opposite, and when I came out, he had gone. I guessed he was inside, and in a minute he came tottering out, explaining that he had gone in to ask the time ! When eventually we arrived home, my aunt duly received the sum of 4s. 6d. for the rabbits, and failed to comment on the appearance of her remarkable *major-domo*.

The month soon went by, and at the end of it my father arrived in the trap to take me home, but I didn't want to go. Despite the strictness of Aunt Mary and the vagaries of Enoch Enoch, I was too fond of the heather and of the farm life to go back to Hayfield. Moreover, my aunt knew this, and once more she carried the day. The problem this time was my schooling, but it was finally agreed that since I was now fully recovered, I should walk in to Hayfield every morning to school. I was to have lunch and tea at home, and walk back at night. It was three miles each way, but that didn't worry me. It was a pleasant walk, and all went well until one winter's morning when, as I got out of bed, there was already two or three inches of snow on the ground. There was some debate as to whether I ought to go to Hayfield at all, but as it was not actually snowing at the time, my aunt let me go. However, conditions were considerably worse at Hayfield, and when I went home to lunch, my mother told me that I was not to attempt to make the journey back. The plan was for me to come back as usual for tea and to stay the night, but when tea-time came I had a premonition that if I went home that night I should be kept there. No doubt I was a wilful child, but rather than risk being kept indefinitely at home, I cut my tea and began to walk back to the 'Grouse.'

Outside the village the snow was eighteen inches thick, and the wind drove me into the shelter of a wall. A fellow traveller out of pity asked me where I lived and begged me to go home, but I waved him aside and struggled on. It was snowing hard and I had forgotten the dip in the road about a mile out of Hayfield. It was bitterly cold and the snow was freezing almost as it fell. I staggered on as

far as the dip, where, of course, there was a drift. How deep it was I don't know, for I never touched bottom; I just crumpled up and sank into the snow in a heap—almost unconscious. Now it so happened that in all that deserted stretch of country, and on a night when no man in his senses would venture abroad, there was one man working on that particular road—no other than Ted, the roadman, who was presumably doing his best to clear the King's highway. At any rate it was Ted who rescued me that night, and thinking I had come from a farm over the way went and knocked up the family, whose name was Large. No doubt Mr. Large explained that all his own children were tucked up in bed, but he came out with Ted to bring me in—or so I was told when I woke up in the Large nursery next morning.

To say there was consternation at the 'Grouse' is to put it mildly. The natural feeling of relief engendered by my return was countered by the equally natural fear that my parents should know the truth. But Aunt Mary was a resourceful woman and she pledged me to secrecy. It was a risk on her part, for to honour my pledge I might have to tell a lie, and for her to countenance a deliberate falsehood would undoubtedly lower her prestige. Nevertheless it was the only thing to do, and, although I expressed a childish horror at the mere suggestion of deceiving anyone, let alone my own mother, I duly kept my mouth shut.

It was about this time that I remember seeing General Booth, one of those men once seen never forgotten. It was on one of my periodical visits to Glossop with the redoubtable Enoch, and the occasion is memorable for another and more material reason. The 'general,' an astute showman who did not disdain a sensational prop for the cause, was seated in a motor car, the first I had ever seen, and, indeed, one of the first that anybody could have seen. The double attraction had drawn half the town from their homes, and the aged evangelist was standing up inimicably to a bombardment from a crowd of urchins, who seemed to have commandeered the family dustbin for ammunition.

All this time Mr. Enoch was playing a dangerous game and relying on the innocence of youth to see him through. But what he failed to realize was that his very behaviour was rapidly destroying innocence. Ever since the incident of the rabbits, I had felt that all was not quite as it should be. I have already hinted that my upbringing was strict, and Enoch's transgressions impressed themselves strongly on my mind, the more so since he remained the confidant of my aunt. Sometimes he would make me keep *cave* while he indulged in a bout of secret drinking in the tap-room, and I was beginning to resent being treated as a sort of juvenile fence. Sooner or later there was bound to be an explosion, and the bubble burst with remarkable directness, though none too happily for me.

One day my uncle took me into his bedroom, and asked me if I had ever seen a gold sovereign. I was able to tell him that not only had I seen several, but that my father had given me one more than once.

"Well," said my uncle, "perhaps you haven't seen as many as that," whereupon he pulled open a drawer, filled with a really amazing hoard of coin. I noticed that the silver was in neat little piles of £1, and when I had expressed my wonder, I was told that if I always did as I was told I myself might one day possess even more money than that. This was cold comfort, indeed, for I had hoped for a more practical demonstration of the rewards of virtue. However, my aunt held the money bags, and there was seldom any change to be got out of *her*.

It was that very same evening, when I was going up to bed, that I stopped short on the stairs. From where I was standing I could see into my uncle's room, for the door was open, and a man was fumbling at the chest of drawers. The intruder turned round suddenly, and in another second Enoch was angrily telling me to hurry up and go to bed. Up till that moment I had never suspected Enoch of being a thief, but at supper next day there was talk of five shillings being missing. Worse was to follow, for my aunt actually asked me if I knew anything about it.

"Mr. Enoch tells me that you gave him ninepence to-day,"

she said, "and that you bought some sweets in Glossop. Did your father give you some money on Sunday?"

My father often gave me a shilling at week-ends, and it happened that he had done so on this occasion, but I had certainly not been fool enough to present Enoch with ninepence of it, nor had I bought any sweets. As if to prove it I brandished a new shilling at my aunt, and turned out my pockets to show that I had no sweets. But Aunt Mary was not impressed.

"Go and look in your overcoat pocket," she ordered.

That took the wind out of my sails, if you like! And she was right. In my coat pocket was a bag of toffee, and I knew who had put it there. Enoch had planted it on me to stiffen the evidence against me. That was enough for me, and without any hesitation I told my aunt what I had seen the night before.

"Are you sure you're not lying?" she said.

"I have only told one deliberate lie in my life, and that was at your instigation."

I remember feeling very proud at using the word 'instigation,' and I had certainly scored a point, but my aunt declared an open verdict. She knew all right, but she would not admit it, and looking back I have never ceased to wonder how that autocratic old lady could have been so helpless before a stupid scoundrel like Enoch, who certainly had more power over her than her own husband. Still, I liked the life and I was content to stay, but from then on Enoch and I lived in open enmity. Once a kind of buffer state between him and his employer, he now saw in me a danger, and I knew that if he could get me into trouble he would not hesitate to do so.

Shortly after this my aunt decreed that I should eat porridge, which was served cold. It was made in the morning, and remained on a table in the buttery until supper-time. One day, when I was watching one of the servants in the kitchen, I noticed that the top of the porridge had been pierced, and around the top there was a kind of glucose liquid. I commented on this to the servant, who dismissed it by saying that probably my aunt had added

some syrup as a treat. But this explanation was quickly dispelled by the evidence of my nose. And then I noticed on the table a small jar, which I recognized as normally belonging to an outhouse where various things connected with the farm were stored.

While I was pondering these things, my aunt came in, and I told her of my fears. She looked at the porridge, and then she caught sight of the jar.

"How did that get in here?" she exclaimed in obvious alarm.

Nobody had anything to say to that, and she swept out of the room. That night there was no porridge for supper, for which I was heartily thankful, for I hated the stuff anyway. I happened to know that that jar contained a lotion that my father had made up for a sick mare on the estate, but my aunt knew more than I did, and it was just that little more that explained her alarm. My father had omitted to mark the bottle 'poison,' but he had told my aunt, and he had also told Enoch, and anybody else who had anything to do with it.

I discovered this a week later when my father was visiting the 'Grouse.' The incident came up in general conversation, and somebody let the cat out of the bag about the lotion. I know that I recalled Enoch asking after my health at breakfast the next morning.

"Are you feeling all right this morning, Master Francis?" —the old hypocrite!

When my father realized exactly what had been going on, he almost went up in smoke. Indeed, he was on the point of sending for the police when my aunt intervened. She could tolerate Enoch, but she would not tolerate any scandal in the house, and once more she carried the day. But it was to be her last victory so far as I was concerned, for my father took me away that same day.

I have no doubt that Aunt Mary was a woman of strong religious convictions, yet she could not be called a churchwoman. This must not be counted against her, for the 'Grouse' was three miles from a church, but this affair of the porridge, and Enoch's dastardly attempt on my life (although to give him his due I only believe he wanted to

give me a pain), brought her one Sunday to attend a celebration of the Holy Communion at Hayfield Parish Church. Moreover, this visit brought her into contact with Mr. Ricketts, the Vicar. It was, of course, essential that she should make an impression on his Reverence, who rejoiced in the initials of R.R.R., as also, by a curious coincidence, did his successor in the benefice. What more natural as the centre of conversation than her erring nephew, an object of interest to both parties since I was still a pupil at the Church School.

I should mention that my family was not exactly *persona grata* with the Vicarage, since Mr. Ricketts was a Low Churchman, and my father was very much the reverse. Indeed, every night before I went to bed I was made to repeat the 'Hail Mary!', and without wishing to do the memory of Mr. Ricketts an injustice I have to put it on record that such religion as I have practised in later life has been due solely to my father's teaching. Anyway, if the Vicar had been ill-disposed towards me before, he was still more so after his interview with my aunt, and on the Monday when I was coming out of morning school, he beckoned me over to him in the street. Without saying a word, he raised his stick and hit me with it over the ear. I don't think he meant to hurt me as much as he did, but he knocked me down, and I was so taken aback that as soon as I had struggled to my feet I kicked him in the shins—and ran. So did the Vicar, and so did a crowd of my schoolmates who had witnessed the affray!

I presented myself at my father's door followed by an irate clergyman and a gang of noisy children. My father listened patiently to an explosive account of what had occurred from the Vicar, who confined his remarks to my attack on his person.

"Is that the truth?" asked my father, aghast that a son of his should openly assault the Vicar in his own parish, even if he was a Low Churchman.

"No, it isn't," I said bravely. "He hit me first."

"Well," said my father to Mr. Ricketts, "if you like to come inside, we'll sort this out, but first of all, would you

be so good as to dismiss this rabble from my door." Spoken like a man !

When the truth was known, relations between the two men were even more strained than before, and it was unfortunate for the Vicar that the evidence was against him. There had been too many witnesses to testify that he had struck first.

When I was fifteen I lost both my parents within nine months. My father died after only a short illness at the age of forty-five, and my mother never really recovered from the shock. At this time I was going to school at Buxton, making the journey by train every day. I had no idea of what I wanted to do in life, beyond the negative resolve not to follow my father as a vet, and to tide things over I went to stay with another aunt, this time a sister of my father's, who lived at Hayfield.

It was an unhappy arrangement. Aunt Mary may have been a virago, but she was a woman who commanded a fair measure of respect, but my new guardian was merely irritable. Any sort of mutual confidence was completely lacking, and it was not long before I began to play truant. Instead of attending church concerts and other parochial events, for which my aunt gave me money, I went into Hyde across the Cheshire border and went to a theatre with 'the lads.' Here I saw many of the old melodramas in the first flush of their triumph, and I remember with gratitude those old stock companies who were able to bring a touch of the outside world into the lives of many youngsters like myself—boys who were in danger of developing purely one-track minds. Coming out of the old Theatre Royal under the glare of its flamboyant lighting, with a brain stored with vivid pictures of adventure and romance, the streets of Hyde itself seemed to open up new vistas in which my aunt and her petty tyrannies found no place. I had reached that age when young men dream dreams and see visions, and it was with a jerk that I remembered the necessity of accounting for my evening's entertainment. My aunt would be in bed, but the maid was always there to tell her when I came in.

"Did you enjoy the concert, Francis?"

"Yes, thank you, Auntie." It was the simple truth.

But this could not last for long, and the bubble burst when one evening at supper my aunt rapped me over the knuckles with a tablespoon. It was a Sunday and there had been trouble about going to church. That night when I went to bed, I went to a secret drawer in my room and took out nineteen gold sovereigns, representing the accumulated savings of my life. Some of these I had been given by my father, some from the mistress of the 'Grouse,' and even Enoch had been responsible for one of them—'hush money' probably. Anyway, there they were, and they were going to be used.

Not far from the theatre at Hyde was a recruiting office, and many times had I dallied outside its red-painted doors, gazing at the attractive posters, and sometimes even taking one of the pamphlets from the little table just inside. My future was not only a worry for my relations; it was beginning to trouble me, and now that I had made up my mind to break with my aunt I had to make another and more important decision. I must earn my living. My seventeenth birthday was already passed. My inborn love of adventure had never abated; indeed, it had received a stimulus from the repressive attitude of my aunts, and before I fell asleep on that fateful night, my mind was made up. I would be a soldier.

In the morning I left the house. I had no luggage, for that would have aroused suspicions. But I had my sovereigns and such personal property as I could stuff into my pockets. There was an absentee from school that day, for the train for Buxton left without me. It was the train for Hyde that carried a Derbyshire boy on his way to claim the King's shilling.

CHAPTER II

AS soon as I arrived at Hyde I walked straight to the recruiting office. Although I had made up my mind irrevocably to join the army I knew that I should be assailed by doubts and misgivings. The sooner I was in the better. Once more I gazed at the brightly coloured posters on the railings, while I was summoning my courage to go inside. My meditation was rudely interrupted by a gruff voice.

"What do you want?"

It was the recruiting sergeant—one of the real old-fashioned sort. His waxed moustaches almost crackled as he spoke.

"I thought I'd like to join up," I said.

"Oh, you think so, do you. Well, my boy, we don't allow much time for thinking in the army, so you'd better make up your mind. Come in here."

The die was cast. I followed him inside.

"Have you got any parents?"

"No, they're both dead."

"H'm. Well, I suppose there's no objection. How old are you?"

"Seventeen and eleven months."

The sergeant fixed me with a stare. "Do you see that door?" he said. I nodded. "Well, go outside and then come back and tell me you're eighteen."

I was horrified. I protested that that would be a lie, and I saw my aunt bristling with fury at the very idea. But I knew that a soldier must obey.

"Now, how old are you?"

"Eighteen."

That was better!

Now that the sergeant saw I was in earnest his attitude

softened. He assured me I had done the right thing and promised me that I would never regret it. A wonderful life! He made me sit down at a small table and copy out a number of words. Next, I had to tot up a list of figures. Then, he thrust a book in my hand. "Read the first paragraph on page 10," he ordered. "Right; that'll do."

Having passed this examination, I was whisked off to see the local magistrate, a benevolent old man, who called me "sonny," and who congratulated me warmly on my decision. Clasping the Bible, I repeated after him the oath, pledging myself to serve His Majesty King Edward the Seventh, his heirs and successors.

Back at the office we discussed the regiment I should join. Coming from Derbyshire, the sergeant thought I couldn't do better than join the Notts and Derbys, but I had other ideas.

"I want to be with horses," I said.

"No room in the cavalry," snapped the sergeant, "but there's the artillery. Will that do you?"

In those days the R.A. was split into two. There was the Royal Horse Artillery and the Royal Field Artillery. We decided on the latter. The sergeant gave me a railway voucher, and my first day's pay—1s. 8d., the 8d. being my ration money, and packed me off to Chester.

I suppose every boy must experience much the same elation on drawing his first pay. I know that the fact that I was off on a strange journey with little idea of what I should find at the end of it was swamped by the justifiable pride that I was now earning my own living.

To get to Chester from Hyde I had to change at Manchester, and while I was waiting on the platform I was accosted by a complete stranger.

"You're going to Chester," he announced cryptically.

"How did you know that?" I countered.

"Oh, you're not the first young fellow who's waited on this platform for the Chester train. Most of them are off to enlist; besides, look what you've got in your hand."

I was proudly clasping the papers given to me by the recruiting sergeant.

"Those buff forms," went on the stranger, "tell their own tale. Most of you fellows carry them in your hand. Take my advice, sonny, don't you go. It's easy. Tear up those papers, and get away while the going's good. No one'll miss you. They're not going to worry about *you*."

I was dumbfounded. I was also profoundly shocked.

"I don't know who you are," I said defiantly, "but I've just taken an oath to serve the King. I'm going into the army because I want to."

The man laughed, and I was beginning to feel embarrassed. Luckily my train came in and I was able to escape from the clutches of this tempter. I have never seen him again from that day to this, and I have often wondered whether he was an agent sent out by the authorities to test the nerve of young recruits. If so, I hope that I acquitted myself correctly.

Chester had nothing to do with the artillery, but it was the nearest regimental depot and clearing station for young soldiers, and I soon found my way up to the Castle, the depot of the Cheshires. The sentry at the gates passed me on to the guard-room inside.

"Are you a recruit?"

"Yes."

"Yes, what?"

It may have been the old, old story, but it was a new one on me.

"Yes, *sergeant*!"

I stood corrected.

He then gave instructions to an orderly to conduct me to one Sergeant Bentley, who I understood would look after me. My escort was sympathetic, but not exactly enthusiastic about army life. But I was determined not to be discouraged. Sergeant Bentley at least was friendly. He noted my particulars, and took me along to a barrack-room.

"See that bed in the corner over there? That's where you'll sleep to-night. Now, watch me while I make it down for you. He summoned a minion to bring a pillow-slip and sheets, while he removed the regulation four blankets. There's your soap and towel, and to-morrow morning at

six o'clock when you hear the reveille, out you get. If you want a razor, the others'll fix you up." He glanced at my chin, and smiled.

I was next taken to see the chef, who gave me a basin of tea, and when I say basin I mean basin and not cup. That put new life into me. The chef was most particular to point out that at breakfast I must bring my own mug and pour my tea into it from a bucket; on no account was I to dip the mug *into* the bucket. In such apparently trifling matters is a young recruit slowly introduced to military discipline. The conducted tour continued under the kindly guidance of Sergeant Bentley, who showed me what is called the 'institute' side of barracks: reading-rooms, billiards, and other recreational facilities, not to mention the canteen.

"And now if you like you can go out into the town, but remember, if you're not in by half-past nine you'll get the biggest hiding of your young life."

Early next morning I was taken before the officer for disbursements—a Colonel. He explained that he would have to write to my aunt to see if she had any objections to the step I had taken. This was unfortunate, but as she was my lawful guardian there was no escape. The Colonel also told me that the artillery had two depots, one at Woolwich and the other at Templemore in Ireland. He asked me which of the two I preferred.

"Templemore, sir," I answered.

"Why?"

"Because I want to travel and see places."

"That's the right spirit. To Templemore you shall go, but you must wait here a day or two until we hear from your aunt. I'm sure you'll do well. No regrets, I hope? In any case somebody would have to find £10 to buy you out now."

"I want to stay, sir," I said, and then I put my hand in my trouser pocket and produced my sovereigns. "You see, sir," I said, "I could buy *myself* out if I wanted to."

Not without reason the Colonel was somewhat taken aback at the display of this hoard of gold. All he said was: "When you get over to Templemore you'll find that most

of your comrades are not too well off. Keep your sovereigns in your pocket, my boy." It was good advice.

Two days later I found myself again in the presence.

"Ah," said the Colonel. "I have here a letter from your aunt. She says she is horrified that you should want to become a common soldier. Of course she can't expect us to agree with her there, can she? She goes on to say that you are a wayward boy, and she ends by saying that as you have made your bed you might as well lie on it. I must say I can't see any valid objection there. I don't think we need worry any more on that score."

The Colonel stood up and shook me warmly by the hand. Turning to an orderly he told him to make arrangements for me to go to Templemore that same night. I was issued with a greatcoat and a railway ticket and packed off by train to Holyhead. I still had no uniform, but I was now irrevocably a soldier of the King, and not even Lord Roberts himself could have felt prouder in that moment.

It has been said that the English regard the Irish alternatively as a joke and a tragedy. My first encounter with the race might easily have brought me down on either side of the fence, for the train was full of boisterous Irishmen returning home after helping with the English harvest. Why it should be thought necessary to import Irishmen for the job I cannot imagine, but here they all were, three parts shot away and loud in their praise of the old country. They had no thought for the solitary English youth in his army greatcoat, for I was given no escort and I began to wonder to what strange land I was going.

The crossing to Dublin gave me my first taste of the sea. I had never been on a boat before, and I cannot pretend that I enjoyed my initiation. A further tedious railway journey took me to Templemore. It was raining hard when we drew into the station, and not being sure of my whereabouts I opened the window and called out to a porter:

"Is this Templemore?"

"Indeed it is. Can't you be seeing it written up over there?"

I stood on the platform and watched the train disappear before asking the porter how far it was to the depot. It turned out to be quite far enough, and the man asked me if I would care to hire a jaunting car. It seemed a long time since I had last been to bed and I gladly accepted. The driver estimated 1s. 6d. for the fare and off we went.

"It's a lovely day," he said, pointing out that he was accustomed to even heavier rain.

In the end I gave the old boy a half-crown, which elicited the usual "Heaven bless you." He pulled at the reins and left me standing in the rain.

I had come a long way from Hayfield, but this was but the beginning of a journey that is still without end.

After reporting at the guard-room I was escorted across an enormous compound to my quarters. On the way we passed an officer and my escort gave the order "Eyes right!" In my ignorance I turned my whole body and received a severe reprimand in consequence. The lapse was especially unfortunate for the officer in question turned out to be Major McGoff Bond, the C.O.

After crossing what seemed like a desert my guide pushed open a door in the far corner and shouted: "Here's a rooky[1] for you." A bombadier received me and once again I was shown my bed and introduced to the various amenities of the place. There were several other recruits in the barrack-room, but nobody of my own vintage. I found out that it was the practice to wait until a certain number arrived before issuing uniforms or beginning any serious drill, other than light fatigue duty.

Apparently they were only waiting for me, for next morning we all fell in and were marched down to the quartermaster's stores. We were issued with our kit and a number, and henceforward I was No. 53084, Gunner Waterhouse, Royal Horse and Royal Field Artillery, attached to No. 2 Depot, Templemore, Co. Tipperary.

"Don't you forget your number," I was told. "You can't lose it. It will be stamped on all your clothes and be yours for ever."

[1] Recruit.

For the next few weeks we spent a good proportion of our time in the gymnasium. Our instructor was a real type, known to all as Black Jock. There must be many people alive to-day who owe their health to this splendid puncher. He was as hard as nails and put us youngsters through our paces with unrelenting vigour. He was fond of wearing a boxing-glove on his right hand, and if anybody seemed to be wilting under the strain of the parallel bars he would be speedily returned to an upright position with a blow. The weediest recruit was transformed into another being, and I shall always be grateful to this old warrior.

In the afternoons we had 'school.' In those days this was an important part of army training, for quite a number of recruits were practically illiterate. After I had secured an Education Certificate and been physically knocked into shape by Black Jock, I was put among a party of recruits bound for Cahir (also in Tipperary), where I was to join my brigade; the 42nd. A brigade comprised three batteries and was commanded by a Lieutenant-Colonel. I was attached to the 29th Battery, composed of three sections and commanded by a major (a battery being roughly the equivalent of an infantry company). A lieutenant ruled over each section, which in turn was divided into sub-sections, each with its own sergeant.

We arrived at Cahir in the middle of the afternoon, when most of the resident troops were having their siesta. Consequently we were not at all welcome.

"Who the h—— are you?" was a typical greeting.

I was bandied about from one room to another until I was eventually directed to sub-section B, and told to report to Sergeant Ebden. The section was not very pleased to see me. Most of them were asleep, and those that were awake treated me to a liberal dose of expletives. Luckily one of the men took a more kindly view and made it his business to look after me. One thing surprised me. All round the room there were a number of cages hanging from the ceiling and covered with white cloth. I asked what was inside.

"Parrots."

" Where do they come from ? " I asked in amazement.

" Punkee."

I scratched my head and tried to recall the little geography I had learnt. Where was Punkee ? My friend, realizing how raw I was, explained that Punkee was the soldier's name for India. It was a name that was to mean much for me.

Sergeant Ebden had red hair and a fine pair of waxed moustaches. He explained that the battery was much below strength. It had only recently come back from India, and many of the men were away on leave, including, incidentally, our own N.C.O.s. Others had left the service and had been pensioned off. Evidently we young recruits were here to fill up the depleted ranks.

" When you've been in the army as long as I have you'll know a thing or two," said the sergeant.

" And how long is that ? " I asked.

" Twenty-five years," he snapped, and I noticed the South African war ribbons on his breast.

" Stick to it, youngster, and you'll get on. Remember, you take your orders from me."

" And remember," he added, like a house-master addressing a new boy, " if you go down to the canteen, you needn't necessarily invite the entire section to go with you ; they know a recruit often has a bit of brass with him—see ? "

Then there was also Sergeant-Major Worsfold, who took a kindly interest in me from the beginning. He stopped me one day and asked me if I wanted a job. By this time I knew enough about army life to know that ' a job ' meant some sort of civilian duty, such as cook or valet. I couldn't very well say no, so I asked him what it was. He surprised me by saying that he wanted me to look after some hounds !

There was a considerable amount of hunting in the neighbourhood, and indeed many of our officers took part when they were stationed at Cahir. A pack of hounds was kennelled on the premises, and apparently the men responsible for them had gone on leave. Always fond of animals, I readily accepted the offer, and was duly instructed in my job, part of which was to exercise the hounds. There

was an experienced kennelman over me, and I soon mastered the work. But it was not to last long.

One day when we were out, two of the hounds broke through a hedge into some parkland. Before we could do anything, the others had followed suit, and the next thing I heard was the sound of a shot. It was fired by a man who had suddenly appeared from nowhere. One of the animals was killed, and the others ran off in all directions in panic. Presumably the man was employed on the estate. Apparently frightened at what he had done, he made off in the direction of a house, while we did our best to round up the hounds. It was a good hour before we had a full muster, and I learned afterwards that the police had taken the matter up and that the man had been severely punished. It was a most unfortunate experience, but luckily I was not held to blame.

By this time, more men had turned up, and so had our horses, and one fine morning the battery moved off for firing practice, which in the artillery is a much more elaborate affair than ordinary range shooting. We marched to a place called Glenamall, where we camped. It was pouring with rain, and not even the duck-boards could keep us dry. No sooner had we arrived than some Irish girls invaded the camp in an attempt to sell us various odds and ends. One of them remarked that it was "a lovely soft day!" All in all we had to put up with a good deal of badinage from the country people, and I remember that when we came to Cahir, there was a bunch of drunken women standing outside the inn opposite the barracks. I still remember the name—'Harty's Inn.' One of them called out: "Sure, they're only boys just after leaving their mothers' breast!"

Our guns were eighteen-pounders, and our first target was a kite-balloon. I have often heard people say that the kite-balloon was unknown at that date, but there was certainly one anchored above Glenamall, and I claim to have brought it down! I was No. 3 on the gun—the man who actually fires the shot, and no sooner had the 'spade' shot back into the earth than the balloon burst into flames.

My claim was contested by my neighbour, another recruit, and the argument became so strong that we resorted to blows. We were quickly separated and taken before Lieutenant Boaze (now an Inspector-General of Ordnance Forces), who reprimanded us severely and detained us in the guard-tent. As a punishment we were told off to act as the target party in the morning. As the reader will understand in a minute, this was an exceedingly precarious undertaking.

For some reason Sergeant Ebden was not with us on this occasion, and the sergeant on duty was a much tougher proposition. When we fell in next morning, he asked for the two defaulters. Neither of us spoke.

"Are you trying to be funny?" he thundered, as he caught hold of my tunic.

As a matter of fact we were not, strictly speaking, defaulters, for although we had been punished, we had not served a legitimate army sentence, such as being confined to barracks. However, such a technical point didn't make it any easier for us. The sergeant took us both away with him to a sort of cairn on top of a hill. Behind the cairn was a dug-out, and on the other side was the target. This consisted of roughly-drawn heads and shoulders of men, giving the impression from a distance of a platoon of infantry. The whole contraption was controlled by a cable, and on a command from the sergeant (in this case a single blast on his whistle) we had to heave the cable taut so that the 'men' stood up on end and became visible to the gun party in the distance. Between us and the guns was a signalman, who signalled to us when the guns were in position. On receiving the signal, the sergeant, who was safely screened by the cairn, blew his whistle and we hauled up the target.

Immediately there was a clap of thunder as the guns went off, and the whole air seemed full of shells and shrapnel. There are few finer sights than an artillery battery in the moment of firing, provided one is not in the line of fire! But we were hardly in a position to admire the spectacle. Just as one blast on the whistle gave us the signal to heave

up the target, two blasts meant 'let go.' Those two blasts never came. The cable was much too short, and my colleague was struck by a piece of shrapnel. I heard him cry out, before he collapsed and of course let go the cable. The strain was too much for me, and I was compelled to let go, too. The sergeant, who had seen nothing of all this, came out of his hiding-place, demanding to know why we had let down the target before receiving his signal.

"He's wounded," I cried. It was all I could say.

Luckily the sergeant knew his Morse code and signalled to the connecting signalman, who relayed the message to the gun party to send up a stretcher immediately. By some miracle I was unscathed, but my fellow 'defaulter' had to have a leg amputated, and consequently was compelled to leave the service. He was only nineteen. Peace may have her victories as well as war—she also has her casualties, none the less deplorable.

It was as a result of this accident that I had an interview with Major Reid, V.C., commanding the battery. He assured me that I was in no way to blame, and indeed complimented me on my conduct.

"You're doing very well," he said, "and I'm going to offer you a stripe."

This came as a complete surprise and took me off my guard. The fact was that I didn't want a stripe, and I asked Major Reid if I might refuse, a request which was no doubt as much a surprise to him.

"Do you mean that?" he asked. "Most youngsters are only too anxious to earn promotion. After all, you have chosen this as your career. I cannot believe that you are no less ambitious than others."

"It isn't that, sir," I explained. "It's just that I would feel happier as an ordinary soldier, at present, anyway."

"Very well. I want you to understand that I am offering you promotion, but I am not going to press it on you. If you accepted it against your will you would make a bad N.C.O."

Major Reid then held out something that meant much more to me than a stripe—the possibility of service in India.

"You'll get some real soldiering there," he said. "It's a fine country with every opportunity of success. You'll see artillery in action under proper conditions, and maybe you'll feel more like taking responsibility after you've had a bit more experience. Stick to it, and you'll be all right."

The hope was fulfilled. Twenty-five of us were picked to join a brigade in India. We were to sail in October (1908), and in the meantime were given £9 and six weeks' leave. It was my intention to spend this leave at home, for I felt sure that my aunt would have forgiven me by now, and even if she still harboured any doubts, they would be quickly dispelled by my uniform. But I was wrong. She wouldn't even see me! She sent out a message by the maid.

It must be said that in the country villages of those days, to join the army was not considered exactly the thing to do, and those that saw me in the village street at Hayfield watched me with censure rather than approval. My uniform was blue, with yellow facings, a red stripe down the trouser, a red, blue, and yellow girdle, and a blue cap with a red band. The only comment this finery evoked was that I looked 'funny in that get-up!' Worst of all I was cut by my two brothers. I saw them by accident in the street, and they both turned and walked away. It must be said in their favour that they were probably acting under strict instructions from my aunt, and she was not a person to be disobeyed, except by a complete outsider like myself.

I felt outraged. It was a challenge and I accepted it. I called out to a small boy and asked him if he would take a message to my brothers in the evening. I promised him a shilling for his trouble, and on the back of a grimy envelope I declared that though they might despise me now there would come a time when they would respect the King's uniform. When I next saw my brothers, the only time I ever saw them again, both of them were in uniform themselves. It was on the Western Front in 1915. Neither o them came back.

I decided to stay out my time in London, where one could do a good deal on very little in the first decade of the century, but before going south I called on the family

solicitor in Manchester. There was a good sum coming to me under my father's will, and since I was off to India I thought I might as well have some of it now. I found the solicitor to be the very acme of Bumbledom. I could not have a penny piece until I came of age. On that he was adamant. Moreover, he added insult to injury by saying that as I was likely to be killed soon, it might be as well if I told him to whom my share of the money should go on my decease !

" I've no intention of dying just yet," I assured him.

" No ? I suppose you think that you'll never be in a battle."

" It's our job to win battles," I said defiantly.

However, as there was no change to be got out of the old man, I took my leave. Later on I was to be swindled out of the money, anyhow, but for the moment I still had my gold sovereigns and my pay. And I was going to Punkee !

CHAPTER III

WHEN I arrived back at Cahir I found the barracks steeped in an atmosphere of happy expectancy. Even those who were staying behind seemed to be imbued with a sense of things to come. It might be their turn next, while the old stagers were full of stories promising a land of milk and honey. India is also a land of wild beasts and fever, but these were conveniently overlooked. Everybody was keyed up, and within a few days of my arrival the 'India draft,' as we were called, were paraded.

We were standing in small groups waiting for the fall-in, and I was chatting with one of the men.

"We're going to have a fine day for it," he said. "You can see the mountain tops. I've never known a day when they weren't clouded in mist. What a country—rain all the time. We'll be getting some sun, anyway. But I'm not too keen about this particular parade."

"Why not?"

"Well, it isn't much fun having a six-inch needle stuck in you."

Just then Sergeant-Major Worsfold shouted the fall-in. The India draft was on parade, and we were given a few words of encouragement.

"This takes me back to the day when I first went out. But soldiers weren't so pampered in those days. Maybe you'll have an easier time, but I know it'll do you a world of good. In a minute you're going to the hospital for vaccination against enteric. That's an innovation since my day. Mind you, it doesn't mean you won't go sick, but it'll go easier with you."

A bombardier marched us off to receive our dose. It was the first time that I had experienced real physical pain, and

the man in front of me went off in a faint. He quickly recovered, and was blandly informed that he must get used to worse things than a hypodermic syringe. After this we were excused all duty for forty-eight hours and told to go to bed. Most of us went through a pretty bad time.

At last the great day dawned, and for our final parade at Cahir we were honoured by a talk from Major Reid.

"Unfortunately," he said, "I have not had an opportunity of getting to know you very well, but from what I have seen you're a smart body of men. As you've probably gathered, Cahir is a sort of clearing-dump for you fellows, and consequently I am deprived of seeing you develop as I know you will. India's a fine country, but you'll have to take care—especially of your health. We here wish you every success, and I am confident that you will uphold the honour and traditions of the service. Take over, Sergeant-Major."

There was a burst of cheering as we swung out of the barracks on our way to the station, and at every corner there was a small crowd of villagers to see us on our way. A train took us to Waterford, where my unfortunate colleague at target-practice was lying in hospital. Before I went on leave I had been given permission to visit him, and I always remember him saying that if we hadn't quarrelled about that balloon he wouldn't be lying there. "But," he added, "I still think I brought it down!" If it is any consolation, I gladly give him the credit.

The army is not only punctual, it is usually too soon, and such was the case at our embarkation. We were the first on board, followed some time later by about three hundred pigs. After the pigs came a coffin, and last of all the passengers, of whom there were not many, as the ship was only a cargo boat. We were stationed on an upper deck, and below us were the pigs, packed like sardines, and almost lying on top of one another. As the voyage progressed, the smell became almost intolerable. Moreover, the Irish Sea was in a turbulent mood and we began to pitch and toss with disastrous effect. Nearly every man was sick, and none of us had a wink of sleep. However, we experienced

a calm just off Fishguard, and it was then that I crawled behind a structure on the deck and went off to sleep.

The next thing I knew was someone calling my name. I rubbed my eyes and realized that the ship was deserted. Suddenly I saw the sergeant in charge peering down at me.

"What do you think *you're* doing? We've been docked for an hour. If you're not quick you'll be for the high jump."

I picked myself up, and heaved my kitbag on to my shoulders. As I did so, I lost my balance, and the bag dropped down among the pigs, the only remaining occupants of the ship! I had to scramble down and collect it, before rejoining my comrades on the quay and receiving a sharp reprimand from the lieutenant.

From Fishguard we went by train to Southampton, and no sooner had I sat down than I was asleep again. They brought round sandwiches and coffee, but I had no appetite for them and waved them away. I slept throughout the entire journey, and was again forcibly awakened—this time by a military policeman at Southampton.

We were to sail on the troopship *Plassey*, and before embarking we were officially handed over to the officer in charge of details, while our lieutenant and his N.C.O.s went back to Cahir. The *Plassey* had her own officers as well as the ship's officers, for she was in regular service as a troopship, and since military routine at sea requires a special understanding, there are always certain officers and N.C.O.s reserved for this work. We were carefully checked, and a bag of money containing our pay for the voyage was solemnly handed over.

We were next allotted to our mess tables—sixteen to a table. There were about a thousand troops on board, all going out to join their units in India. We left Southampton in the early evening, and anchored for the night almost opposite Netley Hospital, the largest military hospital in England, where the chief matron has the rank of lieutenant-general and has her place in the Army List as such.

The crew was not numerous for the simple reason that there was ample labour on board for the many routine jobs

that do not need a specialized technique. For instance, I was immediately made hammock orderly. Every morning our hammocks were stored away in the hold of the ship, and every evening at five-thirty they were handed out to their respective owners. It was my job to receive them and to issue them. On the second night I felt unwell, and when the last man had gone up I took my own hammock from the bin and just lay down where I was. Consequently at the final roll-call I was absent. Man overboard? That is always the first thought, but first the ship must be searched. I was discovered—asleep again. I was still far from well, and this influenced the officer to forgive me. I was also relieved of the job, since I was obviously in no fit state to discharge it.

Temptation is never very far from the path of a young soldier, and it came my way the next day. A man by the name of Roberts suggested that I went in with him on a gamble.

"Look here," he said, "I've been talking to one of the crew. He's got a Crown and Anchor board, and he says if I can find a man with some money, we can make our fortunes. What about it? How much have you got?"

I forgot the warning of the Colonel at Chester and drew out my gold sovereigns.

"That'll do," said Roberts. "Now come with me and meet the boss. We'll have to be careful not to be seen. Just follow me."

The crew's quarters were naturally strictly out of bounds to the troops, but we found our quarry unseen, and the three of us swore solemnly to stick together and share the spoil. Custom was plentiful and by the end of the day I was about £30 up. But Nemesis was approaching. Success went to my head, and I was foolish enough to be seen counting my money on deck when the officer in charge of details spotted me.

"How did you come to have all that money?" he asked.

"It's mine, sir."

"Really? You surprise me. I never knew that private soldiers were so well off. You've not been gambling?"

"No, sir."

"Well, if you take my advice you'll have that locked up in the ship's safe till the end of the voyage. You can keep the odd shillings, and I suppose you'll be able to jog along on your pay!"

I protested against this, but it was no use. I handed the money over and was given a receipt for it. Roberts was furious, and took me along to the cause of all the trouble to explain what had happened. While we were talking, a voice interrupted:

"What do you men think you're doing there? Don't you know you're forbidden to visit the crew's quarters? Get along quick, and never come here again."

Luckily no more was heard of the matter, and I suppose I considered myself fortunate. I was at least £30 to the good, but Roberts never forgave me for spoiling his fun.

Every morning at ten o'clock came 'Ship's Rounds,' when the Captain carried out an inspection; he was followed by the officer in charge of details, a sergeant, and one or two N.C.O.s. Although we were not responsible to the Captain, he, of course, had the last word in the conduct of the ship, and he had the right to overrule our own officers in everything except purely military discipline.

After one of these inspections a sergeant tapped me on the shoulder.

"What's your name?"

"Waterhouse, Sergeant."

"Right. You're going on sentry duty. Fall in with the sentry party in half an hour."

There were thirty-six of us. It surprised me that there could be so many posts on the ship. We were marched off to our posts, and as I was at the back, by the time it came to my turn all the reasonable posts had already been allotted. We had left the open air, and had descended into the hold.

"Halt!"

We were outside the grocery stores. A single lamp glimmered pathetically. It was an eerie spot, and it was my post. Three men were left, and the sergeant marched them

away. I did not envy them. Sentry duty means two hours on and four hours off, and at one o'clock I was duly relieved, and mighty glad I was to get some fresh air. Between five and seven I didn't feel so good, and when I went on duty again, at eleven, I was downright bad. Round about midnight I nearly jumped out of my skin. Through the darkness I saw something move. It was a rat. Another one . . . two more. The place was seething with them. It is no exaggeration to say that if there was one, there were fifty. Some of them were showing their teeth at me. I was unarmed, and if they took it into their heads to attack me I should be powerless against them.

Every soldier, however raw, knows that the one unforgivable sin is to desert one's post, but I had no thought for that. My one instinct was to get out. I was petrified, and, remember, I was weakened by sea-sickness. I climbed up on deck and lay down on a seat. I could still keep an eye on the post, but I am afraid that I was soon asleep. At one in the morning the sergeant on duty went down to post my relief. Consternation. Nobody there. But the two men saw the rats all right, which was to prove valuable evidence at the inquiry. I was quickly found and brought before the officer again.

"I suppose you realize the seriousness of your offence," he said. "I am afraid I have no alternative but to take you before the Colonel commanding troops on board."

It was obvious that the Colonel had not been told anything about the rats. I was simply brought before him as a man who had deserted his post. The sergeant gave evidence, also omitting any reference to the rats. I waited my turn to speak in my own defence and then dropped the bomb.

"Rats?" said the Colonel. "Is that true, Sergeant?"

"Yes, sir. I saw them, too, and so did the relief."

"H'm. Send for the ship's quartermaster."

There was an awkward pause while this gentleman was fetched. When he came, the Colonel asked him without any warning if he knew there were rats on board.

"Yes, sir."

"Oh, you did? Well, this man tells me he saw fifty last night. Does that surprise you?"

The quartermaster explained that there was always a danger of rats, but he could not believe there could have been as many as that. However, the sergeant and the relief sentry stuck to their guns, and the quartermaster was instructed to do all he could to eradicate them. He pointed out that all piping on the ship was in sections to prevent rats from travelling, but he would do his best to smoke them out. As a result of his efforts considerably more than fifty were caught and thrown to the fish. As for me, the Colonel took a lenient view. He realized that there had been provocation, and let me off with a warning.

In those days it took five days to reach Gibraltar, a place which shares with Canterbury the power to move those who see it for the first time. Unfortunately, as many travellers will attest in the case of Gibraltar, the effect is somewhat marred by the inconsiderate habits of vessels to approach the Rock at an indecently early hour. For us, Gibraltar meant land and the end of the Bay of Biscay, which had claimed a fearful toll. We disembarked and spent the day in a seemingly endless route march, which reminded me of the old jingle about that Duke of York, who had ten thousand men and who marched them up the hill and marched them down again. Our own efforts seemed to be just about as pointless.

Altogether this was an unlucky voyage for Gunner Waterhouse. The night before we reached Gibraltar I had the misfortune to lose my hammock, which had not exactly endeared me to the sergeant, and a sergeant, like an elephant, never forgets.

"Here, you, what's your name?"

"Waterhouse."

"Well, go below and report to the master cook. Say I sent you."

I found that several others had received similar orders, and we were all told off to peel potatoes. Talk about fatigue duty! But worse was to come—something for which I was in no way to blame. My old friend the officer in

charge of details asked me one day if I knew where the mortuary cabin was. It appeared that one of the troops had died and was to be buried at sea that afternoon. The medical orderly wanted some assistance in sewing up the corpse—and, of course, they had to pick on me. Luckily by the time I arrived on the scene, the deceased was already encased, but the orderly wanted me to help him weight the shroud. He gave me an enormous bodkin to sew on the four great pieces of lead.

"Don't worry about sticking it in," he said jocularly. "He can't feel it if you *do* hit him."

All the same, I worked gingerly.

The funeral was an impressive affair. A chaplain read the service, and as the body was lowered down the shute into the water, the engines were stopped and the Last Post sounded. A young soldier had gone to a sailor's grave with all the honours of his calling.

The Mediterranean brought a change of atmosphere, and with it a certain irritability of temper, but a calm sea and the attraction of novelty helped to allay any discomfort. A party of us landed at Malta, and I promised to bring back a bottle of wine for a friend. Unfortunately as I was passing up the gangway from the tender that brought us back to the *Plassey*, the bottle slipped and broke against the side of the ship.

"What was that?" said the Lieutenant who was in charge of us.

"It must have been my shaving mirror, sir. It probably slipped out of my haversack."

"Well, if that's going to mean seven years' bad luck I won't add to the misfortune." Which was well said, since he had seen perfectly well what had happened.

And so to Port Said. So much abuse has already been hurled at this unfortunate town that I will not attempt to add to this calumny, deserved though it may be. Even so, there is a part of Port Said that the average traveller is spared, and that is the actual process of coaling. Most people are safe on shore while this is going on. It takes up a whole day, and the dust and dirt beggar description. As

the *Plassey* approached the port, we could see scores of barges coming out to meet us, and as they came nearer we could discern the figures of those on board—the men who were to do the dirty work, and it was dirty in more ways than one. These people are surely the lowest type of Arab, the riff-raff of the East. Not only men, but women and even children are engaged on this work. Many of them missed their footing as they walked along the plank leading to our bunkers and fell into the sea. In my innocence I feared for their lives, but if there is one thing they do supremely well it is to swim. They were not in the least perturbed, and as they clambered back to safety, they threw off the little clothing they wore and stood stark naked as they dried themselves. As a diversion from their labours they proceeded to indulge in sexual orgies and various degrading exhibitions, in which I regret to say they were considerably encouraged by soldiers throwing coins at them. During my service in the East I was to get accustomed to such behaviour, but the effect of such blatant pornography at the first impact leaves a lasting impression. Most of us at any rate were glad to see the last of these folk, and as evening fell we began the long trail up the Suez Canal. Whenever a vessel passed us coming down, we had to tie up at the side, and it was possible to shake hands with a person on the deck of the other ship, so narrow was the canal. On one side was the desert and on the other a comparatively fertile strip of land. Arabs passed to and fro on their camels, and I should have liked to remain on deck at night watching the scene. Land, however monotonous, becomes of special interest after a long spell at sea. But our orders were to go to bed as usual. Sleep was difficult, and on our first night in the canal I was woken out of a doze by a black, shiny hand, which seemed to be about two inches from my face.

I cried out, and in a minute there was pandemonium. There were thieves on board—Arabs, who had come on either at Port Said or at one of the tying-up stations in the canal. Lying hidden by day, they came out at night and pilfered. Their hands and arms were greased so that it was impossible to grab and hold them. One of them had

stolen a necklace from an officer's wife while she was at dinner, and another wounded a man with a knife during the scuffle while we were rounding them up. They looked a tough gang, and they were imprisoned until we could land them. I was amazed at the lack of consternation among the officers, but apparently these raids were by no means uncommon. We stopped at Port Suez to pick up water before going down the Red Sea to Aden.

It was while we were at Suez that I saw my first shark. There was a sailor on deck with me at the time, and he immediately went and fetched a line with an immense hook, on which was impaled a great chunk of beef.

"Watch me," he said, and he swung the bait over the side, quickly fastening the line to a stanchion. The shark came to the surface belly upwards and grabbed the beef. The pull on the line was terrific and seemed to sway the whole boat, but the rope held. In a minute about twenty sharks surrounded the first one, some of them attacking it ferociously. Together we drew in the line, and as we did so one of the sharks bit off the tail of the one that was hooked. Our capture was slowly drawn up the side of the ship, its jaw pierced through, and its tail dripping blood. It was still alive when we landed it, but the sailor hurled his knife at it, and invited the crowd that had already gathered to do the same. Even the officers showed some excitement, and brought their wives to see the catch.

But the sailor who had achieved it was disconsolate; to him this was a bad omen. As a consequence we should lose a man. I have never been superstitious, but he was right this time. The day before we reached Aden the sirens blew three times; man overboard. The ship was stopped and everybody went to their stations. Two boats were lowered, but though they searched for an hour they found no trace of the man. At the inquiry afterwards, it was held that he must have lost his balance while sitting on the rails. The immediate result was that we were given a lecture on discipline at sea, which largely consisted of a list of things that were forbidden. The subject of gambling cropped up again, and oddly enough we were told that the game known

to all as 'housey-housey' was permitted. Why this exception should have been made I don't know. It caused a good deal of trouble, and although one or two men became richer, many more became poorer—and disgruntled.

All differences, however, were resolved when at long last we sighted Bombay, which even then was an imposing sight from the sea. Being a troopship we did not dock, but dropped anchor in the bay. We had been given instructions as to disembarkation on the previous night, and I remember being on deck sitting on my kit at five in the morning. We went ashore on tenders, drawn by small tugs. While we were waiting to be drawn off, one of these tugs collided with us, hitting us amidships and causing an immense breach in the side of the tender. Water was pouring in, and there might well have been loss of life but for the presence of mind of somebody who quickly jammed a number of kitbags into the hole. This stemmed the flow, and by dint of constant bailing out we managed to keep afloat until we were transferred to another tender.

We were all checked up and found 'all present and correct,' save for the two men who had been lost on the voyage. Those of us who were destined for southern India were separated, and later in the day we embarked on the Royal Indian Marine boat *Hardinge* bound for Madras.

CHAPTER IV

AS the *Hardinge* sailed out of Bombay, we had a last glimpse of the *Plassey* lying in the harbour, waiting, no doubt, to transport another contingent of troops back home. Meanwhile we had more room to move about, while the discipline was somewhat relaxed. We were another five days going to Madras, during which time I succeeded in keeping out of mischief, or at least nearly. There *was* one little spot of bother which affected us all.

We had a native crew, and hanging from one of the lower decks were thousands of bananas. One or two of us helped ourselves and picked some off their stalks. We must have been careless in picking them from one particular spot, because they were missed. The officers made no attempt to discover the actual culprits and fined every man of us one rupee (1s. 4d.). Since bananas in India cost then about a penny for a dozen, this seemed exorbitant, but we had to pay up. Those men who didn't possess the money had it deducted from their next pay. There was no escape.

In contrast to Bombay, Madras is low-lying and is not so impressive from the coast. We docked early in the morning (as usual) and marched through the town to the Egremont Station to board the metre-gauge railway for our barracks at St. Thomas's Mount. Marching through Madras gave me my first real sight of India, for at Bombay we had only waited on the quayside. I was immediately struck by the variety of colour and sound. Everybody seemed to be making a noise, and the native women were gaily dressed in the most bizarre costumes. We passed the Fort St. George, where half a battalion of the Dorsetshire Regi-

ment was stationed. Sight of the familiar sentries was reassuring.

The Southern Mahratta Railway of those days was not renowned for its efficiency, and the trains did not always run according to schedule. In fact we had a good hour to wait on the platform, and one of our number thought he would pass the time by acquainting himself with a native woman. He detached himself from the rest of us and made conversation with her. What he said I do not know, but it failed to elicit a favourable response. The only reply he received was a slap in the face. As is the custom in those parts, the woman was swathed in bangles, and the interloper returned with his face badly cut and bleeding profusely. Had it not been for the wound he might have got away with it, but when we were paraded just before boarding the train, the Lieutenant in charge naturally asked him what had happened. Thinking that for a native to strike a white man was inexcusable, no matter what the provocation, the soldier admitted that the woman had struck him, and the woman, when questioned, insinuated that he had made an improper suggestion. Luckily there were no witnesses as to what exactly took place, and the matter was allowed to rest.

The train was packed. Natives were huddled together with their legs drawn up almost under their chins, which is a favourite posture. They are undoubtedly born contortionists! Everybody seemed to be arguing with everybody else, and it was a relief when the whistle blew and we began to move. A feature of the line was the number of level-crossings, and there was always the chance of a stray bullock or other live stock getting in the way. As we were drawing out of Gindy, the station before St. Thomas's Mount, there was a crash. The carriages seemed to go up as if they were about to telescope and then fall down suddenly. I was thrown across the compartment and found myself on the floor badly shaken and considerably bruised. I had been wearing my cork helmet, which didn't soften the blow.

The cause of the trouble was soon discovered. We had

hit a bullock. The animal must have been lying broadside across the track. The engine had shifted it several yards, and had probably killed it outright. At any rate, there was only beef when we found it. The impact had derailed the engine, and the carriages that had gone up in the air failed to land on the rails, with the result that we were several hours late in reporting at the barracks. Meanwhile, the story had got about that there had been a fatal accident in which most of us had lost our lives. In actual fact, nobody was seriously hurt, apart from a few cuts.

The barracks at St. Thomas's Mount are about half an hour's march from the village, and nearby were the houses of several army pensioners, who were spending their retirement in various civil jobs. Unfortunately there had been an outbreak of cholera in the civilian quarters, and the inhabitants had been taken into the barracks where they were given temporary quarters. The result was that we recruits spent our first night under canvas. When I woke up I could hardly open my eyes for the mosquito bites. In fact I had been so badly bitten that I was ordered to report to the doctor.

"Are you a recruit, young man?"

"Yes, sir."

"I thought so. When you've been here a bit longer you'll learn how to deal with these things. Now, when you go to bed to-night see that your head and arms are under the blanket."

This sounded like suffocation to me, but, nevertheless, it also seemed the lesser evil, and it proved effective. Old soldiers are fond of deriding the comforts of the modern army and like to say that the modern soldier is tucked up in bed and called with early morning tea. Be that as it may, I sincerely hope that mosquito nets have been introduced at St. Thomas's Mount.

"Do you see that hill over there?" said an old hand to me one night just before turning in. "They say St. Thomas preached the gospel from there. That's why they call it St. Thomas's Mount. That building you can see is a convent

run by Portuguese nuns. Over the other side is Monkey Hill." Monkeys in India are sacred to many people, and the story goes that a rich native once lived on the hill and bred monkeys. At any rate, that is what they tell you, and the fact remains that it is still considered a crime to shoot at a monkey.

Outside the guard-room of the barracks stood an old brass gun. It was kept spotlessly clean and was used for firing a time-signal at noon and again at ten o'clock at night. First Post was sounded at half-past nine, Last Post at ten, and Lights Out at a quarter-past. Whoever was on sentry duty at ten was responsible for firing the gun. It was soon my turn to do this. Three of us made up the guard, and there was a sergeant on duty to look after us.

Sergeant Rathbone was a terror. He was one of those who had no opinion of the young soldier of any period later than his own youth. He had served twenty-two years in the army and regarded anyone under thirty as the scum of the earth. He was never tired of comparing his own early days with our own—and not to our credit. His vocabulary was unparalleled throughout India and was a byword in the service. Just before we went on guard, he came out and called for his servant. Sergeants were allowed a native servant, though sometimes they had to share one. I must say here that I was always pained by the average behaviour of the service man to the natives. After all, we were there as their protectors, but in those days there was far too much of the boss about it. Those natives in service were treated only a little better than slaves. I was to spend eight years in India, and during that time I learned to love and to respect the Indian people. So much so, in fact, that were it possible I would go back now. I would gladly spend the rest of my life there—to end the journey as it began.

To return to Sergeant Rathbone. A terrified servant appeared in answer to his thunderous demand, and was told off to go down to the wet canteen and bring up a quart bottle of beer. The sergeant intended to make him-

self comfortable for the night. I was detailed to take the middle watch, and my relief was an elderly Irishman, who kindly suggested that as I was new to the game he would help me with the gun. Consequently at five minutes to ten we made our preparations. It was really quite simple. There was a little black bag of powder to be pushed down the barrel with a ramrod, while the detonator was controlled by a lanyard. My Irish friend was busy getting everything ready, and I'm afraid I wasn't very attentive. In any case, it was dark and we only had a faint glimmer of light from the guard-room to work by. On the first stroke of the hour I pulled the lanyard and the gun duly went off. But there was no ordinary explosion. There was a sound as if all the windows in London had broken.

The sergeant came running out breathing fire and brimstone. There was nothing I could say, and the Irishman failed to offer any explanation, save that possibly there had been a piece of grit in the barrel. It is true that even a small amount of sand will cause a rasping sound, and it was our duty to see that the barrel was clear by running the ramrod down it. However, while Sergeant Rathbone was working off his rage he happened to turn round and noticed that his beer had gone.

"Have you touched that beer?" he said to me.

"No, sergeant. I don't drink it."

"Huh! I suppose you're one of those tea and rock-cake soldiers. Well, what do you suppose has happened to it? No one else has been here."

In a second I had put two and two together. I had an idea about the sergeant's beer and about the strange sound made by the gun. I looked at the Irishman, who winked. The sergeant seemed to sense what was in my mind.

A little way away were the stables, and at night a running sentry was always on duty there with an oil lamp to prevent him from falling over the horses. This man was summoned to bring his lamp and search the base of the gun for any broken glass.

"Here, give it to me," shouted Rathbone, who peered at

the ground like a man who has dropped sixpence. But to no avail.

However, next morning there it all was, and there was no longer any doubt as to what had happened to Sergeant Rathbone's beer.

"I'd report you," he said, "but for one thing."

"And I know what that is."

"Well, what is it, you young puppy?"

There was no need to answer. The sergeant didn't need me to tell him that he had no right to have that beer while on duty. Needless to say the story of the sergeant's beer was soon round the barracks, and the episode did nothing to soften the old man.

For about a fortnight our work consisted of nothing but drills, and then we were told that we were to go off to an artillery practice camp. This was to be at Bangalore, a distance of about five hundred miles, and I was given to understand that it would be a very different affair from our last effort at Glenamall.

"I don't suppose you've ever handled a gun," jeered Rathbone.

"Yes, I have, and what's more I've brought down a balloon, something that you haven't even seen out here," I said proudly.

"You have? Well, I'm ——"

I really think that for the first time he was impressed by a 'rooky.' He actually hoped that I should have some good shooting.

We were to march all the way to the camp, and on these occasions, we were preceded by the commissariat, so that there was always a meal waiting for us at the end of a day's march. The march in itself was useful in that it gave soldiers valuable experience of war-time conditions in a strange country.

The march was scheduled to take twenty-four days. It was to give us a splendid introduction to the sort of country in which we should be conducting operations. People sometimes forget that troops are continually up against Nature, which can be the most resolute enemy. At one

point it was decided to lessen the strain on the horses by arranging for some of us to proceed on foot in advance of the main column. That is to say, that by leaving the camp in the evening we could walk on through the night and arrive at the next point in the early hours of the next morning. By doing this, we should be able to get a long sleep until the arrival of the others, who would not be leaving till later the same morning.

Three of us volunteered to do this one night, and equipped with our water-bottles and haversack, but unarmed, we set out in fine fettle. We had the advantage of an excellent metalled road; it was a fine night and we had ourselves for company. It must have been about half-past eleven when we sat down to rest on an old stone bridge spanning a culvert. One of my companions was in the middle of a yarn when he stopped dead in the middle of a sentence, and pointed down into the culvert. Two green eyes were staring at us out of the darkness. They stood out like gems.

"It's a tiger," he said, obviously scared stiff.

"Don't be an ass," I said, trying to cover up my own fright.

We sat for a moment in silence watching those eyes, which never moved. I think we were too frightened to speak. However, somebody had to make the first move and I was determined that it should not be the 'thing.' I picked up a handful of small stones from the road and flung them into the undergrowth. Whatever was there made a quick right-about turn and scampered off. So did we.

After running about a hundred yards, my friends suggested going back. They argued that it was shorter back to the last camp than forward to the next. I am not going to say that I wasn't as frightened as they were, but I failed to see the advantage of going back, and I was able to persuade my friends to proceed. It was not long before we heard a howl. It was like mocking laughter, and I suspected a couple of hyenas at the head of a pack of jackals.

"That's where those eyes have gone," I said. "You needn't worry about hyenas, or the jackals their friends." These animals will not attack people unless provoked. Unfortunately, just as I finished speaking, something slithered across the road, and my attempts at reasserting our confidence were set at naught. This was a snake. It had disappeared too quickly to see what kind of snake it was, but a grass snake in an English wood would have been enough to shatter our already frayed nerves.

We began to quarrel. "It's all your fault." "We wouldn't have come if it hadn't been for you," and all the other helpful comments that come to the fore in times of crisis.

Fortunately a little further on we saw the lights of the camp. We hurried forward, and found that our commissariat was well installed and were expecting us. We were given a hot meal, and were soon asleep. Next morning we felt like a City worker on a Sunday. Reveille had no message for us, and we breakfasted in luxury at half-past nine.

It was excessively hot, and we took the opportunity of bathing in a sort of reservoir near by. Apparently this water was especially valuable and an officious native caught us in the water and promptly removed our clothes. When we came out, we stood on the bank stark naked and cursed him. But no threat would make him reveal where he had hidden our clothes, and we were compelled to suffer the indignity of running back to camp in our birthday-suits. The way was strewn with brambles, and our legs were bleeding profusely by the time we limped into our quarters. By this time the rest of the party had turned up, and some sort of explanation was inevitable. The medical officer was informed and he filled us with the wildest alarms. It seems that we had exposed ourselves to disease and sunstroke, apart from minor discomforts. We had also transgressed the local law, which it was the duty of the military authorities to observe with scrupulous regard. At the request of an officer, our clothes were restored, but we were hauled up before the C.O., who told

us that he had no alternative but to give us each ten days' C.B.

Being confined to barracks when on the march is not the irritating punishment it is when in barracks. For one thing it is impossible to be strictly 'confined,' and the offender cannot be spared from his part in the smooth working of the military machine. Indeed he is given an infinitely greater part and is made to do all sorts of additional fatigue duty. In our case we were also made to walk instead of riding on the gun-limbers.

On a long march such as this it was the custom to rest one day in three, when we were allowed to take an easy. During our first 'break' we pitched our camp in wooded country, inhabited by a host of small monkeys, which kept up an incessant chattering. I got it into my silly head that it might be a good idea to catch one of these monkeys and to tame it. The idea failed to meet with any great response, but two or three of us contrived a trap. This consisted of digging a small hole and filling it with *gram*, with which our horses were fed. Our hope was that a monkey would attempt to extract the food, and in doing so would catch his leg in a loop at the end of a piece of cord, which would be drawn tight at the appropriate moment.

Everything went according to plan. One of the monkeys came down from the trees and approached the hole gingerly. We let him eat some of the *gram* unhindered, and then when he seemed confident that all was well we pulled the string and hauled the captive towards us. And then the fun began. The animal started to squeal. We tied it up to a tree and I could see that the cord was eating into its leg. He was squealing so pitifully that we made him as comfortable as we could and eased the pressure of the cord. But the noise went on and had the inevitable result. All his friends cried out in sympathy. More than that, they decided to come and give what assistance they could.

In a moment we were invaded by hundreds of monkeys. The noise was deafening, and the immediate effect was that our horses strained at the picketing line to such an extent

that they broke loose and stampeded. Officers and N.C.O.s appeared from all over the place and a mass of orders, many of them contradictory, cut across the din. The whole place was in confusion. Somebody had the sense to release the trapped monkey, and the others gradually dispersed. By a miracle not one of us was bitten. But it took us some hours before we had rounded up the last of the horses, some of which had sustained severe injuries and had to be destroyed.

After this debacle it was hardly surprising that there was a general parade. The C.O. gave us all a severe dressing-down, and with justification. He pointed out that the whole affair was completely childish and that our behaviour was a disgrace to the service. We had lost some horses, antagonized the natives, caused an unholy disturbance, and were lucky to escape injury ourselves.

"I don't know who is to blame," he went on, "and I am not going to ask anybody to come forward. It is difficult for me to punish everybody, but just to impress the folly of your action on you I am going to order that everybody except the actual drivers shall march to-morrow, and the next day some of you will have to change places with the drivers so that they can take their turn. Perhaps that will teach you not to play about with animals. It's lucky for you they were only monkeys." Needless to say I was not exactly popular with those who knew the facts of the case, and I have never concealed the stupidity of the whole business.

Altogether this was to be an adventurous journey. At a later stage one of the native servants reported that a hyena had been seen hiding in a *nullah*, a deep ravine at the side of the road. It may have been asking for trouble, but we were only young soldiers, and this was our first experience of jungle life. It we learn by experience, I have certainly learned a good deal about what to do, and especially what not to do, in similar circumstances. But at the time I was only serving my novitiate. Anyway, I gathered a few friends and went off down the ravine to see if we could spot this hyena.

Apart from sticks, we were unarmed. It is, of course, absolutely forbidden to use service ammunition for anything but what it is meant for, and I hadn't been in India long enough to qualify for a shooting permit. Later on I was to go on legitimate big-game shooting expeditions, but that time was not yet. We prodded about in the undergrowth, but could find nothing. We were about to give up the hunt, when someone shouted : " Look ! " As Mr. George Robey once remarked : I stopped, and I looked, and I listened. There was a rustle and out sprang no hyena but a panther ! He bit one man, mauled a second, knocked down a third, and then leapt in my direction. He was coming straight at me. I was standing about three or four yards away from another man, and I couldn't see how he could help getting one or other of us, if not both. But he went between us like a flash of lightning, sprang up on to the road and disappeared.

It was a hair-raising experience. The injured men were taken back to Madras, where they lay for weeks in the general hospital there. The one who had been bitten recovered and was able to rejoin the battery, but the other fellow never got right and had to be invalided out of the army. In the evening a party of officers went out in an attempt to hunt up the beast, but they were defeated by the darkness. Next day, however, on arrival at the village of Gell we learned from a native policeman that the panther had been shot, but only after it had killed two children in the village.

Outside another village we came across a banana plantation and some of the men carried out a lightning raid. The reader must not imagine that the British soldier is addicted to looting, but in those days he was poorly paid and was not averse to getting what he could when he could. He was fundamentally honest, but if his means did not allow him to buy bananas from the bazaar he saw no harm in helping himself. The little native boys whose job it was to look after the crop ran off to warn their parents, with the result that when our C.O. entered the village on horseback at the head of his troops he was greeted with a hail of stones. This was the only time that I have known the British Army

to be stoned, and I can still see one small boy, who looked no more than four years old, standing on a balcony hurling great pieces of stone at us as we came by. The bombardment was not as fierce as it sounds, the actual effect being more ridiculous than damaging, and we left the police to elucidate the trouble. So ended my second bit of bother with bananas.

One of the things that were forcibly brought home to us during this march was that India is evergreen. No matter how long it may be after rain, winter and summer the trees remain green. Drought seems to leave Nature untouched in this respect. Owing to the climate we did not have ground-sheets, for the simple reason that when it *does* rain there is no question of damp ! Nothing can keep a man dry when it rains in India, so it is no use trying ! But in camp we retained bed linen, a luxury undreamt of in similar circumstances in England. The reason was that labour was cheap and there was no dearth of servants. We even carried our own *dhobi* (washerman). There was no boarding in the tent, simply straw on which we laid our *sutterage*, a blue mat. One morning I was picking up this mat when I saw something move in the straw. I looked again and was horrified to see a couple of king cobras. They must have been there all night, presumably in a hole which I had not seen. When I say that I have patted a horse 'good night' and found him dead in the morning from a cobra bite the reader can well imagine my thoughts at that moment. No sooner had I spotted them than they disappeared again. When the officers heard of our discovery they gave orders to clear the tent and to set fire to the straw. This would smoke them out, and sure enough they reappeared, only to be hit over the head and killed. It was their blood or ours, but I still cannot understand why it had not been ours.

And so at last to Bangalore, sometimes called the Flower Garden of India. The city deserves its sobriquet. Its beauty is immediately apparent and was not lost on those of us who were seeing it for the first time. The pride of the State of Mysore, it lies plumb in the middle of Southern

India. The climate is ideal and I can imagine no lovelier place to live. We were to spend three weeks there prior to completing the last twenty-five miles to the shooting camp at Birsandra. Several battalions of troops were stationed in the garrison there, and as recreation we carried through many enjoyable sporting fixtures. I became particularly adept on the hockey field, and among other more warlike scars I still bear the results of some of the knocks sustained at Bangalore when the 'bully-off' misfired. We had a good deal of spare time and the various troops were allowed to visit each other quite freely.

We arrived on a Saturday, and our first duty next day was to attend Church Parade. It has always been a maxim in the British Army that troops must attend Divine Service whenever possible. It is a custom that has caused endless dispute and controversy. Compulsory religion is, of course, fraught with dangers, and soldiers who are genuinely and sincerely religious must be somewhat upset at the remarks that are often passed both before and after such parades. I shall always remember that service at Bangalore for the sermon. The preacher was not a military chaplain, and he spoke to us on 'The Thrills of Life.' He warned us to take care to 'trim the frills while enjoying the thrills,' and went on to say that he understood that some of us had recently been having some monkey tricks!

'Now, how did he know about that?' I thought.

Later in the day I was sent with a message to the officers' mess, and there was the learned divine sitting in an arm-chair with a whisky-and-soda at his side. Monkey tricks indeed! No doubt he had made a similar call on the Saturday evening to discuss the arrangements for the service and had been told something of our adventures *en route*.

When we reached Birsandra camp we found the place already occupied by O Battery of the Royal Horse Artillery, commonly known as the Rocket Troop. I was attached to the 85th Battery of the Royal Field Artillery, so that a certain keen rivalry was not unnatural. Both units have long since combined as the Royal Artillery, and even in

the days of separation there was little difference between the two, except that the R.H.A. was more mobile and used thirteen-pounders against our eighteens. Their batteries were given letters instead of numbers, and there did exist some feeling of superiority among the men. Although we had separate camps at Birsandra we used the same institute and canteens. The term 'Rocket Troop' was actually used on parade, and our ears were continually assailed by such commands as 'Rocket Troop, 'shun!" or 'Rocket Troop, right turn.'

We happened to be paid out on the day we arrived. It was also quarter-day, and various small additional sums were due, odd bonuses and the like. There was an officer at a table with the pay-sergeant handing out little envelopes, and the beer flowed rapidly at the canteen in the evening. We were not going up to the ranges till Monday. Although I disclaim Sergeant Rathbone's charge that I was a 'tea and rock-cake soldier,' I was not, and never have been, a heavy drinker, but in common with most others I found my way to the canteen that evening.

"Here, you," said a big burly man. "Take a good look at me."

"Well, what is there about you?"

"Me? I'm Gunner Mariot, the finest shot of the Rocket Troop, and don't you forget it, young man."

On his breast were the South African war medals and the D.C.M., and when he finished speaking he brushed up against me so that his medals hit my nose. The inference was obvious, and without any hesitation I hit him hard right in his solar plexus. He went down and didn't come up again for about ten minutes. In the meantime a good deal happened. Rival factions were let loose on each other; old scores were paid off and pandemonium broke out. There were a good many black eyes, and only the presence of a Lieutenant put a stop to what might have developed into an ugly scene.

On the Saturday morning both batteries were addressed by our own Colonel. He referred to the rivalry existing between us, but pointed out that any man was liable to be

transferred from one unit to the other. We had enlisted in the artillery, and which branch we served in was purely a matter for the authorities. He hoped that there would be no more of this ridiculous bickering, and warned us that a recurrence of the affray of the previous night would have serious consequences.

All the same I felt dissatisfied. I had been insulted, and I asked my section commander if I could lodge a complaint with Major Parry, the C.O.

"Well, Waterhouse," he said, "you seem to be getting in and out of scrapes a good deal, but I must say you stand up to them pretty well. I'll see what I can do about it."

He secured an interview for me, and when Major Parry heard my story he sent me with a note to his opposite number in O Battery. Once again I told my story.

"Would you recognize this man who you say rubbed his medals in your face?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well, send for Gunner Mariot," he said, turning to a sergeant. My assailant duly appeared and listened to the charge.

"Is that true?" demanded the officer.

"Well, sir, to tell you the truth I don't remember very much about it."

"Do you remember this man hitting you?"

"I really can't remember anything, sir."

"H'm. I see no reason to disbelieve his story, and as you can't deny it I must ask you to apologise to him now."

Gunner Mariot blurted out an apology.

"Very good," said the officer. "Consider yourself admonished. That is all. You may go."

"Does that satisfy you?" he said. I nodded. "You'll have to go carefully, but it's not a bad thing to stick up for yourself—and your regiment. Now, you'd better get back to your quarters."

We had a sergeant-major there called Martin, and we used to call him 'All Day and Martin' after the famous boot blacking. He had enlisted as a driver and was only

about five foot two. On the Monday morning he ordered me to report to Sergeant Williams for the range party. About forty of us made up the party, and I was carrying one of the targets. This consisted of a piece of canvas between two posts, which could be easily hammered into the ground. We were in charge of a Lieutenant, one of those namby-pamby young men who I am glad to say were few and far between in the artillery. Lieutenant Harding and I were both to go through an uncomfortable experience that day. Seeing me with one of the targets, he told me to go and erect it near some cactus plants, which we could see in the distance. This meant walking for about a mile and a half, and the country here is mostly rocks and sand. The site of the actual ranges is known as Nandy Druge, and anybody who has ever shot there can imagine the scene.

The guns were coming up later, and as at Glenamall there was a signal to give the ' all clear,' in this case a flag.

" You'll have plenty of time," said Lieutenant Harding, " and in any case there won't be any firing till the flag goes down." So off I went, and naturally I didn't hurry myself. It was heavy walking with the sand ankle deep, and I knew it would be some little time before the guns were ready. I hammered in the posts, set up the target, and began to walk back. I must have come about four hundred yards, with a good mile in front of me, when to my horror I saw that the flag was down, and in about half a minute shells were whizzing all round me. I lay down in the sand, in fact I almost became an ostrich. The firing ceased suddenly and I realized that they were only range-finding. They had not begun the bombardment proper.

As soon as I thought it was safe I picked myself up and walked back to my comrades. Almost the first person I saw was Lieutenant Harding.

" Where have you been, you bally fool ? " he asked.

" If there're any fools about, then you're one of them," I said.

The officer grew red in the face and made a few gurgles. Then, pulling himself together, he put me under arrest and

I was marched off to the guard tent. I was charged with disobeying an order and with gross insolence to an officer, just about the most serious charge that a soldier can face. Nobody less than Major Parry was fit to deal with it.

Lieutenant Harding gave evidence. He said that I had failed to get back before the flag was lowered, that I had dawdled, and that when reprimanded I had called him a b—— fool.

"What have you got to say to that?"

"Only this, sir, that the evidence is false from start to finish. I admit, of course, that I was not back in time, but Mr. Harding told me explicitly that the flag would not be lowered till I had returned and also that there was plenty of time."

"Is that true?"

The Lieutenant flushed.

"It seems to me," went on Major Parry, "that you are not quite sure of the facts, Mr. Harding. I suppose you realize that Gunner Waterhouse may consider himself lucky to be standing here at all?"

"Yes, sir, that puts a somewhat different complexion on it."

"Somewhat!" roared the Major. "I should think it does. I should like to have a word with you, Mr. Harding, alone."

I was removed from the presence, and I have little doubt that Mr. Harding was told a few things he was not too anxious to hear. When I was brought back into the tent he was immediately shown out.

"I have spoken to Mr. Harding," said Major Parry, "and I congratulate you on a very lucky escape. At the same time you must control yourself in the presence of officers, and though I cannot consider this as gross insolence it was nevertheless insolence, and for that you are admonished."

This was my second artillery practice. On both occasions I had been a member of the range party, and on both occasions I had miraculously escaped injury or death. Not many years were to pass before I was to experience

artillery in action continuously for four years on the Western Front, so that perhaps this baptism of fire was not wholly inappropriate. Yet that day on Nandy Druge found me in the direct line of fire of guns capable even in those days of twenty rounds a minute.

CHAPTER V

ALTOGETHER we were away for five months, and it was March by the time we arrived back at St. Thomas's Mount. Among other achievements we had carried off a Service hockey cup at Bangalore, while a morning's duck shooting had brought in a bag of about four hundred birds. It was a comic sight to see the entire battery plucking them, and there was duck on the menu for days.

March in India represents the turn of the year. From then on it becomes increasingly hot, and those that can afford it transfer themselves to the hill country. Young soldiers may not be wealthy, but they are given a similar privilege—at least *we* were. This was known as acclimatizing the British soldier, and those of us with any pride were rather apt to resent it. So far as I was concerned, I had got to know the men in my battery, as well as our horses, and I did not relish the idea of separation. Again, it hardly seemed necessary to protect us from the climate. Sooner or later we should have to get used to it, and the sooner the better. After all, we had just travelled a thousand miles, marched a good many of them, and experienced life under canvas—and in one instance over cobras!

"Where are we going?" I asked a sergeant.

"Up the *kuds*," he replied enigmatically. He explained that the *kuds* meant the Nilgiri Mountains.

"You'll be stationed at Wellington for the summer, and you'll have little to do but route marches and ceremonial."

It was an unattractive prospect indeed.

Wellington is forty-eight hours from Madras by train. We left St. Thomas's Mount at six one morning, were in Madras at seven and were away again by half-past eight. The carriages on the main line from Madras were luxurious

compared with anything I had previously experienced. They contained sleeping accommodation for six men and there was plenty of room to move about. We were forbidden to buy any food from natives or to leave the train without permission. At the same time, we were not under any strict supervision, for the officers had their own carriage. There was a buffet car attached to the train, but no corridor, so that entry was impossible except at a station, and on this trip we might travel for four or five hours without a stop.

I found an Irishman in my carriage by the name of Duffy. He was no more enthusiastic about the trip than I was.

"I shan't be there long," he said with a smile.

"Oh? Why not?"

"Well, they send you back if you're a bad character."

I confess to being somewhat shocked at such easy virtue, and I told Duffy that I had already been in enough scrapes to last me for some time. However, I found him an irrepressible companion.

We were just settling down for the night, when we heard wails coming from the carriage behind us. At first I thought that the men must be singing, but it was soon apparent that these were cries of distress. Somebody put his head out of the window and shouted: "Smoke." There was so much tobacco smoke about that none of us took much notice, but he called us to the window to see for ourselves. There was no doubt about it. The train was on fire—or at least that particular carriage was. And nobody had had the sense to pull the communication cord. (Fine for improper use, fifty rupees.) Personally I could see no better use, and I pulled it hard. There was a screeching of brakes and the train pulled up almost in its own length.

We were out on the line in no time, but foolishly most of us got down on the inside, that is to say on to the opposite track. Before you could say 'knife,' the down express came thundering round the bend. The down signals were clear, and the train was coming full tilt. I hopped back into the carriage, but some of the fellows looked like being caught.

Luckily those that were left had the presence of mind to throw themselves flat between the lines, and nobody was hurt, apart from a little gravel rash.

The cause of the fire was soon apparent. Native boys are up to all sorts of pranks, and it was known that a favourite game was to steal the grease from the axle-boxes of carriages in sidings. Consequently when the train gathers speed, friction sets up, the sparks fly, and in this instance the carriage had caught fire. Moreover, since the carriage was in the middle of the train, it was impossible to detach it. The actual fire was soon under control, and after a while we proceeded slowly to the next station, where by the aid of slip-points we were able to detach the coach from the train. The occupants were boarded out among the rest of us. While this was going on, we were out of the train and standing on the platform, which had been invaded by the usual crowd of natives with something to sell, mostly fancy sweetmeats and other food. The officers were busy watching the shunting operations, and some of us disobeyed all instructions by buying from the natives. One man bought some custard apples, and after we had got going again he asked me if I would like some. I told him that I had been to the canteen at St. Thomas's Mount before leaving and was well supplied. I remember I had some excellent sandwiches and several bottles of lemonade, as well as a bunch of red bananas. This was to prove exceedingly lucky for me.

It was afternoon, and we were enjoying a siesta. Suddenly the smooth rhythm of the train was interrupted by groans, and there were rude cries of: "Shut up." But the groans persisted. I got off the bed and went over to the sufferer. People sometimes say that they have never seen a green man, but this man *was* green. He was quite unable to speak and looked as if he might die at any minute. He was the man who only a short time previously had offered me his fruit.

Duffy reached for the communication cord, and once again the train stopped unexpectedly. The guard and our officers arrived simultaneously. We indicated the patient.

There was a strange silence as one of the officers went over and looked at him.

"Give him some of this brandy," he said, "and make sure that he doesn't get off that bed."

There was no chance of him doing that!

"Where's the guard? How far is it to the next stop?"

"About a couple of hours."

"All right. Let's hope there's a doctor there."

The guard gave instructions for the train to travel at half speed, and when at last we arrived at this station we were able to get hold of a native doctor, who diagnosed cholera. This was serious.

"You must remove him to the guard's van and keep a constant watch on him. Meanwhile, I'll telephone through to Metropolian and arrange for an ambulance and doctors to meet the train. I'm afraid there's a chance of your men being affected."

Our carriage was searched and every particle of food destroyed, including all my sandwiches. The custard apples were, of course, discovered, and it leaked out that the man had bought these from a native. Before proceeding we were all given a strong tot of rum—but no food.

Metropolian lies at the foot of the Nilgiri Mountains, and where in any case we should have to change trains. On arrival, we were herded together into a shed, but there was no sign of the sick man. We learned later that he had died, and the body was hastily put into a waiting-room. Troops were later sent down from Wellington to give him a military funeral. Meanwhile, the most elaborate arrangements had been made for us. To begin with, we all had a bath, which was strongly disinfected. This was followed by an inoculation and a further drink of rum. We were also given a little light food, but nothing substantial. I began to think that being sent up to the hills was not the molly-coddling process that some would have us believe. A fire and a case of cholera in two days was sufficiently alarming for the most hardened campaigner.

It was made perfectly plain to us that at any moment we might go down with cholera, and it is hardly surprising that

we were not feeling too cheerful when we boarded the train that runs along the mountain railway to Wellington. But the remarkable scenery and the novelty of the journey quickly made us forget our troubles. It took us four hours to travel thirteen miles, and we crossed between thirty and forty bridges. These bridges have no sidewalks, and the train gives the impression of literally hanging over the side with a sheer drop of thousands of feet below. In just over an hour and a half we had climbed 2000 feet and the temperature dropped from 105 to 60 degrees. By the time we reached Wellington we had climbed a good 9000 feet. It was a most exhilarating experience, and the diversity of wild life added to the excitement. Once again we saw thousands of monkeys, with birds and butterflies of every kind and colour. Half-way up we stopped at Conoor, where there are extensive coffee plantations, and where for a short distance there is a double track to allow the down train to pass. The engines running on this line are of Swiss manufacture, and the whole railway must be one of the most remarkable engineering feats in the world. The builders knew that the district would be free from gales, and were thus able to carry out the most daring plans.

This natural beauty persisted at Wellington itself, and I remember particularly a fountain playing in the middle of the road on our way from the station to the barracks. Cattle were drinking and birds bathing without the slightest embarrassment. Disease certainly seemed very far away.

There was always a battalion of infantry permanently in residence at the barracks, and during the summer months this was augmented by details from all parts of southern India. A public highway ran through the many buildings and the sentry posts were consequently both numerous and somewhat far-flung. The actual garrison sentries were, of course, supplied by the infantry, but I found myself detailed to guard one of the outlying posts. Oddly enough, I was to relieve my friend Duffy, who was on from six in the evening till eight. I found him in a great state, full of the most gloomy forebodings.

"You'd better keep a look-out," he said. "Strange things happen up here."

"Whatever's the matter with you?" I asked, but he refused to be more explicit. Like most Englishmen, I could never take an Irishman seriously, and I was inclined to dismiss his warnings as a joke. However, I did ask the sergeant on duty if I could use my rifle.

"Certainly not," he replied, and not for the first time I was left wondering why sentries are forbidden to use their arms unless specifically ordered to do so. It is possibly just as well that this is not generally known by the public!

"You can always hit anybody over the head with the butt of your rifle," reassured the sergeant.

As I paced up and down my beat the cool air of a perfect night helped to dispel my fears, and after a while I retired inside my sentry-box. Perhaps Duffy had only been seeing things, but it was not long before I was pretty sure that I was *hearing* something. It was a peculiar muffled sound, and for the life of me I couldn't fathom it. There was an occasional rustling which seemed to come from behind me. I could see nothing in front of me, and for the moment I stayed where I was. But the sound persisted, and presently I stepped gingerly out of the sentry-box, and looked about me. There was nobody about. I could see the barracks outlined darkly against the sky and a pale moon was casting a faint light across the road. I turned about and looked behind the box. Good heavens! What was that? It looked like some ogre out of a fairy story. It was swaying from side to side like a drunken man, only it was much too big for a man. Was this a member of some giant race? I was much too frightened to speak, but gradually my eyes grew accustomed to the half-light and I saw I was face to face with a bear, standing on its hind-legs and pawing the air. To anyone not in my predicament the sight must have been extraordinarily comic, but I was not in a position to appreciate the funny side of it. I remembered the sergeant's words, and raising my rifle over my head I brought it down smack on to the animal's head. It was not a very good stroke, and I hit it across the nose. But it was enough

to upset its balance. It toppled over and rolled heavily on the ground.

That gave me a moment's respite, and I used the time by running to the guard tent, which luckily was just at the end of my beat. In fact it was not necessary for me to leave my post at all. I woke up the sergeant and the reliefs and told them what I had seen. They were not inclined to believe the story, and Duffy remained completely unconvinced. I was at least counting on him for support! But I did not have to wait long for the most conclusive evidence, provided by the bear itself. It came sniffing round the tent. No further argument was needed—only action, and swift action at that. The sergeant seized an old revolver and fired. "Stand back," he shouted. He fired three times. The ordeal was over.

In the morning the incident was reported, and the members of the guard were paraded before an officer. The sergeant related the adventure in glowing terms, in which he himself was revealed as the hero of the occasion. I must say I felt that some small credit was due to myself. After all, I had delivered the first blow, and as in most fights it was the first blow that counted. I modestly interpolated my part in the encounter, which was received with obvious interest by the officer, who was good enough to compliment me both on my presence of mind and on a lucky escape.

"It's very rare that a bear is seen here," he said. "I can only suggest that it had got lost, and judging by its behaviour, as related by Gunner Waterhouse here, I can only presume that that is just about the truth of the matter. Of course, you know the proper way of dealing with bears. Get up against a tree or something solid and let the animal hug you, but before it has time to tighten its grip you rip open its belly with a bayonet."

He added that as the artillery are not issued with bayonets, I did the only practicable thing, and as a matter of fact the prescribed method of dealing with bears does not always work, for the animal may survive the stabbing for long enough to crush you in its death agony.

The next time I went on sentry duty was on the night of

6 May 1910. The resident battalion were away on night manœuvres, and it was left to us to provide the guard. My post was outside the guard-room itself at the main entrance to the barracks. I had the last relief and was therefore at my post when reveille was sounded. Our sergeant came out carrying a flag.

"Do you know what that is?" he asked.

"Why, yes. A Union Jack."

"Well, it's your job to hoist it, and it must fly at half-mast."

"Half-mast?"

"You heard me!"

His Majesty King Edward the Seventh, whom I had sworn to serve, was dead. But I had also sworn to serve his heirs and successors. The King is dead; long live the King! And it was left to Gunner Waterhouse to hoist the flag at Wellington that morning to announce to His Majesty's Indian subjects that they now owed allegiance to King George the Fifth. A full-dress parade followed and a glowing tribute was paid to the late King by the Officer Commanding. Little did I imagine then that I should have the opportunity of being in London for the Coronation of India's new Emperor.

CHAPTER VI

I WAS sitting in the canteen at Wellington one morning when a sergeant walked in and called everybody to attention. He told us to answer our names from a list he was holding.

"Waterhouse."

"Sergeant!"

In all there were twenty-four men on the list, and we were ordered to fall in outside, where we were told that we were to proceed to take over the guard at a cordite factory some three miles away, between Wellington and Ootacamund.

"To-night," he went on, "you will go on to Ootacamund itself," and he read out a list of kit which we would require.

This was surprising news, and a man next to me ventured to ask why it was necessary to take all this luggage.

"How long are we going to stay?" he asked.

"I don't know," said the sergeant. "Maybe a week, maybe a month. Perhaps years. Anyway, don't ask stupid questions, and look to your front."

While we were putting our things together for this expedition, all sorts of rumours began to go round, and from the mass of information I received I was able to piece together a story, which turned out to be true. It must be remembered that the artillery are not usually called upon for sentry duties, which are reserved for the infantry, and our men were asking why the Borderers, who were stationed with us at Wellington, were not detailed for this job. However, it transpired that the Borderers were due to go off in a day or two and would be engaged in extensive field manœuvres. But what about the Dorsetshire Regiment at Ootacamund?

It was from this regiment that the guard at the cordite

factory had been drawn, but one of them had fallen sick, and the doctor had diagnosed smallpox, with the result that the entire regiment had gone into quarantine. A new guard had to be found in a hurry, and off we had to go.

On arrival at the factory, we found a 'flying' sentry acting as a temporary guard. A 'flying' sentry has no arms, and his duties are simply to question anybody approaching the factory and generally to keep his eyes skinned. The authorities apparently realized that ordinary sentry duty was somewhat *infra dig.* for the artillery, and we were relieved in the evening by a company of native infantry, although a few days later I was to return to the same job.

Meanwhile we moved into Ootacamund that night and pitched tents. Ootacamund is the summer residence of the Governor of Madras, and the job of guarding the Residency was naturally considered an honour. The Dorsetshires, who had been carrying out this duty till now, had removed themselves into camp about a mile away, where they were completely segregated until all possibility of infection had vanished. We ourselves were given strict orders not to go near them, and our movements generally were severely circumscribed. In the morning we were subjected to a thorough medical examination, which fortunately revealed no flaws, and a dozen of us were selected to go on duty outside the Residency in the evening. As the sergeant put it: "You were robbed of a full day yesterday, so you can make up for it to-night."

Three men on duty in two-hour shifts made up the guard, while above us, in addition to the sergeant, was the officer of the guard—a young lieutenant. It was his duty to carry out an inspection during the night, and we never knew when he might be along. Again, over and above him, came the field officer, who must hold the rank of captain, and whose inspections were completely irregular. It was the duty of a sentry to challenge him and then immediately to turn out the guard, some of whom would probably be asleep. A soldier waiting his turn to take over may sleep,

but always fully dressed and with his rifle at his side. But somebody must be awake in the guard-room, for the cry: 'Guard—turn out!' must be obeyed instantly. It might be an inspection, but it might be danger. The officer inspecting may chat with the men, ask them how they are getting on, and finally the order is given: 'Dismiss to the guard-room!' The addition of the last four words is important, and I remember one occasion when a soldier was accused of deserting his post that he put forward the defence that the officer had given the order: 'Dismiss,' which automatically absolved him from further duty. The offender was technically right, and as the officer in question was only a youngster, he was let off with a reprimand.

Only those who have actually undertaken the job can appreciate the mental strain imposed on a sentry. In one sense he may have nothing to do, but he knows that at any minute the safety of his charge may depend on his own actions. It is bad enough being on duty in a crowded city, but it is infinitely worse on a lonely post in a land seething with rebellion—a prey to man and beast. Ootacamund stands high up in the Nilgiri Mountains, the lower slopes heavily wooded and concealing not only a quantity of game but also the headquarters of the Moplahs, a native tribe who treated the British Raj with studied contempt. No matter how alert a sentry is, his thoughts are bound to wander, and my own thoughts were directed to what I considered a glaring defect in the system. As I paced up and down my attention was drawn to the noise of the rowels on my spurs as I walked. We were wearing Wellington boots and spurs (a privilege of the gunner) and the burr of the rowels must have penetrated for quite a distance in the silence of an Indian night.

Then again we were dressed in white, an arrangement which once led to a slight difference of opinion between Lady Curzon and Kitchener, when Lord Curzon was Viceroy. It is reported that in a fit of pique Kitchener disposed of the matter by explaining that since white was the colour of purity it was only fitting that his soldiers should be

arrayed in that colour. Be that as it may it was a doubtful honour, as I was to learn this very night.

One of the other sentries was posted on the other side of the Residency, and I could distinctly hear his spurs whenever he shifted his position, and when the sergeant came out of the guard-room to see that I was still there I mentioned this to him, but he remained unimpressed.

"What do you want—carpet-slippers?"

It was not the first time that I thought his sense of humour somewhat limited, and on this occasion out of place. However, I held my peace and wished him an acid good night.

I had taken over the guard at midnight, and it must have been about a quarter to one when I heard something away to my left. One's imagination is apt to play tricks at such a time, but I instinctively turned to look. As I did so there was a scuffle behind me and a hand gripped my rifle.

My assailant was a Moplah. I knew that as soon as I laid hands on him, for his flesh slipped through my fingers like butter. It was a favourite device of these people to smear their bodies with cheetah fat. Not only did this make them slippery, but it kept the white man's dog quiet. It was Lord Roberts who said that India could never be conquered at night while the pariah dog roamed the country, for whereas the pariah protects the native against a white attack, the reverse is not true. A dog fears the cheetah, who could tear him to pieces, and the scent of the fat on a man's body keeps them quiet. I have heard men laugh at the story of the cheetah fat and dismiss it as a myth, but I can testify to its truth and also to its practicability.

It was obvious what this Moplah was after. It didn't matter to him if I was alive or dead—he wanted my rifle. He must have been watching my white form silhouetted against the darkness and at the same time keeping his ears attuned to the noise made by my colleague's spurs. Standing on his toes, he had waited for the moment when the sentries were farthest apart, and as I turned my head to the left he had sprung behind me and gripped my rifle. Gunners are not issued with bayonets, or he might well

have slipped mine from its scabbard. But he knew that once he had my rifle he could get away before any resistance could be mustered. He would have scaled the wall of the compound and bounded off like a deer.

I was standing at ease at the time and consequently I had only a gentle hold on my rifle. But our two hands gripped it simultaneously, and a second later the Moplah's other hand had taken hold of my right leg. I was knocked off my balance, and as I fell I managed to swing the rifle in front of me so that I fell on top of it. One of the swivels holding the sling penetrated my chest and I let out a terrific yell, half in pain and half as an alarm. I could hear sounds coming from the guard-room, and in a minute I was surrounded by soldiers, but these helpers arrived too late to effect a capture. My assailant was gone—like the wind. But he had gone empty-handed.

The whole incident had only occupied about a minute, and I was far too dazed to make a coherent statement. The one conclusive fact was that I was injured. Another guard was posted and I was escorted back to the guard-room, while the medical officer was called over to have a look at me. Next morning there was an inquiry into the affair, and the Colonel came over from Wellington to preside. Meanwhile I had had three stitches in my wound and was feeling pretty low. As there were no eye-witnesses and the evidence was so scanty, the inquiry was adjourned until I was well enough to appear in person. I had little sympathy from the sergeant, who remained quite unconvinced. He was a man with some twenty-five years' service, who was apt to regard young fellows like myself with contempt. No Moplah would ever get past him—or so he said.

I soon discovered that it would need a considerable effort on my part to justify the truth of my story. It appeared that even the Colonel, though affability itself, was inclined to believe that I had been the victim of an hallucination. The case was of more than local importance, for the Moplahs had caused trouble before, and if I proved my story it was obvious that some sort of action would have to be taken. Now it so happened that there *was* one piece of evidence

that was conclusive and it was the Colonel who thought of it. We had been discussing the question of the cheetah fat when the Colonel suddenly asked: "What did you do with the trousers you were wearing?" I had hung them up on a peg in the tent and so far as I knew they were still there. An orderly was told off to fetch them, and there on the inside of the leg were the greasy finger-marks of the Moplah.

That was good enough for the Colonel, who ordered that the trousers were to be preserved intact and sent to Headquarters. As a matter of interest it is a fact that my assailant was eventually caught, and was condemned by his finger-prints and shot, but that was long after I had left Ootacamund.

My wound was only slight and was healing well. I was anxious to get back into harness and told the sergeant so. "All right," he said, "when you come back I'll send you up to the cordite factory again. There's a party going up to-morrow. The niggers have had to get out and we've got to supply the guard again. Take my tip, young feller, and don't get a reputation for malingering." Well, that was enough to rouse any young soldier with ambitions, and I went straight off to the doctor to see if I could get put on what is called 'C' duties. When a man falls sick he goes into one of three categories. 'A' means that he is not fit for any work at all, 'B' that he can do light fatigues, and 'C' that he can carry out his normal duties provided he reports every morning for examination. The doctor was not keen to let me go, but I was determined to show that sergeant what I was made of and in the end I got permission.

The Dorsetshires were still *hors de combat*, but there were enough of us to mount guard at both places, and a dozen of us went up to the factory. I took over the first watch that night, from eight o'clock till ten, and I started off with two surprises as the sergeant was posting me. In the first place there was a sentry-box with a seat inside, which I have never known before or since, and secondly the sergeant, after giving his orders, suddenly said: "And remember, sixteen men have contracted venereal disease on this post

in one year!" Before I could ask any questions he had gone and I was once more left to my thoughts.

This was certainly the last place where one would expect female company. I had been given to understand that the chief danger here came from the baboons, which used to come down from the mountains and make havoc with the crops. Presently one of the relief guards came along with tea and sandwiches and took over the guard while I had my supper.

"Ever seen any women up here?" I asked casually.

"Me? Heavens, no. As a matter of fact I have heard that some of the natives encourage their wives to get money out of the troops, but I've never seen 'em. I've few enough rupees for beer, let alone women. You can forget about *them* and keep your eyes open for any marauding monkey."

Fortunately, my own watch went off without any untoward incident, and so far as I was concerned the night remained undisturbed. However, just after dawn I was acting as sentry at the main entrance to the factory when a native from the road came up and spoke to me. He spoke tolerable English, and he began to tell me that he had lost his *bibi* or woman. I told him to be off but he persisted in his story. Seeing that he refused to go, and realizing that I was quite unable to help him, I reported his presence to the sergeant. I called out to the guard-room, and as I did so the native ran over to the other side of the road and up a low embankment, waving his arms and shouting hysterically. The sergeant swore and followed the man across the road. I could see the native pointing to the ground, and the sergeant then called me over. I protested that I couldn't leave my beat, but he readily gave me permission, and I ran over to where the two men were standing. There on the ground, half covered with earth and with a gaping wound, lay the body of a native woman.

Consternation! The guard was called out and each man was asked if he had heard anything unusual during the night. The inquiry drew a complete blank, whereupon the orderly officer was summoned. We had a young lieu-

tenant with us at the time, and I shall never forget the look on his face when he heard the news. "Nonsense! Impossible!" was all he could say before he pulled himself together and began asking questions himself. But the men had nothing to say.

"Very well," said the officer. "Take this man and lock him up. We must get to the bottom of this, and if there's any more monkey business——" He was not allowed to complete the sentence, for my good companion of the previous evening interrupted him suddenly.

"Monkey business, that's it," exclaimed the man. "I thought it was a monkey."

"Thought what was a monkey?" exploded the officer.

"It must have been the woman."

"Go on, explain yourself."

"Well, sir, I sort of saw a face. I called out but it didn't move, and then I remembered what I heard about the baboons coming down from the hills, so I fired."

The funny thing was that not a soul had heard that shot, which only goes to show that somebody isn't always awake in guard-rooms. As I have said, soldiers forming a guard may sleep during relief periods, but the cry of 'Guard—turn out!' is supposed to have an electric and immediate effect.

After this admission the native broke down and blurted out that he knew where his wife had been and that he had actually encouraged her to be there. He had been exploiting her for prostitution and had come up in the morning to collect her—and her ill-gotten gains. So the sergeant hadn't been talking through his hat after all. As may be imagined the episode of the sentry who mistook a *bibi* for a baboon quickly went the rounds of the regiment and has no doubt passed into the traditional lore of the army. As for the unfortunate and unwilling assassin, his case came before the authorities, who fined him the sum of ten rupees, which was handed over to the native as compensation for his better half. He was also imprisoned for a month, but his subsequent promotion was not affected by this regrettable lapse.

There was not much for a young soldier to do at Ootacamund in the way of recreation, and I'm afraid that more often than not the evenings found him drifting into the canteen, and in those days it was considered a *sine qua non* for a good soldier to be a hard drinker with an extensive vocabulary. Nowadays I understand it is felt that a man can fight as efficiently on cocoa, and I hope I will not be thought a prig when I say that I have never been greatly addicted to alcohol. The simple fact is that the stuff has never agreed with me, but a young gunner cannot afford to flaunt his personal predilections, and I took good care to be a 'good fellow.' At half-past nine precisely a bell would sound. It was 'Time, gentlemen, please,' and half an hour to the roll, which was called promptly at ten. But at nine twenty-five the corporal in charge would come round asking for last drinks, and a man could get a basinful to keep him going for that last half-hour. And when I say 'basin' I mean it, for a basin was the normal drinking-cup, and I should say it held a little more than a pint, and beer was beer—then.

Well, one night I was sitting smoking with one or two friends inside the canteen. There were not many of us, for most of the lads were outside on the verandah. All of a sudden there was a fearful hullabaloo, and before I knew what was happening my comapnions had fled, and when I turned round to call after them I nearly fell off my chair. Believe it or not, but standing on the next table—a mere three or four feet away—was a young lion, about three-quarters grown! For a moment I was too petrified to do anything. And then I had another shock, for on the threshold of the canteen stood a second lion, barring the exit for the only other man left in the place. This unhappy individual seemed to be marking time, and every time he put a foot to the ground the lion made a grab at his trousers! Now the odd thing was that neither of these animals attacked us. The one at the door appeared to be perfectly content to play this absurd game, while my own beast just stood there and stared at me. I was holding a basin of beer in my hand, and on a sudden

impulse I threw it at him, but he merely shook his mane and growled.

I felt the only thing to do was to stay put, and the next thing I knew was the sound of a commotion outside. The lion at the door had by now forced my companion back into the room, leaving the doorway clear, and a number of natives carrying long staves came in. As they did so my lion jumped off the table and ran towards one of the men. This man seemed to have complete control over the animals; as he raised his arms they jumped up like puppies. He began to make apologies for what had happened, but I was in no mood to stay any longer than was necessary, and with a muttered, "That's all right" I took to my heels. I ran straight into the arms of the rest of the garrison, who had turned up to see the fun.

The explanation of this remarkable and indeed hair-raising incident is simple. These lions were owned by the local Nawab, who kept them as pets. It appeared that every morning, when he was dressing, he fed them with pieces of steak, which he held up in either hand. Moreover, it was a habit of these lions to play with the bottom of their master's trousers, so that my companion in the canteen need not have bothered to lift his feet from the floor! It was not explained how the animals had escaped, but the Nawab was profuse in his apologies, which took a practical shape in a donation of a hundred rupees to the canteen fund. It all sounds laughable enough now, but believe me it's no joke to turn round over a pint of beer and find a lion staring you in the face, and the experience left me somewhat unnerved, as well it might.

What I did not expect was for one of our officers, on the strength of this experience of mine, to ask me to join a leopard hunt. The request came the very next day, and it was put to me that as I was so successful with lions I should have no difficulty with a leopard. For my part, this was the very last thing I wanted at that moment, but what could I do but accept?

"You start at three o'clock in the morning," said the officer, and that was that.

These hunting expeditions were a regular feature of military life, and in addition to serving officers, a number of retired officials and Service men would be invited to take part. It must be remembered that most white men in pre-War India were officials of some sort, either active or retired, and the social side of the army was always open to them. On this occasion I think we had half a dozen officers with their native servants and a dozen soldiers, whose job was chiefly to keep order among the natives. By leaving at three in the morning we could arrive at our destination—about thirty miles distant—before seven, have breakfast in the bungalow there, and be finished soon after ten. The return journey would be uphill, and the great point was so to arrange matters as to escape the full heat of the afternoon.

We made the journey in *tongas*, small carts holding three men, and on the outward journey we kept splendidly to schedule. It had been decided, if possible, to bring back a leopard alive, and the natives set about preparing a catch-pit. The principle of the catch-pit is to lay a net across the bottom of the pit, which is covered over with brushwood. A second net is ingeniously arranged so that it can be lowered on top of the animal in the pit. That is all a matter of mechanics; the art lies in luring the animal to the pit. Well, it wasn't long before we caught sight of two leopards, perched precariously on the branches of a tree. Like all members of the cat family, a leopard is full of surprises, while he combines the strength of a lion with the agility of a deer.

One of our officers adopted a familiar ruse by firing into the air to frighten the animals in the hope that they would make off in the direction of the pit. Should they decide on another direction, we were to fire at them. Unfortunately they sprang a surprise on us by going off in different ways. One of them bounded away towards the pit according to plan, while his mate made straight for me! I was taken clean off my guard. I could never have fired in the time, and I simply fell flat on the ground. The animal bounded right over me, but as he passed he struck one of the natives

on the face with the full force of his paw, badly scarring his face. At the same time a volley came whizzing overhead. It was only by a miracle that I wasn't hit. I learnt later that none of the party had the slightest idea that I was directly in the line of fire. They hadn't noticed me bob down, and the native was lying helpless nursing his face a few feet away. The leopard was untouched and made a clean get-away.

I picked myself up and called out. The others came running up, and I indicated the wounded native, who I could see was in a shocking state. He was removed to hospital as soon as possible, and in the meantime it began to dawn on the party that both of us might have been shot. But not even that possibility seemed to lessen the joy of the chase for these hardened men, who failed to utter a word of sympathy for the native and regarded me almost as an outsider. One retired major whispered in my ear: "It's lucky for you that we're all d——d bad shots!" He added that I should never be nearer to fire than I was then if I lived to be a hundred. I believed him.

Meanwhile the natives were busying themselves with the other leopard, who had dutifully fallen into the pit, but in the process of lowering the other net, some of the men had been standing too near the edge. Anyway, the sides of the pit gave in, and one or two men fell with the net into the pit. The animal was trapped all right between the two nets, but in an understandable rage he clawed the natives who were now lying on top of him. It was easy for him to thrust his claws through the upper net and tear the bare flesh of his captors. One of the men was killed outright, while the other was badly mauled. While this was going on I was walking towards the pit with the Major, and when we arrived on the scene, one of my own officers took me aside to ask how I felt after my experience.

"As soon as the boys have secured the leopard, we're going back to the bungalow for an early lunch before making the return trip. The natives will get away as soon as possible, and we shall follow later."

"I'm sorry, sir," I said, "but I'd rather not have lunch

just now. I don't feel too good, and if you don't mind I'd rather go back now with the natives."

"All right, but you mustn't get morbid about these things. As a matter of fact we shall probably be coming back to-morrow to try and catch that other blighter. We can't let him get away like that. You'll soon get used to it," he added. "The great thrill of hunting, you know, is just that you never know what may happen."

Hardly had he said the words when three shots rang out. The officer swung round, and saw the Major and one or two others waving frantically in our direction. There was a scuffle in the undergrowth away to my right, and I caught a glimpse of a leopard making off at the double. We were assured that it was the same one. She had returned for her mate, but had only succeeded in giving us another fright. That settled the question of lunch for me. The officer gave me leave to return with the natives and the solitary leopard, and I was glad to see the back of that jungle. As it happened, this was to be the first of many such expeditions, but it had been an inauspicious beginning.

However, the idea of repeating this performance next day was luckily abandoned, for news was received that we were to return to our battery, which meant going back to St. Thomas's Mount at Madras, where we were received with a good deal of gentle banter. News spread rapidly, even then, and our peculiar experiences with the beasts of the jungle earned us the sobriquet of 'the menagerie squad.' However, even the best of humour can become irritating, and I found myself in hot water through hitting a soldier who was twitting me about all this. The blow was harder than I intended, and as it was witnessed by an N.C.O. it went badly for me. It was the first time that I had been in real trouble, and as I was still buoyed up with the ambition of youth I faced the commandant of the barracks with some trepidation. Fortunately he realized the nature of the incident and let me off with a severe reprimand.

Just then there was a call for volunteers to undergo examinations in nursing and Hindustani. Any young

soldier who passed these tests stood a chance of promotion, and as I was still game for anything new I put my name down on the list. In a few days a small party of us were sent off to Poona-Malee, some fifteen miles from Madras, to take a nursing course at the hospital run by Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Sisters, the organization which to this day is the official nursing force of the army, the executives finding a place in the Army List. Indeed, as I have already stated in an earlier chapter, the chief matron at Netley has rank equal to that of a lieutenant-general.

They started us off on fairly simple tasks, teaching us to make beds and take temperatures. There were lectures on diagnosis and the nature of diseases, especially those prevalent in the country. Altogether I was beginning to look upon this period rather as a rest cure. Then one morning, matron said she was going to give me a turn in the operating theatre, and she sent me off to receive instructions from the orderly on duty. I found the orderly a genial cove, who was obviously quite used to dealing with novices.

"We haven't had much going on in here lately," he beamed, "but things are looking up a bit to-day. A kidney case, I believe. It's a long time since we had one of them. Ah, here's the M.O.; no doubt he'll tell you all about it."

A young surgeon came in and began to explain this little job to me, and the more he told me the less I liked it. It may sound strange for the son of a vet who had already seen a good deal of life to feel squeamish, but my childish relish for blood had completely vanished. Besides, this was something different, and it is a commonplace even in the medical profession that a man's first experience of a major operation is unnerving. However, I knew I had to go through with it and I did my best to look as though this was an everyday occurrence.

Presently the patient was wheeled in. He was a great, strapping man, whose chief complaint seemed to be that he had lost his moustache, which they had made him remove. Perhaps it was just as well that his mind should be occupied

with such a triviality at such a moment. He was asked the usual question as to whether he had any false teeth, and in another minute he was under the anæsthetic. Grouped round him was the surgeon, the anæsthetist, two nurses attending on the surgeon's needs, three orderlies, and myself, who was so placed that no detail should escape me. The actual incision made little impression on me, and I confess that my interest at first was wholly taken up with the amazing speed and efficiency of the operation. But when the surgeon extracted the kidney, everything seemed to go blank. I just saw him drop it into a bowl, when I dropped, too. The floor seemed to come up and hit me, but that is the normal sensation when a man flops.

When I woke up, I was propped up in a chair. A nurse was offering me a cup of water, and the surgeon was smiling at me.

"Feel all right, now? That's done you a world of good, and it needn't upset you in the least. You all go that way at first. Now, I want you to come with me, and I'll show you something—just to complete the cure."

I followed him to another room, and he produced for me the bowl containing the man's kidney.

"There you are," said the surgeon, rather as if he was displaying a prize marrow, "isn't that a fine specimen?" He began to indicate various features of the organ, and as he spoke I could feel my original sense of revulsion rapidly disappearing. I was interested, and when I started to ask questions, the doctor could not conceal a smile.

"There's not much wrong with you," he said kindly. "Now, you'd better get along and have a good lunch."

I wasn't quite up to 'good lunch' yet, and I had little sympathy from some of my colleagues, who had, of course, heard all about my collapse. However, I held my peace, for I knew perfectly well that most of them would have the same experience—and they did!

It was comforting to learn that I had satisfied the authorities, but not before I had been present at a post-mortem. Grisly as this was, I survived unscathed, which is more than could be said of the corpse, which was split from

the top of the head downwards with remarkable precision. It was then roughly sewn up and placed in a sack for burial. The organs were removed and replaced by bags of sand! After that, I felt I could face anything, and my subsequent examination in Hindustani went off without a hitch, due in large part I'm afraid to the *babu* tutor, who if you behaved properly was able to give you most of the questions in advance for a small consideration.

For my pains I received a bonus of twenty-five rupees and six weeks' leave, which was spent, oddly enough, with a shooting party at Cooch Behar.

CHAPTER VII

THESE various excursions had made unfortunate incursions into my pocket, and when at last I reported once more at St. Thomas's Mount I found that there was a considerable sum to be deducted from my next pay. However, I had had my money's worth, and if I had to tighten my belt for the next week or so I could not complain. I remember waiting my turn in the queue on pay-day, when a bombardier came up to me.

"Hey, Waterhouse; there's a registered letter for you just come in by the post from England."

A registered letter? I was certainly not expecting any such thing. I drew my money, such as it was, and hastened to find out if it was to be augmented by some unknown benefactor.

I tore open open the envelope and found inside a formal-looking typed letter and a cheque for £100. The letter was from the Manchester solicitor, who had expected me to die in battle so soon, and the cheque was a token payment in respect of my inheritance under my father's will. I was now of age, and altogether there was about £2500 coming to me. But it was enough for me to be handling a cheque for £100. I put it away and sought out my section commander for advice. He considered this sudden shock of wealth to be sufficiently important to send me to Major Parry, who was by this time beginning to know me fairly well!

The Major read the letter carefully.

"It seems to me," he said, "that this is a matter that will have to be investigated by yourself. I see this cheque is drawn on a Lancashire bank, and it will take some little time to clear it. In any case it would be as well for you to see this solicitor yourself and get this sorted out. You may

ask how can you possibly do that. Well, it may be lucky for you that there's a new regulation allowing men who have served abroad for a certain period to return home on leave for six months. You're now twenty-one, and you've been out here three years. I think I can give you a good character. I know you've been in some scrapes, but none of them are so bad as to affect this proposal. Would you like to go?"

"Yes, sir, I would, very much."

"All right, then. I'll have your application put through to General Headquarters and it should be only a matter of time. Meanwhile I'll keep this cheque and arrange for it to be cleared, when the money will be handed over to you. We can arrange for you to go back on a troopship provided you contribute £15 to the fare. You've no objection to that I suppose."

This was indeed good news, but good news spreads rapidly, and it was not long before everybody in the battery knew that I had had some money sent out. Major Parry had allowed me a small advance, and I reckon nearly every man in the battery had a drink off me that night. But even now some evil genie was in the offing.

Weather permitting, our beds were put out on to verandas during the daytime, and the next afternoon one of the native servants interrupted my siesta by informing me that a native soothsayer would be pleased to tell my fortune for a small consideration. I let the man come up. He was obviously an amateur and seemed to me to be a little over-enthusiastic about his job. Without waiting to come to terms, he began to tell me a great many things about myself, which I had to confess were mostly the truth. But with age comes experience, and I suspected a frame-up.

"Look here," I said, "you've been put up to this by a servant attached to the barracks who, no doubt, happens to know a thing or two about me—most people do these days. He's put you on to what he thinks is going to be easy money and I suppose you're going to share out the doings. Well, there just aren't going to be any doings, and I suggest you cut it quick before you get something

you hadn't bargained for." He had the sense to run off, and, to use a schoolboy expression, I 'left the room' for a moment. When I came back, I saw to my horror that the bed was on fire!

Buckets of water were soon to hand, and the fire was quickly put out, but I was going to have something to explain away. One thought was uppermost—bang goes my leave. It was going to be difficult to refute the obvious cause of the fire, that I had carelessly left a cigarette burning. The worst happened; not only was my leave cancelled, but I was given a fortnight's C.B. And then there was a sudden easing of the burden. I was informed that my papers had already gone forward to Headquarters, and that to save complications nothing would be done about that. I should simply have to wait a little longer.

Then I began to think. I did not know where the native had gone—probably not far away. Was it not possible, indeed highly probable, that he had come back and avenged himself in this way? It might not be possible to prove it, but it struck me as worth trying. I appealed to have the case reconsidered, and once again I found myself before Major Parry. I told him the full story about my visitor, and he sent for the servant to come up. The servant was, of course, able to corroborate the first part of the story.

"Can you procure this soothsayer?"

"Yes, sahib."

"Good. Go and find him and bring him here immediately."

He was not long away. The man admitted trying to tell my fortune, but expressed surprise at the sequel.

"How do you tell fortunes?" asked Major Parry.

"I have a power that tells me, sahib."

"Well, perhaps you wouldn't mind asking this power if he can tell you who set fire to this man's bed."

There was a slight pause, while the man struck an attitude. He was obviously embarrassed. The 'power' was apparently of an elusive nature. The Major rapped impatiently on his desk, and looked inquiringly at the man before him.

"He cannot tell me that, sahib."

"Oh? Why not? It should not be a very difficult question. But, never mind, all is not lost. You may not know it, but I too have access to a secret power, to whom I have put the same question. Shall I tell you what the answer is? It tells me that it was you who set fire to the bed. Now, is that true?"

The man did not speak.

"Come, come," said the officer, suddenly dropping his mock seriousness and assuming the genuine seriousness of his position and authority, "you had better tell the truth; it will go easier with you. Tell me: did you set fire to this man's bed?"

The defence broke down, and the man acknowledged his guilt. In a few moments he had been handed over to the civil police.

"I am sorry, Waterhouse. The position so far as you are concerned is, of course, as though this had never happened. Now, you will be glad to hear that your application has gone through, and I have ascertained that by leaving here next week, you will be able to catch the *Plassey* at Bombay. Meanwhile, if you go and see the Paymaster, he will give you your hundred pounds. You had better have most of it in English money, and the remainder in rupees for your expenses this end. We will deduct the fifteen pounds passage money, and also a further two pounds. This is to enable you to draw two pounds on landing at Southampton in case of any emergency. I don't suppose I shall be seeing you again before you go (I sincerely hoped not!), so I will take this opportunity of wishing you a safe journey and a happy leave. I shall look forward to having you back among us when your time is up. Make the most of it; you don't know when you may get another. Good luck, and good-bye."

Came the dawn! I needed no reveille that morning. I had packed my kit the previous night and was counting the minutes. I ordered a *gharry* to take me down to the station, and was seen off by a crowd of hilarious soldiers, many of whom were no doubt looking forward to the day

when they might be in my shoes. On arrival in Madras I found that I had some hours to wait for my train to Bombay, which did not leave till the evening. I deposited my bags at the station, picked up a couple of travellers in the same position as myself, and, I regret to say, went on the spree. To be more precise I bought a bottle of whisky—for the first and last time. The aftermath will not bear repeating. Suffice it to say that I woke up next morning with a splitting headache. I could see the heat rising from the railway lines, and it was not until we approached Bombay that I was fully restored.

I reported at the docks, and was taken out on a tender to the old *Plassey*, the same ship on which I had come out. Yes, the same ship, but a very different passenger. No drills, no duty of fatigues for me this time. No sentry-duty in a rat-infested hold, and no potatoes to peel. I was going home with money in my pocket and six months to spend it in. I took my hammock and slept the sleep of the just. But the spirit of mischief was still undaunted. There was plenty of 'housey-housey' going on all over the ship, and when I suggested to one man that he would do better at 'Crown and Anchor,' he complained that he could not afford the stake.

"What about this?" I said, drawing some money out of my pocket. "Is THAT any good to you?"

"Is it? Not arf it ain't," and so we agreed to go fifty-fifty. Before docking at Southampton I had collected no less than £200, and this time I took good care to keep the money in my pocket and not count it over on the deck!

It was a thoroughly enjoyable if uneventful voyage. We stopped at Port Said for three days, and I was able to make a brief excursion to Cairo. We were held up by fog for twenty-four hours off the Needles, but this only seemed to make the homecoming more real. I stepped ashore as proud as a king, collected my £2, and took the train to London before proceeding to Derbyshire.

I was fully determined to beard my old aunt again. Now, at least, I had no qualms. I was invulnerable against any assault she might make. I was as good as she was and she

would know it. Hayfield looked unchanged, and, brushing the dust off my uniform and adjusting my cap, I boldly rang the bell of the ancestral home. The same maid opened the door.

"Master Francis!" It was fully half a minute before she could say more.

Following her back through the years, I asked appropriately: "Is Auntie at home?"

"Your aunt's upstairs. You know she won't see you. She has said over and over again that you are never to come here again. You must go, Master Francis, quickly."

But I refused to budge, and I demanded that my aunt be told that I was waiting to see her.

"She can't blame you for telling her," I said.

I waited while the maid went away—the bearer of dread tidings.

Presently the old lady appeared. I had won my first point, but before I had a chance to be amiable, she let forth such a torrent of abuse at me that would have even taught old Sergeant Rathbone something. "Aren't you ashamed of yourself?" she finished.

"No, I certainly am not," I replied, "and what's more you're a wicked old woman to suggest it."

She stood there white with rage, which did not abate when I told her that I intended going to Manchester to arrange about my inheritance. That made the kettle boil over all right.

"There's one thing, at any rate," she said, almost exploding, "you shall never have a penny of my vast fortune." Vast fortune! Those were her words.

She slammed the door in my face, and I walked away wondering, not for the first time, how my dear father with his heart of gold could have had such a sister. Truly the wonders of science are indeed miraculous and its secrets inscrutable.

I fared little better with my solicitor, who still seemed to feel cheated that I was still alive. He made a number of ridiculous suggestions involving all manner of complications, and I saw what was at the back of his mind. When I told

him to his face that all he was thinking about was his fees and not the proper disbursement of moneys entrusted to him, he accused me of insolence. But I didn't mind. There was no court martial looming over me in his office, and I told him bluntly that he must make over the money without further delay. Very unwillingly he took me down to the bank, where he opened an account on my behalf.

And so back to London to live the life of a gentleman of leisure with the means to indulge it. I made for the Union Jack Club in the Waterloo Road, and experienced for the first time the hospitality of that admirable institution, which has proved a home from home to so many soldiers.

The summer of 1911 was a memorable one for London; it was no less memorable for me. I saw the Kaiser unveil the Victoria Memorial in front of Buckingham Palace. It was the first time that I had ever seen royalty, and I felt a new pride in my calling that would doubtless have shocked my aunt beyond words. The courtyard of the Palace was strewn with red carpeting, and a procession of important personages crossed slowly to the base of the memorial. Most of the Royal Family were there, and an impressive touch was when the King bestowed the accolade of knighthood on the designer. The Emperor Wilhelm was at the height of his glory. He could not have foreseen his transformation into William the Wood-chopper any more than I foresaw that, in a few years time, I should be shaking hands and talking to the King of England.

I was so impressed by the spectacle that I actually wrote a long letter to my aunt imploring her to forsake the trout stream at Hayfield and to come up to London. She had never seen the capital, and I hoped that the experience would broaden her outlook—and soften her heart. But I wasted my time and a stamp, for there was no reply. She remained incorrigible.

Then came June and the Coronation. I took up a position just outside the Abbey and obtained a splendid view. Not even the coronation of our present King has effaced the memory of that occasion. There was an atmosphere of abandon that I have never seen repeated. It was truly a

magnificent augury for a glorious reign, and I was glad to have been in at the birth.

Soon after the Coronation I paid a visit to Brighton. It was a disastrous visit and completely took the gilt off the gingerbread. In plain language I was duped, and it was no consolation that I was the victim of perhaps the best-known swindler of his day. I first met him while having a drink in the lounge of a famous hotel. He was well dressed and made an immediate impression on my youthful imagination. Probably I was only too happy to 'talk with a toff' and was not very particular as to who. I was foolish enough to let out that I was in the army and was in England to collect a certain sum of money.

"A smart young fellow like you doesn't want to waste his time in the army," he said, and my thoughts went back to the almost identical words spoken to me that day on the platform at Manchester.

"You've got a nice tidy sum all safe and sound. Why don't you buy yourself out and enjoy it?"

And so by degrees he oozed flattery and secured my confidence with well planned care. I told him that I was in the army because I liked it, and that I was quite happy to remain there. But the conversation dragged on and the tentacles tightened their grip.

"I've got a little place on the Riviera," he went on. "As a matter of fact it's a hotel. I only acquired it a few weeks ago. Of course, I live in Brighton, but my flat's in the hands of the decorators and I'm staying temporarily in this pub. The point is that even if you do stay in the army, you might consider a safe investment for that money of yours. I'm forming a little company to take over this hotel of mine. Two friends of mine have each put up two thousand pounds. I only want one more, and it's a proposition that might interest you."

I knew little about finance and nothing at all about running hotels on the French Riviera. What was I to get out of this? No less than a percentage which would work out at a minimum figure of £350 a year. Of course, such a fantastic return would have aroused the immediate

suspicions of an older man, but my new-found friend could afford to dangle a really juicy plum in front of my inexperienced eyes. He proceeded to extend two invitations. One was to visit his solicitor in Brighton, and the other to accompany him abroad to view the property. The first was easily accomplished; very easily for my friend since the 'solicitor' was a tame accomplice, who produced a number of documents, all of which were, of course, completely unintelligible.

"You see, everything is absolutely in order. You can't be too careful in these matters. Much better to have everything above board and in black and white."

"Of course."

I said it would be difficult for me to go abroad as my leave was confined exclusively to the United Kingdom, but my friend had an answer for everything.

"We can soon fix that up. Just drop a line to the India Office. They'll give you permission all right. Just a holiday trip, you know. No difficulty at all."

His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for India duly obliged and I was granted leave of absence for twenty-eight days.

Needless to say I paid most of the expenses on the way out. The hotel existed all right, and very nice it was. I was introduced to the head waiter, but I might have noticed that the rest of the staff were kept well out of my way. £350 a year and nothing to do for it—nothing but to sit down and write out a cheque for £2000. I said I couldn't afford it, but my friend magnanimously reduced the figure to £1800—a special concession, which I would appreciate. And that night I drew a cheque on the Lancashire and Yorkshire Bank for that sum.

We returned to England. I wrote to the man several times, but received no answer. But he did not disappear—not immediately. He came to see me once or twice, just to assure me that everything had gone through and that I could sit back and await my dividends. Several other people were exercising a considerable amount of patience in this matter, and the hotel was to receive a number of somewhat

querulous letters, which must have robbed the manager of as much sleep as the senders had been robbed of hard cash. But the criminal overreached himself. He crashed as so many before and since have done—on the Turf. He turned up one day and wanted me to put some money on a horse called Eligible running at Hurst Park. He said it was owned by his father-in-law and was a dead cert. He omitted to mention that the backing left it a complete outsider. I put on the money, and lost every penny of it.

"Never mind about that. You've still got your three hundred and fifty pounds a year steady."

He never spoke to me again. I went to a solicitor in London, who took the matter to the police, and at the same time he was wanted in France, where he was arrested, tried, and sentenced to twelve years' imprisonment on a number of charges. So ended my first and last financial adventure.

How my aunt would have rejoiced—but I didn't write her a long letter about that!

CHAPTER VIII

PERHAPS it was as well when my leave came to an end, for otherwise my money most certainly would have done. September 1911 found me once again at Southampton reporting to the officer in charge of details and embarking on the troopship *Rohilla*, later to be sunk as a hospital ship in the Great War. Since I was no longer on leave I had to play my part in the routine of the ship, but that did not prevent me from financing a 'Crown and Anchor' board for a corporal going out to join his regiment at Secunderabad.

I financed this lad, but refused to be associated actively with the scheme. Perhaps that was why I lost £50 in one day and a further £50 the next. That was quite enough, and I hastily withdrew my support.

"So you're back," said the Sergeant-Major at St. Thomas's Mount, rather as if I had just been out to post a letter. "You'd better report to the C.O." I gave Major Parry a full report of all my adventures, including my disastrous trip to the Continent and consequent impoverishment. He only smiled and said something about the value of experience. I was not the first young soldier to come through his hands, and despite all my escapades I shall always be grateful to his quiet understanding and thorough knowledge of a soldier's troubles. He advised me to bank the little money that remained, and I was only too glad to hand it over.

Christmas in the army in India lacked nothing of the customary rites, but instead of staying in barracks I joined a shooting party, where I again got into trouble. This time, however, I was completely innocent. A sergeant had the misfortune to shoot a man in the foot and accused me of jogging his arm. I denied the charge vehemently. Too

vehemently, perhaps, for I was reported. My defence was brief and to the point. In the first place, if the sergeant had had the safety-catch of his rifle down, which he most certainly should have had, the gun would not have gone off. Secondly, it was hardly likely that I would have been standing behind him near enough to jog his arm. After all, he was a sergeant and not a recruit at shooting practice needing his stance adjusted. The argument was watertight and held good. I was acquitted, and the sergeant was rewarded by being reduced to the ranks.

Early in the New Year we received orders to transfer ourselves to Jubbulpore in the Central Provinces. The battery stationed there was going home on leave. We were to replace them, and we in turn were to be replaced by new-comers from England. We were all taking over each other's gun and equipment in this military general post.

Apart from its civilian population, Jubbulpore is an important garrison town, while nearby is the largest gun-carriage factory in India. At the time of our arrival the Royal Fusiliers and the Cheshires were both stationed there. Not far from Jubbulpore is Lecknemdom, another practice range, and we were soon on our way to camp there. The reader will not be surprised to hear that I had developed an almost uncanny fear of artillery practice camps, but circumstances beyond our control saw to it that not a shot was fired at Lecknemdom.

It was only three days' march, and on the second day out I asked permission to precede the battery on foot. I felt that in the daytime I should be safe from the adventures that befell me during our march to Bangalore. It was a beautiful morning, and, cutting myself a stick, I walked jauntily along the road.

Once more I sat down to rest on a bridge spanning a culvert, and once more I saw those green eyes staring up at me. I put my hand in my pocket and brought out a revolver. Though I did not know it at the time, this was against all regulations. I had bought it in Manchester and there was a terrific fuss about getting a licence for it.

It had cost me a pound, and seeing that a revolver is not much use without something to fire out of it I had also bought a few rounds of ammunition. I loaded the revolver and turned round again to face the animal. There were now two. I fired. One of them ran off, laughing hideously when it knew itself to be safe. A hyena is a coward. It does not know its own strength. It could be a formidable opponent, but seldom attacks unless provoked.

The other beast was wounded, but not seriously, and the wound goaded it into a fury. It bounded up towards me. If I had fumbled I should have been done. I fired again. The bullet went clean through the animal's heart. It crumpled up on the roadway, less than half a dozen yards from where I was standing. I turned the revolver over in my hand and walked on. My only regret was that I should be prevented from telling the story on account of the vital part played in it by something which I had no right to possess. The battery, if it saw the body of the hyena, would not ask questions. It could easily have been killed by a native.

No sooner had we laid out our camp at Lecknemdom than ominous clouds began to gather in the sky. And down it came! The monsoon had arrived and it had come too soon. We had not expected it for at least another six weeks, and we were taken completely unawares. In less than an hour we were completely washed out. I have already said that duck-boards are not used in India, as they would be completely useless as a protection against the intensity of Indian rain. There was nothing for it but to submit and to get back to barracks as quickly as possible—and under the circumstances that wasn't going to be too easy. It certainly wouldn't be quick.

To begin with it took some time to collect all our kit, working all the time in a steady downpour. At last the battery was ready to move off, and we began our pathetic progress towards the Nerbuddah river. The river was, of course, in flood, the water was flowing in a torrent, and the the bridge had been swept away. The Nerbuddah was impassable and further progress impossible.

Two men volunteered to swim across and to take a message to St. Thomas's Mount appealing for engineers to come to our aid. The current was so strong, and the stream so full of all sorts of matter washed from the banks, that this was a hazardous undertaking. But there was nothing else to do and their offer was accepted. We watched them battling with the stream and dodging obstacles, but they made it, and we raised a cheer as they disappeared into the distance.

We waited for two days—two days of incessant rain. Men began to cough, others to shiver. Luckily there was a rum ration available, but things were pretty bleak. At last a party of sappers appeared and worked heroically to improvise pontoons. Slowly we began the long process of getting our horses and guns across. It was a precarious business, and in the middle of it one of the pontoons broke away. We lost three horses and a gun, which was later found downstream mangled beyond repair. Before we were finally across, we had also lost two men, who were drowned, while later four men succumbed to pneumonia. I need hardly say that there was a run on handkerchiefs for some considerable time, and altogether it was some weeks before we could live down the sobriquet of 'the sick battery.'

Moreover, as if the monsoon wasn't bad enough, it was followed by earthquake and fire. I remember waking up in the middle of the night with the oddest sensation. The whole room seemed to be rocking, and an eerie effect was caused by a number of dead birds falling from the rafters. All this to the accompaniment of violent storms. Lightning set fire to part of the native quarters, and the fire spread to the barns where the hay for our horses was stacked. The whole place seemed to be ablaze, and anybody waking up to all this might be excused for thinking that the Day of Judgment was at hand.

Slowly order grew out of confusion, and within a few minutes I was told off to join a party of men to get out an old fire-engine. It was obvious from the start that this antiquated ruin would not help materially, but we did our

best with the water that was available. The rain seemed to fan the flames to greater fury, and the air was hot and full of charred wood flying hither and thither. It was difficult to keep in touch with one's fellows in the dark, and I can hardly think that our efforts were of much avail. But with the light of morning these efforts became more co-ordinated and the fires subsided. Reconstruction occupied the natives for several weeks.

When I look back on these days I can only smile when I sometimes hear young men reject the army as a career on the grounds that the life is dull. " Oh, I couldn't possibly go into the army—day after day of drills and route marches, cooped up in the same old barracks with the same old faces —I should die." There are, it is true, the drills, the marches, the barracks, and the faces, and, indeed, there are ample opportunities of dying, though there is nothing dull about that ! You certainly do not die from boredom in the army, and the odd thing is that when I think of the scores of times I have been in mortal danger (and that is no exaggeration, as the reader will know at the end of this narrative), few of these occasions have been brought about by enemy fire. The conclusion would seem to be then that the army provides a life of adventure, irrespective of any fighting that may have to be done.

For instance, take the case of the elephants. I had been sent down to the railway station to help unload a truck in the goods siding. A hundred yards away were half a dozen elephants loading timber on to another truck. These elephants were kept at the gun-carriage factory and were employed for all sorts of heavy work. It was fascinating to watch them. Two of them would put their trunks under a piece of timber and at the appropriate word they lifted it, always perfectly together. Well, there they were doing their work, and we were doing ours—each to his own task and no nonsense.

At lunch-time we were to be relieved, but as nobody came the sergeant in charge instructed me to stay on guard, while he escorted the others back to barracks to dig up the relief party.

" You stay here," he said, " and if you want a rest you can go and sit in that pill-box there."

The ' pill-box ' was a strongly built hut at the side of the line. It contained a table and chair and was doubtless used by railwaymen. However, it was uninhabited at the time and I made myself comfortable in it. Although I was supposed to be strictly speaking on guard I dozed off, but was rudely brought to my senses by the most fearful racket going on outside. I jumped up and peered out. I had forgotten that the elephants were still at work, and there was the big bull elephant at the end trumpeting like blazes and very definitely in a towering rage about something or other. Elephants are, of course, tribal in their habits, and the others were awaiting the decision of their leader. This decision was not long delayed, and consisted in a stampede in my direction. They came charging down the line, raising a dust that would have enveloped St. Thomas's Mount.

I bolted into my funk-hole, banged the door, and huddled into a corner, expecting to be ground to powder any minute. The tread of the elephants forcibly reminded me of the earthquake shocks we had only recently experienced, and a climax was reached when the hut shook violently. There was a terrific thud outside, and I thought the place was about to cave in on top of me. And then the noise grew softer and disappeared altogether. I opened the door and looked out. It was plain what had happened. The animals had come right past me, and in passing the leader had smitten my hut with his trunk. The marks were clearly discernible on the joists of the wood. It was a miracle that the whole structure didn't crumble. I learned afterwards that the elephants had gone back to the factory, causing an immense amount of damage *en route*. They had also killed two small children and a woman who was with them. As soon as they had reached their quarters they became docile again. Trained elephants develop many human traits, and they can be punished almost like children. Reduce their rations, or restrict their movements, and they know that they have been misbehaving.

It was a tradition in India that Thursdays were holidays,

the only work to consist of essential fatigue duties. This was at the express wish of Queen Victoria, who chose this laudable method of commemorating her acquisition of the title Empress of India. On one of these Thursdays I went out to chase butterflies, and forsook my rifle for a butterfly net. I know that this may sound oddly incongruous, but as I have already hinted the Indian butterfly is extraordinarily attractive and the goal of many collectors. The members of my barrack room could hardly be designated as collectors, but we were fond of catching butterflies and decorating the room with their brilliant colours.

It was on my way back from the chase that I heard a squeaking noise coming from the ditch at the side of the road. The sound was that of a young kitten, and when I looked down I saw three baby animals that, indeed, I would have taken for kittens were it not for the fact that India knows not the cat. There was no sign of any parent, so I picked them up and put them in my shirt, where they went off to sleep.

"What on earth have you got there?" said a man in the barrack room when I unloaded my cargo on to the bed.

"Well," I said, "I don't rightly know. Have *you* any ideas on the subject?"

The fact was that nobody could name the beasts, and we decided to hang on to them for a bit and see what happened. It was a week before they opened their eyes, and a little later on we noticed markings on their bellies.

"If you ask me," said a man one morning, "those kittens of yours are baby panthers. You'd better take care."

On further examination I was inclined to agree, and I immediately got rid of two of them. I kept the third as a pet, and as nobody raised any objection he became quite a favourite about the barracks.

"Have you found out what those animals are yet?" asked a young lieutenant one afternoon when we were cleaning out the stables.

"Yes, sir, we think they're panthers. As a matter of fact there's only one left, but he's quite tame—so far."

"Good heavens! It's a remarkable thing that the

mother wasn't with them. She must have been pretty close. If she'd seen you touch her young, you'd have been for it all right, and you wouldn't have found a butterfly net much use. At any rate, one thing's fairly obvious—there's a fully grown female panther knocking about these parts and I'm going to have a stab at getting her. You've had some experience hunting game, Waterhouse; would you like to come with me?"

"Yes, sir, very much."

"Right. Well, collect another man and we'll go out this evening. From what I know of panthers, she'll look for those young ones for at least nine days. I know it's a bit late now, but there's a good chance that she'll still be on the prowl near the spot where you found them."

So that night I directed the lieutenant to the spot. We climbed a tree and watched. Twilight was just setting in, and we had a good two hours before it would be dark. Presently there was a movement in the undergrowth beneath us.

"Ssh! Don't breathe," whispered the officer, who took careful aim.

Bang! A howl came up from below. It was all over. She was a beautiful beast, most exquisitely marked, and I have no doubt that the skin still decorates the floor of the officers' mess.

Meanwhile my pet panther was growing up. On the whole he was reasonably well behaved, but he did have one or two regrettable habits. Perhaps the most unfortunate was his practice of going up to a native woman from behind, seizing hold of her dress, and methodically unwinding it till it lay in a heap on the ground, while the victim stood stark naked unable to move. Only the troops had any influence over the beast, and the arrival of a couple of soldiers did nothing to alleviate the lady's distress and merely added to her embarrassment. These lapses increased at an alarming rate, but we were able to keep them from the ears of our officers.

But there were other things too, and the climax came when Willie, as we called him, paid a surprise visit on the Colonel.

That did put the tin hat on it, if the reader will excuse a phrase that is historically inaccurate! The Colonel was sitting in his office working on some papers, when Willie calmly jumped in through the open window, landed on the desk, upset a bottle of red ink over the Colonel, and sent everything else on the table flying on to the floor. Probably the Colonel had never heard of Willie's existence, so that his rage was equalled by his astonishment.

There was an immediate inquiry, at which the whole story of Willie's capture and adolescence was revealed. The Colonel had recovered from the original shock and fortunately appeared to be quite intrigued over the whole business. In fact he laughed heartily when told of some of Willie's more outrageous pranks. Nevertheless, it was obvious that the time had come when he must find another home. He was finally accepted as a gift by the Bombay Zoo, where I am sure he lived the rest of his days in honourable retirement. Let us hope so, anyway.

CHAPTER IX

INDIA produced what was perhaps the most dazzling spectacle of the modern world—the Delhi Durbar of King George and Queen Mary. The splendour of that occasion can only be known to those who attended it. The colour and panoply cannot be adequately described. It has been my good fortune to have found a place, however humble, at many of the great events of our time—and I was there. The impression was such that to-day, nearly thirty years after, not a week goes by without this fantastic cavalcade passing before me in imagination.

There was tremendous excitement at Jubbulpore when it was learned that representative troops from all over the country were to attend. At that time there were roughly 70,000 British soldiers in India, so that the individual's chance was infinitesimal. For instance, we were allotted a contribution of twelve men, to include an officer and N.C.O.s. The choice was by ballot, and I drew a place.

For purposes of ceremonial it was arranged to have one complete unit, and at Delhi we were attached to a battery from Agra, representing the artillery. At the actual Coronation, however, we took up positions round the dais along with others. We were all under canvas and never in my life have I seen so much of it. Acres and acres of tents seemed to stretch almost to the horizon, while for a week the railways brought literally millions of visitors, including many thousands from abroad. Incidentally, it is as well to remember that the population of India approaches 300,000,000. The stations were perpetually disgorging multitudes of gaily dressed natives, who found accommodation as best they could in the crowded city.

From where I was standing I had an uninterrupted view of the proceedings, and as each prince walked to the dais to

THEIR MAJESTIES KING GEORGE V AND QUEEN MARY IN CORONATION ROBES AT DELHI

do homage I felt that the limit had been reached in the matter of gorgeous apparel. But each ruler seemed to outdo his predecessor. There were elephants with their tusks tipped with gold and studded with diamonds and Oriental jewels. The howdahs were draped in cloth of gold, and the whole of this vast Empire seemed to have concentrated all its wealth and fabulous treasure at this place and at this time. It was truly an awe-inspiring sight.

As most people remember, the ceremony was marred by one unfortunate incident. The then Gaekwar of Baroda, dressed simply in white, turned his back on the Emperor after making his obeisance and walked away. Luckily nothing happened, but for a brief moment the holiday atmosphere changed to one of misgiving. It is a matter of history that the rulers of Baroda have for long been involved in trouble of various kinds, but I am not going to suggest that the Gaekwar of that time intended a personal slight on his sovereign. There was, of course, an inquiry, and his personal guard was reduced. His simplicity of dress may well have been meant as a mark of humility, but the actual order of procedure must have been rehearsed in detail.

For the troops the Durbar brought several material benefits. Not the least of these was an extra month's pay for every soldier, from the highest to the lowest in rank. We were also allowed three months' leave and received the Durbar medal.

There can be no doubt that the Delhi Durbar made a deep impression on the native population of India. The royal gesture was widely appreciated and probably did more than anything else to consolidate Indian opinion. It is not too much to say that modern Indian sentiment, so definitely expressed during recent international crises, represents the full flowering of the seeds sown that day nearly thirty years ago.

Before leaving Delhi I was able to visit Agra and to fulfil a cherished hope—that of seeing the Taj Mahal. This is no place to expand on its legendary magnificence, and suffice it to say that this was not lost on a young soldier, whose

æsthetic taste might be regarded as immature, to say the least.

When at last we returned to Jubbulpore, life seemed almost flat for a time. Fortunately young soldiers are not given much time for brooding, and there was plenty to do. Our week-ends, however, were free, unless one was selected for duty at Church Parade. The army had taken the English week-end habit to India, or so we liked to think! This brought opportunities for small private excursions, and very pleasant they were—except one.

There was a fellow called Whelan (the last I ever saw of him was on a stretcher somewhere in France), who asked me to join a party he was organizing one week-end to go out to the famous Marble Rocks. These rocks are really mountains, and I suppose they represent one of the world's greatest concentration of marble. They lie only about twenty-five miles from Jubbulpore, and we were successful in getting week-end leave. We went off by train, and booked rooms at the 'Dak Bungalow,' overlooking the gorge, where a lake is fed by water rippling down from the marble hill-side. These bungalows were a popular feature of the country-side; they were small private hotels (or more properly hostels) reserved for the white population, and they charged an extremely moderate tariff.

On the Saturday evening we were sitting on the veranda after dinner, smoking cigars and no doubt giving a reasonable impersonation of a cluster of retired colonels at Cheltenham, when one of the servants suggested that we might like to go out on the lake in the morning. He explained that it was possible to hire small rowing boats and that this was definitely the thing to do. We thought so too, and in the morning we descended to the water and hired four boats—two in each. All round this lake, and hanging from the rocks, were enormous clusters of wasps. The nests overhung the water and I didn't like the look of them at all. The wasps were buzzing round the nests and goodness knew just how many of them there were. However, we were assured that we had nothing to fear, but there was one proviso—smoking was forbidden.

It was a lovely morning, heightened by the natural beauty of the scene, and as we pushed out from the shore our thoughts were far from the barrack room ; nor did they touch on the danger that waited above. I did just glance up at the wasp nests, but they showed no sign of activity. Whelan and I were sharing a boat, and, followed by two of the other boats, we made our way up towards the other end of the lake. But the fourth boat lagged behind, and to my horror I suddenly noticed that one of the occupants had lit a cigarette.

I cupped my hands to my mouth and shouted : " Put out that cigarette, you d——d fool ! "

It was too late ; the boat was already almost under one of the nests, and the rowers were looking up to examine it. Hardly had the echo of my words faded when the wasps came out to look at *them*. To begin with they hovered over the water like some lowering cloud, buzzing fiercely. They flew round and round, and those of us at the far end of the lake rowed for all we were worth. Imagine our feelings when we saw the wasps descend in a body on our poor friends. The air was so clear that we could see the catastrophe quite plainly, but it was impossible to recognize the men in the boat. Their faces were literally covered with wasps. If I say that there were thousands of them, it would be an understatement. The victims did the only thing possible. They flung themselves into the water. It was their last action. Neither of them could swim, and as we learnt afterwards they must have been stung to death before they even reached the water.

By the mercy of Providence, we were able to land, and we ran up to the bungalow shouting for help. Two terrified natives met us half-way up. It appeared that this sort of thing had happened before, and they had it all taped. The fundamental thing was to get back into the bungalow, shut all the windows and doors, and stay there for at least twelve hours. They assured us that the wasps would come up to the bungalow and try to force an entry. It would be the middle of the night before there was a chance of their returning to their nests and quietening down.

Talk about a gas-proof room! The whole place seemed hermetically sealed. We even stuffed up the chimneys, and I doubt if any of us were able to sleep. The sight of those wasps and the thought of our comrades' fate was likely to haunt us for some considerable time. We were able to telephone to Jubbulpore, and on the Monday morning a party of men arrived to dredge the lake for the bodies. They included a doctor, who assured us that the wasps had killed them; even their eyes were pierced, and the bodies were completely unrecognizable. I have seen many disasters and witnessed many cruelties in my life; I have been among hundreds of dead and I have seen men ripped in pieces, but to this day I can think of nothing quite so ghastly as that experience at the Marble Rocks, perhaps because it was so totally unexpected. It was bizarre. It was horrible.

I have already said that one of the awards in connection with the Durbar was three months' leave, and it naturally took some time for this to work its way round the garrison. Perhaps it was on account of my experience at the Marble Rocks that my turn came almost at once. It would not, of course, be possible to go to England in the time, and for a moment I was perplexed as to what to do. However, I learned that a party from one of the infantry regiments stationed at Jubbulpore was about to go off on a hunting expedition to the Assam jungles. I asked permission to join them, and everything was satisfactorily fixed up. Our base was to be Shillong, and we took the opportunity of visiting Calcutta on the way up. Before any hunting expedition got to work it was necessary to consult with the proper authority as to the game laws in any given area, and these vary according to circumstances. For instance, it appeared that several man-eating tigers were known to be about in the district surrounding Shillong, and consequently our activities were welcomed. Moreover, a reward of 150 rupees was offered for each skin. In two days we had bagged a couple, which helped considerably to pay for the expedition.

It is hardly necessary to stress that big-game hunting incurs a great deal of preliminary expense. For one thing,

we had to take our own cook and to engage native guides. It was from these latter that we learned of the presence of wild pigs a little distance away at a place known as Mad Water. The ground here is scrubby, and admirably suited to the difficult sport of pig-sticking. Not only is it difficult, but it is often dangerous, as the following incident will show.

I must point out that the hunter is on horseback with one hand free to hold his lance. He gallops past the pig, strikes with the lance, preferably in the animal's breast, and the movement of his mount should ease the lance out of the pig's body. As soon as his lance is free, he must pull round his horse so as to face the beast again in case it should still be capable of showing fight.

These pigs were big tuskers and they were remarkably agile. Suddenly I saw that one of them was making straight at me. I nerved myself to carry out the instructions as set out above, when I felt my horse stumble and I was thrown right over its head, landing some distance in front. When I picked myself up, the pig was facing me at a distance of not more than three yards. It looked as though it were going to pounce at me, and its tusks were already dripping with blood. I had no time to wonder whose blood it was, for just then a shot rang out and the beast fell almost at my feet.

Meanwhile my horse was lying on the ground, and when I went up to it, I found that its belly had been ripped open. My pig must have attacked it from underneath and run its tusks into the horse. The beast was beyond help, and I shouted to one of the party to put a couple of rounds into it. I have a vague recollection of the remaining pigs scuttling off into the bushes. They may be dangerous, but they are certainly not courageous. It was an ignominious rout, but nevertheless I would not have had it otherwise. We had to pay 80 rupees for the horse, which made a considerable hole in our profit over the tigers !

Just as we were recovering from this episode we heard a shout, and noticed another party approaching us.

" Do you mind if we join forces ? " asked an officer in charge of the party.

We certainly had no objection and, indeed, were glad of the company. It was mutually agreed to return to the more profitable sport of shooting tigers.

Now it transpired that this officer had wounded a tiger the previous day, and he insisted on searching for it again. He was warned that it would be dangerous to hunt for it in the jungle, and advised to wait till the beast came out into the open. Unfortunately he spurned both the warning and the advice, and since he had made up his mind to go, we had no choice but to follow. So, with rifles cocked, we crept behind him. We saw nothing for about half an hour. It was getting dark and, so far as we were concerned, we were anxious to get back to our base. Then suddenly I heard a rustle, followed by the most frightful cry. The officer and a tiger appeared to be inextricably entwined in a sort of blur. In a minute the tiger had separated itself, and as it did so every man of us fired. I still can't think why we did not shoot each other, for we were at all angles, and the firing was practically simultaneous!

That officer was torn in pieces. The tiger had sprung at him from a hiding place, gripped him by the throat, and passed its claws over his body in a rapid movement like a dog scratching at the ground. The body was torn into shreds. The carnage was such that isolated pieces of flesh were lying about the ground. The tiger was dead, but at what a price.

CHAPTER X

I HOPE that the reader will not imagine that up to now I was only playing at soldiers and wasting my substance hunting big game with the big pots. In any case, the time was coming when the object of the chase was to be very different.

Back in barracks at Jubbulpore there seemed to be more than the usual activity; the atmosphere was charged with expectation, yet nobody seemed to know quite what to expect. It was the autumn of 1913, and just when this intangible sort of excitement was dying down grand manœuvres were announced. This meant being away for at least three months, and it was clear that something on a far bigger scale than usual was in the air.

I should say that for some years before the War, the army in India had been brought to a remarkable state of efficiency. In fact it would not be an exaggeration to say that if anybody at home wanted to see the British soldier at his best he would have to go a long way. The remarkable quality of this fighting machine in India was very largely the work of one man—Kitchener.

In 1911 we had had the Agadir incident, which almost precipitated a war between England and Germany. Lord Roberts issued his famous and timely warning of the dangers that lay ahead, and impressed upon the nation the need for overhauling the fighting services. That speech had two immediate results. Haldane launched the Territorials, and Kitchener entirely remodelled the army in India.

Kitchener, we know, was a lonely man, but this I can say —that he was loved and respected by every soldier in India. And this was just because he himself devoted all his energies to the greater well-being of the troops. Some of my older readers may remember Kitchener's pamphlet, handed to

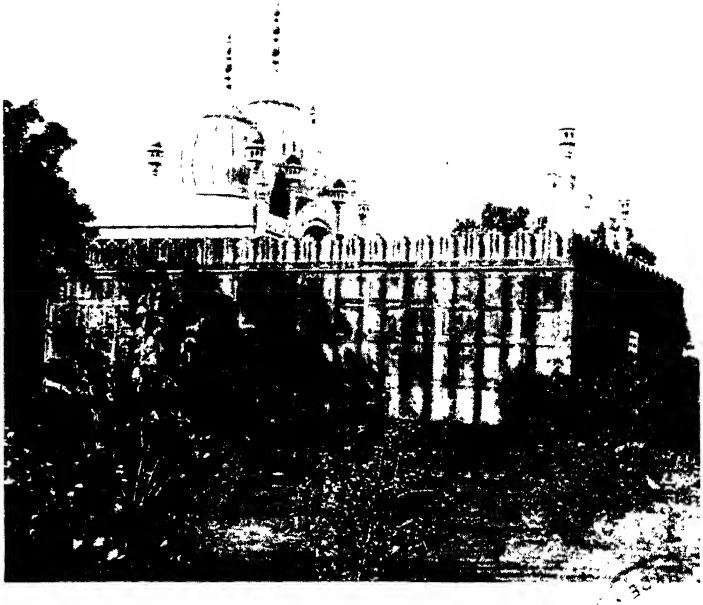
every man on going out to join his unit and the oft-quoted phrase: 'Be courteous to all women, and intimate with none.' Not everybody obeyed the injunction, but such plain-speaking was certainly appreciated.

The soldier in India was never allowed to forget he was on active service, and that impression was brought home even more so on these manœuvres. We were issued with field-dressings and everything was done to create a warlike atmosphere. As a matter of fact the preparations were so alarming that a rumour ran round to the effect that we were off to quell a rebellion on the North-West Frontier, still the powder magazine of India.

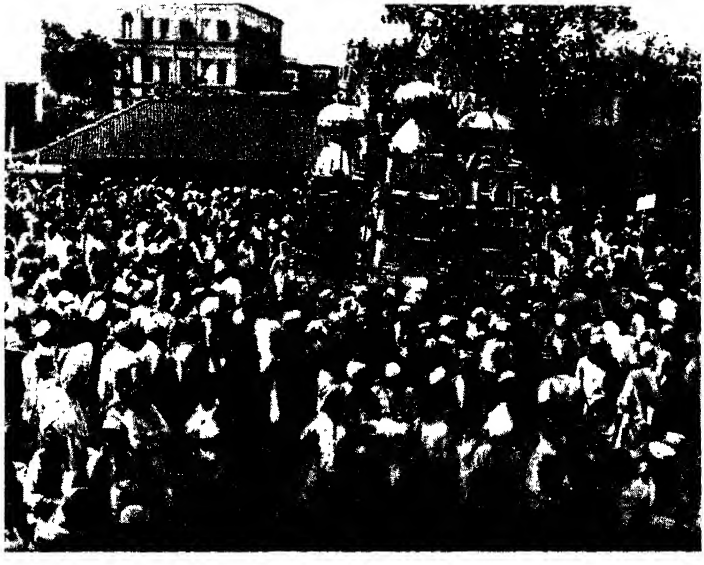
We marched south to Nagpur where we were joined by other units and became a division. Then north again into United Provinces to Lucknow and Cawnpore, and west to Meerut and Lahore, so that although there was no truth in the rumour, it was not far short of the mark. An invading army had in fact been imagined for purposes of staging a mock campaign. This campaign engaged all troops in India, numbering some 70,000 men, divided into two armies —the Blue to attack, and the Red to defend. Part of the Red Army was to come up from Rajputana as a flanking movement, and our job was to prevent the Blues from taking Delhi.

During these manœuvres we often used live shells, only changing to blank when the 'enemy' was in range. Every possible strategical device was employed, and if we but knew it this was to prove a magnificent rehearsal for our work during the next four years. There were, of course, days when we remained in our bivouacs, for our horses had to be shod and our equipment overhauled. These days proved a welcome respite from the ardours of the campaign, and I sometimes wonder whether the modern mechanized army recalls these 'easys' with regret. But I suppose machinery can be as refractory as a horse!

It was Christmas when we finally arrived back at Jubbulpore, but this feeling of tension continued, and our regular routine underwent various changes and modifications.



THE GOLDEN MOSQUE AT DELHI



NATIVE PRAYER FESTIVAL FOR THE SAFETY OF THEIR MAJESTIES ON RETURN TO ENGLAND

For instance, we were made to dig trenches, another piece of admirable foresight on somebody's part. We had a fine record as a mobile army, but it was a new experience to dig ourselves in. There can be no doubt that the Empire owes much to the men who foresaw what might happen and took appropriate steps to meet any eventuality. When the call came, India was ready.

Early in the New Year we had an intense artillery practice, and as the days went by the chances of long leave grew more remote.

One evening at the end of July 1914 I was sitting in the canteen drinking what we used to call 'country' beer. I was not in funds and could not afford the Scotch ale that was supplied to the troops, and contented myself with the local brew. Suddenly a man rushed in. He was obviously excited, and everybody turned round to see what he would do.

"Have you heard the news, you fellows?"

"What news?"

"The Archduke of Austria has been assassinated."

"Well, who cares, anyway?"

The Archduke of Austria meant little to us, and the political activity of foreign Europeans seemed of little consequence to a body of tired troops in search of recreation after an arduous day. Nevertheless, there were many whispered conversations in the barrack-room that night, and next morning we were surprised to find that our ordinary drill parade had been cancelled. Instead a special parade was announced, and we were formed up to make three sides of a square. Major Parry, our C.O., was away on sick leave and we were addressed by Captain W. K. Blair, an equally well-liked officer.

"You've probably all heard the news from Sarajevo," he said, "and you may have drawn your own conclusions. What I want to say now is that nobody knows what is going to happen, and it is idle to speculate. I know that every man here is prepared to undertake any task which may befall him, but in the meantime it is essential that you carry out your immediate tasks with efficiency and dispatch.

Don't spread rumours and don't discuss something that may never happen."

That was all. The parade was dismissed, and, needless to say, everybody discussed everything. At breakfast the room was buzzing with rumours, especially concerning Russia, and when some native boys ran through the barracks selling typewritten news-sheets it was impossible to obtain copies for the crush.

But authentic news was not slow in confirming or rejecting these rumours. Germany had threatened to invade Belgium, and England had sent her ultimatum, culminating in the declaration of war on 4 August, 1914.

Immediately there was a full-dress parade. This time we were addressed by the Colonel, who told us that at that moment it was not certain whether India would send an Expeditionary Force to France. "I hope we do," he said, and the sentiment was shared by every man on the parade ground. In a few hours the decision was made. We were to go—and we were ready.

Every man to his task. Horses were groomed and harnessed; gun-carriages cleaned; rifles overhauled; equipment polished—and shells loaded. Each sub-section carried 600 rounds. I remember a young sub-lieutenant, just out from England with his single pip, remarking that no matter how long the War should last, 'that should give them something to think about.' Little did this young officer, who in a short time was to earn rapid promotion and to be in charge of a brigade, realize what this new kind of war would mean. In a couple of hours at the Battle of Neuve Chapelle I was to put 485 rounds through my own gun!

Before we left we were visited by the Bishop of Nagpur, who gave us his blessing. "Some of you," he said, "will not be coming back, for such is the nature of war, but those of you who will be called to make the supreme sacrifice will do so in the faith of Christ, for the glory of your country and for the protection of your dear ones. God bless you all. May He show you His mercy, and may it please Him to send you back to us." Noble words, which did not fail to

impress those who felt their simple message and the sincerity of the speaker. Years afterwards, when I was in hospital in India, this same Bishop visited the wards, and he was overjoyed when I reminded him of the words he had spoken that day. I was able to tell him that very few indeed of those men who had heard him had survived the holocaust of the Western Front.

To give one instance of the efficiency and discipline of the troops, it took us precisely one hour to entrain, which is no easy task with guns and horses and all the paraphernalia of an army on the move. In another half-hour we had left Jubbulpore, and thirty-six hours brought us once again to Bombay, where we camped for two days outside the city. Major Parry was still *hors de combat*, and a new major was posted to the brigade. Unfortunately he made a disastrous impression at his first appearance by recounting all the things he would not tolerate. Instead of saying how pleased he was to have us under his command, he contented himself by saying that he hoped we should maintain our reputation, and then went on to give a catalogue of various kinds of behaviour to which he objected. All the more obvious vices came within his strictures. It seemed all so unnecessary and caused a great deal of resentment, especially after the good Bishop had rubbed it in that a good many of us must expect to die. Perhaps even my old solicitor in Manchester would have his wish granted! We all agreed that we would far rather have continued under the protection of Captain Blair.

As we had this time to wait before embarking, a request was made for some pay, and Captain Blair put the proposal before the major, who refused point-blank. Later, however, he recanted to the extent of allowing one pound between every five men. This gave us three rupees each, whereupon a good many of us proceeded to indulge in all those things which the worthy major would not tolerate. There were certainly a good many drunks in Bombay that night.

I myself was fortunately on duty, and that duty included going out with a search party to bring in the defaulters. I think we had the best of the bargain, for we saw the

sights without incurring the penalties. We discovered quite a number of men being entertained by ladies of various nationalities in the brothels of Bombay. These men had evidently forgotten Kitchener's dictum about women. The major, of course, was furious, particularly as our impending departure made it difficult to inflict heavy punishments. There could be no question of anybody being confined to barracks, but N.C.O.s were given lists of names for the carrying-out of the less pleasant fatigues on board ship.

Early next morning came orders for our embarkation. Our ship was a dirty-looking boat with a single black funnel, and I even thought with affection of the old *Plassey*, with its yellow funnel and white bows. This was much smaller, so small in fact that there was only room to accommodate one battery—my own. Down went the gangways for the troops and the ramps for the horses ; the guns were lashed together and lowered into the hold by enormous cranes. As soon as we were on board we were told all the things we couldn't do. It was a long list, and Billy Ford, a little cockney, asked the sergeant-major afterwards if we were allowed to breathe.

"You'll breathe all right until the Germans get you," was the encouraging reply. "Maybe you won't get so far as France ; they say there's a German raider knocking around here, so you'd better take a few deep breaths while you can."

Nobody was allowed to leave the ship and sentries were posted at the gangways. Yet at roll-call that evening no less than fourteen men were absent. As soon as the Major got to know about this he ordered a full parade in the well of the ship. A searchlight floodlit the scene and seemed to drive home his words.

"I understand," he said, "that fourteen men are missing. I will only say that I myself would not care to be in their shoes when they are caught. I don't know how they got ashore, but this is certain—that they must come back the same way. No gangways will be let down and the sentries will be at their posts."

We retired to our hammocks and were soon asleep. Next morning the missing men were on parade!

"All present and correct, sir," announced the sergeant-major.

"So they've returned, have they? All right, sergeant-major, have them locked up in the cells below and distribute their duties among their fellows. That'll teach everybody a lesson."

Later in the morning we began to move, and one of our first jobs was to exercise the horses. I should say that horse-boxes had been erected down the sides of the decks and the horses were backed in so that they faced inside. Because of possibility of fire there was no straw, the floor being sprinkled liberally with sawdust and grit. One of our horses was a ginger fellow called John, who was deeply attached to a mare known as Jane. During our embarkation Jane had walked quietly up the cocoanut matting on the ramp, but John refused to budge, with the result that recourse had to be made to a crane. A ledge running along the front of the boxes prevented them from slipping, and wide belts were suspended on which they could rest and take the weight off their legs; there was no room for them to lie down.

Exercising horses on board ship takes a bit of doing. The idea was for them to prance round on a piece of matting on the deck, but the movement of the ship and of the houses on shore made them particularly frisky. One poor man got so badly kicked that he toppled over backwards and fell through a hatch into the hold. He lived till we were three days out and was buried at sea. After that it was decided to let the horses grow fat.

Slowly we steamed out into the bay, and presently we took up a position in line with other vessels and rested on our beam. Then on the horizon we saw smoke. The flag-ship of the Indian station, a battle-cruiser, and accompanying destroyers were coming to take over the convoy, which totalled forty-six ships, the largest convoy that had ever sailed the seas. This was our first glimpse of the Navy in action, and it was thrilling for gunners to see the

big guns of these warships. We were to have one more night before leaving Indian waters. The horses had their last feed at half-past six, and 'hammocks' was at eight o'clock on the *Rajput*. When at last the convoy began to move I was to say good-bye to Punkee for six long years.

On our first night out, we were awakened in the middle of the night by the bugle sounding 'emergency stations.' We jumped out of our hammocks, got into trousers, and rushed to our positions, expecting any minute to find ourselves in the water. But nothing happened, and it was not long before we were ordered back to bed. What had happened was that one of the ships had become detached from the main body and had been engaged by an enemy vessel. This proved to be none other than the *Emden*, which had already been causing trouble near Madras and which as everybody knows was to be a perpetual nuisance to the Allied fleets until she was finally sunk by the Australians.

The *Rajput* did fewer knots than any other ship in the convoy except one, and consequently whenever we lagged behind, the others had to wait for us. Unfortunately the slowest of all had dropped so far behind that the *Emden* had spotted her without spotting our warships, which, in turn, had no knowledge of the *Emden's* whereabouts. We were not equipped with wireless, and all signalling at night had to be done with lamps. Luckily no damage was done, although in the morning we could not see all of our vessels, which gave rise to all sorts of rumours.

My friend the cockney was particularly upset and told a lieutenant of his doubts.

"Are we all right?" he asked pathetically.

"What do you mean—are we all right?"

"Well, sir, I can't see some of our ships, and after last night, I feel a bit nervous."

"Good Heavens, man. What do you suppose the navy is for? Really, I'm ashamed of you. You'd better go and ask the captain to let you look through his telescope. Perhaps that will put your mind at rest."

Just then the Major came by.

"What's that you're saying to this man?" he asked the Lieutenant.

The subaltern explained the gist of the conversation, explaining that Gunner Ford seemed anxious for the safety of some of the ships.

"Oh, he does?" sneered the Major. "All right; fall in everybody."

He had thought of a new idea.

"You men aren't getting enough exercise. Take off your shirts and double round the deck for half an hour."

Off we went, with the officers watching us, and the sergeant-major keeping up the pace.

We had no further trouble with the *Emden*, and as we approached Port Suez, the flagship turned about and steamed past us, running up a message of good luck. Ahead lay our new escort made up of units of the Mediterranean Fleet under the *Black Prince*. It took us three days to go up the Canal in single file, and the old *Rajput* was followed by the *Black Prince*. What a contrast! As I peered over the stern admiring her guns, it seemed as if there were but twenty yards between us.

At Port Said we went through the usual process of coaling, with the usual accompanying exhibition. During this process, however, we were involved in a collision. One of the other boats hit us broadside on, smashing the davits on our port side and causing other damage. Naval officers carried out an inspection and pronounced us fit for sailing. It was a matter of urgency. The War was going on, and we must go on, too. Nevertheless, we only had half our number of lifeboats if anything happened.

In the Mediterranean itself, between Port Said and Marseilles, we ran into a terrific storm. All our horses were sick, and I doubt if many men escaped. I know how I felt, and it didn't make it any easier when at the height of the fury I was picked with other men to go down into the hold to lash the guns, which had moved from their position. Looking up, the ladders seemed to be horizontal, and none

of us relished the prospect of going up them. However, somebody threw down some ladder-belts. These are like life-belts with a hook, and the point is that if you feel sick or think you're likely to go off in a faint on the ladder, you just hook yourself on to a rung and wait till you feel better! It may sound peculiar, but, believe me, it's a very useful and welcome device, and I was more than grateful for my belt that day. When I *did* get up on deck again I just threw myself flat out and hoped for the best.

We lost six horses as a result of that storm. We hauled them out of their boxes and over they went, but it wasn't quite as easy as it sounds. A dead horse is a considerable weight! Hardly had they touched the water than they were surrounded by sharks. It was a macabre sight, and did nothing to ease our own condition.

And then one morning I woke up to find everything incredibly still. I jumped down from my hammock and looked out of the port-hole. I could see the hills of France.

"We're there!" I yelled.

"Shut up, can't you, waking everybody up before reveille," but as he spoke, the bugle sounded, and the news of our arrival spread quickly through the ship.

Orders were given concerning disembarkation, and we received our pay. We had had no pay during the voyage, although there was an excellent canteen on board. Knowing our Major's views on military discipline, it seemed odd that he should choose to pay us just when we were going ashore—and at Marseilles of all places. Already the word 'Mam'selles' seemed to be on everyone's lips. Moreover, in addition to our pay, every man was given £2 bonus, known as 'blood money.' However, we were not concerned with the ethics of the thing. We had money in our pockets and we were going ashore. That's all that mattered, and it helped considerably to warm our hearts, if not our bodies, for we were still dressed in our Indian drill, and it was getting uncomfortably cold.

As we came up the Gulf of Lyons, we could see the grim

outlines of the Château d'If, which has housed some of France's most notorious criminals. It includes a network of underground passages linking historic dungeons, which I have no doubt could tell a tale or two. But ours was to be a different fate.

CHAPTER XI

WE docked at half-past eight in the morning, and by ten o'clock we were on French soil, on which we were to spend the next four years. Our horses were temporarily stabled in sheds on the quay-side, and our first job was to groom them. One could see that they were just as pleased to be on *terra firma* as we were, and it was not long before the majority were lying down. After all, they had been on their feet for several weeks. In some cases their fetlocks were swollen, as a result of lack of exercise, but this yielded to treatment. Altogether they were in excellent fettle with a fine gloss on their coats.

Meanwhile we could see the *Rajput* at anchor in the Bay, and the quay was slowly filling up with other troops from the remainder of the convoy. When the last man had landed and the last gun swung ashore we had the order to hook-in and to fall-in in column of route—that is in single file, one gun behind another. With our Commanding Officer leading the procession on his charger, we made our way towards the gates leading from the quay into the city.

These gates were guarded by mounted guards, and as we approached I saw that what looked like the entire population had gathered on the other side. People were peering through the railings, shouting and screaming, and one or two were actually trying to squeeze through. When the gates were opened, there was a mad rush, and we found ourselves engulfed by a whirling throng of women and girls, shouting *Vivent les Anglais!* and other terms of endearment of a more intimate nature.

Girls were waving the tricolour and bestrewing the road with flowers. Our horses were decorated with garlands, while bottles of *vin ordinaire* were pressed on our willing selves. Those who could jumped up on to the gun-limbers

and embraced whoever they found there. Surely no modern film-star or Atlantic flyer ever received quite the welcome that was shown to this little Indian artillery battery that had come across the ocean on the old *Rajput*. These women of Marseilles acclaimed the soldiers of perfidious Albion with an abandon that came from their hearts. They knew instinctively that we should take care of *la patrie*.

We proceeded through the city, past the Fort St. Jean, which I was to meet again in very different circumstances on my way out to Tunisia to join the Foreign Legion, and on towards the hills at the back. We were to spend the night about three miles outside the city. There were no tenting arrangements, and we made ourselves comfortable in a number of disused barns. Before retiring for the night we were treated to another harangue from the Major.

"You've had a wonderful reception from the French people," he said. "That's all right, and if it doesn't go any farther there's no harm done. But remember, you are not in an enemy country here; you are among friends. Bear in mind the traditions of the Service and be always on your guard. In the meantime, it is forbidden for anyone to leave the camp."

Personally I was extremely tired after all this excitement, and wrapping myself in an immense blanket I tried to get off to sleep.

"Coming out?" said a voice.

"Don't be a fool," I said. "You know what the Major said."

"Yes, yes, I know, but just you get up and take a look round. See anybody you know?"

There certainly seemed to be a few gaps in the ranks, but I wasn't going to look for trouble that night.

"I'm stopping here," I said. "You can please yourself."

"What are you looking for—medals?"

"No, and I'm not looking for a kick in the pants either."

With that my would-be friend disappeared into the darkness, and I eventually dozed off.

I was woken up by the cold. There was a full moon

casting a shadow across the entrance to the barn. The man next to me suddenly threw back his blanket and started.

"Brrr. A rat!"

Neither of us was in a good temper and we started to argue. Our altercation was interrupted by the sudden appearance of the orderly officer on his rounds, accompanied by the sergeant-major.

"How many men absent from here? Check 'em up, sergeant-major."

We answered our names, but in many cases there was no answer.

"A nice state of affairs," remarked the officer. "Here we are due to move off in a few hours and half the men absent. All right, post the sentries and send the remainder of the guard down the town. Tell them to make a report to the *gendarmerie*. The police are likely to know where we shall find these men. They've just got to be found somehow."

That's what comes of paying men as soon as they get on shore!

Reveille went at four o'clock that morning, and at a quarter to five we moved off. All except one had returned. The C.O. called all section commanders together, and they galloped up on their horses to receive the orders of the day, and incidentally to report that one man was missing. So far as I could gather our orders were again mostly negative —not to detach ourselves from the column, especially when halted at the roadside, etc., etc. It was still dark as we left our camp and began our march back into the city. Our immediate destination was the station, but beyond that there was a curtain, through which even the junior officers appeared to be incapable of seeing.

As the reader will appreciate we were pretty smart at entraining. We unhooked the gun-carriages, put the horses in their boxes and ourselves into compartments, and for the first time we made our acquaintance with the famous notice: *Huit chevaux; quarante hommes!* As a matter of fact the men detailed to travel with the horses were comparatively well off. They did at least have room

to lie down. The rest of us barely had room to sit, and, as usual, we were locked in.

"Where are we going?" I asked a lieutenant, who was standing on the platform.

"Some say to Heaven and others to Hell," was his enigmatic reply. "I think some of you had a taste of Heaven yesterday afternoon," he went on, "so perhaps you might like a change."

"Well, sir," I said, "even when a ship goes down, the rats get drowned."

He walked away, no doubt wondering exactly what I meant, and it occurred to me that the remark might be taken in several ways.

However, there was an incident to divert my attention. The missing man had appeared. I saw him being marched up the platform between two *gendarmes*, who presented him to our C.O. Before anybody else had time to speak, the man burst out with: "I didn't cause this war, and I'm blowed if I'm going to take part in it. I don't want to be in the battery." This took the officers completely by surprise, and the Major was evidently nonplussed. He was silent for a moment, and then gave instructions for the man to be placed under protection in the guard's van, adding: "You'll be sorry for those words, young man—and you needn't worry about serving in this battery; you won't be here long." The man remained with us for a while, but was later given a field court martial and sentenced to a long term of imprisonment. What became of him eventually I don't know, but I'm almost certain that he *did* play his part in the war after all.

We remained in that train all day and all the following night. We never went for long without stopping, often in sidings. Periodically other troop trains passed us, and sometimes we stopped level with one, when food and drink would be passed through the windows. Some of us made great play by imitating the little horns used by the French railway guards, and this so annoyed one of them that he complained to an officer, with the result that we were solemnly told not to make rude noises!

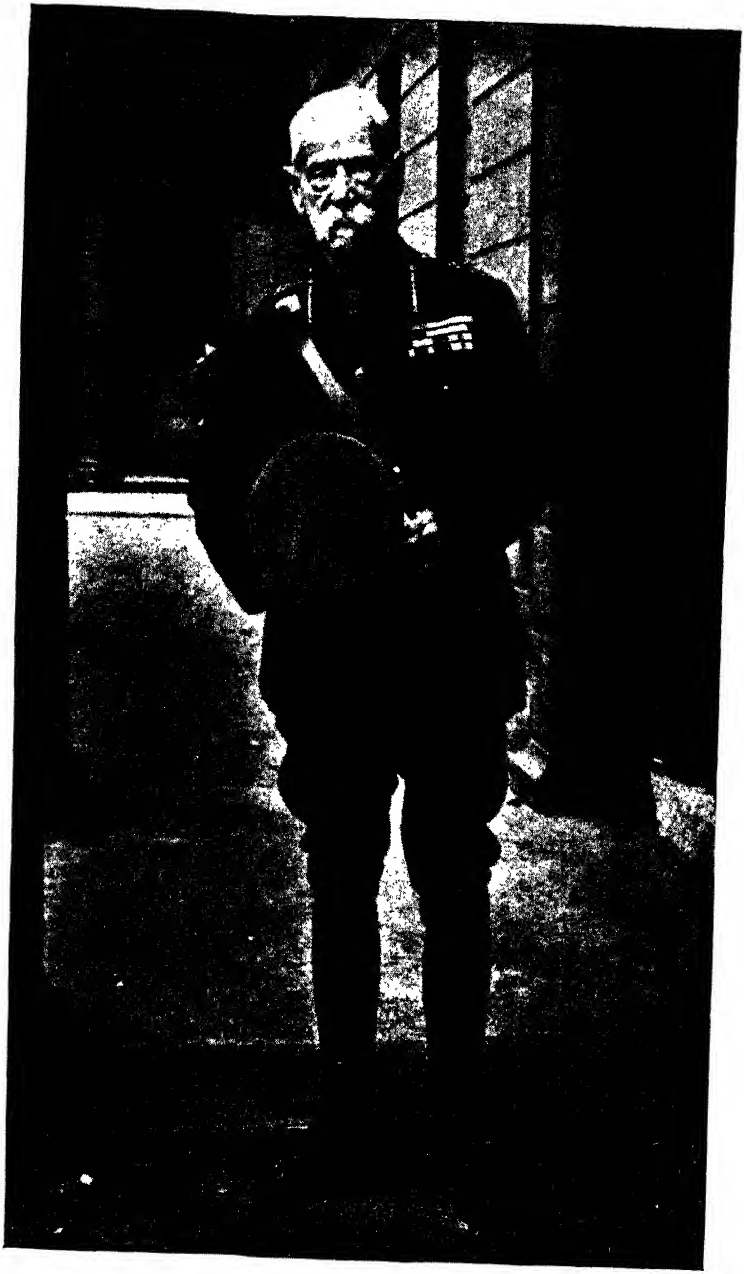
Gradually the news leaked out. We were going to Orleans, and in the middle of the night somebody looked out of the window and shouted: "We're there." Actually we were in a siding outside the city, but that was as far as we were going to get. It is my experience that troops always arrive at their destination in the middle of the night, just as ships invariably dock at dawn. In either case, it's equally unnerving and probably, in most cases, quite unnecessary!

Once more we processed through the town, but the only reception we had was from irate townsfolk, who were woken up by the row and who shouted at us from upstair windows. The English were not quite so welcome as at Marseilles, and I confess that my sympathies were with the inhabitants. This time we were provided with tents, but just as we were settling in, it started to rain. Everything we touched seemed covered in mud, and the guns were down to the axles. It was a difficult job to extricate them, tempers were frayed, and we were not a good advertisement for the Allied cause during the rest of the night.

In the morning we were still wet, but we were informed that we should have to take part in an important parade in the city, and we must do our best to clean ourselves up. Luckily the sun came out, and with the help of a clear stream we removed the mud which had caked all over the guns and most of our equipment. By the time we took up our positions in the centre of the town I think I can say that we were completely transformed.

There was the statue of Joan of Arc looking down on her old enemies, and I was amused to hear a good many whisper: "Oo was she?" But historical research was stifled by the approach of a number of staff cars, obviously bearing important personages. Officers stepped out, and for a few seconds were engaged in saluting everybody else. From the last car there stepped two men—the Commander-in-Chief of the English forces, Sir John French, and Lord Roberts—'Bobs' himself, then eighty-two years old.

This was an inspection indeed, and Lord Roberts spoke to every man. Nobody was overlooked. When he shook hands with me, he asked how much service I had.



FIELD-MARSHAL LORD ROBERTS, V.C.

"Six years, sir."

"In India?"

"Yes."

"Good. I spent forty years there. Good luck to you."

What an inspiration for a youngster in the Indian Army to receive such encouragement from a man who had made his name in that country and through his efforts had achieved lasting glory.

Both Lord Roberts and Sir John agreed that our camp was no fit place for us, and we were immediately transferred to billets, the French troops moving out into army huts. Two of us were boarded out on an elderly couple, and I shall always remember the old man saying: "You may stay up a little longer if you like." The time was exactly eight o'clock, and we might have been a couple of children allowed to stay up as a special treat. Our host was a devout Roman Catholic, and before we went to bed recited the Rosary to an exceedingly inappropriate accompaniment from my companion, who was cursing everybody and everything in the next room.

From Orleans we entrained for Bethune, which was to be the limit of our journey by rail. But before we arrived there we had a surprise. We had stopped at a small country station, when we heard a humming noise overhead. Two German aeroplanes were circling above us. I don't think any of us were prepared for this. Aerial warfare to us was a dream, and now it had come true. The 'planes dropped bombs in a desperate attempt to blow up the train, but none of them found their mark. As they swooped lower, we fired at them with rifles, and they answered with revolvers. Luckily they were not fitted with machine-guns. They flew off, leaving us unscathed. We had, however, been observed, and observation is as much a duty of the air arm as destruction. So far as I was concerned, this was an isolated instance of attack from the air, for I was not to see another aeroplane for many months.

Considering the wholly unexpected nature of this attack, we were remarkably self-controlled, but when it was all over we found that the train wouldn't go, and this not for

any mechanical defect but because the driver had fled! We found him taking refuge under a hedge, and it was only after persuading him that there were only birds in the sky that he consented to resume his appointed task.

At Bethune we took to the road, and although few of us spoke, we knew in our hearts that not far away the battle had been joined. And as we marched we received grievous news—Lord Roberts was dead. Yet every man among us felt immeasurably proud of his blessing. This was to be our job and we were going to see it through—for King and Country, for ourselves—for 'Bobs.'

Bang! And again, bang! In a moment shells were bursting all round us. Had those aeroplanes given us away?

"Right take ground," came the order, and we wheeled round into line, bringing up our guns and automatically going to our stations.

We were in an orchard. The enemy's fire was growing in intensity, and in a moment we were given our range and were answering back. It was an uncomfortable moment, for at that time we were uncertain as to the position of our own infantry. Fortunately soon after we had opened fire the bombardment slackened, and we had orders to collect cover for our guns. We scavenged round, picking up twigs, foliage, and anything else suitable for camouflage.

"There you are," said Captain Blair. "For the first time you've had a dose of war. The enemy knows our position, and we must expect more. However, we've received information about our own troops, and at present our range is unrestricted."

As it turned out, we were to spend the rest of the year in and around that orchard. In front of us, a little way to our left, lay the village of Festubert, and all through the autumn of 1914 and the early part in the winter we were to play a not unimportant part of what became known as the Battle of Festubert. We dug emplacements for the guns, and trenches for ourselves, and all this time we were engaged in what official War *communiqués* call 'artillery activity.'

And yet our first casualty came about through a stray machine-gun bullet. Two of us had been sent off to gather

wood (and apples), and my colleague had climbed the tree, when I heard the z-zz of bullets fly past. Now it is an old axiom in the army that there is nothing to fear from a singing bullet; it is only when they ping that you must take cover. It is a subtle distinction and I believe in playing for safety. However, these bullets must have 'pinged,' for suddenly the man up the tree dropped his hatchet—on to my foot!—and cried out in pain. "I'm hit," he yelled. "I must get down."

"Well, fall down," I said rather unkindly, yet it was the only thing he could do, and down he came—a fair wallop.

Blood was pouring from his trouser leg. I turned him over in the mud and did my best to stop the flow. It didn't occur to me that the man was almost suffocating by having his face pressed into the mud. I called for help, but there was no answer, and I had to leave him while I ran off to find it. We got him back to the battery, and presently the doctor arrived on the scene from his billet. It was a serious case, and the last I saw of my friend was being carted off in an old horse ambulance. It was the end of the War for him, and I heard afterwards that he had lost a leg.

You get some queer jobs in the army, even in war-time, and we had a peculiar job at Festubert. An old French peasant came up to us in a great state of mind to say that Jerry had been shelling a convent and please would we go and evacuate the nuns. Well, it wasn't going to be too easy to reach the convent at all, but a party of us managed to make it. There were only some fourteen women in the community, and they had spent days in the cellars. It was apparent that they were half starved and thoroughly frightened. All the same, they weren't a bit enthusiastic at the idea of moving out, and it was only by reciting hair-raising stories of their fate if they remained that they agreed to go. We bundled them into a cart on the road, and then they wanted a priest to give them a blessing. Finally, somebody tipped the driver the wink and away they went, falling over each other as the cart jolted into movement.

Meanwhile Festubert itself had been evacuated, and some

of us had an opportunity of inspecting the village. It was an extraordinary experience. Most of the houses had been left exactly as they were ; in some the tables were even laid, and a meal prepared. There was no question of looting, for the village was doomed anyway. If we didn't help ourselves the Germans undoubtedly would.

It was a house just outside Festubert that became an observation post for the Leicesters. It had suffered heavily from shell-fire and only the ground floor was left intact. However, well sand-bagged, it made an excellent dug-out, and four men from our battery were detailed to act as the observation party to maintain contact between ourselves and the Leicesters, whom we were supporting. There was an officer, two signallers, and myself as orderly. We made ourselves comfortable in the basement, which had a staircase leading directly to the road. Periodically one or other of us would go up to see what was happening and to show that we were still there for the passing of messages. We were well rationed and were quite prepared to stay for some days if necessary. There was no telephonic communication, so that it was up to us to take the initiative in making all necessary contacts.

One morning I came gingerly up the steps of the dug-out and was just about to lift the curtain to come out on to the road when I stopped dead. There were voices above and they were not talking English. I ran back two steps at a time. " The Germans are here," I said.

" What do you mean—here ? " asked the officer casually.

" At the top of the stairs," I whispered.

" Great heavens ! Where are the Leicesters ? They must have retreated without us knowing. Follow me."

The officer led the way back up the stairs. We stood at the top under cover of the curtain and listened.

He put his fingers to his mouth. " Ssh ! "

Cautiously he lifted the curtain and then let it go quickly, but not before I had seen a group of German soldiers standing in the road rolling cigarettes and joking. We went down again, and to our horror we could hear voices at the top of the stairs.

" Who's down there ? " said a man in German. " Here, somebody, get me a bomb."

It was easy for him to lift the curtain and chuck a bomb down. ' There's something for you to share between you,' he might have thought. There was no need for him to come down himself and risk being shot. But nothing happened. Perhaps there was no bomb handy. Anyway we were left in suspense.

" I'm afraid it's all up now," said the officer. " We shall probably have to surrender ourselves. It would be the honourable thing to do under the circumstances. I can see no other way. There's only one hope, and that is that we shall retake the ground, and in that hope we must hold on—at least till our rations give out."

We remained in our trap for another twenty-four hours, and then I went up again to reconnoitre.

Once more I ran back. " They're talking in English now," I said. All four of us made a dash for the stairs, but the officer got their first and in a second he was standing in the road face to face with an officer of the Manchester Regiment.

" What the——? Where have you sprung from ? And what do you think you've been up to ? "

The situation was explained.

" You've certainly had a narrow squeeze. Better get back to your battery if you can find them, but watch out. The enemy are likely to put up a barrage any minute now."

We made our way back to the orchard to find that we were on the verge of being reported missing—' believed dead.'

And then—Christmas. All the stories of fraternization with the enemy, of the exchange of food, and of the Christmas Armistice, only came to me *as* stories afterwards. Our guns were active most of the day, and there was no armistice for us. I believe that at certain points in our sector where the infantry was facing the enemy at only about two hundred yards there was an exchange of biscuits, but nothing of the sort came my way. For me Christmas 1914 meant ' artillery activity,' and after sixteen years of it I can say

without fear of contradiction that an artillery barrage is just about the most destructive force in the world.

It is no exaggeration to say that 'artillery activity' forms the basis of modern warfare. It is unceasing and it is of vital strategic importance. Artillery is never silent. Its aim is destruction, not so much of buildings as of lines of communication and enemy outposts. Railways, roads, telephone wires as well as enemy gun emplacements form the objectives of artillery fire, and sometimes when the rat-tat-tat of a solitary machine-gun is heard in the silence, that one gun may become the objective of heavy fire. After a barrage of fire, the enemy may come out to inspect the damage, and that is the cue for another onslaught. So it goes on, hour after hour—'artillery activity.'

The British Royal Artillery still uses the 13- and 18-pounders for their light artillery. To-day a steady rate of fire would be 300 rounds an hour, but this can be doubled if necessary. Modern shells weigh 20 lb., and the guns have a range of 9000 yards. The Howitzers range from the 4·5 to the 15-inch, firing 50 rounds an hour with a range of 14,000 yards and firing a shell of 1400 lb. It would be possible to bury a motor-lorry in the natural crater formed by one of these shells.

This will give some idea of what such 'activity' means and what soldiers must feel when they see the flash of the enemy's guns, presaging such a barrage.

Each gun has a normal detachment of eight men, of whom No. 1 is the sergeant in charge. No. 2 opens the breach and assists in adjusting the sights, No. 3 lays the gun, No. 4 loads it, and Nos. 5 to 8 supply the ammunition. I have already explained how at Festubert we dug trenches, so that we could even sleep beside our guns and work in relays during intense fire.

Before the end of the War no less than 52,000 artillerymen lost their lives, and since the artillery is not engaged in ordinary trench warfare, this enormous death-roll was the result of this 'activity.' But the man behind the gun is ever mindful of the motto of his regiment: 'Everywhere where honour and glory lead.'

Early in 1915 we went out of the line. It was our first real break and very welcome it was. Ever since we arrived in France we had been ill-equipped for the rigours of a winter campaign. It was too early for clothing to reach us from England and we were still wearing our Indian drill. I doubt if anybody during those first months of the War had had a tougher time than the Indian Expeditionary Force. But there was to be no extended rest for us, even now. We were billeted in an old farm, the officers in the house and ourselves in the barns. The farmer's son had gone to the War, and the old man had resumed work with the assistance of two stalwart daughters. From the terror of the enemy's guns we now had to contend with the farmer's wrath if we left a gate open or ill-used the water-pump.

Everyone expected that in a day or two we should be moved farther back, but that was not to be. Before a week was out, we went back into action, first at Richbourg and then near Levantie. But for a week or two we were only engaged intermittently. We kept popping in and out of action in all sorts of places, and I remember an incident at Richbourg when I was sent up into a belfry to join an observation party there. It was a strongly built old Norman tower, and I was standing actually in the belfry when a German 5·9 shell took off the top. Two officers who had climbed up to the top of the tower were killed and the narrow stairway was blocked. The impact set off the bell machinery and I had a headache for a week. As a matter of fact my nose started bleeding and I thought for a moment that I had been hit, but it was only shock. Somebody made a hole through a wooden shutter and climbed down to bring help, and we eventually got out by means of drag ropes. I often wondered how this old tower had lasted so long, but I suppose the Germans were using it as a landmark for their guns.

It was at Levantie that our battery became a 'sacrifice' post, which meant getting our guns as near the enemy lines as possible without being seen, so that in the event of an advance the enemy would walk straight into shell-fire. We

took up our positions only 600 yards from the German trenches, while our own infantry were barely seventy-five yards in front of us. Through a pair of field-glasses I could see a German soldier shaving.

"I believe I could pick him off," I remarked to an officer.

"I daresay you could," he replied, "but we don't want to give these guns away."

But he sent a messenger down the line to tell the infantry, and it wasn't long before we could hear machine guns sweeping the enemy lines. I don't know whether they got my man or not, but in any case he had a close shave that morning.

In the first week of March 1915 came the famous Battle of Neuve Chapelle, in which we took part. We were active in this sector during the latter part of February, and our job was to put up a barrage to break the barbed-wire entanglement ahead, so that our infantry could advance. Neuve Chapelle is a matter of history, and I will only remind the reader that we lost more men in one day than during the whole of the South African War. No less than 12,000 men were killed inside of two hours. We ourselves suffered eleven casualties. The battle was short and bloody, and it taught many that this war was not going to be a walk-over for anybody.

In one sector the barbed wire had not been cut, for when we moved up our guns in the rear of the advancing infantry we found that a Highland regiment had been caught, and kilted bodies were hanging on the wire. It was a gruesome sight. They hung there like twisted scarecrows, and the memory of that morning remained for a long time. Shell-shock was becoming common, and I have no doubt that Neuve Chapelle and its consequent horrors were largely responsible for the fate that overcame one man in my battery. It was at Aubers Ridge that this man went clean off his head. I saw him go to the tool-box of the gun and take out what we used to call the 'monkey' spanner.

"What are you doing with that?" I asked, but he only glared and ran off towards the next gun. He never touched

one of us, but he struck No. 2 of the next gun over the head with the spanner and killed him outright. The others fell on him as one man to overpower him, and the last I saw of him was being taken away tied up with ropes. Such is war—' but 'twas a famous victory.'

CHAPTER XII

IN the late spring of 1915 the greater part of the infantry whom we had been supporting were transferred to Mesopotamia, and we were drafted to Poperhinge to link up with the Canadian Expeditionary Force, who at that time were without artillery of their own. Poperhinge will always have a special place in the memories of all who knew it in those days, for it was here that the Toc H Lamp was first lit, and also that Studdert-Kennedy established his great work that was to bring him enduring fame and affection as 'Woodbine Willie.'

It was not long before we found ourselves in the famous Ypres salient, and it was there that we had the first big surprise of the War, if we discount the two lone aeroplanes that appeared on our way to Bethune. Early one morning we heard a noise like the approach of an express train, and then the whole earth seemed to quake. The Germans had fired their famous 17-inch shell. It landed only 150 yards in front of us, and later on I had an opportunity of inspecting the crater, which was no less than 24 feet across and 32 feet deep. Several more came over during the course of the morning, but none of them found us. It was, however, to say the least, an unnerving experience, and along a front of miles the guns flashed and pounded incessantly.

Away to our right stood Hill 60, and later on the same morning I saw soldiers dressed in red trousers crossing along the bottom. They were French Zouaves retreating. I began to wonder what was happening, when my attention was diverted by what looked like an early morning mist. But it was no longer early morning and this mist was keeping to the ground. It seemed to be approaching in our direction, and then came the dreaded news through the field telephone —gas! We were told that men were already succumbing,

and orders were given to put up a barrage. The Hun had launched his first gas attack and thereby let loose a horror that is still haunting the world. That morning witnessed the birth of chemical warfare and its attendant misery. In that moment the whole aspect of battle was transformed, and modern warfare was born. Till then we had respected our enemies as worthy fighters, well versed in the chivalry of the battle-field. From now on we realized with whom we were contending. The mask was torn off, and once more the Hun was revealed in all the grotesque colours of his inherent 'frightfulness.' It was a landmark in history —and I was there.

Down the road came parties of men coughing and spitting. It was a pitiful sight, but it gave the Canadians an opportunity of showing their worth. With fixed bayonets, various units succeeded in evading the gas and launched a bayonet charge on the advancing Germans, driving them back into the shelter of their trenches. Not even a German relishes the prospect of cold steel in hand to hand fighting, in which, incidentally, the native Indian troops excelled. Wave after wave of men dashed forward, their bayonets glistening in the sun, and repulsed the enemy so successfully that their devilish machinations did them little good, especially as the wind changed at a critical moment and sent what was left of the gas back on to themselves.

It was significant that strapped to the bodies of those Germans struck down by the Canadians that day were cylinders, so that the advancing troops could release gas as they went. The gas bomb was as yet unknown—and so was the gas mask. All sorts of odd preventive devices were issued, the most popular being a kind of hood with a tiny slit for the eyes, but nobody suggested that these were gas-proof. It took a little time to evolve the now familiar box-respirator.

By this time the War really was beginning to seem interminable, yet the spirit of the troops remained undaunted. It is easy enough to be high-spirited during a short campaign or in the first flush of victory, but to remain so through month after month of mud and seeming stalemate

is an achievement of which humanity may well be proud War remains the supreme testing-ground of the soul, and in spite of all the tragedy of those years I can honestly say that I am thankful for the experience. But this is not a war book and I must push on, confining my narrative to those outstanding episodes with which I was myself connected.

One such episode occurred when we were moved out of the line into billets after Ypres. Word came round that an important personage was inspecting the troops; this personage was, in fact, so important that we were ordered to make a special effort to clean ourselves up. We ever made a valiant attempt to polish our buttons, and thinking that we were to be subjected to a staff inspection, there was a good deal of grumbling and not a little downright swearing. Our horses were tethered, and we fell-in by ourselves, somewhat bedraggled and not in the best of tempers.

Presently a number of staff cars came in sight, and I noticed that the leading car was not flying the Union Jack. From the bonnet fluttered the Royal Standard, and out stepped His Britannic Majesty. The King was accompanied by Sir John French and was immediately received by our Commanding Officer, who presented his brother officers. I was standing so close that I could hear everything that was said. His Majesty looked extraordinarily well and spoke encouraging words.

"How are your men?" he asked.

"Very fit, sir."

"Good. I should like to meet them."

The inspection took a little time, for the King spoke personally to each one of us. He shook me warmly by the hand, and commented on the difference between the Western Front and service in his Indian Empire. My mind went back to the Delhi Durbar, when I little thought that the man I had seen crowned with such Oriental splendour would so soon be shaking my hand on the battlefield. He complimented the C.O. on our turn-out, and then his face broke into a smile.

H.M. KING GEORGE V VISITING TROOPS IN FRANCE

"If we were at sea," he said, "I should command you to splice the mainbrace, but we can't exactly do that here. Still, I think the occasion warrants a rum ration."

And so, after we had given three cheers as the King Emperor drove off, we were able to honour the loyal toast, through the consideration of one who had gladly become a comrade on the field of battle.

Later on I was to meet his uncle, the Duke of Connaught, who visited us at about the same time as Horatio Bottomley —a contrast indeed. Bottomley came as the civilian telling us to 'keep our pecker up,' whereas His Royal Highness said little, as becomes a soldier. He knew only too well what war means, but his presence among us proved an inspiration that was not lost on the men. As for Bottomley, there was no doubt that he had the gift of the gab, and a certain understanding of his audience. He was master of the situation, and it was a credit to his powers that he 'put over' his message with obvious success.

And so on to 1917 and Vimy Ridge. And Vimy Ridge for me stands out as the occasion of the greatest tragedy of the War. It was the night before the infantry were to go over the top to take the ridge. Our plans were made, and there was an uncanny stillness in the air. It was the lull before the storm. The Germans were in a magnificent position on high ground and had the advantage over us. Every man knew what the next few days might mean. Our guns were loaded and ready to put up a barrage of artillery fire to confuse the enemy before the great attack. Now was the time to sit back and take what rest we could. All our officers except one were in a dug-out a little way up the line to our right. The one exception was doing observation duty at a post some five hundred yards ahead. Meanwhile his brother officers were enjoying a smoke after dinner in their dug-out. They had an old stove in there, and a pipe ran up through the roof and out on to the ridge above.

Late that evening the orderly on duty went along to this dug-out to see if the officers wanted anything. He lifted the gas-curtain and stepped back in amazement. The

interior of the dug-out was completely wrecked. All except one of the men inside were dead, most of them beyond recognition. The other man only lived a few hours. The amazing thing was that none of us had heard anything. The explanation was simple and reveals one of the tragic coincidences of war. A solitary shell had found the opening of that chimney-pipe as it fell. It had slithered down right into the dug-out, with the result that every single one of our officers was killed at one blow; only the Lieutenant on observation duty escaped the holocaust.

What a calamity! It cast a shadow over the whole line that night. And in the morning there was grim work to be done. Some of those who were killed that night had come out with us from India, and we felt that we had lost real friends. The bodies were buried that same night and new officers allocated to us.

One of these new officers came up to me one morning, tapped me on the shoulder and said simply: "You'll do."

"Do what, sir?" I asked.

"Observation," he replied. Evidently a man of few words.

I followed him across a stretch of open country, and he indicated an object on the ground some distance away. It was a balloon! This was a new kind of observation for me, and I could hardly be said to relish the prospect of it. When we reached the balloon we found two officers of the Royal Flying Corps who joined us in the basket. In a very little time we had begun to climb.

Each of us occupied a tiny seat in the four corners of the basket, and after a time I heard one of the R.F.C. men say:

"Four thousand five hundred feet. That'll do. We mustn't overstrain the line. She'll pull up another hundred feet before she rests."

I found it a most unpleasant experience, but my discomfort was partially forgotten when I looked about me. We could see for miles, and there was a magnificent view right over the German lines as well as our own. My companions were already making elaborate notes and marking their

maps. My hand was gripping the ring of my parachute, when suddenly I heard a noise above us, and somebody shouted : " Over the side quickly ! Pull your rope ! "

I fell out of that basket somehow. I know I was last out, and the only thing I can remember was the most fearful flash as the envelope burst into flames and the sight of a German plane veering away from us. Then I lost consciousness. I am not an expert parachutist, but my own experience is that you know nothing for the first part of the drop. When I came to I could feel the parachute pulling, and I had broken out into a terrific sweat. My whole body seemed to be perspiring, and then there was that awful feeling as I saw the ground coming up to hit me. I landed in the middle of a field and was immediately surrounded by willing helpers, who had been watching my descent. My only injuries amounted to a few bruises, the result of being pulled along the ground by the parachute as I landed.

My three companions all landed safely and the four of us were taken along to be medically examined. One of the R.F.C. men had a wound in the leg, necessitating hospital treatment, but the rest of us were perfectly all right after a rest.

At the end of 1917 we broke away from the Canadians. It was a sad wrench and we were sorry to say good-bye, but we were wanted elsewhere. Even in those days the Canadian Army was the highest-paid force in the world, drawing six shillings a day against our own one shilling and threepence, but not even this discrepancy affected the good comradeship that had always existed among us. Henceforth we became what are known as Field Army Brigades, and as such we were sent to any unit who needed us. And that kept us busy for the duration.

What else stands out from those dreadful years? Well, there was my somewhat gruesome, and yet oddly amusing, realization that the Americans had come in. It was early one morning when I noticed a cart drawn by a couple of mules ambling along the road at the back of our lines. A solitary figure was doing his best to put some ambition into

those mules, but the cart came to an abrupt halt where I was standing.

"Say," said the driver, "can you tell me where that god-darn American division is?"

"Hullo! what's this? I thought we'd finished with the Canadians."

"Canadians be darned. I ain't no Canadian. I'm from Noo York and I guess that's just where I'd like to be at this moment. D'ye know these two darn mules are just getting in each other's way."

"So you're an American. Pleased to meet you. Anyway, what have you got in the back there?"

"Stiff 'uns."

"Stiff 'uns?"

"Yea, stiff 'uns. Maybe you don't understand plain English. Take a look."

He led me round to the back of the cart and pulled away the cloth, revealing four dead bodies. At that moment a shell whizzed overhead, just to show that Jerry was awake.

"If you're not careful," I said, "there'll be six stiff 'uns and two dead mules. Better get going."

He kicked those mules, who at once forgot their differences and broke into a gallop. The last I saw of the Yank was his angular figure running behind his grim cargo in a desperate attempt to catch up. But those mules had got the better of him once for all. I hope he found his comrades.

Leaving on one side the tragic loss of our officers at Vimy, we had been amazingly lucky in the matter of casualties, and we had retained most of our horses, and this at a time when nearly everybody else was making do with mules. In fact the Indian Division was acquitting itself pretty well. But our turn was coming. Enemy aeroplanes spotted us on the road, and a single bomb killed fifty horses and thirty men. That was the work of one bomb. Admittedly the number of dead was largely the result of men clustering together instead of separating as ordered, but even so our casualties would have been heavy. I myself went round with a revolver giving the *coup de grâce* to many wounded animals, and it was terrible to see men scattered

all over the road, and in many cases blown to pieces. Many of them had been my own friends. That is why war is the testing place of the soul in showing the worth of the body. It bodes no escape from truth.

Spring, 1918—Haig's famous 'Backs to the wall' message. Huge German advances. I remember another morning going along to have a look at our No. 1 gun, when I suddenly stopped dead. Standing out in the early morning mist were a dozen men, crouching amid some shrubs. I rushed back. "Germans," I whispered, and the warning was passed back down the line. We had been covering the Cheshires, who must have been completely overrun, and here were the advancing Germans bang on top of us.

"A raid," said somebody.

"Raid be damned! The whole b—— lot of them are coming."

How we got those guns away remains a miracle, but we retreated in good order. Jerry was advancing all along the line, and soon he was spattering the country-side with shell-fire. Not a house was left standing, not a tree untouched. It might have been the end of the world. For some it was.

A large-scale retreat is a complicated business and can have some unusual consequences. Everything is left as it was at the moment of retreat. For instance, the canteens and ration dumps. There's no time to take away anything but the most urgent provisions. But that doesn't mean that some people don't help themselves if they get the chance. Coming across a couple of packing-cases, I asked somebody what was inside.

"Oh, emergency rations, I believe."

"Emergency rations? Where from?"

"Well, where do rations usually come from?"

Just then an officer came by demanding to know what we were arguing about.

"Rations?" he said. "Nonsense. Open them up."

Inside were boxes of expensive Turkish cigarettes, but this time the would-be smuggler was foiled. They were immediately confiscated and no doubt helped to revive

many flagging spirits in an officers' mess. But there was plenty left for the German invaders.

Yes, amid all that welter of blood and slaughter, disfigurement and madness, there were shafts of humour and ridiculous moments. It may have been life at full tilt, but it was still life. The whole, and not just a part, was exaggerated. I came out of those years unscathed. Yet a few weeks before the Armistice a man with twenty years' service was killed by shrapnel while sitting three feet away from me over a cup of tea.

"Dick! What's the matter old boy?"

There was no answer.

He was gone. And I was left.

CHAPTER XIII

I HAVE already mentioned the Canadians, and before I leave behind those four years of war I should like to recall a few of my experiences with Dominion troops. These incidents, though perhaps slight in themselves, show how very much the Empire was in it. As for the Canadians, abler pens than mine have extolled their magnificent fighting qualities. I can only echo their praises and confirm them in the light of my own experience.

My mind goes back to a morning at Popperhinge. Our battery was resting at the time, and I had had a pass to go into the town, which by this time was undergoing heavy shell-fire at intermittent intervals. One of the things that struck me most forcibly (as indeed it did every man who had fought in France and Belgium) was the remarkable way in which the civilian population in areas under constant bombardment continued to pursue their normal life as far as was possible. This was certainly true of Popperhinge, where business was, if not 'as usual,' very nearly so.

On the morning in question I was actually looking for a Naafi canteen but came to rest in a café instead. I can remember its name, it was the Café Marie, heavily sandbagged outside but gaily decorated within. Here at least Monsieur was carrying on with a stout heart and fine courage. It was, in fact, just the place for a soldier.

Madame greeted me with a great show of affection and led me downstairs to a basement, formerly used for storage, as she explained, but now fitted up as a restaurant. My fingers were almost blue with cold as I ordered a coffee cognac. Looking round the room, I saw that I was not completely alone. In the far corner sat a solitary figure,

crouching over a small table. It seemed to me that he was feeling rather sorry for himself. If he had seen me he made no move to make himself acquainted, and when Monsieur brought my drink I asked him if he knew who he was and what he was doing there at that hour.

"Oh, him. He's one of your lot. As a matter of fact he's been here all night." He lowered his voice and bent down and whispered confidentially: "A little too much *pina*, eh? Ah well, and why not? One doesn't grudge it to the army. Perhaps you can do something to cheer him up."

Monsieur tactfully disappeared and left me to handle the situation as best I could. I moved over.

"Will you have a drink with me?" I opened obviously.

"A drink! Say, what do you think I've been doing here for the last few hours? No, sir. 'Smatter of fact I don't feel too grand."

"Yes, I've gathered that. But where do you come from?"

"Listen. I come from Saskatchewan, and I wouldn't mind being back there." He pulled himself up abruptly. "What did I say? No, of course, I didn't mean that. Fighting men, that's what we are, fighting men. You know, you English Tommies have one big fault."

"Oh? And may I know what that one big fault is?"

"Well, you seem to have a hunch that nobody else ever does anything round here."

"Round here?"

"In the War, you fathead."

I laughed.

"Don't let that worry you. I've served with the Canadians, and I guess I've a pretty good idea of what they've done. Here, take a look at this," and I showed him the elephant stamped on my hat.

"So you're one of the guys that came over from India, are you? Well, of course, that's different. Old Contemptibles, eh?"

"Well, now we've wiped out that score perhaps you'll tell me what's getting you down. It isn't only Monsieur's wine, is it?"

The man thought for a moment before confiding in me. I must have assumed the right expression, for he began to talk, almost as if to himself.

"My company's resting at present—that's why I'm here. I'm attached to the transport, and I was in charge of two horses. Jack and Maud I called them, and believe me there aren't two better horses on the whole of the front."

"That's saying something!"

"Maybe it is, but you haven't seen the horses. If any wagon got caught in the mud I could trust Maud and Jack to pull it out. There's nothing they wouldn't do for me. They were like children to me, and I couldn't have looked after them better if they were. But a fellow can't watch everything. The other day Jack caught his foot in his hay-net. He'd been pawing at it, and the result was he broke his shoe. Of course, the Colonel had to come along and see it. Had me up, he did, and told me off good and proper. But he wasn't as angry as I was. You get me when I say that out West that guy would be what we call a counter-jumper. But it isn't always the best men that get to the top. Anyway, he's the Colonel and he took away my horses. Tough, eh?"

"Sure," I said, "but that sort of thing's liable to happen in war. You'll get 'em back. And you'll die fighting."

The man shook himself from his coma. "Die fighting! I sure will. Do you know before we left Canada we had a sort of reception—more of a send-off perhaps. Anyway, a guy made a speech, and he used those words. 'If the worst happens,' he said, 'you'll die fighting.' I've always remembered that. It's true, you know."

I didn't doubt it.

"What about going round to Toc H?" I suggested. "It's only a step from here." I thought it might cheer him up to have congenial company, and I knew that you could usually rely on a mixed crowd at the institute. "It's no good sitting here drinking cognac all day. You'll only feel worse."

We tottered out into the street. It was a beautiful day, and Jerry seemed very far away. But he wasn't! We had hardly gone a step when over they came. Whizzzz! People ran in all directions. We crouched against a wall and presently stepped gingerly forward. "It's only a hundred yards or so," I said encouragingly. And then four more came over. A woman dragged a small child down the street in front of us. She was still running when another lot came down—this time just in front of us. Again we clung to the wall.

"That's funny," I said. "They can't have altered the range. He can't go on firing at this spot. Must have been a 'repeat' order. He's probably trying to get that ration dump up at the railhead, but he's a good eight hundred yards short."

In a minute or two we heard a deep boom and I knew that Jerry had altered his range. "It's all right now," I said. My companion mentioned the woman. "I wonder what's happened to *her*," he said. "Maybe she's trapped under that packet," and he indicated a heap of debris in the road where a house had collapsed. "You stop here," he said. "I'm going to see if she's there." He went on in front, but I followed behind. I thought he looked extraordinarily pale; that was not surprising, because a bombardment is enough to unnerve anybody. "I don't feel so good," he muttered. "I'll be all right in a minute."

He really did look bad, and I sat him down on a stone seat at the side of the road. "We'll be at Toc H in a minute," I said, "and they'll fix you up all right. You're probably shaken up, but some coffee and a drop of rum will soon set you up."

"I shan't need it. Listen, will you do one thing for me?"

"Of course. What is it?"

"Go to that darned Colonel of mine and tell him it wasn't my fault about those horses and that nobody could treat them better."

"But you can tell him that yourself."

"I guess I can't."

"Why, what's up?"

"It's all right," he said quietly. "I'm going down fighting. That's all. Open my tunic."

Delirious?

I undid his tunic but could see nothing. I pulled up his shirt, and there in his stomach were four tiny holes. As he breathed these holes were pumping blood, which though it had trickled down into his trousers had not come through his clothes. Shrapnel.

I jumped up quickly and stopped a sergeant a few yards further up the road. "Get help," I shouted. "Stretcher bearers, quickly. My pal's hurt."

"That's bad luck," said the sergeant, "but there's precious little help here. Everybody's up the other end of the town. There's been a big blow-up there—several casualties, I believe. Wait here and I'll see what I can find."

After a bit we got him to hospital and I went on to Toc H. There was nothing more I could do at the moment and I decided to wait in the town for news. I found the place almost deserted. A chaplain greeted me.

"Not many here, I'm afraid," he said. "I suppose most people are still in the shelters. No use exposing yourself to the enemy if you can't hit back. Better live to fight another day."

I agreed, thinking of my Canadian friend. When I told the chaplain what had happened, he kindly said he would go along to the hospital and make inquiries. I amused myself listlessly till his return, and when he came back I sensed the worst.

"I'm sorry," he said, "Your friend's gone. Nothing could be done. He was probably dead before they got him inside. He'll be buried in the compound to-morrow."

Next day I obtained another pass and went along to the hospital. They had already buried him, and they showed me a list of seven Canadians who had perished in that bombardment. But I never knew his name. I only know that he died fighting, and I hope that they're saying that on the farm in Saskatchewan.

That man was typical of the Canadian troops. They were a voluntary army; many of them were well off, and one can only presume that they joined for a cause they considered worthy, and not only worthy, but essential. Of such is the Commonwealth.

Then there was Bernadotte. As his name suggests, he was a Swede, and it might be asked what he was doing in the War. I came across him in a café. He spoke perfect English, and he told me that for many years he had made his home in Canada and had come over with the Canadian Expeditionary Force. "There was no need," he explained, "but I never did like the Jerries, and somehow I felt that if anybody was having a crack at them, I ought to be in it, and that's why I'm here."

He, too, had to be put wise as to the British Tommy's part in the War!

"Anyway," he said, "neither of us will be wanted much longer. They say the Yanks are going to finish it for us, and if they do, they won't forget to tell us about it!"

"Well, we can do with all the help we can get," I said tactfully.

It transpired that friend Bernadotte had no right to be in that café at all. He was supposed to be working with a party transporting goods in a wagon from the railway station to his company's quarters. There were several of them on the job and they worked it like this. One man was deposited in the café, and when the lorry passed again, he was picked up and another man took his place for an easy. A very pleasant kind of relay!

"Look here," I said, "why don't you get yourself naturalized?"

"Not much hope of that till this outfit's sobered down." Which I took to be his way of saying the end of the War.

"Yes, but suppose you stop one. You'll die without a country. You wouldn't like that, would you?"

"No, I suppose not. You know, you're the first person to have put it like that."

"It's the only way to put it. You go along and see

your C.O., and he'll fix you all right. Well, I must be moving."

I was on my way to an ammunition dump, which I had been detailed to guard. I walked up the road, and presently the lorry which was to pick up Bernadotte came by. After an interval the same lorry overtook me, this time with Bernadotte on board.

"Want a lift?" he cried.

"No thanks. I'm picking up the small railway at the top. So long and good luck."

"And the same to you."

A cloud of dust and the wagon rumbled off.

The next thing I knew was another cloud of dust. But this was coming towards me, and in front of it was a cart being driven furiously. It was no way to treat a horse, and I was about to call out to the driver, when I realized that he wanted to speak to me even more than I did to him. He was pulling at the reins and the cart skidded across the road.

The driver was the bearer of grave tidings. A shell had dropped on to that wagon. I climbed on to the cart and we drove back to find a mass of twisted wreckage, among which lay buried the mutilated bodies of Bernadotte and his friends.

He, too, had died fighting, though he had said nothing about it. He had also died without a country. My advice was too late. But there was still some small service left for me to perform. I could preserve the secret of the relay device. I would not give the game away. I waited till a party from his company came to investigate, and I informed the officer in charge that one man had survived the disaster. He had been badly shaken up, and had wandered into the village. They would find him in the café, where he had gone to revive himself. That was the story. It was impossible for me to go back and warn the man, but I hope it worked. It deserved to, for Bernadotte's sake.

For a time I was also in contact with the Australians, who, as fighting men, were no less intrepid than the Canadians. One incident stands out vividly in my mind,

perhaps because it happened just before I went home for a fortnight's leave. We were going up into the line to relieve one of the Australian batteries. This was to be a difficult manœuvre. On our arrival, the Aussies had to get their guns out of the gun-pits, hook in and move off, and then it was for us to move our guns into position. The point is that speed was essential in order to reduce the period of impotence as much as possible. The Australians were in the process of hooking in, when the comparative silence was broken by a solitary rifle shot. For some time the line had been quiet. It was early evening and the moon was almost full. But that single shot told us that something had been going on in the moonlight.

The significance of it was that the enemy infantry were supposed to be well out of rifle range. The Australian Major was nonplussed. "The Germans are here," said somebody in a hoarse whisper. The word went round. "I can see their hats," said another voice.

What had happened was that a section of enemy infantry had made a surprise advance through a wood on our right flank and had succeeded in forming a salient, cutting off our own men. It was an awkward moment, but we had an answer. To meet a tactical move of this kind, every artillery battery carries two machine guns, and these were immediately put into action. The ground in front of us was peppered over a wide range, and in the meantime we had orders to retreat with all our guns. Oddly enough, our fire was not answered, and we were able to get away without loss.

Our machine-gunners followed, and they were eventually posted at a cross-roads, while we retreated with the guns to a given point, where, as dawn broke, we put up a barrage. Our Australian friends seemed mighty pleased about this and set to work with the utmost relish. There can be little doubt that it was largely due to their efforts that the German advance was successfully checked.

Later that day it was my job to accompany our horses back to their billets, for the battery had dug itself in for some time. We were lodged in an immense barn, already

half full of straw. Like many French barns, there was a loft, and it was here that I spent the night. Actually I was only to spend a few hours up there, for in the middle of the night I was awakened by a cry of: "Fire!" I looked down, and was horror-struck to see that the entire building seemed to be in flames. To this day I have no idea how I got out, and yet out of some three hundred men only four lost their lives. There was a good deal of argument as to how it all started, but my own conviction is that somebody forgot the maxim: 'Never smoke in bed.'

It was just after this that I was granted a fortnight's leave in England. Owing to the cessation of normal passenger services on the railways, civilians were allowed the use of troop trains, and on the journey to Calais I found myself in a compartment with a middle-aged man and his wife with their baby. Later we were joined by several Australians, also on their way to Blighty. One of them produced what at first I took to be a kitbag, but which turned out to be a two-gallon bottle of rum!

"What have you got there? Lime juice?" I asked.

"Look at the seal," said the proud owner.

It was a red seal—the sign of rum.

The bottle was passed round, and I think the only abstainer was the child, who perhaps on account of this quickly became fretful. Each of us took a turn in an attempt to pacify it. It was a fine day and we had the carriage window down. I was standing by the window holding up the baby so that it could see out, when suddenly the train slowed down abruptly. Probably a cow was on the line, but the front carriages bumped and we pulled up with a jerk. I was thrown back into the carriage, and the baby went out of the window. It all happened in a flash, and much too quickly for me to do anything about it.

But the baby was not killed; it was not even hurt. By some miracle it was caught on the door handle by its clothing. Its mother was so delighted that she made no attempt to remove it until all of us had duly marvelled at its escape. Ten minutes later the child was fast asleep in its mother's arms.

Twenty years afterwards, on the occasion of the Coronation of King George VI, I was standing in the Strand, when I thought I recognized a face. I still think it belonged to one of those Aussies who had seen that baby hanging from the door handle of a French train. It was a sight neither he nor I will ever forget.

CHAPTER XIV

I SHOULD not like to leave the War without paying some small tribute to the native troops of the Indian Army, whom I had grown to admire long before the call to arms sent us across to France. For them the War proved a special burden. Accustomed to intense heat and hard ground they found themselves suddenly swept into a European winter and knee-deep in mud. Remembering how climate affects not only the physique, but also the character of races, the performance of these men was indeed remarkable.

The Gurkhas are known throughout the world for their loyalty and integrity. Ever since the Indian Mutiny, when they remained faithful to the British cause, they have proved themselves a true bulwark of the Empire, and when the challenge came they, no less than their white comrades, were ready to meet it.

These men were old-fashioned warriors, and the terror of the enemy. They were feared not only for their resolute courage and daring, but largely on account of their own special weapon—a knife, which was for them more precious than all the jewels of India. To take a Gurkha's knife would be tantamount to robbing an Arab of his horse. And they had their own method of using it. They threw these knives in front of them with such speed and with such deadly accuracy that in most cases it meant decapitation for anybody who happened to be in the way. They would then run after them and retrieve them.

Perhaps I can best give some idea of the Gurkha's attitude in the War by recalling two incidents in which I happened to be involved. The Lieutenant commanding my section came up to me one morning and asked me to report down at the Transport lines.

"I want you to get me a couple of wagons up when it falls dusk," he said. "If you like you can wait down there and come up with them."

On my way I came across a party of men in the road, apparently engaged in a heated argument. Their voices charged the air with venom, and as I approached I saw that they consisted of four German prisoners and one small Gurkha. (They stand only about five feet high.) Lying on the ground was a fifth German, his face covered with blood. The Gurkha had his bayonet fixed and was obviously complete master of the situation. It was a comical sight to see this little fellow holding his own with these burly Germans, who towered above him. They were, of course, unarmed.

I had no wish to interfere, but as they were in my path I couldn't very well escape, so mustering my best Hindustani I asked what all the trouble was about. The Gurkha was delighted to find that I spoke a language he could understand, and proceeded to let off steam.

It appeared that the Germans had been taken prisoners in the line, and that he had been detailed to escort them back to a clearing station. The whole business filled him with disgust. He pointed out more in sorrow than in anger that he had come from India to kill Germans, and he couldn't see why he was not allowed to kill the men in front of him. For him it was a sheer waste of time to march prisoners about the country. And not only a waste of time —a physical imposition. He showed me his feet, swollen and blistered.

"Why should I have to walk with these men?"

That was his attitude. What was I to say? I know what he wanted me to *do*. He wanted me to do the job for him with my rifle. I looked at the man on the ground. His ear had been cut off, and the Gurkha explained that the man had been arguing too much and had got on his nerves. I glanced at his knife, and summoned all my tact in explaining that I could not possibly do what he asked.

He told me how he had been given the prisoners, and how an officer had actually given them cigarettes. They

NATIVES AT THE CHARGE IN THE DESERT

H.M. KING GEORGE V REVIEWING CANADIAN FORCES IN FRANCE

hadn't given *him* a cigarette! He couldn't see it. It was all wrong. Again, what could I say?

Luckily for me at that moment a horse ambulance came down the road, and we were relieved of the wounded man. I told the Gurkha that the only thing we could do was to get a move on with the remainder, and I duly accompanied the party, diverting the escort's attention with tales of India. What happened to the prisoners I don't know, but that Gurkha was later court-martialled, and I was summoned to give evidence. I never learned the verdict.

His attitude was typical of his race. These men didn't mind dying. They expected to. But they also expected the enemy to die. That was the condition of their service. It seemed logical enough. They gave no quarter and expected none. I know that the Germans gave them a bad time whenever they got hold of any. Many who were themselves taken prisoner had their noses slit or were subjected to some other permanent disfigurement as a reminder of their sojourn in enemy hands.

On another occasion we were in billets next door to an improvised casualty station. Things had been fairly quiet when we had been in the line and I was surprised to see a large number of casualties, most of whom were Gurkhas. They had been brought in on stretchers and set down all higgledy-piggledy waiting for ambulances to take them away. I went over to have a look at them, and when I offered one a cigarette I was overwhelmed with requests for similar favours from the others. While I stood there chatting, I noticed one of them get up off his stretcher and crawl in and out making for the other end of the compound. Suddenly it dawned on me what he might be after.

For some reason or other a number of prisoners were also being temporarily lodged in this place, and I had an idea that this man intended to do some mischief. It was a ticklish predicament, and it was essential not to cause any kind of disturbance. I made some excuse and followed him —casually at first and then more deliberately. There was no doubt about his direction. I caught up with him and touched him gently on the shoulder.

He looked up.

"I'm ill," he said simply.

"Yes, yes, I know. You must get back. It's not good for you to be wandering about."

I daren't turn back myself lest he should take it into his head to attack me, for once a Gurkha has drawn his knife he insists on blood. If his immediate object is denied him, he will turn to another, even to himself. I have often seen these men cut their own fingers rather than be thwarted in their desire. Carefully I succeeded in turning him round and guiding him back to his stretcher.

On the way back I ran into the Medical Officer, who demanded what I was doing.

"Oh, I'm sorry. I see you're a gunner. Anyway, what's up?"

I took him on one side and confided my suspicions.

He nearly blew up.

"Good Heavens! Whoever suggested putting those Jerries there? They must have been crazy."

"Well," I said, "it's my opinion that some of them might have been missing. In fact there might have been a few heads rolling around."

Immediate steps were taken to separate the parties, but the incident was not devoid of tragedy, for when the time came to remove the wounded Gurkhas several were found to be dead. Would we bury them? Well, of course we *could*, but somebody gently pointed out that such action might not be welcomed by their comrades. What about the other native troops, who happened to be about? Worse still. We were now up against the problem of *caste*. It isn't wise to drop bricks with men of high and rigid principles.

A solution was found in the fact that half a battalion of Gurkhas were stationed a few miles away, and a party of us were sent off to collect the necessary undertakers. I reported the situation to the officer in charge, who fully understood the difficulty and detailed a party of his men to accompany us back. These men were full of questions. I was on horseback, but they kept breaking their ranks and

running up to fire questions at me. How many were dead? How many Germans were dead? That was a nasty one! To pacify them I said that plenty of Germans were dead. What had we done with the bodies? "Oh," I said, "they've been taken away somewhere." I had to dispose of the bodies *somehow*! You see, they didn't mind their comrades dying so long as the enemy had suffered greater casualties. Wonderful fighters, whatever their philosophy.

One came across all sorts of people in France. I wonder, for instance, how many of my readers realize that we employed large numbers of Chinese coolies to work in Labour Corps. These men were never in the line, but were used for digging trenches and other manual work. They were a rum crowd and when I first saw them I had to laugh —but not for long!

One of our native drivers came up to me one day and asked me if I had seen "Little Willie's Army." I thought he was pulling my leg, but when I reprimanded him, he assured me that if I liked he would show me this 'army.' We walked a few hundred yards down a road, and there working at the side were some two hundred Chinese. What made me laugh was their clothes. You may not believe it, but many of them were wearing silk top hats! They had not been put into uniform and sported an amazing variety of costume.

As we stood watching them, the sergeant in charge came up.

"What the —— —— do you think you're doing here? It's difficult enough to get these men to work as it is, but with you standing there it's impossible. Do you know that these fellows get a Chinese dollar a day, and they don't do a penn'orth of work? Just look at them. They work when they think they will. If they want a smoke they just sit down and take an easy for half an hour."

I told him I had just come along to see them, but I wouldn't detain him. I noticed that they had long-handled spades so that they needn't stoop too much, and some of them actually had sunshades, which, according to the sergeant, they put up for either sun or rain. Here, indeed, was another way of fighting the War.

"Well, thank God we've got a navy," I said to the sergeant, who by this time had cooled off somewhat. I was surprised to find that he spoke fluent Chinese.

We stood there chatting for a while, and then one of the men came up and accused my native guide of abusing his colleagues. He took up a threatening attitude and refused to be pacified. Standing up on a hump of earth by the side of the road he shouted to the others, who in a flash downed tools and made for us. I'm afraid I made off down the road pretty quick, and ran all the way back to our billets, slamming the gate behind me. We were in a farm as usual, and my comrades came running out of a barn, surprised to see me in such a state. I had no time to explain, for the Chinamen were at my heels and shouting and screaming outside. A show-down seemed imminent, and since discretion is deemed the better part of valour we made ourselves scarce. But my pursuers were not to be put off, and picking up stones from the road they hurled them through the windows of the house. This brought out our host, and the fat was properly in the fire.

It was not long before the officers, too, came out. They raised their voices above the din and spoke to the invaders in no uncertain manner. They soon realized that further resistance might be fatal and slowly moved off. The incident was, however, reported to the Officer Commanding, and I was put under arrest.

"What for?" I asked the sergeant-major.

"Dunno. O.C.s orders."

But I was almost immediately released, when the full facts became known.

"The trouble is," said one of the officers, "it seems impossible to get anybody to fraternize with the Chinese workers, and friction is difficult to avoid."

So much for the Top Hat Brigade. Three shillings a day and an umbrella. Profiteering I call it!

To close this account of the lighter side of the War, I will tell a little story concerning our American allies. Two companies of American infantry happened to be stationed near us when we were resting at a small village

not far from St. Omer. When we wanted to go into the town, we used the canal and took a boat. Indeed, water transport was the general rule here among the inhabitants. For a franc it was possible to hire a boat to take you into St. Omer and back. Two of us were just about to take off from the shore, when along came a party of five Americans, demanding to be taken on board.

"Sorry," I said, "but this only holds four. It won't be long before another boat comes back."

This little speech was received with a torrent of abuse, most of which I'm afraid is quite unprintable. We argued the point, but the Americans were insistent, and forced their way on board, shaking the boat and sending us all into the water. One of the newcomers, who had just previously boasted of his prowess as an oarsman, was now shouting: "Help!" He couldn't swim, anyway.

While we were struggling for the shore, a Frenchwoman with her shopping basket stepped into our boat and paddled off.

"Merci, merci, messieurs. Vous êtes bien gentils!"

Distress had solved our differences, and we invited the Yanks into our billets. We got the old stove going, and asked the daughter of the house to bring hot drinks. My pal and I went off to get out of our wet things, but the Americans stripped stark naked where they were and stood warming themselves in front of the fire. Neither they nor the girl was in the least perturbed at this. All they could say was: "More coal; more coal." They got that stove almost white hot, and draped their clothes on the backs of chairs round the room.

It was agreed that we would spend the evening together in St. Omer, and our American friends insisted on acting as hosts. The keeper of the boats demanded another franc from us, and we crammed ourselves into the boat, which was almost level with the water.

"Remember," I said, "one of you guys can't swim!"

Somehow we made it without mishap, and we spent what may be justly described as a merry evening at one of the big hotels of the town. I will spare you the details!

But I do remember one thing. Jerry dropped six aerial torpedoes in the garden of the hospital adjoining our hotel. Not one of them exploded. All the lights went out, but that was all. I can still hear one of the Yanks swearing as he spilt his drink in the darkness.

CHAPTER XV

DURING the last fortnight of the War it was difficult to know quite *what* we were doing. Our movements seemed to be unrelated. But it had been a war of surprises all along, and few of us bothered to ask questions. All we knew was that the Very lights were less frequent and that the Germans weren't troubling us so much as before. On 10 November 1918 I heard strange rumours. There was talk of an armistice ; it was even being said that the Kaiser had fled. But such talk was quickly dismissed from our minds. The War ending ? Impossible. And then next day it all came true.

I can remember reading a notice posted up on a crumbling wall. It was the official notification : 11 a.m. and cease fire. It seemed incredible. Only a few hours to go. As I stood there almost dumbfounded, a young lieutenant came up.

" Ah, Waterhouse, I've been looking for you."

" Me, sir ? "

" Yes, I understand that the field post office has opened down in the village over there, and there may be some mail for us. Anyway the Major wants you to go down and see. You'd better take a horse from the wagon field and ride over."

When I arrived in the village I found them sorting the mail in the parish hall. I noticed umpteen parcels addressed to various members of our battery, and I began to wonder just how I was going to transport them.

" Look here," I protested, " I shall need a G.S. wagon for that lot."

" You'll manage all right," said one of the sorters. " We'll rope them together, and you can balance them on your horse."

We were in the middle of tying them up when *whizzzzzz*. I ran to the door. A German 5·9 had gone clean through the church. I went out and found my horse alive and well, though somewhat frightened. I loaded up and turned to ride back. As I did so, another shell came over and blew up a building where they were sorting registered letters.

"Well," I thought, "I don't know about an armistice, but Jerry's having a final fling with a vengeance."

I only know that I whipped that horse into a gallop, and I shudder to think of what must have happened to Mother's Christmas pudding or whatever was inside those parcels. When I got back to our men, nobody would believe me about the shells, but if any of them were expecting a registered letter they'd soon find out!

Eleven o'clock and peace. So far as we were concerned there were no fanfares. Only the silent realization that the War was over, and an almost unbearable feeling of relief that we could move about without perpetually having to duck our heads or take cover. We were still soldiers, and there were still orders to be obeyed. We marched. We seemed to march all through Belgium, though actually we were only going into permanent billets, where we were told to clean ourselves up. We groomed our horses and polished our buttons. It was the victory parade of the Indian Expeditionary Force, or such as was left of it, and we were not to be denied our place in the sun.

Once more we marched. And then one day we crossed the Rhine. The conquerors had come to stake their claim. The Army of Occupation was in occupation.

We did not stop until we reached Cologne, and I was immediately struck by the contrast of this fine city with its beautiful cathedral and the battered ruins of Belgium's towns and villages. For four and a half years the Germans had been waging a war with every vile means known to man, and yet here were their cities untouched. But bricks and mortar do not make a nation, and though the buildings stood out proudly, there was defeat in the eyes of the people. Our reception in Cologne left us in no doubt as to who had won the War. It appeared that white bread was unknown,

while motor-cars were running on iron tyres. I shall never forget the astonishment of the proprietor's wife at our hotel when she saw our rations being unloaded. But it was the bread that caused most surprise. She went down to her kitchens and produced what looked like a bottle of ink to show us what she had had to put up with.

The hotel itself, however, was well equipped, and the comparative luxury of this accommodation was as much a change for us as was our bread for her. Everything was spotless, and we slept two in a room. The entire building was commandeered, but the proprietor seemed to be only too pleased for his premises to be occupied. Outside in the street a crowd of excited housewives had gathered to see this miracle of fresh food arriving. Discipline was somewhat relaxed and no objection was taken when eager fingers prodded these provisions just to see that they were real.

By this time we had quite naturally been infected with something of a holiday spirit. Our duties were slight and we were allowed a reasonable fling. It is a commonplace that wherever there is a concentration of troops, especially in a town, there, too, is some measure of frivolity. For us Mademoiselle from Armentières was temporarily superseded by the Fräuleins of Cologne, who incidentally appeared delighted to meet us. In fact, most evenings found us frequenting one or other of the numerous cafés along the water-front.

However, to put lusty young soldiers and emotionally starved young women of dubious respectability together in a convivial atmosphere is to ask for trouble. Of course, we weren't exactly 'put' together, we just drifted together; but there was trouble just the same. We were in a café one evening when I heard a Canadian accent. I turned round and saw that there were several Canadians present, but as they were fully occupied in making the required impression on their fair companions I resumed my—er—drink. Suddenly a shot rang out and all the lights went out. Pieces of broken glass fell from the ceiling and pandemonium broke loose. There was a scuffle for the door and an encounter

with both civil and military police. Luckily I was able to elude the mob and subsequently watched operations from a safe vantage-point. The Canadians were in no mood to go quietly, and a first-class brawl seemed imminent. Some of them even went so far as to break into the stores, seize ropes, and by tying them to a lorry did their best to pull down the Kaiser statue on the bridge across the Rhine. But the ropes snapped and the old man held his ground.

It was easy to realize what had happened. One of the Canadians had sufficiently succumbed to the charms of his chosen Fräulein as well as to the *vin du pays* to allow his wallet to be stolen. Discovering the loss, he had also lost his head and fired at the lights. Fortunately the authorities were lenient and showed great tact over the whole affray. All that happened was that we were all sent down to Army Headquarters in the morning and solemnly reprimanded by an official. I remember looking through an open door in the building and seeing about a dozen women sitting on benches. The majority had black eyes.

But though the incident passed off, it was to have an unpleasant sequel. Later in the same week the cause of all the trouble went to a local barber to have a shave. As he sat in the barber's chair, his face covered with lather, and in the usual helpless condition of all men 'in the chair,' the door opened and a woman came into the shop. He could see her through the mirror in front of him, and her features seemed oddly familiar. Once again he lost control of himself and called her various names, with which I shall certainly not sully these pages.

"What was that you said to that lady?" inquired the barber.

The volley of abuse had sent the woman flying from the shop, and the soldier merely stared into the mirror.

"She's no lady," he replied shortly. "She's a ——, and what's more she stole my wallet the other night."

These were to be his last words. Incensed at these insults, the barber cut the man's throat. The woman was his wife. The soldier died and the barber was executed. A search of his premises revealed much hidden treasure, and it was

evident that the income of the establishment was not derived solely from legitimate trade.

A less gruesome episode concerned a visit to one of those Exhibitions of Anatomy which are such a feature of continental entertainment. A safe draw at fairs, these shows consist for the most part of life-size models of the female body, usually in various stages of pregnancy. Adults Only. Admission One Mark. Well, one bright spark took it into his head to remove one of these figures. He got away in the crush and calmly walked back to the hotel with the 'body' over his shoulder! It was found next morning in his room. It was returned to its rightful place, and an indemnity paid for the damage. The proprietor of the show merely commented that it was absurd to take a wax figure when so many attractive young women were available in the flesh. I think he was genuinely surprised at such a lack of discrimination.

But we were not always in trouble, nor were we blind to the natural beauties of our surroundings. Excursions were made to Bonn and Düsseldorf, and as long as I live I shall never forget the view down the Valley of the Seven Hills from the steps of Cologne Cathedral.

And then early in 1919 came the news that we were to go home. England again, and hardened as we were England meant a good deal to us just then. For four and a half years we had been fighting for her, and now we were to see her. This time we travelled by train, and our destination was Newcastle. It was at Newcastle that we were stationed at the time of the Peace Celebrations, and it was on Town Moor that I celebrated. We may have missed some of the pomp and panoply of the capital but we enjoyed ourselves all the same. And then came fourteen days' leave.

I was in no mood to spend this precious fortnight in Derbyshire. My old aunt had been gathered to her fathers, and since Hayfield would not have me as a recruit she should not have me as a veteran, for in truth I was feeling almost a veteran by now. I went up to London and had a good time, paid for by my war bonus of twenty-nine pounds

—the Government's gift to a sergeant of artillery for blowing the Germans out of France.

Those days soon passed, but I had the sense not to overstay my leave and arrived back in Newcastle promptly to time. Shortly after this we were transferred to Ripon, and from there I returned to the place I had started from—Ireland. This time it was to be Kilkenny, that beautiful city where both Catholics and Protestants have their own cathedral and where both manage to live in amity. When I arrived in Kilkenny I found a happy and contented people, who bore no animosity at all against the military. It was 'top of the morning to you' and 'bless you, my boy' all the time. But the clouds were gathering, and soon the storm broke.

The arrival in Kilkenny of the notorious Black and Tans properly upset the apple cart. The Black and Tan episode is indeed a black page in our history. The force was recruited from all kinds of dubious sources, and from what I saw of them I have seldom seen such a collection of scoundrels. It had been dinned into them that their job was to restore order and suppress revolt, and these instructions were often interpreted as licence to commit any act of sabotage or loot that seemed possible. The tragedy of it was that in Kilkenny at least there was not the slightest need for such action. A peaceful city was thereby turned into a shambles almost overnight. As an Englishman, I was not proud of this rabble, and my sympathies were with the victims.

The city became wrapped in a blanket of suspicion; the wildest rumours abounded, and it was not long before innocent townsfolk were frightened of walking the streets alone. Armed rebellion was in the air, and there was one fearful night when two of these men were shot by an infuriated mob. The military was called out and we had a pretty dirty night.

Here is a typical instance of the sort of thing that went on. Some miles from Kilkenny is the village of Michelstown, and at Michelstown there lived an old lady, whose age must have been nearer seventy than sixty. This lady

was suspected of Republican sympathies. Her husband was already under arrest, and it was decided to dig out her son. A detachment of troops was detailed to assist in the round up, and we set off in a lorry. We drove up at an old farm house a mile or two from the village, and almost frightened the old lady out of her wits by crashing into the sitting-room. She was brusquely asked to reveal the whereabouts of her delinquent son. She protested that she had not seen him for weeks, and it was plain that she was speaking the truth. Even the Black and Tans shrank from pestering her further, but while this cross-examination was in process, her kitchen was being ransacked.

When we boarded the lorry again, a man proudly displayed a basket of eggs.

"Hullo," I said, "where did you get those?"

"The old lady."

"Oh, she gave you those, did she?"

"Did she, my foot!"

"So you helped yourself?"

"I sure did. Anyway, there'll be fried eggs for breakfast to-morrow morning."

"Like h—— there will!" I said, and I put my foot through the basket.

One of our officers asked what the row was about, and the man insisted that the old lady had sold him the eggs.

"Well, we can soon find that out," he said, and ordered the lorry to turn back to the house. The officer went in alone, and presumably asked the lady if she had sold the eggs. Not only did she deny any such thing, but she declared that she had no knowledge that anybody had even taken them. The thief was taken into custody and later removed to a safe place. He was found out, but it is true to say that in this he had been merely unlucky.

No one will deny that there was some danger in Ireland at that time, but I still maintain that our action in sending over the Black and Tans did nothing to mitigate the trouble. Rather it fanned the flames of hatred against England—flames which took a disastrously long time to die down, and which even to-day can still flare up. The embers are still

hot, but if there is ever to be another cold douche, let us see that the water is pure.

Not far from Kilkenny there were some coal-mines situated at a place called Castle Conar. To work these mines it was necessary to have a supply of gelignite, and as only the military was authorized to possess explosives, it was part of our job to transport the gelignite to the mines. This was conveyed by a body of men under an armed convoy, and this convoy was quickly marked down by the rebellious element for molestation. It was impossible for us to shoot down civilians in cold blood, and the frequent encounters on the road proved an unpleasant embarrassment.

It was in an effort to solve this problem that I had one of the few brain-waves of my career. So confident was I that I broached the C.O. about it.

"Excuse me, sir," I ventured, "but I have an idea which might help in getting the gelignite up to Castle Conar."

"Go ahead, Waterhouse."

"Well, sir, it's like this. These convoys arouse suspicion. Wouldn't it be better for one man to go alone. After all, he could put the gelignite in his pocket, and no one would suspect him."

"I wouldn't care to be in his shoes," commented the C.O. dryly. "Of course, if you're prepared to do it, then I've no objection, but remember this is not an order!"

Six sticks of gelignite fitted easily enough into my pocket, and I decided to have a shot at it. It was a good six miles walk, and whenever I passed anybody on the road, I adopted a nonchalant air and greeted the stranger with a warm: "Good morning to you." "And a very good morning to you, soldier boy," was the usual reply.

I found the men at Castle Conar in a great state. "By all the powers, what's happened to the military? Have they all been blown up? When are we going to get our gelignite?"

"Right now," I answered up, and produced the sticks from my pocket.

"May the Holy Mother be praised! But where are the others?"

"There aren't any others this time, but you needn't worry. They've not been killed on the road. I just thought I'd bring it along myself to-day, see?"

The result was that I brought it along myself for some days afterwards, and the idea found favour. Henceforth the task was allotted to one man. The funny part was that I did occasionally meet armed bandits hiding in ditches, but none of them ever suspected a solitary soldier of possessing explosives. In fact, I often chipped these miscreants and wished them good hunting, as I swung gaily down the road.

A good deal of the Black and Tan trouble was, of course, left to us to clear up. I remember one day being on town duty when a young fellow came up to me and asked how many of us were knocking around.

"I don't know," I lied. "If you want any information you'd better ask the officer in charge."

The man looked hard at me. Evidently he had no intention of consulting the officer, but he wanted to impress me with his own importance.

"Take my advice," he said, "and keep clear of the other end of the town. Better stay where you are."

Since my official instructions were to stay where I was I had no intention of moving. I thought no more of the incident, but next morning a report came through that the post office had been raided and a considerable amount of cash stolen. To use a familiar phrase 'several arrests were made.'

On another occasion we were on patrol duty in the town when we passed a funeral. There were numerous mourners, and our officer no doubt thought that there were perhaps too many to be genuine. There had been several cases of arms smuggling and we had strict orders to be on the look-out for any suggestion of this. Anyway, the funeral party was ordered to halt.

"What have you got inside that coffin?" asked the officer, an expression of unblushing innocence on his face.

"Why, sure a body," said one of the mourners, suppressing a very forced tear as he spoke.

"Perhaps you're right, but I think we'll make sure, if

you don't mind. I must ask you to stand aside while my men open it up."

Consternation! Several women mourners screamed and tried to get away, but they were held by the soldiers. Oaths and curses were hurled down at us. We should be damned for ever for this blasphemy.

Nevertheless, I regret to say that inside that coffin were a dozen rifles and three hundred rounds of ammunition. The entire party, together with the hearse and the coffin, was escorted back to barracks, where the coffin lay in state in the guard-room. A week later it was my duty to form part of an escort to take the smugglers into Cork by train so that they could be delivered over to the civil authorities, to continue their lamentations in prison.

I shall never forget one of the women prisoners during the journey asking me if my mother was in heaven.

"Yes, she is," I assured her confidently.

"Well, when I get up there I'll tell her all about you!"

"You won't be there yet awhile, Bridget," I said.

"And you won't get there at all," she replied. "Not you, heaven's no place for the King's men."

And with that we both burst out laughing!

CHAPTER XVI

THE reader will not be surprised to hear that by this time I was feeling that I had deserved a little peace and contentment. Apart from anything else it would be pleasant to know that one could get some sleep at night. No sooner did we settle down than there would be a call to go out and help the Black and Tans in some trouble or other. Thinking things over, I decided that I would like to go back to India. I should be going back as an experienced campaigner who knew the country, and it is still true that Punkee has a strong appeal for me to this day. My section commander arranged for me to see the Colonel.

I found him cold and unsympathetic.

"Better try some home soldiering for a change," he said. "We can do with experienced N.C.O.s. You should have had enough of India for a while."

"Then I can't go, sir?"

"No, I'm afraid not."

It was a bitter disappointment, but I was not beaten yet. I remembered a friend of mine who had a job in the Artillery Records at Woolwich. Perhaps he could help. With this in view I secured permission for week-end leave and went to London. The trip itself was none too pleasant: for one thing it meant being shaken up twice in quick succession by the Irish Sea, and for another it cost me a fiver. However, it achieved its object.

I dug out my friend and told him of my hopes. He was more sympathetic than the Colonel, and he was able to give me some valuable information. It appeared that a brigade of Artillery was being formed at Winchester for eventual drafting to India. He knew that they were in need of N.C.O.s and he promised to do what he could for

me. The result was that two days after my return to Kilkenny I was sent for by the Colonel.

"Ah, Waterhouse, I see there is some chance of your wish being gratified."

"My wish, sir?" I feigned complete surprise.

"Yes. I've received a telephone message from London asking for your immediate release for service in India."

"Then I can go?"

"Not if I can help it. I shall reply that it will be extremely inconvenient. At any rate, you must stay here for the present."

Fortunately, the Colonel's protestations were in vain, for the reply came back that instructions were to be proceeded with without delay, and the Colonel had no option but to release me. So far as my friend was concerned, if it was simply a question of selecting a number of sergeants, he might as well draw my name from the file as any other. A few days had to elapse before I was wanted at Winchester, and since I was of no further use in Ireland the Colonel was good enough to let me spend these days on leave. I was glad of this, for it enabled me to thank my good friend personally.

I went down to Winchester by train and asked a porter if he knew where the artillery was stationed.

"Ten miles away over the hill," he replied.

"What! Aren't they in the city?"

"No. We have troops in the city, of course, but not these artillery chaps. I think they're only half-civilized. They say they're going to India or some such place, but they come down here at nights and proper run amok."

I had to inform him that the Royal Regiment of Artillery never runs amok, except when it goes into action.

"Well, never mind about that now," I said; "where can I get a taxi?"

"You may find one down by King Alfred," which incidentally is not the name of an inn but a statue to the king. It was at Winchester that he burnt the cakes, but he didn't get the statue for that!

I don't know about ten miles, but it was far enough, and

I hoped it wouldn't be too long before we sailed. I was received at the camp by a battery sergeant-major, and next morning I was taken before the Colonel Commanding, who said he was glad to see me.

"You'll be a great help to these men," he said. "Not only in their drill, but in giving them a helping hand when we get out. After all, you've been to India before, and you'll be able to tell them what to expect and to see they do the right thing."

When I came out from this interview, my friend the sergeant-major tapped me on the shoulder.

"Look here," he said. "I can fix you up with a staff billet if you like. I think you're just the man we want to look after some prisoners we've got up here. You needn't worry about the job. They're just ordinary military prisoners undergoing detention for the usual things—attempted desertion, overstaying leave, and the rest. You'll probably be able to keep the job during the voyage out, for some of this lot will still be serving their sentences then."

I accepted the offer gladly, and later the defaulters were paraded for my benefit. They were mostly youngsters, but they had made a bad start, for detention is a more serious matter than merely being confined to barracks. Detention for twenty-eight days is, in fact, the most serious punishment that can be inflicted without a court-martial. I was given the charge sheets and made every man answer to his name and number, while I checked the number of days served and the number to come. It was purely a routine matter, and after each man had answered he stepped back into his 'cell'—cells had been improvised out of wooden army huts. However, as I was walking down the line a voice called out:

"The last man we had was a b——, but I think you're worse."

I saw who it was who spoke, and I was surprised because I hadn't even said anything to him, nor in fact had I said anything to anybody else to arouse suspicion.

"All right," I said. "Give me a charge sheet. You're for the C.O. Come right along with me now."

I marched him off to his superior officer, who, in turn, sent us to the Colonel. I had commandeered a couple of bombardiers, as witnesses.

The Colonel evidently knew his man.

"H'm. So you've been insolent to the sergeant, have you? I suppose you know that that's a serious offence. How old are you?"

"You can see that from the sheet," said the man, who was apparently no respecter of persons.

"Twenty. Now, look here, young fellow. You're going out to India, see? There's not going to be any malingering about that. I've already sentenced you to two lots of twenty-eight days, to run consecutively, so that'll take up your time till we sail—and a good bit over. It's a waste of time for me to go on detaining you, and I'm going to hand you over to Sergeant Waterhouse here to deal with you as he thinks fit. He will use his discretion, and if he can make a soldier of you, you'll live to be grateful to him."

He sent the man out, and then asked me what I proposed doing with him! I thought for a moment and then told the officer what I thought.

"Not a bad idea," he said. "We'll see how it works, anyway."

Next morning I got that man up at five, and took him along to the baths.

"'Ere, what's the gime, sergeant?" He was a little cockney from Stepney.

"You're going into that cold bath," I said.

"Oh no you don't."

"Oh yes I do," and in he went, helped by a strong push from me.

That went on for three mornings, and there was a nip in the air, for it was late autumn. Moreover, as the prisoners' rations were reduced, the medicine could not be regarded as pleasant. However, on the fourth morning I saw that he had a good breakfast.

"Now," I said, "are you going to be a good soldier? Your work isn't difficult, and it makes a bit of difference having a decent meal, doesn't it?"

He agreed and I stopped the baths.

A few days later I happened to meet the Colonel.

"Ah, Waterhouse, how's that man of yours getting on?"

"There he is, sir, helping to paint that wall over there."

"Good Heavens. You don't say so. Call him over."

"So you've decided to be a good soldier, have you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Good. Now, how many more days have you to serve?"

The Colonel cut them by half. It was a courageous action, and a dangerous one, but it was fully justified. That man went out to India with us, and earned rapid promotion. He was suffering from some grievance or other, but I seemed to have hit on the right cure. Detention might have soured him still more. There is a good deal to be said for corporal punishment—it's soon over, and few people want a second dose!

But this man was mild compared with a fellow from Newcastle, who proved to be the toughest handful I have ever had to deal with. In fact, his case was considered bad enough for transfer to Aldershot, where he was to be detained in the permanent prison known to all soldiers as 'the glasshouse.' Unfortunately I was detailed to accompany him there, together with a gunner. I was taking no chances, and before we left I had the prisoner handcuffed. We were to go by train from Winchester, and a porter showed us into an empty compartment. I tipped him the wink as to who we were, and he came inside with us, as I thought to lock the far-side door. However, I was wrong about this. The three of us were occupying corner seats, and when the train was proceeding slowly through a tunnel, the prisoner must have rubbed his handcuffs against the sliding door handle. Anyway, before I could see what he was doing, the door was open and he was on the line. Before stopping to think I was out after him.

Since he was handcuffed he fell like a stone. It was a wonder he didn't break his neck. As for me I put out my hands, but was badly cut about by the iron chairs supporting the track. Meanwhile the train had gone quietly on, and with it the rest of the escort. After telling the prisoner what

I thought of him, we picked our way back through the tunnel. My face was bleeding, but he seemed hardly hurt at all. We emerged as black as soot—indeed it *was* soot, and when a signalman saw us approaching he nearly jumped out of his box.

"Blimey! You're lucky. Just 'arf a mo. Here she comes," and the Southampton express hurtled past. I explained what had happened, and after some little time we got a lift on a light engine back to Winchester. From the station-master's office I telephoned for instructions. Eventually I got him back in a taxi, and when we next took him out it was with an escort of four men. I believe he was dismissed the service with ignominy. I was told off for jumping on to the line, and my companion who went on to Aldershot was confined to barracks for not getting out! Altogether a not very creditable episode.

What with one thing and another I wasn't sorry when we left for India, although I had to take my charges with me. We sailed from Southampton on the troopship *Zeppelin*, which had been taken over from the Germans and which was subsequently put into service by the Orient Line. Also on board were the 7th Hussars, a regiment in which Haig had served, and of which Lord Porchester was then Adjutant. Being in charge of military prisoners I was appointed provost sergeant, and wore the red armlet of the Military Police.

It took us five days to reach Gibraltar. The German engines were unfamiliar and the sea in the Bay was terrific. It was so bad that the doctor ordered the prisoners to be released and have free access to other parts of the ship. When at last we docked, it was decided to send everybody ashore on a route march to recover. On top of these troubles there was a coal strike, which delayed us several hours.

During our march through Gibraltar a couple of men lagged behind and 'mizzled.' Whether they intended to desert or whether they were merely attracted by the young ladies of Spain I don't know, but they were absent when the roll was called on board. As provost sergeant I was

ordered back ashore to look for them. I wandered about the town without any success, and while I was talking to a man in a shop, who should walk in but another sergeant of military police.

"What do you think you're doing here?" he demanded.

I explained my business.

"Oh. Well, you'd better understand that you've no business here. We're quite capable of looking after ourselves without interference, and I suggest that you get back to your own gang pretty quick."

This brought the blood to the boil, and I let off a few military expressions at him.

"And stop your insolence!"

"And the same to you"—and so on.

After a lot of talk he compelled me to follow him back to his own headquarters, where I was taken before the Provost Major, who was no more friendly than his underling. He told me that he had received no information, and that my own officer had no right to send me chasing deserters in Gibraltar without first telling him about it. He ordered me back to the *Zeppelin*, and back I went. Naturally I was asked why I had come back without the men, and when I explained how I had been held up, my officer was furious. He made a full report to the Commanding Officer on board, and I had to swear an affidavit. What happened eventually I don't know, but the *Zeppelin* went on without the missing men. They were found later and followed us out on another boat, each of them receiving three months' imprisonment.

We had on board this trip several wives of soldiers, going out to join their husbands, and while on my beat I couldn't help noticing that certain members of the crew were always lurking in the vicinity of the married women's quarters, which were, of course, strictly out of bounds. I reported this, and was told to keep a keen look out for any trouble. Not long after this, I did actually see two members of the crew going down a hatchway leading to the forbidden zone. I called the guard and had them arrested. They were taken before the captain and spent the rest of the voyage in irons.

Naturally this didn't increase my popularity with the

crew, and one afternoon I was surprised by about a dozen of them, who seized hold of me and would have flung me overboard without a doubt had not somebody called for help. Soldiers suddenly appeared from all over the ship, but I was only rescued in the nick of time. Mutiny seemed imminent, but luckily there was no further trouble. There was no question that those men were determined, and in another minute I should have gone to the sharks. After this attempt on my life I was relieved of my duties to avoid any possibility of friction. The proper authorities at the Board of Trade were at least promised some interesting reading.

And so once more—Port Said. I have already said something about the system of coaling in practice, and on this occasion one of the natives succeeded in getting on board and looting in various parts of the ship. One of the women missed some of her jewellery, and it was some time before the thief was discovered. In the meantime I was fully occupied elsewhere. I was standing on deck when I heard the look-out man call out that somebody was in the water. This was not one of the natives, but one of our own military prisoners, who had managed to escape. To do so he achieved a miraculous feat. Having escaped from his confinement, he had somehow got down to the anchor chain from the deck. Now the anchor chain passed through a hole on the side of the ship, and to reach even the top of it from the deck looked impossible. There was no sort of foothold, and if he jumped he must have ruptured himself. To this day I have never discovered how he did it, but he did. After that it was easy. He simply slid down the chain and into the water.

Three of us put out in a motor-boat, but the man reached the shore in front of us. And he had the Arabs on his side. The Arabs at Port Said were only too glad of any opportunity to get one back on the white man, and one of them tripped me up with his foot as I was running along the quay. I fell sprawling. The whole length of my arms was covered in gravel rash. We found our man hiding in a bazaar, and returned with him to our ship. I had to have my arms cleaned and bandaged, and it was just when I was emerging

from this treatment that I found myself in the middle of the hunt for the thief who had been looting on board. It was now thought that he had an accomplice.

Notwithstanding my injuries I joined the chase, and was following a bombardier down a rope ladder leading to the engine-room, when I heard him cry out. Somebody had slashed him with a knife. Luckily he was untouched, but the knife had gone clean through his sleeve. There they were, the two of them, half crazed and playing the air with their knives. At the point of a revolver we forced them into a corner, and after a struggle trussed them up. We hauled them up that ladder like sacks of potatoes.

Meanwhile the native police had arrived. They kept well away during the search, but now that we had caught the blighters they came running round. The men were already half dead, but the native police began to beat them up with rubber truncheons! After they had had enough of this, they took them away to be dealt with by the civil authorities, but personally I doubt if they lived to see a Court of Justice.

Incidentally it may seem odd that I never bothered to ask the man who had escaped how he did it. At the time all was confusion, and it was only when thinking about it after the man had passed out of this story that I realized exactly what he had achieved. The feat must remain a mystery. I can only attest its authenticity, and of that there is no doubt.

CHAPTER XVII

BY a happy chance the voyage from Port Said to Bombay passed without mishap, and I was able to secure *some* rest. At Bombay, instead of being landed in dhows, we were now able to dock at the quayside, and the *Zeppelin* nosed her way behind one of the liners of the P. and O.

I was to see many changes from the India I knew of five years before, and the first thing I noticed was the comparative quiet in the Alexandra Dock. When the officers and their wives landed there was not the usual bustle of natives vying for the privilege of carrying their bags. Some of the colour seemed to have gone out of the scene. There was no doubt about it—the West was encroaching.

Our immediate objective was Mhow in the Central Provinces, and since there was only a metre-gauge railway at Mhow we should have to change trains. Forty-eight hours took us to the railhead where we left the main line, and another twenty-four hours brought us to Mhow, but before we arrived we were to lose one of the native servants whom we had engaged at Bombay.

It was only a few miles from Mhow that the train stopped, and on either side of the line were crops, growing extremely high and completely hiding the soil. This native stepped down off the train, and in about ten seconds had let out a fearful cry. I was asleep at the time, but was woken by a terrific commotion in the carriage. Two tigers had ventured as far as the railway, and the native had practically walked into their jaws. One of our officers picked up his rifle and fired several rounds in quick succession. He failed to kill either of the beasts, but they made off hurriedly and dropped their prey.

The wretched victim was carried back into the train and

put in the guard's van. He was terribly mauled and died from his wounds very soon afterwards. The incident had a remarkable effect on my prisoners. There was little chance of their attempting to escape, and I removed their handcuffs with complete confidence !

Mhow stands high up, and may be regarded almost as a hill station. Although I was to have enteric there, the climate is considered healthy, and the place is visited frequently by tourists and boasts a large white population. From a military point of view it is an important garrison, and at this time there were stationed there a brigade of artillery, a regiment of cavalry, two battalions of infantry, and two regiments of native infantry. There must have been at least four thousand British troops. In former days it had been used by an elephant battery, and the name was still in use. There was a time when elephants were used to haul the guns into action, but they never hauled them out again. The first whiff of gunpowder left them with an unconquerable inertia !

This difference in the attitude of the natives was still more apparent when it came to engaging our own servants. There was not so much of the ' Salaam, sahib ' as before, and there was a remarkable increase in the standard of pay. As a sergeant I was entitled to a servant of my own, and soon after our arrival I was accosted by a native boy holding out a wad of papers, which somehow reminded me of invoices in a warehouse. They turned out to be references from former employers, written on all sorts of scraps and signed by N.C.O.s and officers. Personally I have never put much store by references, believing that the only true test of a man's worth is what he does for *you*. But I liked the look of the lad, and I asked him what his name was.

" Boy," he said simply.

" Is that what your mother called you ? "

" Yes."

" Well, I'm going to call you Guinness, because you look like one," I said, and the boy grinned appreciatively at what he assumed was just another of the white man's jokes.

" How much do you want ? " I asked.

"Sixteen rupees a month, sahib."

"For a sergeant?"

"Yes, sahib."

In old days an officer's servant received sixteen rupees, and a sergeant's four, but now the former had risen to thirty. At first I protested, but even at this new rate the service was remarkable. 'Guinness' called me early in the morning with hot tea and never went home before eight in the evening. I cannot remember ever having to take off my own boots, while clean linen was always put out and my laundry scrupulously attended to—without loss. All this for 4s. a week! I had some thirty men under me, and these could share a couple of servants between them, each contributing ten annas a week—just under 1s. For this, their beds would be made and their clothes attended to. I was almost tempted to repeat the accusation made by the old sergeant whose beer was blown up at St. Thomas's Mount that the modern soldier is mollycoddled!

Other natives were put in charge of our horses, being responsible for grooming and for cleaning the harness.

But it was not only the cost of man power that had risen. Most commodities had gone the same way. For instance, whereas it used to be possible to buy a dozen bananas for a penny, the same money would now only buy four. The only thing that remained *in status quo* was our pay. But that gave us something to grumble about, and every good soldier must have a grouse.

After spending a little time at Mhow, I was detailed to undergo a transport course, the purpose of which was to provide practice in supervising the transport of guns and equipment over long distances. This took me up to Nowshera on the North-West Frontier, and brought new experiences of the immense variety of our Indian Empire. While at Nowshera, we also had some alarming experiences with loose-wallahs, or rifle thieves.

We sergeants slept in bunks, and four of us occupied a small stone building. It was very damp, and we had lit a charcoal fire in the middle of the room. Owing to the heat we had left the door open, which proved to be exceedingly

foolish. I was just dozing off when I heard a sound. It seemed to come from under the bunk. I looked down and saw something that might have been a dog. I turned over to reach for my whip that was lying on a small table at my side, when the whole bed seemed to go up in the air. By the time I had picked myself up, the bed-clothes had caught fire, having been thrown on to the charcoal embers, and I just caught a glimpse of a native running off as fast as he could go. He was stark naked and was moving like the 4.45 from Paddington. The other occupants of the building woke up and were able to make their escape from the flames.

By a stroke of luck I was able to recover my money, which had been thrown into a corner when my bed had been shot up. But the others were not so fortunate. Everything else had perished in the fire. As for the thief, he might have been crouching under the bed for hours. These men have the most amazing powers of endurance, and they can lie in wait like an animal without stirring a muscle. As soon as he realized he had been spotted, he had raised himself up with all his strength so as to upset the bed and give himself time to escape before we could realize what was happening.

There was an official inquiry, but we received scant sympathy. The only thing that seemed to matter was the loss of government property, and my unfortunate colleagues were not recompensed.

But there was a far more serious dust-up a few nights later in one of the barrack-rooms. A man had woken up in the middle of the night to find a native crouching beside his bed, and fumbling in the pocket of his coat. Now, at night all our rifles were stacked together and placed under lock and key. That key was kept by one of the men, and the natives knew that their only hope of securing their booty was in locating it. That was obviously what this particular thief was about. But the man whose coat he was rifling didn't stop to think. He struck the visitor so hard with a downward stroke that he was completely laid out. Half a dozen accomplices appeared and tried to avenge the act, but they were quickly overpowered by the other occupants of the

room, and by the time I arrived on the scene, all I found was a bundle of loose-wallahs all neatly tied up !

The thieves were handed over to the civil authorities, but our command had got wind of a native dump where stolen goods were stored, and a few days later an armed party went off in search of the trouble-makers. As a result of this expedition numerous arrests were made, and law and order was established—for a time at least.

As a matter of fact these natives found it comparatively easy to get hold of rifles, but what they wanted particularly were the bolts. A rifle is no good without its bolt, and rifle bolts were often taken out and locked up in a place of safety. Smuggling was rampant, and the most ingenious methods were employed. A favourite device was to stick stolen rifles into a dead sheep, which would be innocently carried off as if it had been legitimately killed. I must say I have often wondered how this was possible, but all I can say is that I have seen rifles being removed from carcasses, so they must have got in somehow !

As soon as I had completed my transport course I returned to Mhow, where I discovered that several men were down with cholera.

" You're for the doctor," said the sergeant-major as soon as I arrived. " Inoculation."

I had lost all count of the number of needles I had had stuck into me since I joined the army, and I knew that this particular thrust would make me feel pretty sorry for myself. Indeed, next morning I woke with a splitting head and a fearful sweat. I was lying in bed when an officer called in.

" Ah ! Waterhouse, I'm glad to see you back again. They tell me you had some trouble with loose-wallahs up on the frontier. Took some prisoners, eh ? "

I told him the story of our adventures, and he was good enough to inquire after my health.

" What you want is a strong dose of brandy. I'll have some sent round from the sergeants' mess."

The drink duly arrived, and as I never received a chit for it I presume that it was on him. A friend in need and indeed !

Shortly after this we received the official news through battery orders that His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales was to visit India and would be coming to Mhow to review the troops. The prospect of this visit was a subject of conversation for a long time, and there was no doubt that there was an intensity of expectation among the men. Those of us who had been through the War seemed to have a special affection for H.R.H., whom we had come to regard almost as one of ourselves.

But before the Royal visit there was Christmas, and Christmas in the army in India was a tremendous occasion. All the customary ritual and festivities took on a keener flavour, and on this occasion our commanding officer offered a prize of fifty rupees for the best decorated barrack-room. The offer was greeted with immense enthusiasm, and plans for decoration occupied a good deal of our spare time. I had the foresight to buy portraits both of the Prince of Wales and of Princess Mary (shortly to be married). I discovered these in the regimental bazaar, and we put them up in our barrack-room, surrounded by multi-coloured festoons. They seemed to add a topical flavour to the decorations, and I think I can say that it was these portraits that brought us the prize.

On Christmas Day the finishing touches were put to the display, and in the evening the Colonel visited us to drink the health of His Majesty and of his men.

"I have a very ticklish job to-night," he said as he glanced round the room, "but I see that you've been using your brains as well as your artistic sense, and I am going to award you the first prize. But it's not been an easy job. I congratulate the entire battery." Such seemingly unimportant episodes can make all the difference to young soldiers serving abroad at a time when their thoughts naturally stray home to their own families.

And then came the Prince's visit. There was, of course, a full-dress parade, and afterwards the officers and senior N.C.O.s were presented. We were all on horseback, and I remember I was riding a chestnut. The Prince spoke to each of us in turn, and patting my horse, he remarked:

"There's no doubt that *your* horse earns his oats," my first indication that my one-time boyish figure was losing its pristine glory! But it was a great day for all of us, especially when His Royal Highness visited our mess and chatted with us informally as one man to another.

After he had gone 'Guinness' asked me why the great Royal Raja had not come in all the splendour of the Orient, riding on an elephant and dressed in jewels. He couldn't understand the simplicity of the occasion. I tried to explain but it was no good, and in the end I left it by merely reminding him of the old adage: East is East and West is West, a saying which he invariably used afterwards when anything went wrong! In this respect he turned the tables on me very nicely.

I was to see the Prince again at the races in Calcutta, where I spent a fortnight's leave. I stayed at the Soldiers' Hostel, and while in Calcutta I was attracted by a poster advertising a circus. I thought I would go, and I paid a good price for my seat. The performance was held in an enormous tent, and I have always wished that a colour-photograph might have been taken of the scene. There were hundreds of natives in gay costumes, so that the arena presented a feast of colour. There seemed to be a rainbow in every section.

The 'acts' were truly stupendous; nobody can 'tumble' quite like these native boys, who might have been india-rubber balls. Sitting next to me were two men whom I took to be Burmese. They were well dressed and presently got into conversation with me. One of them offered me a cheroot, which I accepted. I knew very well that these Burmese cheroots are pretty strong meat, but if you can stand up to them—well, you know you've had a smoke! I lit up and very soon began to see things that I felt were not in the show. The acrobats appeared to be going in every direction, things became blurred, and suddenly the floor of the arena was coming up to meet me. In short, I went right out, and fell forward on to the people sitting in front. I was conscious of being lifted up, and somebody brought a drink of water. I soon recovered and turned

round to see what had happened to the Burmese gentlemen. They had gone, and for a very good reason. When I felt for my wallet it, too, had gone.

When I reported the incident to the manager he was most sympathetic and explained that I was not the first victim. There had been a good deal of pilfering going on, and he kindly paid for a *gharry* to take me back to the hostel. I was able to get some money wired out to me from Mhow, but it was a long time before I accepted another cigar from a stranger. I had been doped and duped, and I instinctively knew that a seasoned campaigner should have known better.

On my return to Mhow I became the victim of something much more serious, however, something which was going to bring about my discharge from the army. I went down with enteric. So did others, and with some it proved fatal. I had a temperature of 105 and was removed to hospital, where I stayed for fifteen weeks, some of which time I lay in the balance between life and death.

Somehow I pulled through, and when the time came for convalescence I was sent away to Ninatal, also in the frontier region, where I stayed in a small military hospital. I was now able to get about a bit and was feeling comparatively fit. But some sort of adventure was always waiting for me, and at Ninatal I had another adventure with a bear. I had gone out of my room, which was on the ground-floor and opened on to the road, left the door open, returned and shut the door, when I found myself face to face with the bear. I opened that door again and ran for all I was worth across to a hut, where I found some other men. The bear was chasing me, but these men laughed at my fright. "They're plenty of them up here," they said, "but they won't hurt you." Just then the door opened and in walked the bear, accompanied by a native boy, who was playing with it almost affectionately. Meanwhile I had been thinking of that other bear at Wellington, but apparently this was a less ferocious beast. In fact he was soon licking honey out of the boy's hand. But how was I to know that?

When I was considered fit enough I was returned to Mhow

once more to learn my fate. I was told that I must go back to England. I was not discharged yet, but it was felt that after this it would be better for me to serve at home. I protested in vain, but the die was cast. It was good-bye to Punkee this time. I was soon in Bombay again, and found myself on board a terrible boat. No sooner did she leave Bombay than she began to pitch and toss, and she only stopped misbehaving when we were held up by fog for twenty-four hours off the Needles. We were a rum crowd on board, mostly composed of sick and a number of men who had completed their service and were on their way home to England. I don't mind admitting that I felt the break as Bombay faded from sight, for I somehow knew that this time I should not be coming back. And the boat was small consolation. Moreover, she was to be the scene of a free fight. It all arose through these discharged men getting drunk and invading the invalids' quarters. We were sleeping in bunks and I was, luckily, high up, where I could view the fray without being involved. There was a pretty fierce dust-up, but the officers were able to separate the combatants. Nobody was very much the worse, but the offenders were made to realize that they were still subject to discipline.

From Southampton I was immediately taken to Netley Hospital, that famous institution which I have already described. I was put into a ward with some thirty other men, but I was not given any instructions to exercise a sergeant's control over them. That point is important. We could wander in the grounds and watch the ships in Southampton Water, and generally had an easy time. Well, one Sunday morning I was standing in one of the corridors looking at a glass case on the wall. In that case was a shawl knitted by Queen Victoria herself and presented by her to Netley. Imagine my surprise when a sergeant-major came up and snapped: "What do you mean by standing about? Why aren't you conducting your party to church in a proper fashion? You approve of church, I suppose?"

"I don't know what you mean," I said. "What men?"

"What men! Heavens alive! Consider yourself under open arrest."

"But——"

"And don't ask questions. Get along now, smartly!"

Divine Service at Netley was an impressive affair, but the solemnity of the occasion was marred by an interruption during the sermon. The preacher was expounding on the moat in your brother's eye when a voice from the congregation said aloud: "Aye! Aye!" The preacher stopped abruptly; there was an embarrassing pause before he continued his homily.

Needless to say we were lined up afterwards and questioned about this, but nobody owned up. No further steps were taken officially, but my friend the sergeant-major was, of course, convinced that I was the culprit and put me under close arrest—the difference between 'open' and 'close' arrest being that in the case of the latter you are accompanied everywhere by a man of equal rank. He even had me taken before the Colonel for insubordination—a very serious matter.

"Well, what have you to say for yourself?"

"To begin with, I think there's been a mistake. Never have I been put in charge of any men while I've been here. The sergeant-major took me completely by surprise, and I protest against these proceedings."

"H'm. Let me see. You're in the artillery, aren't you?"

"Yes, sir."

"I thought so. You've let off a pretty good salvo!"

Fortunately, I was able to persuade him that there really *had* been a mistake, and I was denied further acquaintance with my accuser by suddenly being drafted to join a unit at Woolwich, where I drew arrears of pay amounting to £54 and went on short leave.

I felt uneasy about the future, and when I reported back with my new unit I was immediately sent before a medical board and discharged. Apparently a not too favourable report had followed me from Netley. My service was at an end after sixteen and a half years in the army. Ireland,

India, and the Western Front. I had had my fair share of excitement. I had been face to face with death more than once, and I felt I was able to claim that I had acquitted myself, if not with distinction at least with honour. At any rate my friend the recruiting sergeant at Hyde, who made me lie about my age, should not have been disappointed in the exploits of his protégé.

CHAPTER XVIII

AFTER leaving the army I had to consider what I was going to do with myself. Ever since I was a boy I had been given orders, and though there had been times when I had to use my own initiative, I had never had to look for work. I was still a comparatively young man, and I had in my possession a reasonable amount of cash. Travel was in my blood, and I decided that rather than hang about in England waiting for something to turn up I would go to America.

I had no dependents in this country, whereas I knew of two cousins in Canada, while an old army acquaintance had settled in Illinois. We had corresponded regularly and I felt that if he could find a living over there it was on the cards that there might be something for me. Anyway, there was no harm in trying (as I thought). With a six-months permit and a return ticket for that period I crossed the Atlantic in the *Mauretania*.

Before landing at New York I was handed a form to fill in. This had to do with the immigration authorities, and as everybody knows who has ever been to the United States there are precious few loopholes in the system. One of the questions on this form related to infectious diseases, and I duly entered the fact that I had suffered from enteric. I could see no harm in that. After all I had been pronounced as fit. However, this piece of honesty was to cost me dear. On disembarkation I was seized, questioned, and packed off 'up the island,' as they put it. At Ellis Island I was hauled before a judge and after a great deal of argument I found myself in a segregation hospital. I could see my six months ebbing away already.

A fellow 'patient' in the next bed asked me what I was in for. He was an elderly Pole and seemed uncertain as to

why he had been detained. "Anyway," he said cheerfully, "consider yourself lucky. You're living rent free with board thrown in." That was one way of looking at it, of course, but the old man hadn't realized there was a flaw in his argument. I was subjected to a blood test, and eventually told that I was not a germ-carrier after all. I pointed out that had it been otherwise it would not have reflected to the credit of the British medical authorities. The point was, however, that they tried to sting me for three hundred and seventy-five dollars for their trouble! This was too much, and I protested vehemently. I explained that I was only over for six months, and that in any case I was not carrying much money. Beyond the cash I had on me, I was without support, and therefore they could hardly expect me to pay for what by their own evidence was shown to be a mistake. Luckily they relented and let me go free.

And so I found myself walking the streets of New York. Being wise in my generation I consulted a 'strider'—the American equivalent of a 'bobby'—about suitable quarters. After hearing my story, he advised me to try the 'Paradise,' which lies just off 55th Street.

Belying its name, the 'Paradise' is not a night-club, nor is it an expensive hotel. It is, in fact, nothing more than what we in England would call a lodging-house—the sort of institution of which I was to have considerable experience at a later stage in this odd life of mine. But the American lodging-house is decidedly a cut or two above its English counterpart, at least in my experience. At the 'Paradise,' for instance, I found fine bath-rooms, a comfortable lounge, good food and bedding, all sorts of facilities usually associated with a club, and all for a quarter of a dollar a night. I was received with the utmost cordiality by the porter, who was dressed in a long white coat with black sleeves, and who was evidently skilled in putting strangers at their ease.

In fact the place was so comfortable that I foresaw a severe temptation to stay there indefinitely. So far as I could see the inhabitants were a motley crowd, mostly out of work, though one or two appeared to be in jobs, while a few were simply using the place as a temporary home

between moves. As a foreigner I was naturally the cause of some comment, and I was soon in conversation with a middle-aged man who told me he had been living at the 'Paradise' for quite a while.

"What are you doing over here?" he asked tentatively.

"Well, as a matter of fact, I'm only here for six months, but, maybe, I thought I could pick up some sort of a job."

"You can't do that, buddy; you've no labour permit."

I had forgotten that one!

"What really brought me here," I said, "was the chance of seeing an old friend of mine over in Illinois, but although I heard from him only a week before I sailed, so far I haven't been able to make contact with him since I've been over here. That isn't a long time, I know, but I thought maybe there'd be a letter waiting for me when we docked. Perhaps I shall change my plans and go over to the Empire and try and track down a cousin."

"What do you call the Empire?"

"Canada, of course."

"Say, you know that belongs to us really, only we've got so much we just can't be bothered with it."

"All right," I said, "as long as we don't argue about it! You got a job?" I asked.

"A job? Yeah, but it's a rum sort of fit-up. You see I work down at the Pack Box."

"I'm afraid I don't understand. What's the Pack Box?"

"Never heard of the Pack Box? Well, that's where they put the stiff 'uns from the East Side. Fellows sometimes die sleeping out in the alleys of the Bowery. The bodies are brought in in the morning and it's our job to lay them out, put them in boxes, and wrap their heads in ice. We leave 'em there for maybe twelve hours in case a relative or somebody comes along to take a last farewell or to identify a body. Then they're removed for burial." He said this with a mock solemnity that was almost ghoulish. "Doing anything to-morrow?" he added suddenly.

"No."

"Then you might care to come along with me and take a look at the old Pack Box."

Next morning I met my friend early and accompanied him to this mortuary. We picked our way through back streets down by the river, and he pointed out all sorts of odd corners and improvised shelters where the destitute sought sleep—a sleep from which some of them never woke. The Pack Box itself presented a grisly spectacle. I'd seen a good many dead bodies in my life, many of them blown to bits, but there's something particularly morbid about death in the mass, especially in civil life. There must have been about thirty bodies lying in open coffins face upwards with the features almost hidden in ice. It was a macabre sight.

"There you are," said my companion amiably. "Take your choice."

But, like Queen Victoria, I was not amused and was only too glad to find an excuse to get away.

Back at the 'Paradise' I got talking to a man called Ainsley, who said he had a brother in Canada working a ranch at Calgary. Now that was odd because there was a man in my battery in France by the name of Ainsley who also came from Calgary, but this Mr. Ainsley couldn't place him. Of course, there was nothing in that, but it put me on my guard. This guy went on to say that he was interested in transporting horses from this ranch of his brother's into the States, and that, too, I thought was odd. I imagined that there would be enough horses this side of the border without having to import them from Canada.

"Look here," he said, "I'd like you to meet my friend, Madame Brisson. She's interested in this little business of mine, and you never know but she might fix you up to your advantage."

I'm sure I wasn't too keen about being fixed up by this Madame Brisson, and I felt instinctively that anything of the sort would be more to her advantage than mine. However, I had no objection to meeting the lady.

"Where does this dame hang out?" I asked.

"She's at the down-below—you know, the shake-up," which I interpreted correctly as being a drinking booth.

Ainsley took me along the same night, and although I've been in some rum dives in my time, I think this was about the rummiest. There was nothing of the brothel about it—indeed, apart from Madame, the place was entirely masculine—and there was no forced gaiety about it. In fact, apart from drink, the place was obviously used for only one purpose—business. Moreover, in spite of Madame's plausible talk I was pretty sure that whatever this business might be it had little to do with horses in Calgary. Ainsley and I were sitting talking at a table when the door opened and in walked an enormous coloured man. He was wearing a pink coat and sponge-bag trousers with a very small check, and he was adorned with so much jewellery that I thought the Kimberley mines had walked in.

"You see that guy?" said Ainsley. "He's so rich he doesn't know what to do with his money."

"Really? What does he do?"

"Oh, simply makes people happy."

"Women, I suppose."

"Pah! Women! They don't make people happy. Think again."

He didn't volunteer any further information, but I didn't need to think very hard to see what was behind both this display of wealth and the intrigues of Madame Brisson. There was no doubt about it. I was in the middle of a dope racket. This was confirmed later by my friend of the Pack Box when I happened to mention where I had been.

"So you've been down at the '91,' eh? Lucky you've got some brains in that head of yours. And Madame Brisson wanted to give you a job, did she? Perhaps you didn't know, but she likes to get hold of English people to act as decoys. She'd have paid you well, make no mistake, but it might have landed you——"

"—in the Pack Box," I suggested.

"Well, not so far off it perhaps!"

"You needn't mind old Ainsley," he said. "He's all right, so long as you don't let him worry you about that

ranch, for, believe me, that's no ranch. No doubt it looks like one, but that's just to cover the dope smuggling. Have a care, friend, have a care."

Now that I was wise to the true function of the '91,' I didn't mind blowing in there occasionally of an evening to pass the time, and I was there one night when the place was raided. I was then given an admirable demonstration of the efficiency of the way these places are run, and of the money at their disposal. Immediately the alarm was given, somebody pulled my arm, whispering: "Get in there, quick," and pushed me into a room. There was no light, but in a second the lights went up—and the floor went down! This room was a lift. We stopped with a jerk, and were guided along a passage until at last we emerged in the street. I was told that the lift would go up again, and if the police searched the 'room' there was nothing to give it away. Of course, somebody could talk, but nobody did, and presumably for a good reason!

If I wasn't careful I should find myself slipping into the night life of New York. That wouldn't do at all, and seeing that the prospect of a job was growing more remote, I decided to go to Canada and make the most of my time by seeing as much as I could. I traced down my cousin at Paris, Ontario, only to find that he had died and left his estates to one of his workers, or so I was told by the legatee. This man didn't seem too pleased to see me, and suggested that it was all very fine my coming along now, but why hadn't I bothered to keep in touch with my cousin when he was alive and well? I explained that until recently I had been serving His Majesty and consequently was not free to run round seeing my relations in various parts of the world. But all he could do was to advise me to visit Niagara Falls!

Altogether I spent eleven weeks in Canada, but I had to return to New York as my return ticket only worked from there. At one time I toyed with the idea of hitch-hiking my way back, but I was strongly advised against it.

"I'll hide in an empty refrigerator," I had suggested.

"And suppose there's an accident and they turn on the ice?" Visions of the Pack Box killed the idea stone dead.

and I thought it well worth while to pay my fare and travel like a gentleman.

America was not a land of promise for me, and I saw no useful purpose in prolonging my visit. But before I could quit I had to see my erstwhile friends on Ellis Island again and pay them twelve and a half dollars for something far too complicated to explain. I couldn't understand it and I was far too tired of the whole business to argue the point. I paid up and sailed for home.

Liverpool found me with still some time in hand before the expiry of my ticket to London. I knew of some cheap digs in Birkenhead where I put up for a few days. But funds were running low. I should have to find a job soon. Liverpool or London? I didn't care. I went down to the docks and bought a newspaper. I made a note of one or two addresses in the small advertisement columns, and had just stuffed the sheet in my pocket when I noticed a man hanging about suspiciously a few yards from where I was standing. I walked past him. I knew his face. Where? It came in a flash.

"Excuse me, but haven't I seen you in the '91'?"

"I don't quite get you."

"No? Ever been in New York?"

"What are you getting at?"

"It's all right. If you're no Englishman, then I'm no 'tec."

"That's better," said the man with obvious relief. He then admitted that he had been in the '91,' but quickly changed the subject. He was over here on a short business trip, and would I excuse him as he had to dash off to an appointment? He was gone in a flash, and I went away to search out one of my addresses.

Eventually I found myself in the offices of a bill-posting company in Dale Street, and much to my surprise I landed a job. It was a good job, too, but unfortunately it didn't last long. The company went out of business. However, it brought me an adventure. The job consisted in going round the city choosing suitable sites and supervising the bill-posters. Now, bill-posting, especially in bad weather, is a

tricky business, and we had a real duffer on our staff. I saw him one afternoon in obvious difficulties grappling with an enormous bill at the top of a ladder.

"Let me have a go at that," I called out, and down he came, only too glad of assistance. I went boldly up the ladder, telling the man to hang on to it like grim death. It was a long climb, for the hoarding was on the top floor of a big block of offices. I don't know exactly what happened, but my colleague's attention must have been momentarily diverted, for I was half-way through the job when I felt the ladder giving way under me. Slowly it began to slide down the wall—and then wallop! The next thing I knew was that I was lying half in and half out of a window. The ladder had, of course, slid right across the street, dislocating traffic and only by great luck not causing a serious accident. I, too, had been saved only by the skin of my teeth, or more precisely the seat of my trousers. My fall had been broken by a balustrade jutting out from the building, and I had rebounded through an open window on the second floor, badly bruised, generally shaken up, but otherwise none the worse. It would appear that I cannot tackle the simplest job without courting disaster, but I am still on top!

Just before this job crashed, I ran into the mysterious American again.

"Still here?" I said jovially.

"Yeah, but only just. I'm sailing for the States this afternoon. The boat sails at a quarter-past four. Sorry I haven't time for a drink, but see what you can do with this," and he slipped something into my pocket.

"Won't you tell me who you are?" I said.

"Listen, buddy, how long does it take you to make up your mind?" he countered.

"Oh," I answered, "that depends. Why?"

"Well, don't hurry about it. Wait till this afternoon. Now I must be off. So long!"

I put my hand in my pocket and pulled out £2. Hush money? Who knows? Walking home that evening I happened to look up at a clock. The hands stood at 4.20. I still hadn't made up my mind, but my friend was now at

sea. I have often wondered how he fared with the immigration authorities on the other side, but no doubt he could well afford 375 dollars!

When I lost my bill-posting job, I returned to London, little thinking that I was on the verge of the most remarkable experience of my life.

CHAPTER XIX

LONDON for me had never been a home, and I always felt like a stranger within her gates. The London of 1924 was still the post-War London of exaggerated gaiety; a sense of irresponsibility seemed to pervade the air and it seemed no place for a man without a job. Looking back it sounds almost incredible that I was only thirty-six, yet I was an old soldier. I was in the prime of life, yet with my career behind me.

That wouldn't do. I saw the folly of it, and was determined to get down to something as soon as possible. But what? The more I saw of civilian life the less I liked it. I wasn't made for it and I began to feel homesick—homesick for foreign lands where I had fought my battles, yes, and made my friends. It was in some such mood as this that I walked into Hyde Park one morning and bought a newspaper from a kiosk. I sat down and idly turned the pages, when my attention was caught by a headline. I cannot remember the exact words, but it was to the effect that hundreds of Germans were rallying to the side of France in her fight against Abd-el-Krim in Morocco.

How could this be? The Armistice was only six years old, and here were Germans rallying to the tricolour. I read on. Young Germans were in despair; their country was without hope. For many of them their only training had been in war, and France was now at war with the Arabs in her African Empire. The Moroccan revolt led by the redoubtable Krim was gaining ground, and the writer of the article went on to say that these young Germans had enlisted in the service of the French Foreign Legion. The Foreign Legion? I had heard of that. I knew it to be an international force serving the French Republic in the colonies, and this item of news gave my thoughts a new

direction. If these Germans were enlisting, why shouldn't I? I put the paper down and walked out of the park into the Edgware Road, turning into a post office and thumbing the pages of the telephone directory.

Half an hour later saw me outside the entrance to the French Consulate in Bedford Square. A formidable official inquired my business, and when I told him that I wished to have some particulars concerning the Foreign Legion, he became offensive, saying that there was no room for Englishmen and that it would be impossible for me to see the consul. We had a few 'words,' and I went off in the direction of Soho. If officialdom was closed to me, then I would make my own inquiries.

Outside St. Patrick's Church in Soho Square, I noticed several people coming out of the church, and I went boldly up to one man and asked him if he knew of any Frenchmen in the neighbourhood.

"Frenchmen? Ah, monsieur, I am French. May I ask what you want with me?"

"I want you to tell me about the Foreign Legion," I said, getting down to business at once.

He may have been somewhat suspicious of my intentions, but, anyway, he feigned ignorance and suggested my visiting a certain café, where I might find a man with the required information. For the price of a meal and a few cigarettes, I was given the name of someone who had actually served in the Legion. I was getting warm at last! To find this ex-legionary I had to go to the Church Army hostel in the Marylebone Road. However, I succeeded in unearthing him, and we had a long talk. It was only many years later that I learnt that he had never been in the Legion at all. What he *had* been in was a force known as the Bataillion des Afriques, a French penal regiment. How he ever got into it I never discovered, but his service there had brought him into contact with the Legion, about which he knew a good deal. So far as recruiting was concerned, he assured me that it was impossible to enlist in England, and if I couldn't afford to go over to France, my only plan was to see the consul in London—somehow.

I parted with a few more cigarettes, and once more made my way to Bedford Square. I saw the same official, who tried to put me off. However, I informed him brusquely that I had received instructions to see the consul, and would he please arrange for an appointment. He let me get as far as the hall and disappeared upstairs. Presently he brought word that I would be received then and there, and I was ushered into a spacious room on the first floor. The consul greeted me warmly and as soon as he heard my business, he laughed, rather as if a small boy had shown him a new trick.

"La Légion. Oh, la la! Well, my friend, we do sometimes get similar requests. Tell me, have you been a soldier before?"

That was an easy one, and there was no doubt that my military career made an impression.

"Do you speak French?"

"I learnt it at school, and I was able to rub it up during the War. I can't say that my accent is Parisian, but I think I can make myself understood."

He then spoke to me in French, and I gathered that I had passed the language test with flying colours.

Convinced that I would be a good legionary and an asset to the forces of the Republic, we proceeded to business. I would have to enlist at Dunkerque and I would need a passport.

By the time I left the consulate I was in possession of a rail pass to Calais and the princely sum of five shillings for myself. Two days later I entrained at Victoria in a spirit of high adventure, knowing just about as much of the Foreign Legion as the average film-goer.

And now I must pause in my narrative to make a personal statement to the reader. If I was to give a full account of my life in the Legion it would need a book to itself. In this volume I am setting down the story of my life, and as I have already published a number of books based on my experiences in the Legion, the reader must excuse me if I touch but briefly on these crowded years. But there is one thing I can do. Even in this hurried survey I can paint the

NATIVE SCENE IN RABAT, MOROCCO

VIEW OF MAZAGAN FROM THE BARRACKS, MOROCCO

Legion in its true colours, which are not as bright as the gaily coloured uniforms so often depicted on the screen. Even as I write, the Legion is attracting young men from this country into its ranks, and if any words of mine can put an end to this traffic in souls I shall at least have achieved something. In plain language, the Foreign Legion is an international disgrace, and in the following pages it will be my purpose to justify such condemnation in the light of my own experience.

What then is the truth about the Legion? To begin with, it is an international force and is open to any white man. Anybody who talks of black men in its ranks gives himself away, as do film producers when they make the Legion march in column of fours. The Legion marches in threes, and it is always marching—somewhere. A man may enlist under any name he chooses, and no questions are asked. Physical fitness is essential, while some knowledge of French is useful, but to earn promotion it is imperative to be a bully. About the only thing you are allowed to retain is your nationality, but if, as sometimes happens, you wish to take a commission, then it is necessary to take out French naturalization papers.

The majority of the officers, however, are French regulars, many straight from St. Cyr (the French Woolwich), and such fair play or common decency that exists is entirely due to these men. They are soldiers versed in the true discipline of good comradeship; they are brave and face unflinchingly the ghastly tortures meted out by the sons of Allah to the officers of the Republic. But like a cancer in their midst are the men who have fought their way up from the ranks, men who have risen in exact ratio to the extent of their brutality, men who care nothing for France, but only for power to wield still more terribly the whip of degradation.

My baptism into what has been aptly called 'the legion of the damned' was indeed an eye-opener. From Calais I was taken to Dunkerque, where I was formally enrolled, and from whence I crossed France to Marseilles. After a few days in the old Fort St. Jean, towering above the

harbour, where only a few years earlier I had landed with the Indian Expeditionary Force, I was put on a ship with a dozen other recruits and crossed to Sousse, the headquarters of the Legion cavalry. Although the Legion is a little more than a hundred years old, the cavalry only date from 1922, when France took into her service a number of Russian Cossacks. The infantry have their headquarters at Sidi-Bel-Abbes in Algeria. Sousse is on the coast of Tunisia, but troops from both countries were now being rushed into Morocco.

Up to my arrival in Sousse I had been wearing a smart suit of clothes, for which I paid nine guineas. This was stripped off me and sold to an Arab for three francs—thrown down into the sand for me to pick up. I was issued with a khaki shirt and trousers and given a number—1484. Names don't count for much in the Legion, and when you die your number is simply given to the latest recruit. Next my head was shaved. The excuse for this is that it is in the interests of hygiene, which is just so much nonsense, for officers are immune from this indignity. Lastly, to crown my initiation, my finger-prints were taken. I remembered how, when I was making my inquiries in London, the general comment was always : " What have you been up to ? " As everybody knows, the Legion harbours not a few people who have been ' up to something,' but it is false to assume that it is the gateway to oblivion. The Legion may not ask questions, but it keeps a perpetual eye on you, and it is at the service of the Paris Sûreté, and, for that matter, of Scotland Yard too.

Enlistment is for a period of five years. You can be re-engaged for a further period of ten years. At the end of it there is a pension, but that pension is conditional on your residing in the French Empire. If you are wanted by your own country, you will be given up without a murmur, unless, of course, you are of special military value to France, when you will be urged to stay where you are. Pay? There is a generous bonus on enlistment of 400 francs; after that seven francs a month ! That doesn't leave much over for drinking wine in sun-baked cafés and taking the

sheikh's daughter out to dinner, which in some quarters is still regarded as a legionary's chief occupation. It is thus advisable to have either independent means or a generous friend at home. I have met many rich men in the Legion. There was one man who must have been worth £1000 a year if a penny. He was just an adventurer, and not even the rigours of the Legion seemed to damp the ardour of his quest. Incidentally, those who come to the Legion to forget make a great mistake, for they invariably remember, especially if they are forced to spend weeks in the desert at the mercy of Arab snipers. As for receiving money through the post, I can say with truth that I never lost a letter. Somehow or other the post always caught up with me, and here at least the Republic deserves full marks.

It's difficult to get English people to realize just how hard the Legion is. Well, at this finger-print parade, there was one young fellow who liked it so little that he raised a raucous voice in protest. An officer happened to be in the room at the time, and he came over to see what the trouble was all about. He dismissed it with a laugh, but when the man continued to protest he changed his tone. He fell us all in and marched us to a room where a man was being subjected to the 'twitch.' This man was chained to the wall with an iron collar round his neck. His nose was gripped by a piece of rough cord tied round the snout, and every now and then a sergeant (in the cavalry a 'marshal') would give the string a twist. It is a practice sometimes employed with stubborn mules, but I never thought I should have lived to see the twitch used on a human being.

"That," said the officer, "is what happens to a man who protests. You don't come here to protest. You're here to do as you're told. *Comprenez?*"

We stood there aghast, when suddenly another order broke the silence. "Eyes right."

What we saw was another man, smartly dressed, strutting towards the entrance.

"Now, take a look at him," said our mentor. "There's a good soldier. *Bon soldat!* He's done his work for to-day

and now he's off to the town to enjoy himself. Good wine and plenty of mam'selles. *Eh bien*, it's for you to choose."

That remark about the wine and the mam'selles was typical. I have known an officer use the whip on a man and then go and sit with his comrades in a village café. Off parade, officers will fraternize with the men, and they are not concerned with your behaviour out of hours. A night pass allows a man to be out until one o'clock in the morning, and provided he's sober at reveille, sounded at 5 a.m., nobody worries. But once more I ask who wants to go out on seven francs a month?

Another favourite punishment in force at Sousse is known as the 'circus.' A pole is placed in the middle of a circle, and from this pole a rope runs out to the edge of the circle, and at the other end of the rope is the delinquent, who must march round the circle carrying forty pounds of sand on his bare shoulders. The point is that the rope must never slacken. It must remain taut for the duration of the march; otherwise the whip is brought out again. No wonder then that a soldier is apt to lose his temper even to the point of striking an N.C.O. That is a serious offence in any army, and in the Legion it may result in being sentenced to a term of years in a penal battalion. Here there is no pay at all, and your life will be taken up with making roads, marching to and from your work in chains. I once saw one of these gangs at work, and it was no surprise to me that I never met a man who had survived his term.

But these domestic horrors are not all. The Arabs know a thing or two about cruelty. Fortunately they are expert shots, but if they do take a prisoner he can expect no quarter. On search parties and patrols of one kind and another I have come across the bodies of French officers foully mutilated and giving evidence of unspeakable tortures. In this Moroccan campaign, the Arabs had many advantages. They knew every inch of the country, they were not dependent on any commissariat, and they were served by the most remarkable system of gun-running. Their supply

of arms seemed inexhaustible, and ammunition was smuggled in a multitude of ways—even in fruit and vegetables. They are masters of guerrilla warfare, and they kept the French on the hop for many weary months, and even though Krim himself capitulated, the Arab is still lord of the desert, as he always must be.

No one can say that the Legion is not a fine fighting force, and this is due oddly enough to its very cosmopolitanism. The representatives of each nation vie with each other for the crown of valour and they have achieved some astonishing victories. It needs an iron nerve to face an oncoming horde of mounted Druses or Berbers armed with sabres, flashing in the desert sun. The desert, too, claims her own victims. Men go *cafard* and are left to die, a prey to the ever-waiting vulture. These are not the products of a morbid imagination, but the very real memories of one who signed on and honourably fulfilled his contract as a mercenary soldier under the tricolour. For I can say with truth that not once did I attempt to desert. Desertions were common, but successful get-aways few. Desertion in the desert means either death from starvation or at the hands of the enemy, while desertion in a town is doomed to failure from the word go. The thing has certainly been done, but only by a fluke. On more than one occasion I have been the confidant of an intending deserter, only to find myself later a member of the firing squad detailed to dispatch him.

Morocco was not the only storm centre. There was Syria, where Mangin's column had been torn to pieces by the rebelling Arabs, who remained quite unperturbed at the introduction of heavy artillery. Oppressive taxation was at the bottom of the trouble, and in Syria the revolt was guided by the Druses, those mysterious inhabitants of the Lebanon Hills, whose capital city of Sweida remains a closed book to all but the most intrepid adventurers. I was sent over to Syria along with a cavalry squadron, made up largely of White Russians. We landed at Beirut, proceeding by train to Damascus, but we were ambushed, the train wrecked, and three men killed. The key railway

running from the port to the capital was perpetually ravaged by the rebels despite the vigilance of a day and night guard. But we gave as good as we got, and the officer commanding gave instructions for the dead to be carried on to Damascus, and there piled up in the main square as a warning to whomever it might concern. We were billeted in the Citadel itself, that gaunt fortress standing high above the River Abana, now called Barada. After centuries of Turkish domination, Damascus, one of the most ancient cities in the world, presented a strange sight. Anyone walking down the street might receive a brickbat from an upper window, and we were told emphatically that only within the walls of the Citadel could we consider ourselves safe. The Citadel was not only a fortress and a barracks; it was also a prison. Deep down underground on a level with the river bed were filthy cells filled with men awaiting a trial that might never come. One day I was given the job of taking them their soup, and never, not even in the Legion, have I seen such a caricature of humanity. There was an old Turk, held over from the last regime, who acted as gaoler, and he didn't make things any easier for his unfortunate charges.

As I have said, it would be possible to fill this book with true and terrible stories of Legion life, a life often relieved by touches of humour and often by the spirit of gallantry and self-sacrifice, but taken in the round a life of barbarity and folly. But this is not a Legion book, and it must suffice to say that I served my term until a series of wounds kept me out of the fray. Those wounds by themselves would not have granted me my discharge, which was brought about entirely through a chance meeting with a high British official. The crowning insult was yet to come. I was taken back to Dunkerque, possessing nothing but the clothes I stood up in—a dirty Legion uniform—and there I was left.

"How do you get back to England? That's your affair. This is where you joined, and this is where we leave you. So, *Au revoir*."

FRENCH TANKS ON REVIEW IN TUNIS

And in Dunkerque I might have remained to this day were it not for the fact that while wandering round the docks I saw a familiar sign—the Lion and the Unicorn. Anything so essentially English at that moment was like a raft to a drowning man. I soon found out that the sign was that of the English Consulate, where I had an interview with the Vice-Consul.

"We get a good many like you here," he said, regarding me as if I was a small boy. "If you take my advice, you'll go down the road to the English Sailors' Mission. Ask for the Chaplain and tell him I sent you."

The Chaplain was even less surprised to see me.

"Don't tell me," he said as he sat me down in a comfortable chair, "I know all about it. You'd better stay here for two or three days to pick yourself up. You'll have your own room, plenty of English papers, and good food."

He was true to his word, and when I finally left his hospitable roof it was with two hundred francs, a sum which I am glad to say I was able to repay soon afterwards. I cannot now remember the name of that good Samaritan, but if he is still at Dunkerque and chances to read these lines, I would like him to know just what his kindness meant to me at that time. There must be many more who are similarly grateful. At Dover I visited the local branch of the British Legion before proceeding to London. At Charing Cross I had a typical London welcome—thick fog, damp and bitter cold. For a moment I thought wistfully of the North African desert and remembered the old tag, 'you can be uncomfortably hot, but you can be miserably cold.' But this was England, and let the weather do its damnedest, I was free. Free? Yes, but lonely and no home to go to.

That night was my first in that dormitory of the destitute —the Victoria Embankment. And before my eyes closed in sleep I thought of Marshal Lyautey, the man to whom France owes modern Morocco, and whose only welcome on returning to his country was a demand for arrears of Income Tax.

CHAPTER XX

THE Victoria Embankment presents a drab picture in the early morning to one who has spent the night on one of its benches. For me the picture was not brightened by a steady rain. A solitary barge was being towed down stream, and it occurred to me that I might be going the same way if I didn't pull myself together.

Those years in the Legion had been wasted years. They had brought me nothing except bitter memories. I was now much worse off than when I joined, and I knew that service in the Foreign Legion is not the best qualification for a job. But such morbid introspection is best left alone at such a time—and at such a place! With an artificial gesture of cheerfulness I wished a fellow 'lodger' good morning. I asked him if he had any suggestions to make.

"Better try the Salvation Army," he said. "Why not go round to the hostel in Westminster? They'll probably give you a bed, and tidy you up a bit."

The familiar uniform of the S.A. takes on a stranger hue when one is driven to its shelter, and my mind went back to that day at Glossop with Enoch Enoch when I had seen old General Booth himself. In those days it was popular to laugh at the 'Army,' but now that laughter had a hollow ring. I walked along to Westminster and craved admission.

"We've had seven hundred here already to-day," said the man at the door—a figure of speech, no doubt, but not a very comforting greeting. However, I was let in, and was presently interviewed by an 'ensign,' who asked me why I had come. It seemed an unnecessary question, but I was to learn that if charitable organizations have a failing it is perhaps a lack of imagination. I told him something of my story and made it plain that I was genuinely up

against it. I was still suffering from the effects of wounds sustained in the Legion, and it must have been evident that it would be some time before I was fit to take any work that might be found for me.

"We get some rough customers in here," said the ensign. "They come and go like the tide, and like the tide they sometimes leave a pretty good mess behind them. Anyway, we'll fix you up for to-night."

Food, clean linen, a bath, and a bed meant a good deal to me just then, and I felt considerably refreshed in the morning.

I was advised to go to Charing Cross Hospital for a medical examination, but instead I went to the offices of a weekly periodical which at that time was running an assistance fund for British ex-Service men. No sooner had I got inside the door than I ran straight into a man whom I had known as an officer in the army in India. He recognized me at once, and we were able to have a yarn about old times. Unfortunately he couldn't do anything in the way of a job, but he sat down and wrote me a letter to the House Surgeon at Charing Cross. I also called on Sir Bertram Joyce of the Soldiers and Sailors Aid Society, but though I was everywhere received with sympathy there was very little any of these good people could do for me, and I stayed on in Peter Street for some days.

Walking down Victoria Street one day I watched a bill-poster at work on an advertisement hoarding, and my attention was struck by this notice: 'Wanted: Genuine ex-légionnaires of the French Foreign Legion; Apply, Doorkeeper, Plaza Cinema, Regent Street, W.1.' I went immediately to the Plaza and accosted a uniformed commissionaire.

"What, another of you?" he commented sarcastically. "We've turned away hundreds already. I should think all Soho's been up here this morning."

"I suppose you don't believe that I've ever been in the Legion," I said. "Well, take a look at these," and I pulled out my discharge papers and finger-prints.

"Now you're talking. Just hang on a minute."

He went inside, and it was not long before I found myself in the manager's office.

"You're just the man we've been looking for. Do you know where Wardour Street is? Well, if you go along now to Paramount House and ask for the Publicity Manager we ought to be able to fix something up. You'd better take a taxi."

The driver was given instructions and told he would be paid the other end, and when we drew up at our destination there was a deputation waiting to receive me. I found myself surrounded by various members of the organization, many of whom were asking excitedly if I would address committees and social clubs on my experiences. But before I had time to take stock of these requests, I was hurried upstairs.

The Publicity Manager was most enthusiastic and asked me if I was free to undertake a job. I assured him that that was exactly what I wanted.

"That's fine," he said. "Now look here. We've got a film over from America called *Beau Geste*, an adaptation of the famous novel by P. C. Wren. It's cost a mint of money and we're confident that it's a winner. I want you to go down to the private theatre at the Plaza and see this picture run through. I want you to see it twice—we'll give you a break in between—and let us know your opinion as to whether this film gives a true picture of Legion life. It'll take you about four hours altogether. There'll be a whisky and soda beside you and a box of cigars, and we'll look after you all right."

I never touched either the whisky or the cigars. My mind was intent on the screen the whole time. Only when my eyes were blinded by the white light at the end did I realize that the film had finished. I was able to report wholly favourably except for one or two details of dress and routine. "Perhaps," they said, "they'll do a picture over here, and then you'll be useful. Now, what do you say to dressing up in a uniform and standing in the foyer during the public run. You'll have to talk to people, answer questions, and make yourself generally useful in publicizing the picture."

And so it came about that during the whole of the long run of *Beau Geste* in the West End I became once more a légionnaire, though in a smarter uniform than I had ever worn in Morocco. During this time I met many interesting people, for the film became something of a sensation, and there were few members of London society who did not pay at least one visit. The climax of the run for me was when I was presented to T.R.H. the Duke and Duchess of York, now the King and Queen. There was one hectic night when I was seized by members of the Australian Rugby football team and taken off to their hotel, where I was entertained at an elaborate party.

After London, I accompanied the film round the leading provincial cinemas. At Birmingham I was called a liar in public by a French consular official, and at Hastings a Frenchwoman struck me over the head with an umbrella. Yet I never made any remarks that were damaging to the French nation. I was merely describing life in a particular force as I knew it and corroborating the evidence of the film from my own personal recollections.

But like other good things this tour came to an end, and once again I was left without work and with little prospect of obtaining it. The luck of seeing that poster asking for ex-légionnaires had to turn, and I was compelled to seek shelter once more with the Salvation Army.

One thing I did possess and that was a pair of good strong boots, which I put under the pillow at night for safety. But one morning they had disappeared. They must have dropped on to the floor and been stolen. This was my first experience of that unpleasant strain in some people of robbing a man when he's down. A favourite instance is going through a man's pockets after he has been knocked silly in a road accident. If ever I wanted to shoot anybody it was the man who had taken my boots. I reported the matter to the ensign, who dug out an old pair of canvas slippers for me, and I went out into the yard.

"Is he in a good temper this morning?" said a voice.

"Who?"

"The ensign."

"I should say so! He's just given me this pair of shoes. I had my boots stolen last night."

"Listen, chum," went on the other, "I'm walking to Hackney this morning about a job. Like to come?"

"What? In these shoes?"

"Yes. Why not? You'll be all right."

Apparently there were some vacancies going in a factory, but by the time we arrived they had all been filled. We were a disconsolate pair and feeling very sorry for ourselves as we sat down by the roadside wondering what to do next.

"Well," announced my friend, "there's only one thing to do; we must go to 'the lump'."

"The lump? What on earth do you call the lump?"

"The workhouse, mate."

"Good heavens! I didn't think it would come to that. Do you know, when I was a kid, I sometimes used to walk from Hayfield to New Mills, and we used to pass a great building surrounded by beautiful gardens, where men in white corduroys and women in red petticoats were walking. I remember asking my mother who they were. 'Those, dear, are paupers,' she said. 'But they can't help it, can they?' I asked her. 'No dear,' she replied, 'and it's a shame they should be there.'"

"Really? Well, well, well. I'm afraid we shan't see any red petticoats, but it's not as bad as all that. Anyway, let's go."

I was in no mood to argue about it, so I followed him. He, it appeared, was an *habitué* and knew the ropes. On his instructions I said the word 'Admission' when the porter opened the door. This seemed to do the trick, for we were immediately passed through into a large waiting-room. Presently a uniformed official came in and called out ferociously: "First six, please!" There was no competition for a place in the first six, who quickly passed out of the room. "Cheer up, sonny," said my companion, "it'll be our turn next," and we duly went along with the next batch. We were taken before another official, who asked us any number of questions about our lives and where we had slept the previous night. Our answers were presumably

satisfactory, for we were taken along to the baths, while our clothes were removed for fumigation—"to make sure that nothing can walk in them except yourself" as some wag put it.

Here we were denied the luxury of linen, but given two good blankets. Reveille was at six o'clock next morning. "Blimey!" grumbled an old man next to me, "they give you another half-hour in quod at this time of the year!" By a quarter-past eight we were out in the street. The porter told us that if we came back we could stay for another four days.

Now all this was very interesting in its way, but I had no wish to become a permanent burden on the rates. Outside in the street, my mate pointed to a small house alongside the institution.

"See that house?" he said. "That's the Master's house. Go and ring the bell, and ask him for a pair of boots."

"I daren't do that," I protested.

"Oh, yes, you dare. He won't eat you, and it's worth the effort, isn't it?"

I decided to have a shot. A maid answered the door, and when I explained my mission she told me I must apply at the porter's lodge. But while I was standing there, a man came up and asked what I wanted. It was the Master himself. Possibly he was impressed by this blatant effrontery, but at any rate he said I could report the facts to the porter and apply for foot repair, as he put it, with his permission.

"Back already?" asked a puzzled porter when we accosted him. "Well, you *have* got a nerve. Just wait there. If you're not telling the truth you'll know all about it." But he brought back a pair of boots, for which I solemnly exchanged my slippers.

Peter and I walked slowly away from the gaunt building, and I wondered exactly what we were going to do.

"Where are you going?" I asked.

"Aberdeen."

"Aberdeen!"

"I know, that may surprise you, but that's where I'm going, and what's more you're coming too."

"Me?"

"Yes, you. Why not? We shall get a lift part of the way, if we're lucky. After all, what else is there to do?"

"But why Aberdeen?"

"Listen, chum. I've got a sister in Aberdeen. She won't let me down. She'll look after us for a bit, and maybe we'll pick up something there. Who knows? Anyway, there's nothing to keep us in London."

That was true enough.

"All right," I said. "I'm game. Do we start now?"

"Immediately, if not sooner," and Peter gave force to his decision by quickening his pace, as though it were a matter of half an hour's walk.

But we were in luck. A lorry answered Peter's call, and the driver said he could take us as far as Bedford. We jumped in. Not only did we get this lift out of town, but the driver bought us some tea and buns, and threw in a packet of cigarettes before he left us.

"That's very nice," I said, "but what do we do now and where do we sleep to-night?"

Luckily these questions of mine had no worries for my friend. He remained quite unmoved and was always ready with an answer.

"Ask that old boy where the local is," he said.

"The local what?"

"The local 'lump,' you fathead!"

I strolled across the road and accosted an elderly man, who wanted to know what we were doing and where we were going. All I could say was "Aberdeen," which I know didn't sound very convincing.

"I think you two gentlemen had better come along with me."

I collected Peter and I imagined that we were being taken to the man's house. In a sense that was true, but it wasn't the kind of house I expected. We stopped at the police station! Our guide turned out to be an officer in plain clothes.

But our consciences were clear, and after we had been questioned, we were given a chit and advised to present ourselves to the Mother Superior of a convent in the town. Here we were received with great kindness and every consideration, spending the night in an annexe specially reserved for wayfarers. In the morning the lady gave us a blessing and a shilling each—a shilling which, I am happy to say, I was able to repay on a later and less hazardous visit to Bedford.

The resourceful Peter next suggested Leicester for the following night, and we were again successful in getting a lift. My friend certainly knew how to get about. At Leicester it really was the ' lump,' and the night was made memorable by a free fight in the dormitory. Fortunately I was not involved, but we were glad to get away in the morning. As it happened we were to stay a couple of nights here, for we were picked up by a street preacher, who took us along to a hostel run by Plymouth Brethren. Our religious beliefs were evidently somewhat elastic—nuns at Bedford and P.B.s at Leicester ! Moreover, our good friends had business relations with a haulage company and arranged for our transport as far as Sheffield. It struck me that Yorkshire without walking a step was not bad going !

But it was here that the real business of tramping began. We spent the night in a lodging house and then set out in the direction of Dinting, sleeping under a haystack from which we were forcibly removed in the morning by an irate farmer coming to collect eggs. On we trudged till Peter had another brainwave. We were approaching a calico-printing works, and he suggested that there would be no harm in asking for a job. That, after all, was what we wanted, and if we could get it this side of the Border, so much the better. The works manager asked us to wait, and when we *had* waited for nearly an hour he took us round to the back and pointed to a queue of men.

" Do you see those fellows standing there ? Well, they all want a job, so you see you haven't much chance."

" Well, you're a nice one," retorted Peter. " Why couldn't you have told us that before ? "

He had nothing to lose and could afford to talk, and the result was that he could afford other things as well, for the man relented and gave him a florin, which enabled us to put in at the Saviour's Hostel at Guide Bridge, just outside Manchester.

Manchester in the early hours of the morning looked no more inviting than the Victoria Embankment, and we made our way quickly through the city. It was still early morning when we reached Salford. Peter paused outside a humble cottage surveying two bottles of milk outside the door. There was a glint of envy in his eye. As we stood there the door opened, and a woman looked out. She was still in her night-clothes with a shawl slung hastily across her shoulders, and she shut the door again quickly. But she reappeared almost immediately and asked what we wanted. Peter confessed that he had been looking at the milk, and the tone of his voice betrayed his emotions.

"Come right in," said the woman. "Goodness knows things are difficult these days, they are indeed, but you're welcome to what we've got. Just let me get upstairs and into my petticoats," and as she went up she called out to her husband. "Joe! Joe! Get up. There's two fellows downstairs come in for a bit of breakfast."

Lancashire hospitality is no myth. Here was a poor family, little better off than ourselves, but we were not allowed to go on our way before we had shared their board. Moreover, the house was spotlessly clean, a point which stood out in comparison with some of the lodging houses we had visited.

Our next halt was Preston, where I thought it might be useful to call on the artillery barracks. This proved a great success, for we were both received as old comrades and lavishly entertained by the sergeants' mess. In fact, too well entertained. The scanty food we had been living on during the last few days formed no proper basis for such junketing, and I'm afraid I fell an easy victim to the liquor set before us. However, this was only a temporary set-back. What was more to the point was that a round-robin realized four pounds, which was riches indeed. We could have taken

a train with this, but Peter was against squandering the money on such luxury. No doubt his previous success in cadging lifts had gone to his head. To give him his due, we did ride a good half of the way between Preston and Aberdeen, but the four pounds went anyway. It was stolen in a lodging house at Carlisle. Somebody took it from my coat pocket during the night, and when I complained in the morning there was the very devil of a row.

Nobody was inclined to believe my story; the police were summoned and we were informed that we should have to stay where we were while inquiries were set in motion. That didn't worry us so long as we were housed and fed. In the end they decided to give us the benefit of the doubt, but failed to give us the four pounds. A very distressing affair when we might have been riding comfortably in a train. However, that's what some people call the luck of the road, I suppose.

Just over the Border we were taken in by yet another religious house. This one had a Presbyterian flavour, and I remember it by its porridge and for the fact that we were made to remove our shoes on entering. Whatever else may happen, anybody who cares to make the journey from London to Aberdeen with an empty pocket will find plenty of variety when it comes to sleeping quarters. They will find kindness and hospitality in the most unexpected places, as well as the expected hard knocks.

And so at last—Aberdeen. It was with a feeling akin to pride that we entered the granite city. We had achieved what we set out to do, and I am still proud of the achievement. Yet anticlimax awaited us, for Peter's sister had died a week before our arrival. Another brother was looking after her affairs, and it appeared that there was a matter of £50 coming to Peter. We stayed while he collected this money, and then made our way across to Glasgow, where Peter got a job. It meant going to sea, and though he begged me to go with him, I felt that the time had come to say good-bye. Like Charles II, I was not over-keen to go on my travels again, and in any case the sea as such was no friend of mine. So we bade each other a fond farewell, and Peter

left me standing on the platform of the Central Station, having previously slipped £7 into my pocket.

But I didn't come home by train. A motor coach was cheaper as well as a luxury after recent experiences. Cheaper and more luxurious—perhaps, but not so much fun.

CHAPTER XXI

AFTER my return from the North, I was still penniless and seemingly no nearer work. I went to the Salvation Army hostel and sat down to think. It occurred to me that I might be said to have what is known in Fleet Street as a life-story. After all, I had been about a bit and had experienced one or two unusual adventures. In this connexion I felt that I was possibly as good as the next man. At any rate, there was no harm in trying.

I walked down to one of the big newspaper offices and consulted the commissionaire on the door. This worthy was not very encouraging. "Go on," he said. "Got a story, have you? Well, it's not the first time I've heard that. The trouble is that when the reporters get hold of you people they usually find that you've no story at all." I insisted that mine was no ordinary story, and he had the goodness to send up my name. It appeared that I *did* have a story, which duly appeared, while I was given a tidy sum of money on account.

However, this was not a job, and I should have to go easy. Consequently I stayed on for a bit at the hostel. It must have been the following week when I was sitting in the lounge after lunch that a S.A. man came in and spoke to me.

"Is your name Waterhouse?"

"Yes," I said, "why?"

"There's a gentleman outside says he wants to see you."

Who could this be?

I got up to go out, and as I did so somebody called out: "Good luck, chum!"

"What do you mean, 'good luck'?" I asked.

"Well, a good many people go out of that door, but they may not come back for a year or two."

So that was it!

"Look here," I said, "when I come back through that door I'll give you a sock on the jaw."

I strode out.

When I got outside I found a well-dressed man of youngish appearance. I looked him up and down, but couldn't place him.

"Mr. Francis A. Waterhouse?"

"At your service."

What did this man want?

When I put this question to him, he hesitated before replying. And then he told me that he had been reading some of my stuff in the papers, and had been especially intrigued by my Legion experiences.

"Look here," he said, "come over the road and have some lunch with me."

I explained that I had already lunched, but I said I would be pleased to have some coffee with my strange visitor. When we were comfortably settled at a table, the man went on to say that he had been in a spot of bother, and not to put too fine a point on it he was anxious to disappear. Naturally he didn't go into details about this trouble, and for all I knew he might have been putting one over on me. It appeared that he was quite well off, and looking at him more closely I couldn't exactly picture him in the Moroccan desert.

"Well," I said, "I don't know who you are, and I may never see you again. What you say may be true, but if you take my advice you'll stay out of the Legion. Especially if you want to forget something. The Legion only makes you remember."

"No doubt. But I've got money, and surely once I was over there, I could buy myself out and settle in the country."

"Sorry, old man, it can't be done. If you join the Legion, you've just got to stick out your time. Please yourself, but I was never more serious in my life than I am when I say 'don't'."

He thanked me as we left the tea-shop; then shaking

my hand he disappeared into the crowd, and, as I thought, from my life.

Not long afterwards I was turning the pages of an evening newspaper when I was immediately attracted by a photograph. It was a portrait of a man. The face was strangely familiar. I read the caption. *Norman Rouse convicted to-day of the Northampton murder.* I blinked. There was no mistake about it. This was the man who had been so anxious to get away—to disappear.

Armed with this photograph I went straight down to the offices of the paper. "H'm," they said, "you're a bit late. The man's been sentenced now. Why didn't you go to the police about this?"

"Because," I replied, "I had no idea until to-day that Rouse was the man. It was only when I saw this picture that I realized who I had been talking to." Nevertheless, next day the paper had a column about my experience with him.

Rouse appealed, and on the morning of the appeal I was up betimes and found a place in the public gallery of the Appeal Court. I was going to make sure. There in the dock stood Rouse, dressed in the same blue suit, and looking as immaculate as ever. Five judges in their scarlet robes listened to Sir Patrick Hastings pleading for him. All in vain. The Lord Chief Justice of England dismissed the appeal and Rouse walked quickly from the dock. Once he looked up to where I was sitting, and I have always wondered whether he recognized the man who had dissuaded him from going abroad. At least his fate was now no worse. Better die at the hands of His Majesty's hangman than to go *cafard* in the heat of an African sun.

It was soon after this dramatic moment that I was to receive news that provided a link with one of the less creditable episodes of what had now become my past. I learned in a roundabout way that the gentleman who had inveigled me into buying spurious shares in a hotel on the French Riviera, and thereby defrauded me of my inheritance, was still alive and living with his sister at Ostend. I still had nothing to do, and with the money

that remained from my newspaper fees I decided to visit him. But before I set out I learned that he was suffering from cancer of the stomach, that he was in desperate pain, and was, in fact, a dying man. Nevertheless I went and I saw him. The meeting was strangely moving, and the past was wiped out by the greater tragedy of the present. I forgave him. What else could I have done? He had been in and out of prison all his life, and now he was going to appear before the last dread court of all. It was not for me to give evidence.

But that visit to Ostend was not a waste of time, for it brought me a job at last. Returning to Victoria from Dover, I found myself travelling with a middle-aged man, who soon got into conversation with me. We were alone in the compartment and, after regaling him with some of the stories in this book, I explained that at the moment I was —well—at a loose end.

"You want a job?"

"You've said it."

"Well, mind you, I'm making no promises, but I may be able to put something your way."

He then told me that he was a partner in a firm controlling a number of London suburban theatres, and he was on the look-out for a suitable man to look after their outside advertising. We had a drink at Victoria and he asked me to call on him at his office in the morning.

After an interview with his colleague I secured the job, and with it the welcome salary of £7 a week. It was hard work, with hours extending most of the way round the clock, but it brought a sense of security and stability back into my life. Amongst other things it necessitated my having a car and learning to drive it. This brought its own peculiar excitements. My young tutor took me on to Clapham Common for exercise, and it was there that I made a disastrous beginning as a motorist, going clean through a front garden, knocking down a wall, and coming to an enforced halt in a flower bed. The master of the house came out breathing fire and brimstone, and his lady, being of a more practical turn of mind, emerged with a

bucket of water which she promptly threw over me. As luck would have it, these good people had only just finished laying out their garden, and I was made aware of this achievement in no uncertain fashion. However, my promise to repair the damage brought forth a calmer tone and induced the proper mood of resignation. In this care-free way did I dispense the bulk of a fortnight's earnings.

After this we transferred our motoring activities to the less restricted spaces of Wimbledon Common, and it was not long before I was able to show my tutor a thing or two. We used to put pegs in the ground at all sorts of angles, and I would negotiate them with all the dashing of a staged rodeo.

All this time I was garaging the car at premises behind a Clapham cinema. These premises belong to a Mr. Browne, and many was the time when Mr. Browne and I had a cup of tea together and discussed the affairs of the hour. Sometimes we were joined by his friend Mr. Kennedy, and I found them both exceedingly interesting and entertaining. Browne was always extolling his family life and praising the many virtues of his wife. A happily married man with a prosperous business and taking an intelligent interest in the passing scene. I received no hint that this man had only recently come from Devonshire, where he had been staying for some years as the guest of the Government.

And then the storm broke. There came a morning when my good landlady burst into my room with my early morning tea, but without knocking. In her other hand she clutched at a newspaper.

"Oh, sir, oh, sir, have you heard what's happened?"

"Whatever's the matter, Mrs. Knowles?"

"Oh, I can't believe it, sir. You know the P.C. Gutteridge murder?"

"Well, what about it?"

"Do you know who did it—at least, who's been charged? Mr. Browne, sir. Mr. Browne, your friend at the garage. Oh, it can't be true, it can't be true."

I jumped out of bed, dressed hurriedly, and ran round to my friend who had taught me to drive and who was

living only a few doors away and told him the news. Together we went round to the garage. There was no Mr. Browne, but business was as usual. And so a strange coincidence brought me once more into contact with assassins. It was hard to believe, indeed. I thought of all the talks I had had with these men, these family men who took such a loving pride in their homes. These men did not look like murderers, but then, I thought, does anyone look like a murderer? Is there such a thing as 'a murderer's face'? I think not.

As everybody knows, Browne and Kennedy were sentenced to death in due course for one of the most brutal murders of modern times. They paid the penalty, Browne at Pentonville and Kennedy at Wandsworth, which was in my beat. On the morning when they hanged Kennedy the sun was shining and the birds were twittering in the trees round the prison. Women were sobbing, and as the clock struck eight a hush descended on the scene.

"It seems so awful—such a pity," cried a woman near me.

"I know, but he might have thought of that himself," I replied.

A man opened the gates of the prison and pushed his way through the crowd. In a minute people were surging round the board to read the notice of execution.

I started up my engine and drove away, reflecting on many things, but keeping my eye firmly on the road.

Not long afterwards the talkies had thrown me out of a job.

CHAPTER XXII

IT seemed that my luck was definitely out again. Civilian life offered me no scope, and yet it was now the only life left open to me. I made up my mind to go and see a man who had previously done me a great kindness and who had said that he would always be pleased to see me, but I must first take the reader back with me to the time when I was appearing with the film of *Beau Geste* at a West End cinema.

While I was standing in the vestibule one afternoon a middle-aged man tapped me on the shoulder and asked whether I could do him a favour.

"That rather depends," I said cautiously. "Perhaps you will be a little more explicit."

"Well," said the man, "I want to bring a small party along to see this film and the young lady at the box office tells me that she can't let me have any seats till next week. What do you know about that?"

"I wish I could help you, sir, but I'm afraid I have no power over the seating arrangements."

"Never mind," he said. He was about to go away when he hesitated and added abruptly: "You were in the Legion, I suppose?"

I told him that I certainly was and that it was only because I had been able to convince the management of my service that I was engaged for the job.

"That's very interesting," said the man. "I should like to have a talk with you some time. Maybe you'll come round and see me—if you have a spare moment."

He thrust a card at me and was gone.

I watched him push his way through a small crowd that had gathered round the main entrance, and almost immediately I had to hurry away to prepare for the performance.

It was not till the evening that I pulled the card out of my pocket and read the name—Edgar Wallace.

There was an address at Salisbury Square off Fleet Street, and next morning I presented myself and was told that Mr. Wallace would see me straight away. The great man was in an expansive mood and seemed to take a delight in drawing me out. I told him some of my experiences in the East and we must have yarned away for the best part of an hour, when there was a knock at the door and a page announced another visitor. I reached for my hat.

"Stay where you are," said Wallace. "I know who this is. He won't be here long."

A tough-looking gentleman was shown in. He was raggedly dressed and I should have taken him for a beggar.

"Come in, come in. So you think Edgar Wallace can do something for you. You know I sometimes wonder what you people in Pentonville think about me. You seem to imagine you've only got to go to Mr. Wallace and tell him a tale to get some money. Perhaps you don't know that Mr. Wallace has to work pretty hard for his money. Anyway, you can't tell me a story for the simple reason that you haven't got one to tell. I could get a better yarn by looking at the Newgate Calendar for ten minutes than you could devise in ten years."

I listened intently to this impromptu sermon, but the speaker betrayed his words, for in another minute he had put his hand in his pocket and had spread a handful of silver on the table. He tossed a couple of half-crowns at the man and told him to go away.

"That happens every day," he said when the fellow had gone. "Every lag in London must have been in this office at some time or another. I sometimes wonder why I'm fool enough to see them. One day perhaps one of them will have something original to say. But go on telling me about yourself, and you needn't think I'm pumping you for copy. Believe me, I am genuinely interested." We chatted on almost till lunch-time, and as I got up to go, Wallace pulled out a fiver. "I know all good things come to an end," he said, "and even *Beau Geste* won't run for ever. Just in

case you get a bad break, here's something to tide you over for a day or two. In any case, keep in touch and let me know how things go. A man like you oughtn't to be in want of a job."

I was convinced that Wallace was not just being polite and that he meant what he said. At least there could be no harm in going down to see him, and I blatantly informed the page-boy that I had an appointment. I thought afterwards that it was rather ridiculous attempting to bluff the king of crime writers, but I was lucky. As soon as I entered the room I detected a change in Wallace. He looked depressed and worried. A pair of binoculars lay on the desk.

"Hullo," he said, almost shouting. "What have *you* been doing all this time? As a matter of fact, you've caught me at a bad time. You probably know that I do a good deal of racing journalism, and I've got to get down to Hurst Park. Do you go in for the Turf at all?"

"Hardly, sir. I know most things about a horse, but I can't say I'm a racing man."

"Maybe you're lucky to be out of it. I've just had a bad break myself. I sent my agent down to put £1000 on a horse at 100 to 8 and it lost by a short head. It isn't losing the thousand that worries me, but the thought of the winnings. You know, Mr. Waterhouse, I wouldn't like to be thought a bad sportsman, and I can say that I've never questioned a decision, but for the life of me I can't see how any horse can win a race by a short head. What is 'a short head,' anyway?"

Now it happens that this matter of a short head has often worried me, and as soon as Wallace saw that he had an ally he seemed to throw off his despondency and to urge his case with all the vehemence of an impassioned counsel. The length of a horse's head is technically four inches, just as a horse born on 31 December becomes a two-year-old on 1 January. The point is that even with one eye closed accuracy of vision to the degree of a short head is physically impossible unless the whole body remains rigid. The slightest turn of the head, and the line of vision is altered.

The position is even more complex in dog-racing when the runners bound along, heads often alternating in the lead. In America the problem is dealt with by photography, the camera always remaining in the same position. In this connection we may note in passing that it is forbidden to film a race from the judge's position. Under present conditions, the judge can only do his best, and he would probably be the first to admit the possibility of error, but the whole question is one that might well be reviewed.

All this time Wallace was drawing rough diagrams on the wall of his office. He told me that when he had time he would like to start a controversy in the Press on the matter, but the trouble was, he explained, that as a racing journalist himself, any suggestion of this sort might be misconstrued. He glanced at his watch.

"I must be off at once," he said. "Listen, you ought to be in a job. I don't know of anything at the moment, but I won't forget. In the meantime, here's something to keep you going." It was another fiver. He grabbed his stick and picked up the binoculars from the table. I followed him down, but when we reached the door, he thrust the stick at the page. "Take it away," he said, "I'm not as old as all that." And then turning to me, he added: "There's someone I'd like you to meet, but I can't stop now. So long."

The page-boy and I were left staring at each other. "Mr. Wallace gives so much away," said the boy, "that I wonder he doesn't raise my wages."

I was to have one further meeting with Edgar Wallace. I ran into him in Fleet Street a few days later. He was in a great hurry, and he told me that he was shortly off to America—"going to Hollywood to write scenarios. Maybe there'll be a job for you out there. Legion films, perhaps. I don't know, but you ought to be invaluable as a technical adviser. By the way, you remember me telling you that I knew of someone who might like a chat with you. Well, I can't stop to discuss it now, but I've left a note at my office in case you called. You might care to collect it some time. Now I must fly, but I won't forget you—and good luck!"

He vanished in the crowded pavement and I never saw him again. As all the world knows he went to Hollywood and died before he could return. He never had time to start that controversy, but he found time to be a good friend to an ex-legionary who has not forgotten his kindness.

When I called at his office for the note he mentioned, I found a new page on the door.

"Are you the Frenchman?" he asked.

"Frenchman be blowed. Whoever told you that?"

"Why, the boss of course."

"What he told you I expect was that I had been in the French Foreign Legion. Anyway, have you got a note for me?"

"Yes, sir, it's been here some days. Mr. Wallace left an envelope and said you'd be calling for it." There was a note in Wallace's own hand saying that he had written to Lawrence about me, and that I might be hearing from him. Also enclosed were three pound notes.

And that was how I came to meet Lawrence of Arabia. We met outside the Law Courts and talked for a solid two hours in a café in Essex Street. Lawrence was always eager to learn anything new of the Arabs. There was, of course, little enough I could tell him that he didn't know already, but he pressed me to tell him all I knew, and I can say that this brief interview was one of the most vivid contacts of my life. Why didn't I write my life story? Edgar Wallace had asked the same question, but ten years were to elapse before this story began to take shape. It is not always easy to set down the experiences of a lifetime unless one is blessed with patience and the necessary skill!

It had been interesting meeting Wallace and Lawrence, but beyond this suggested life-story I was still without a job. Yet once more I was to be the victim of chance. It was one afternoon when I was standing in Regent Street gazing into a jeweller's window. Diamonds have always held a peculiar fascination for me, and I can seldom pass a jeweller's shop without stopping to look in the window. On one side of this shop there was an alley-way, and I noticed that more than the usual number of people were passing up and down.

Suddenly a group of some dozen men turned into the alley from the pavement, and as they did so, one of them caught hold of my arm.

"Come on," he said. "Don't stand there or you'll miss it all."

I was too startled to say 'Miss what?' and before I could speak he was at me again.

"Don't look so dopey. We shan't even get in unless we get a move on."

He pulled at my sleeve, and before I knew what was happening I found myself walking with him up the alley and into a small doorway. We went upstairs into a large room crammed with an oddly assorted crowd. I heard a woman say: "We ought to click to-day. They want five hundred, I believe?" The words 'Five hundred what?' were on my lips when I glanced up at the wall and saw a notice-board bearing the caption: 'Connie's Film Agency.'

People were forming themselves into a queue, and I took good care not to let on that I was green. I walked with the queue and presently found myself confronted by a clerk behind a grill.

"Name?"

"Waterhouse."

"Right. Elstree to-morrow morning, nine o'clock."

He pushed a card at me and turned to the next man.

The information on the card was brief. It summoned me to the Elstree studios to take part in the filming of *Juno and the Paycock*, directed by Alfred Hitchcock. I stuffed it in my pocket and went back to my rooms.

"Do you know anything about crowd work on the films?" I asked a neighbour of mine. "A friend of mine's got a call for to-morrow and I promised him I'd try to find out something about it."

"That's funny," he said. "I used to do a bit myself. What you do is to catch the 7.15 train from St. Pancras to Elstree—elevenpence return. Walk to the studios at Boreham Wood, and when you get inside you'll see the casting office right in front of you. You can't miss it. Go

in there, and get your card stamped, and they'll tell you what to do. If you're sent away before noon, you'll only get half a guinea, otherwise it's a guinea for a day's work up to seven o'clock. After that you get half a crown an hour till midnight. It's good money while it lasts."

At St. Pancras next morning I found my erstwhile friends of Connie's Agency. They were all laughing and joking and greeted me like a long-lost friend. I found everything exactly as I had been told, and I learned that our job was to look like a gang of toughs. We had received orders to wear cloth caps and scarves and the oldest clothes we could find—not a very difficult wardrobe for most of us! As I walked to the dressing-rooms I thought of my last interview with Edgar Wallace. I had received no summons to Hollywood, but here I was in films, even if it was only as an extra. It was my first experience of a film studio, and my first impression was typical. There seemed to be a complete lack of organization. The time-table was flouted, nothing ran to schedule and the whole place cried out for a stage manager with plenary powers. These apparent defects are indigenous to the system, but it is easy for the novice to wonder how anything can ever be achieved satisfactorily.

This impression of chaos deepened as the day passed on, and by seven o'clock in the evening not one of us had done a hand's turn. I collected my guinea, and returned with the others next morning. At four o'clock that afternoon we went on the set, and the scene was duly shot, but we had not finished till just on midnight. The last train had left an hour before, but an ever-provident company had commissioned a fleet of charabancs to take us back to various central points in London.

It occurred to me that I might as well get myself registered at the agency in Regent Street, and a clerk entered my name on the roll, with the result that I soon received another call. This time it was to take part in the filming of *Balaclava* at the Islington studios, an enterprise requiring a rather more elaborate costume. Here again there was a long wait, and together with five other Highlanders, in full panoply of kilts and bonnets, I sat in an underground

dressing-room. It was lunch time and the studios were deserted, for even the cinema must abide by Trade Union rules. The six of us had been out and brought in our provisions, intending to relax at ease in our dug-out. Four of the men were playing cards, when the silence was broken by a peculiar noise rather as if a multitude of taps had been turned on, which in actual fact was exactly what had happened. Added to this was a more ominous sound like a muffled siren. This went on for some minutes, and I opened the door to see what was happening. A cloud of smoke belched into the room. My comrades coughed and choked and yelled at me to " shut that blinkin' door." The reader will not need to be told that this was the great Islington fire—and we were trapped ! Perhaps we had been forgotten, but it didn't take us long to realize our position.

The smoke outside was dense, but there was no other way of escape. It was impossible to see our way, and our clothes didn't make our progress any easier. I knew that we must creep along the corridor and climb the stairs at the end leading up to the main studio. We managed to fight our way up and all around us we could hear the hoses playing on the building. At the top of the stairs we groped our way in the direction of a door, and just as I reached it the wood splintered under the axes of the firemen. I fell forward half dazed and only remember being carried away.

The whole sky seemed to be filled with sparks and great flashes of light. Every fire brigade in London must have been there, cordons of police were controlling the crowds, and traffic was at a standstill. The white of the ambulances contrasted with the red of the fire-engines. But we were not the only people needing attention. The neighbourhood of the studios abounded in slum dwellings, and many of the inhabitants were suffering from the shock. Old men had had strokes, and more than one woman had prematurely given birth to her child. Such indeed was the plight of a woman in the house to which I was taken to recover. I knew that my comrades were safe, and there seemed to be nothing I could do except to get home. There was no hope of salving my own clothes, and after a short rest I set out

to walk home, and that meant tramping from Islington to Westminster—in costume! A kindly policeman shooed off a group of urchins who had gathered round to give me a boisterous send-off. But, alas, fresh faces came to stare at every street corner.

The day of the disaster was a Saturday, and no sooner had I got home and into bed than I was informed that some gentlemen wished to see me. In they came—the gentlemen of the Press, hungry reporters, note-books in hand, hanging on every detail. I told them what I could. It was a sober statement of fact, but I learnt from the Sunday papers that I had carried out the leading lady in my arms! *Balaclava* was an unlucky film, for at a later stage of the production a lantern caught fire and threatened a similar catastrophe.

I was to have one further experience in my screen career. Mr. Dupont was making *Two Worlds* at Elstree and he wanted a company of Russian soldiers. When I arrived I found a member of the Corps of Commissionaires giving instructions on military drill to the extras engaged on the production. The first thing I noticed was that he was telling them to swing their arms backwards and forwards. Now, the Russians don't do that. Their arms move in a semi-circular fashion, and I proceeded to do an unpardonable thing for an extra. I sought out Mr. Dupont and told him about it.

"That's interesting," he said. "You seem to know a thing or two."

He summoned the commissionaire and told him he wasn't paying him so much a week to make mistakes. He was good enough to increase my pay by a guinea and to retain me as technical adviser on such matters.

It was for the same film that Mr. Dupont required a man who would be willing to have his head shaved. The agency suggested sending a bald man, but no, he wouldn't have that. The man must submit to being shaved. Well, I'd had my head cropped once before in the Legion and I offered my services.

"What do you want?" asked Mr. Dupont

"Ten guineas," I replied.

The offer was accepted, and so it was that I had my first and last speaking role on the screen. My lines consisted of three words, spoken in a café scene.

Meanwhile I had lost touch with the agents, and in the hope of finding work I wandered round the studios on the look-out for a chance job. Some queer tasks have come to my lot, but I was now given one of the oddest. The company was making 'stills' of the leading lady, who represented a dancing girl and was thus not over-dressed. The heat from the giant arc lamps was causing her to perspire freely. A powder-puff was thrust into my hands, and I was ordered to smother every drop as soon as it appeared. For most of my life I had carried some sort of fire-arms and been engaged in pretty tough work, yet here was I armed with a powder-puff and assisting an exceedingly well-known young lady with her toilet. Not even the French had asked me to do that! Thus did I say farewell to the silver screen and its wonderland.

As I have said, I was living at this time in Westminster, to wit, at the Salvation Army Hostel in Great Peter Street. One Saturday afternoon I was walking towards the old Lambeth Suspension Bridge when I noticed a small crowd of people at one end of the bridge. The old bridge was in its last days. It was closed to vehicular traffic and a notice announced that troops crossing it must break step. Curiosity drew me towards the crowd, and as I approached an elderly man pushed his way out of the knot of people.

"What's up?" I asked.

"It's a kitten. Got itself down under the bridge. You can hear it crying. Lawd knows how it got there—or how it'll get back. The women there are fair upset about it."

There was no sign of any policeman, not that he could have done much about it. Even through the talk of the people I could hear the pitiful cries of the trapped animal. A sudden impulse prompted me to take a risk.

"Take my coat," I said to the man. "I may be crazy, but I'm going to have a shot at getting that cat out."

"Don't be a fool. Look at the tide. The river's pretty

full just now and if you fall you'll find yourself at Vauxhall in that current before you know where you are."

"I know, but I'm going to have a shot all the same."

I clambered over the balustrade while the crowd stood back aghast. By carefully placing my feet I was able to get a good grip, and I saw the kitten at the end of a girder, wedged up against the end and obviously frightened out of its life, as well it might be. A false move and I should be sunk. After some manœuvring I was in a position to reach the animal by stretching to my full length. The cat scratched my hand and bit it, but in a supreme moment I grabbed it, and in one extraordinary movement born on the spur of the moment I brought my arm round in a circle and threw the kitten over the balustrade into the roadway.

How I returned to safety I don't know, but I do know that nobody seemed in the least concerned when I did finally get back on to the road. The cat was undoubtedly the hero of the hour, and I sat down against the bridge nursing my bleeding hands. Presently the man with my coat came up and offered a word of congratulation. A man from the coffee stall at the corner brought over a cup of tea, and finally a lady from the crowd thanked me for my efforts.

"I don't know how you did it," she said. "I could hardly breathe while you were over there. It was a wonderful achievement and I'm sure we're all most grateful to you." The crowd soon dispersed, one of them claiming the cat for herself, and I picked myself up and went home.

Next day, the Sunday, I was walking through Smith Square when I saw the lady who had spoken to me. It was she who recognized me at first, and although I tried to avoid her she came up and asked me where I lived. I was reluctant to tell her, but she was so insistent that I gave in. It was not that I was ashamed of my address, but I have never believed in telling strangers too much. Anyway, on Monday afternoon the superintendent at the hostel informed me that a policeman had called for me and would be coming back in an hour. When the man returned I saw at once that he was no policeman. He was in fact an inspector of

the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. He persuaded me to have a talk with the Society's secretary, from whom I later received an official letter of thanks for my services on Lambeth Bridge together with a gift of £3. By the same post came an anonymous letter, but giving an address in Smith Square, and enclosing £5. Subsequent inquiries showed that this second letter was from the lady, but I will respect her wishes by not disclosing her name, a name well known to most of my readers.

After this little episode my life took a new direction. I was to graduate from the screen to the stage, but I am afraid that my theatrical career was even briefer than my appearances on the screen. Fate made me a star in a night and destroyed me the very same week! It came about in this way.

When I was serving in the Legion I came across a fellow-countryman occasionally. We were never together for long, but one day I heard that he had attempted to desert. The French had caught him and after various trials and other discomforts he had eventually been sentenced to a long term of imprisonment in a civil prison in France. Ever since my own discharge I had been busy agitating on his behalf. As a life-long soldier I have always regarded desertion with contempt, but at the same time my experience of the Legion, and especially of its ways with malefactors, moved me to do all I could to get this man out of its clutches. Articles had appeared in the Press, and I had even approached certain Members of Parliament about the matter. I am glad to say that his release was eventually secured, and his home-coming was the cause of a great flourish of trumpets. Naturally, I was closely associated with this man at the moment of his triumph, and since people have an insatiable appetite to gaze upon public figures, we were both approached by a theatrical impresario to appear on the stage. Betty Chester, who had won fame as a Co-optimist, was roped in to provide feminine appeal, and the three of us duly appeared in a specially written Legion sketch. The Press were enthusiastic, so was the public. For three nights we played to capacity. How-

ever, when I was leaving the theatre between shows on that third day I saw a poster on the back of a bus that made my hair stand on end. That poster seemed to be all over London. It was the end. The management could not proceed, and a long provincial tour was hurriedly cancelled. A show that might well have gone round the country for a couple of years crashed in a night. It is unfortunately impossible for me to disclose the details behind that failure, and I can only assure the reader that the circumstances were entirely beyond my control. Nevertheless, I had won promotion from a film extra to be top of the bill at a leading London theatre.

These momentary successes were all very well, but somehow they never lasted. I was still without a job, and there was now no Mr. Wallace to hand out encouragement and five-pound notes. Moreover, there was ever present in my mind the terrible slogan : 'Too old at forty.' I had moved into rooms, and while I was pondering these things one afternoon I was astonished to see from my window a Rolls-Royce draw up outside my door. An immaculately uniformed chauffeur was at the wheel, and beside him a footman, who hurried round to open the door. Out stepped an expensively dressed lady, who without any hesitation rang my bell.

"Are you Mr. Francis Arthur Waterhouse?" she asked.

"That's right," I said.

"Good. May I come in? I want you to do something for me."

The noble lady sat down on a rickety arm-chair and began to unfold a sad story. More than once she was almost overcome with emotion, but her story had the stamp of truth and I listened intently.

"I saw your performance on the stage the other night," she said, "and I thought that you might be able to help me. I've come here actually on behalf of my sister. Her only son is in France, at Marseilles. He's a wayward boy, I'm afraid, and won't settle down to anything. It's difficult to control him because he is entitled to an allowance over which his mother has no power, and she's very worried

about the boy. The point is, Mr. Waterhouse, that in his last letter he says he intends to join the Foreign Legion. It's no use our saying anything, and it wouldn't be the slightest good if either of us were to go over and see him. But you —you know what the Legion is; you can speak from experience. Will you go? Please, you must. I will make it well worth your while."

My mind was assailed with doubts. I had a passport, but for all I knew I may have been a marked man. France had my finger-prints. I had fought in her army, and for the past few years I had done little else but castigate my former employers. I had told the English people the truth about the Legion. I had been challenged by the French Consul in Birmingham. I tried to point all this out to my visitor, explaining that I had no wish to be locked up in France and forgotten. Who would make representations to the Government on *my* behalf? Still, she was offering a first-class fare and all expenses plus a fee of £50. Besides, here was a chance to prevent a young Englishman from making a fool of himself—perhaps from committing suicide.

"All right," I said. "I'll go. I promise you I'll do all I can, although, of course, I can't promise that the mission will be a success."

"Good." Her whole being seemed changed, and I felt the awful responsibility that she had put upon me. She gave me her name and told me to meet her at Victoria at four o'clock on the following afternoon, when she would give me my ticket and the boy's address. There could be no delay, she said.

I kept the rendezvous, and I was soon once more on my way to France. On the voyage there was the usual inspection of passports.

"Haven't I seen you before?" asked the French official.

"Very likely," I replied. "I wasn't born yesterday, and I've been about a good deal. My passport will give you the details."

"Yes, yes," went on the man, "but you may have been over for a week-end some time."

There was nothing in it, of course, but to me even so mild

a suggestion gave me the jitters. At Calais I saw the same faces as in 1924. No questions were asked, and I hurried on to Paris, and thence to Marseilles.

I had no difficulty in finding the boy, who was a pleasant fellow in the early twenties and quite open to conviction. I talked Legion to him hard for an hour, and I knew I had won. Poor fellow—he was the victim of the fictitious glamour that surrounds this force, about which he really knew nothing at all.

"I'll come back to England to-morrow," he said.

"Why not to-night?"

It was my intention to return at once, now that my mission was accomplished. I had no wish to stay in France a minute more than was necessary. But the boy had one or two matters to attend to and wished to remain another day. There was some time before a train left for Paris, and I took him to a café for a drink. I also showed him the Fort St. Jean, from which Legion recruits are drafted into Africa. I was so pleased about the affair that I am afraid I began to talk a little too loudly. Imagine my horror when I turned round to see a *gendarme* at our side.

"You two gentlemen are English?"

"You have a passport?"

He thumbed the pages and handed them back.

"That's all right," he said. "You must forgive me, but we have to be extra careful here. You will understand when I say that one or two recruits from the Fort St. Jean have changed their minds and are at large in the city. When I heard you talk English and mention the Legion I naturally had to make inquiries."

He moved away, and thinking he had gone, I said audibly: "Changed their minds, have they? It's a pity I didn't do the same." I didn't realize that the *gendarme* was still in the café. Time was getting on, and I said farewell to my young friend, who gave me his word of honour that he would follow me back next day. I walked to the station. So did the *gendarme*. He shadowed my every movement, and I felt as though my last hour had come. But he never stopped me, and as my train slowly moved out of the station, I leaned

out of the window and saw him smiling on the platform. He had seen me off the premises, and that no doubt was enough. But he could telephone to Paris !

However, nothing happened. I made my way across the capital, but not till we had left the harbour at Calais did I feel safe again. I had hoped to have the boy with me, and I was not surprised to find his aunt a little sceptical. But he kept his promise, and I was glad to know that I had saved him from the Legion. Whatever his subsequent life may have been, he was at least spared that indignity.

As for my own life, I cannot grumble that I have not had my fair share of adventure. Some of it has been of my own seeking, but much of it has simply come into my path. I have always seized it with both hands, and I have no regrets. In this book I have looked back, but I believe that a man of fifty is amply justified in looking forward, too. In that spirit I gladly raise my glass to the future, and may we have the luck we deserve !

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