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NOVELS BY
JOHN TRAVERS
(Mrs. Bell, O.B.E.)

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A SERVANT WHEN HE
REIGNETH
THOSE YOUNG MARRIED
PEOPLE

HODDER AND STOUGHTON
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THERE are no portraits in this novel. Each character belongs to fiction and is the creature of my imagination. If any village exists with the name of Khalsapur it is not known to me : my Khalsapur is a dream village. But I have spent many years in the Punjab and love its people.

EVA MARY BELL.

1st May 1925.

But hear ye this ; ye sons of men !
They that bear rule, and are obey'd,
Unto a rule more strong than theirs
Are in their turn obedient made.'

MATTHEW ARNOLD.

THOSE strange people the British, when in the presence of a love affair, are most stubbornly observant because they are profoundly interested. There were two lovers and seven spectators in Lady Lipswich's dining-room on the twenty-second day of August, and none was bored. Severn, the butler, though a pessimist was a well-wisher, and carved for Sir Anthony Nugent with sympathy. But the boy, Barren, was stolidly disappointed, for he held that the advanced years of Nugent and Gillian Reeves destroyed romance. Nevertheless Barren and Severn were alike fascinated by the situation, and left the dining-room reluctantly. Old Lady Lipswich presided as hostess with something of the air of a priestess, for in her eyes this was an occasion when mysterious forces were about to dictate important decisions. National foundations, family traditions, religious ideals were at the mercy of an emotional will-o'-the-wisp. Yet in the long run that vagrant spirit of passion would be schooled—and very possibly slain—by the vigorous sentiments of social powers. Her courteous manner kept the occasion formal, even solemn. On her initiative the conversation was limited to men's subjects, or rather to what she still held to be exclusively their subjects, namely sport and politics. She thereby reduced her daughter, Lady Patricia Barlow, to the silence of tact, and her granddaughter, Kathleen Wood, to the silence of indifference. It was more difficult to make her other grand-daughter, Gillian Reeves, hold her tongue, because for nine months

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she had been a member of Parliament, but she remained as speechless as one who dreams. The grandson, upon whom Lady Lipswich's eyes rested with complete satisfaction, said very little: he knew that his Uncle Ernest would talk enough for a dozen. And Sandy Wood was rather a charming boy of twenty-three with no upstart desire to tread on the toes of his elders. He regarded Anthony Nugent with considerable respect. Probably he was the only person at the table whose whole attitude towards the recently appointed Governor of the Punjab was inspired by respect, and nothing more. Lady Lipswich was conscious of being fascinated; Patricia's criticism was tinged with resentment because he turned from her to a younger woman. Little Kathleen thought the spectacle of a man of thirty-nine in love 'screamingly funny': she really could not take him seriously. Ernest Barlow, on the contrary, took him too seriously. The mind of that scholarly Liberal was fitted to dwell in a small and select library, and regarded an empire overseas as a rather rowdy and questionable business. He accorded a measured deference to Nugent as an eminent man, but he disliked intercourse with his mind, because it forced him to cross swords instead of advancing theories. Moreover Nugent's anecdotes were of the barbaric kind: he expected you to weigh the words of some uneducated Indian soldier. Ernest Barlow, who at one time had been editor of that well-known quarterly, the *Political Review*, found such a demand irksome: his own anecdotes referred exclusively to the utterances of distinguished statesmen and scholars, and were all worthy of a place in a respectable biography.

It was after Ernest Barlow's favourite anecdote, which quoted the repartee of the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to the editor of *The Times* in 1892, had fallen

flat that Sandy Wood challenged Sir Anthony's attention.

"I say, are you really going to let Gill motor you to Aldershot this afternoon? She's the most dangerous driver in the world, you know."

It was then that Nugent looked at Gillian, and she raised her eyes to embrace his, while the others watched them. Nugent saw a pair of admirable shoulders, a slim sunburnt throat, and an oval face in which the features were small and well enough formed, but lacked beauty. It was in some eyes a 'dear little face,' or a 'funny little face.' It would never entitle her to admiration if she wore white satin and a tiara. But when she leant against the flushed trunk of a great Scotch fir that morning, and the harvest sun had garnered rich colour from pine needles at her feet and from her short curly hair, Nugent had found that small, gay, and changeful face quite adorable. It was, he thought, the very picture of her heart, so charged with feeling. And yet it could carry the tranquillity of sleep itself. There was much more in it than mere agitation. Now, as her eyes greeted his, there was instant response but no absurd surrender; she held her own.

But she found it difficult to hold her own when she looked at him. The sight of him shook her. Her private mental vision had become so intimate with his face that it made Gillian shy to confront it publicly; shy as though she had spoken a secret aloud. Every one in the room conceded that Nugent, though not at all handsome, had the right sort of looks. In that phrase they summed up their approval of his height, strength, vigour, his imperturbable assurance, his ruddy fairness and English look. But Gillian had it all noted in a terribly sensitive way: the too long and determined chin, the thick closely cut sandy hair, the darker eye brows and small

moustache; the short upper lip of the straight ugly mouth which commanded the whole face to reserve and patience: the blue eyes which were emphatically observant and good-humoured. There was not a trace of gloom in Nugent's face, and all his gestures were those of a man free from personal hesitation. Gillian found nothing in the universe so interesting as the meaning of Nugent's character and actions.

Gillian, though preoccupied with the adventures of her eyes, had half an ear open to Sandy's remark. "Don't you believe him," she said gaily to Nugent. "I'm not in the least dangerous."

"I don't know about that," Nugent replied darkly, in a voice as deep as a gong. He thereby delighted old Lady Lipswich, who felt that the disarmament of women would render life unbearably dull.

Young Kathleen spoke like an imp,—love had not touched her yet. "Double harness sounds as peaceful and prehistoric as Noah's ark, but a married couple should not be permitted to drive the family motor. They ought to toss up for it—heads he's always to drive, tails she's always to drive. When both fancy themselves expert it's *too* awful. One sits behind not daring to breathe, and the other drives with defiance and all in a twitter. And they fight about it frightfully. You should hear Dad and Mummy. Anybody who marries Gill should drive himself if he values his life."

Neither Gillian nor Nugent made any response to this sally. The situation was 'too delicate'—to use Lady Lipswich's words.

Patricia Barlow was engaged in a fury of mental arithmetic. "I'm the age now that Mother was when I married. She was a grandmother then. I thought her old and out of it. By Gillian's age I'd had two sons.

When I was eighteen like Kathleen I regarded an unmarried girl of twenty-nine as *quite* hopeless. Anthony Nugent is about my age. Gillian is ten years younger. She is wildly in love with him. I'd be bored to death with any man of her age: why, she's only six years older than that child Sandy! It's queer. Anthony Nugent begins where I leave off."

Sandy and Kathleen went on babbling. Ernest Barlow maintained a sour silence. Time was when it had been possible to enjoy conversation at his mother-in-law's table, but nowadays it was like a nursery, a bear garden. He supposed she had perforce dropped out of things: one seldom met 'interesting people' in her house now. As a widow she seemed to devote herself to the rising generation. Her husband, the old Earl, had been a force in his day: a great judge of a story, of a horse, of good wine, and good company. As for his granddaughter Gillian, what *would* he have thought of her? Short hair, short skirts, independent means, a political career forsooth, darting here and there by aeroplane: driving her own car: doing exactly as she pleased, and all as a matter of course. Rash man, that Anthony Nugent. Well, he'd been married before. He *ought* to know all about it.

"If you must catch this general of yours at three o'clock we should start now," Gillian said to Nugent.

There was something of flight in Gillian's abrupt departure from the table, the room, the house, and her linsfolk. When she brought the motor round to the hall door and sat at the wheel, with the wind and sun stirring her hair and glowing on her cheek, she showed the gladness of escape. Nugent got in beside her, and his great shoulder touched hers. They sped away together. She had him in her chariot, and she was all shyness, sensitiveness, and daring.

"I hope they'll settle things this afternoon," little Kathleen remarked bluntly on their departure. "It will be a blessing when they are married. Lovers are really the limit; they make me scream. Why on earth can't they be just ordinary like other people?"

Lady Patricia turned her lovely face on her niece and said, with some harshness: "Because lovers are not ordinary people."

"Well, I hate extraordinary ones. Freaks!" retorted the girl.

"You wait," tolerantly suggested Sandy. "Granny, do you think he'd appoint me his military secretary or A.D.C., or something?"

"Possibly," interjected Barlow. Privilege, the accumulation of influence in a family: such things were pleasant to this good Liberal.

"Would you like it, darling?" inquired the old lady.

"If there was pig-sticking to be had," said Sandy.

"Fancy Gillian, our Labour M.P., as His Excellency's wife! Ugh!" chuckled Kathleen. "I must say she's got some nerve!"

"Kitty, you are a half-fledged little chicken," remarked Patricia.

"Crushed again!" groaned her niece.

Lady Lipswich, accompanied only by Patricia, sauntered out to the terrace, which lay sparkling with sun on the crest of a hill. Just below them dark pine woods made an everlasting shadow, immovable beneath the fleeting moon or travelling clouds. In the distance hills built a wall against the sky, and in the wide valley behind the house lay Farnborough, Farnham, and Aldershot. Patricia stood looking out over this view. An aeroplane flew noisily above the plain and made the forests and fields seem fragile fertilities, chained by their roots and

exposed all helpless to danger. When the aeroplane vanished there reigned a sombre peace.

Patricia's mother regarded her with sympathy. 'Dear Ernest' bored Patricia. That was very dangerous. Particularly dangerous at forty. And this daughter had always been emotionally energetic. She had been very good considering. . . . Very wise and good. Poor darling.

The presence of Nugent and Gillian had perturbed Patricia, stimulated regrets, quickened memories. "Gillian is madly in love, Mother," she said wistfully.

This was disconcerting. Old Lady Lipswich murmured: "My dear child, that does not sound very romantic. Why *mad*?"

"It is indiscreet! To stake all her happiness as she does is so dangerous. She gambles with her heart," her daughter replied.

Lady Lipswich still defended her granddaughter with a gentleness: "Gillian has said nothing to me; she is so very reserved."

"Reserved!" The exclamation was an outcry. "She has been inarticulate for the first time since she was a baby: but the disclosure of her feelings has been complete. She has held nothing but her tongue, her emotions are all out of hand."

"I have not remarked it," said Lady Lipswich austerely.

Patricia thought, 'Of course she won't see it if she does not wish to do so.' While the older woman reflected, 'When a woman is unable to conceal her emotions, there is danger. If she cannot control their display, can she command their actions? The doubt arises. The sooner this affair is settled the better.'

After a pause, Lady Lipswich vouchsafed the informa-

tion that Sir Anthony Nugent would propose marriage immediately. "As Gillian's parents are dead, he spoke to me most properly and frankly this morning. It is not a brilliant match. His father was in the Army, his mother, he told me, was a Denton from Norfolk: I never heard of them. He has three brothers, none eminent. There is one sister, who is the head of a girls' school at Brighton. It is hardly what your father would have hoped for as an alliance for Gillian, but girls of her age are sadly handicapped. The war took all the best."

In memory of her brother, the Earl of Lipswich, who perished in the battle of Loos, Lady Patricia let her mother's words die away into a sad silence; when she resumed the conversation it was to ask, "Any money?"

"None, and no property," sighed Lady Lipswich. Her handsome, parchment-coloured face, frail height, white hair, and fastidious voice gave her an air of fine remoteness from any bargaining, but she had weighed every aspect of this marriage with acute perception of worldly gain and loss. "His first wife—nobody in particular, I think—had a little money, which is quite rightly settled upon the son. The boy is fourteen and at school. Fortunately there is no daughter."

"The marriage would have been impossible had Gillian been without a substantial two thousand a year," said Lady Patricia.

"Yes, indeed," agreed her mother. Then she gave her verdict. "Sir Anthony is a very distinguished man, and as Governor of the Punjab will hold an important position. His wife will have scope and influence. That is well suited to Gillian's character, and on the whole I am perfectly satisfied."

"Touch wood!" cried Patricia, and the dark pines seemed to shiver. She turned swiftly and looked down

to where Aldershot lay hidden with all its armed men. "Your Sir Anthony said to me, 'The passions of the Punjab are those which lead to bloodshed rather than to the divorce court.' I suppose nine out of ten Europeans who live in that province are soldiers, and they are outnumbered by Indian soldiers. You can detect Sir Anthony's liking for a martial type. He soon gets tired of Ernest's company. Off he goes to the garrison with his girl in his pocket. He has got that side to him, Mother."

"Why not?" inquired the old lady stoutly. "England has that side to her too. Our race is not military, but it is courageous and romantic." She remembered many wars, many lovers.

"But what of Gillian's wonderful opinions! Her ardour for disarmament, her advocacy of immediate self-government for India, her socialistic aims? I foresee domestic ructions. Kill or cure."

"A passing phase," the grandmother pronounced. "Gillian was a little unsettled by the war."

"The girl poured her wine into the only bottles she could find?" suggested Patricia, musing. She decided that Lady Lipswich had but a vague conception of Gillian's temperament: its championship of the forlorn, its desire to comfort and sustain the helpless, its impulse to go to the rescue. Gillian's power and will to love drove her towards the unlovable, whom she idealised.

Those two women, had they lacked leisure, would have stolen it in order to linger on the terrace and discuss every aspect of the love affair which brought marriage to their house again, transfiguring one of their women, changing a stranger into a relation. They had used their influence delicately through slow years to make Gillian desirable, and she was desired. Patricia gave a long sigh.

“Mother, do you think Anthony Nugent is *passionately* in love with Gillian?”

“How should I know that, my dear?” retorted Lady Lipswich.

Her daughter laughed a little. “Well, Gill is rather primitive, you know.” She sounded that note of warning bitterly.

The dowager knew how to keep her own counsel, and her thoughts would have astonished her daughter. ‘Gillian is simple. Having attained simplicity, she makes a choice. All her actions are directed by a single purpose, and she will go straight to that man without hesitation. It is my poor primitive Patricia who inclines now towards this man, now towards that, a prey to those who pursue her, easily captivated and as easily alienated.’

The old lady’s formidable silence increased Patricia’s bitterness, so she touched upon a subject that held gall for Lady Lipswich. “Shall you ask Doris to the wedding?”

Doris married Lady Lipswich’s only son, and did not remain his widow long. Her second marriage with a Captain Watford proved unhappy, and she left him for an older and richer man named Smith. After divorce she became Mrs. Smith, and Captain Watford quickly married again. Lord Lipswich was at Eton, and could boast of an extraordinary number of step-parents.

“I have not thought about it,” Lady Lipswich responded nervously.

“If you don’t invite her, she won’t let the boy spend his Christmas holidays with you,” Patricia said, with some sharpness. “Her divorce has not made any social difference to her: she is very much in request and quite pleased with herself.”

“I never cared for Doris’s friends,” was Lady Lips-

wich's mild comment. But she turned and looked towards Aldershot with a benediction in her fiery old eyes. Her dear son had prized valour and honour, and he lived up to his high traditions. Down there in the valley were his spiritual heirs, while that woman . . . that dreadful woman ! . . . A sigh from Patricia wounded her mother. She was not happy, poor pretty Patricia. But in her pliable youth Lady Lipswich had taught her to repress what Doris's experiments blurted out. In primeval days the forests around Sands Manor had sheltered beings who were grossly superstitious, and sometimes the hostess of Sands Manor thought that the memory of these ancient fears held the still pines spell-bound through dark nights. Patricia's maturity was undoubtedly influenced by the taboos which ruled her girlhood. They worked like a witchcraft, and the old mother witch was unrepentant and victorious. Patricia was not religious like Gillian : but something ingrained as a law had kept her faithful to Ernest Barlow, whose fame, cold scholarship, and intellectual zeal had flattered her vanity during courtship, and led to separate bedrooms in after years.

The valley fascinated Patricia to-day. She could not take her eyes off it. All the soft sounds of firs and trees, dry sandy soil, and brittle heather, of wheels upon rail or road, might have been the meaningless rattle of a pea in a drum for all she cared. For her emotional ear was pricked to the tunes running in her head of words which Anthony might be saying to Gillian and Gillian to Anthony, somewhere down there where the bugles and trumpets sang so clearly. She formed sentences and put them into Gillian's mouth : provocative, flippant remarks which a sprite might have uttered. And to Anthony she gave tyrannical and possessive speech that drew at last

from Gillian the seductive avowal of love. In that tense moment she made Anthony utter a lover's tribute of passion for Gillian's youth, grace, charm. She endowed him with eloquence by which as man to woman he expressed his idealised desire, and defined the rapture the girl's mere presence gave to him. Then her imagination fell, stone cold, away from her heart, and she murmured, 'No, it is never like that. They are probably quite practical and prosaic. But if I had my youth over again . . .!' And on the heels of that thought her husband appeared, and she looked at him with the amazement not recommended by the marriage service: 'How could I? Why did I?' she asked, with a little shrug of her shoulders. While she listened to his conversation with her mother, his depressed condemnation of Doris Smith, and his definite advice to maintain relations with her, his careful reference to Gillian's marriage settlement, and his bland tribute to her parents' memory, Patricia experienced exasperation. Doris was a firefly: happy when gaiety glittered upon her silly busy wings: why be gloomy about her? Gillian's parents had been jolly spendthrifts: had Johnny Reeves and his wife survived the influenza epidemic of 1918, Gillian might have whistled for a dowry. Ernest would not speak of people as they really were: he never admitted in so many words that his father-in-law was a forcible, selfish, charming rake: he never described the dowager as a gentle victim, clever enough to have no scandal, enjoying 'position,' a beautiful, conventional snob while young, but adoring her children. Now a dignified, severe matron, a strong champion of her descendants, on whose behalf she ignored every consideration except the main chance. Her only son had been good stuff, socially minded, but the daughters, Margaret Reeves and Kitty Wood and

Patricia, never cared vividly for anybody or anything outside the limit they defined as Society. Gillian was like her uncle, and resembled her wayward, spoilt, worldly mother only in her impulsiveness. Patricia was pretty sure—yes, pretty sure, that Margaret Reeves had gone beyond flirtation with several men. Kitty Wood had not: she hinted that she had, and pretended that she knew passion and tragedy to the full, but Patricia did not believe a word of it. Patricia could not conjure out of the family's past any memory or tradition of great love. Violent sentiment, petulant desire, a passing obsession: these things she had seen and felt: her father, her sisters, had made of such material the vivacity of their self-centred lives. Her mother had stood apart, making plans. Her brother had a real affection for his wife: he would have been miserable had he lived. Gillian was different from them all: she could sustain emotion, and had a big, tender heart. She was a born lover. Lady Lipswich and Ernest Barlow talked as though they had influence and control over Gillian: Patricia knew that to be a fallacy. Gillian had not so much escaped from them as avoided them, and by her avoidance of what Patricia termed 'the whole boiling of us' she had maintained her mental independence. 'Gillian has a scale of values that is different from ours,' Patricia declared to herself, and thought how absurd it was that the young woman and her lover would obediently return to Gillian's family and announce their engagement, and accept approval and congratulation just as though it mattered tuppence to them.

And presently they came. Gillian walked ahead of Anthony, and quite obviously brought tidings. It seemed to Patricia that she called to them all from another world and from a great distance, though her words were commonplace enough.

Gillian met her grandmother's gracious exclamation of 'Safe home!' by lifting the old lady's thin hand and placing it on her own knee and holding it there, while she sat down on the balustrade of the terrace. Gillian was breathless, as though she had flown up out of the valley's deep woods to alight at a great height on a conquered summit. "I don't know about safe, Granny," she said in her queer little gruff way. "I'm engaged to be married."

There was a delighted chorus, and Patricia, out of tune, heard her own voice saying, "Then you certainly are in the danger zone, Gillian, my lamb." And she watched with much curiosity to see how Anthony Nugent met a situation in which a man might so easily look a fool. He had his hands thrust deep in his pockets, and his eyes rested on Gillian with a strange expression. Patricia couldn't make it out. Did he pity her? Did he idealise her? Did he care for her in the same way as she cared for him? What he said was, "Nonsense, she's as safe as a church. I know how to look after her," and Patricia liked the great laugh he gave. Certainly there was nothing dim, or pedantic, or dull about Anthony Nugent.

"You'll have your hands full, with the Punjab and Gillian," Patricia cried to him.

"I shan't handle them the same way, you know. It wouldn't do," the big man retorted cheerfully. Then he asked her in a comical way, as he lit a cigarette, "Do you think Gillian will be kind to me?"

Gillian took the words out of Patricia's mouth. "Yes, I shall be kind to you, but I shall be firm," she said, with a quaint chuckle.

"Firm!" Nugent echoed. Patricia had never heard an intonation convey such good-humoured indulgence, courtesy, sheer masculine toleration. "I wonder what

that implies. No doubt I shall find out in time. I don't think it sounds very jolly, does it? I shan't have to be firm too, shall I? When the Press urges me to be firm, I always say to myself, 'Ugh, this is where I get stung.'"

Lady Lipswich found time to say, "To be a Governor's wife during these difficult days is a great responsibility. Do you realise that, little Gillian?"

And Patricia exclaimed, "O Mother, how Victorian! Nobody admits responsibility or guilt nowadays."

Sandy and Kathleen, carrying their tennis racquets, brought a crude youth upon the scene, and they heard the news with some embarrassment, for they had just confessed to each other their unfavourable verdict upon the engagement, and now found themselves called upon to express enthusiastic sentiment. Kathleen craved to chaff Nugent, but lost her nerve at the last moment. He tried the weight of her tennis racquet and sampled Sandy's new india-rubber handle—'As though we were two babies with toys,' she indignantly whispered to her brother, who growled, 'Look out, he'll hear you!' in real alarm.

Lady Lipswich was in high delight, for Gillian's betrothal had removed a reproach. She fondled her granddaughter's hand, and Gillian responded in a tender, sweet way. Patricia raised her eyebrows: it was all so unreal. Gillian was not a yielding, gentle creature, she had a fierce will. But the Dowager had known a thousand occasions when a troublesome child became for an hour a good little girl with pretty manners and a submissive voice, happy and easy to manage because she had had a treat: Lady Lipswich had ever been gracious to such moods, and she was gracious now. Presently Gillian broke away, saying that she must dress for dinner. They were all relieved when she went, because she had a secret

ardour which they could not share. As, one by one, they drifted into the house from the terrace, Kathleen nudged Sandy and grumbled that she thought the evening would be ghastly. "They get on my nerves," she said; and he responded cheerfully that they didn't worry him a jot: it was their funeral, not his.

On the whole the evening went off well, for by the addition of Lady Lipswich's secretary to the party they were able to make up two tables at bridge. As eleven o'clock struck Lady Patricia rose impatiently, and when all but her mother and husband had left the room, she gathered the cards together, and said with a cynical laugh: "Thank God for cards. They help us to escape from the one thing necessary to salvation—love!"

Ernest Barlow looked prim, and she smiled hardily at him and cried: "You ought to play patience, Ernest, every night of your life and all night long."

Mother and daughter went up the broad staircase together, and the old woman rebuked Patricia, because she seemed enthroned by the first betrothal of the third generation, and felt majestic: "My dear, why do you say such things to your husband?"

"Isn't it true, Mother?" the lonely daughter retorted. "Isn't love the one vital thing, and how many of us have faced it? Only there is no real escape from it. None. *You* know that!" She looked into those old eyes, dark jewels.

"I know so much that I am silent," Lady Lipswich told her with dignity. "Good-night, my child. If you must talk to Gillian, don't talk long."

Gillian was huddled up on a chintz-covered window-seat star-gazing. Once across her threshold, and Patricia was transformed into a young edition of Lady Lipswich: with the same brooding affection and special tenderness,

she went to the girl and threw her arm round her shoulders. "Well, Gill! Satisfied?" she asked.

"I am in pastures new, and enchanted," Gillian murmured.

Patricia gave her shoulder a little shake. "Don't dream, you silly thing."

"O, I know you," cried her niece warmly. "How you've all said I should never marry, and declared that my politics were the *pis aller* of a spinster! And now that I've taken on this difficult adventure, you'll all shelve my problem with the words, 'She is old enough to know her own mind.'" She looked like a charming little squirrel with her small face, bright eyes, chestnut hair, and the moon riding high above her head through the open window.

"What is your problem, Gill?" her aunt asked in friendly tones. "Tell me about your Anthony. What sort of man is he?"

"My sort," answered Gillian; and then after a little pause, "He is a Tory, you know—that's one problem. For I can't leave him where he is. I must find the right word to move him. Have you noticed his red hair? Not a breeze but a flame will move Tony! It will take me ages to find the right word, the tongue of fire."

"In marriage opinions soon modify," remarked Lady Patricia. "You won't feel so keenly about politics after a while. I mean it won't matter to you what *he* feels."

"Then problem two must be faced," the bride elect said resolutely. "He has been married before, and he loves his Violet. I'm going to marry him, but he has already that loved wife, that loved son."

"Don't torment yourself," Lady Patricia said quickly. "It is morbid. He loves you, doesn't he?"

"Yes," said Gillian. "That's all right, Pat dear, only I don't think I'll talk about it."

“ Sacred ? O, you ’re as old-fashioned as Mother ! ” She stooped and kissed the girl, with a dry smile. “ I think that you and your Anthony love differently and love different things, Gillian. In the long run, is union possible ? ”

“ That ’s a big, big question, ” Gillian admitted bravely. “ Time will show. ”

Patricia paused in front of a mirror and sighed. “ Time always shows, worse luck. O Gillian, make hay while the sun shines ! ”

“ Nonsense, you ’re beautiful. I wish I were, ” cried Gillian.

“ He probably thinks you are, ” said Lady Patricia, and closed the door behind her very softly.

Gillian turned out the light and curled herself up on the window-seat again. She was not going to bed and to sleep : not she. This night of all nights was too good to lose. Her mind was not prone to introspection, but for hours as she sat there it dwelt upon its knowledge of herself, which though fragmentary was vivid. Nursery memories bored her : she had been an only child, solitary, imaginative, quick to respond to affection. Her mother had been demonstrative, and the generous gestures of love were in Gillian’s very fibre ; caressing hands, endearing words, and intense kisses, all animated by the genius of her heart. Gillian as a school-girl was not mentally gauche nor emphatically athletic : curiosity had impelled her to study. She had flung herself into the young community’s fray and experienced popularity and hot dislike. Nothing could have been more conventional than her début in 1912. She had tact, and swiftly acquired social technique : which gift and skill proved useful in her war work at the Ministry of Labour. Her home life, her work, and her social environment were alike in a state

of transition when the Armistice was signed. The death of her parents and the impetus of a universal change made Gillian plunge into politics, because the fate of peoples and promises, rather than individuals and traditions, swayed her. She had been sensitive to the conflict of the House of Commons : though she idealised and dramatised its political atmosphere, its real force deepened her own convictions and perceptions. The experiences she gained there made her take herself in hand. She became more compact, steadier, and more withdrawn from the household woman and the society woman.

Gillian learnt to recognise all institutions as the mere functions of human will, prone to the tyranny of opinion, and mutually exclusive since error weakens. She perceived that those who uproot systems by violence give a shock to love and a vent to hate, and that all who defend what has been held sacred have at least the merit of fidelity. Her whole temperament found its mainspring during the war, and after, in the words, 'The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth.' She had been born in the house of mirth—they were a gay lot, the Lipswich clan—but she rallied her wits to the cause of the unfortunate. She knew that her family regarded her as disloyal to their interests, while the labour party never ceased to suspect her of trying to 'have it both ways.'

Hers was a fighting, energetic spirit, which would not let things slide : she paid heavily for all her mistakes because there was no complacency in her temperament. The housing question had touched her to fury, and the loss of her seat was due to a confused hubbub and outcry which arose over her strenuous efforts to drive out the overcrowded industrial folk from vile dens into a temporary camp. Gillian's astonishment was unbounded : her

choice between hardship and degradation was decided by overpowering instinct rather than conscious discrimination. Now, looking out at the dark void of the sleeping valley, aware of the quiet harmonies of the hushed house wherein she and her betrothed knew privacy, she thought once more, all aghast, of that room where four married couples lived together. She contrasted such red outrage with the pallid, serene strangeness of a tent pitched outside a city, and linked to its labour by the heavy wheels of motor transport. That phantom tent stood in her brief political career for failure, frustration, the thing she could not make others see.

From her window she watched Anthony Nugent's light go out, late. He was ten years older than she, and he held her to be very young : delicious thought. That day he had said to her, " You are awfully feminine, you know." She had loved that.

The age of things did quite terribly matter. Impulse was ever new-born, habit had always a stubborn history. You had only to contrast Granny with Kathleen, and Anthony with Sandy, to realise the accumulative effect of days and nights. Could she put the clock back twelve years, she would become Nugent's wife with a very different dowry of experience and character. Patricia's discontent indicated all that the swift passing away of youth signified to an ardent woman in her emotional life. But Gillian believed with her soul in life immortal and the survival of personality. And at that tense height . . . alas, there . . . she confronted Violet Nugent, who but fifteen years ago had been Anthony's bride.

Was she a fool to care so terribly about his words, his will, his mood ? Each in turn simply obsessed her, she knew. Yet she disagreed with many of his opinions and was critical of his actions ; O yes, quite critical. Some

of the things he said made the blood rush to her head. He was a conservative, and conservatism was such an old, old thought: she desired all things new. Perhaps wiser women would not bother about mere opinion on the night when so much love had been given, Gillian sighed. She was all too familiar with a gathering together of energy and an awakening passion of her mind; therefore she grimly recognised the latent impulse when she felt it stir within her now. "Ah, I am impatient to capture the place that is held in his temperament by first things!" she cried.

What had observant Patricia said, in warning, about loving differently and loving different things? She, Gillian, was like a river, seeking in sympathy the lower levels, overflowing banks, transcending frontiers,—giving, travelling, transfusing. But Anthony Nugent rose like a mountain; offering sanctuary, yet hospitable only to the individual who exercised effort; scornful of the ascendancy of a lucky star, but impelling all to an upward movement, to personal aspiration.

Different: yes. But she loved him, and her thoughts drifted through the night accompanied by that immortal sense of bliss. Her hands and bare arms hung from the window and shone white in the moonlight, as though they signalled a desire and a power to carry gifts across unseen, unknown ways. When the new day crept through the night to Surrey the pine woods looked like dark grapes in the dawn, and the purple heather glowed like wine upon the land.

'England, we both love you!' murmured Gillian.

Then she, like Patricia, glanced at the mirror. 'O! I look as ugly as a monkey,' she cried in dismay, and seized a powder-puff.

THE Punjab, annexed in 1849, boasts twenty million turbulent folk, mostly agricultural. Its Sikhs and Dogras are martial Hindu races ; its Mahomedans are belligerent, especially in the Salt Range and the Rawalpindi division. Two-thirds of the strength of the Indian Army—which outnumbered the British troops in India by two to one—is drawn from this Province, which is backward in education in spite of its ten thousand students at the Lahore University. The Aitchison College in the capital bestows a public-school life upon sons of Punjab chiefs ; and the Khalsa College at Amritsar, often racked by political passions, affords education to Sikh youth, while every city and tahsil can boast a school or two. When John Lawrence offered this grim northern country the pen or the sword, he offered its leaders the choice, at a crisis, between civil government and martial law, and like wise men they chose the former : but the ryot with the stoutest lathi¹ still gets his own sweet way without diplomacy in his village. The Punjabi policeman overcomes men with spindle-shanks five days' journey south from his home, and the Sikh in uniform is found in far Hong Kong. The sea has no hold on the Punjab, but five rivers are the arteries of its life, and on the irrigation system is concentrated its most intricate quarrel with its bread and butter. It has hillmen of the Himalayas and desert dwellers and sophisticated townsmen for population. The Punjab is a land where hard luck is resented by hard

¹ lathi—a staff of wood.

knocks, for its terrible furnace heat from May to September, and its bitter cold weather, its eternal snows and limitless plains, breed uncompromising persons of rash impulse and stubborn will. On its boundaries are Kashmir, the rampart of the Himalayas, the States of Poonch and Jammu and Patiala, the United Provinces, Delhi—that Imperial enclave,—Rajputana, and the North-West Frontier Province, which rib was taken out of its side not more than a generation ago. Simla is within its administrative area, but there the glory of its Governor is outshone by the glory of the Viceroy. Away to the North the General Officer Commanding in Chief has his headquarters in Murree, and his word goes throughout the dozen cantonments of the Punjab and across the North-West Frontier; it holds the Khyber Pass and extends up to far Chitral, but the Waziristan area is another man's burden and outside the Northern Command. The British soldier lives only in Sialkot, Risalpur, Ambala, Lahore, Jullundar, Ferozepore, Rawalpindi, Nowshera, and Multan within the Punjab: but in the summer the hills lift a portion of the Army above the torture of the plains, and in the cold weather soldiers are men of camps. British units never vary their habit of polo, football, hockey, and cricket; and year after year Indian units, acquiring a standard, may be seen at the same games. Always, winter and summer, the whole Army is faithful to some athletic pastime. Towns and villages have caught the infection—or something like it—and the Punjab stirs in the dust with a ball as its guiding star. In or around cantonments you will see the polo pony and the charger, the big mule, and the dainty fox-terrier: but the donkey, the camel, the goat, and the water buffalo, though they come and go, are not as these lordly ones, and are the familiars of the ryot. He and

they move slowly as though their fate's clock were set to mark time here for ever, world without end, while the hustling British, with their weapons and books and balls, have always the air of a nine days' wonder in Asia. Should their great exodus come—as come it must on the day when they are commanded to make bricks without straw—they will leave behind them churches and hospitals and bridges and canals, that will stand a little longer than their mud and plaster bungalows and clubs, their barracks primly built by the Public Works Department, and their cemeteries where mausoleums and white crosses rise; but shadows will wander ghost-like over rubbish heap and lonely waste, where men-at-arms moved on parade or played for the championship. Meanwhile there remained in Nugent's time much to do, much fuss and fury. Young civilians remembered a few of 'the good old days,' then the extraordinary effort of the war, and since 1919 the events of a political situation which sometimes staged comic opera and sometimes tragedy itself. In the villages, lumbar-dars, zaildars, and tahsildars played queer deep games at times. Four Commissioners and more Deputy Commissioners kept four great divisions within bounds. The Governor, no longer an autocrat within the Punjab, and still subject to the overruling authority of the Viceroy and Parliament, was newly provided with an Executive Council consisting of a British and an Indian member, and the trio had charge of reserved subjects; while subjects termed transferred were dealt with by Indian ministers appointed for the term of the Legislative Council, which consisted of elected and nominated members, the former having a permanent majority. As transferred subjects included education, agriculture, forests, roads, and buildings, intoxicating liquors and drugs, charitable endowments,

cruelty to animals, development of arts and crafts, disorderly houses, bridges, ferries, libraries, and the disposal of the dead, which things have an intrusive power in even the most colourless individual's life, there was room and to spare for dispute and distrust between high caste and low caste Hindu, between Hindu and Mahomedan, and between the educated and uneducated classes.

The Indian Press, very free and easy, poured vituperation upon all British officials. The Government of India was hard up as usual, and spoken of as being not a little stingy. Dacoities, murders, and such-like were rife enough and increasing. There were plague and terrible malaria and a shortage of doctors. The farmers were in debt, and the rains had been none too good. Hindus and Mahomedans had killed each other with every brutality at the time of the Muhurram in three large cities. Lieutenant-colonels said they could not make two ends meet. The hostile thirty per cent. customs duty on European frocks and frills taxed the purse and temper of every Englishwoman, and the cost of passages home to see their children broke their hearts. Several generals caused comment by being divorced. Everybody cheered up when it was announced that a well-known seditionist and revolutionary in Madras had pronounced every syllable in Cholmondeley when making a public speech in English. On the whole, the fearless British were thoroughly self-possessed, but quite undeceived by the pious aspirations of Secretaries of State. They knew what they knew.

It was very difficult to get at their knowledge. Only a long-winded man cares to mention, for instance, Sikhs to a languid inquirer who cannot without explanation detect the distinction between Mazbi, Ramdasia, and

Jat, Sikh ; cannot discriminate between Sikhs and other Hindus ; knows the recent history of the Akalis—the Deathless Ones intoxicated with their own conceit—but has never heard of the celibate Nirmalās ; has a vaguely pleasant recollection of British victories in the Sikh wars, and recognises the name of Maharajah Ranjit Singh, who ruled the Punjab and Kashmir, and died just over a hundred years ago, but is ignorant of the distribution and proportion of Sikh soldiers in the Indian Army with the political importance that infiltration gives to a race of three millions, who dwell for the most part in the Punjab proper, but have some eight hundred thousand in the Indian State of Patiala, nearly one thousand in Kashmir, and not a few overseas. The Golden Temple in Amritsar is familiar ground enough in conversation, but an official will be an exhausted man if he attempt to impart information on the long religious history of the Sikhs to the uninitiated who has no precise knowledge of the elaborate doctrine of the ten Gurus ; from Guru Nānak, born in the fifteenth century, to the great Guru Govind Singh, who died while the eighteenth century was still young. It requires a patient fellow to listen to a dissertation on the teaching of that sacred scripture the Granth Sahib, the form of baptism called by the Sikhs 'Pahul,' and the necessity of wearing always the kes or uncut hair, the kachh which are short drawers, the kara an iron bangle, the kangh a comb worn in the hair, and the kirpan or steel dagger, which outward and visible signs the 'Singhs' of the Khalsa—'the pure society'—do faithfully display to unheeding blue eyes. Their religious passions, indigenous law of status derived as Hindus from the Shastras, and their local law of custom, epidemics, harvests, the taxes they pay and the pensions Sikh military men and their dependants receive, are often the core

of a situation, but have none of the flavour that a superficial student finds in such flagrant matters as were demonstrated in the Jalianwalla Bagh, and at Nankhana Sahib, and in the Guru-ka-Bagh affair. Small wonder that officials become silent men. A catchword, a formula, a vague gesture, are so much more popular than information.

Two weeks ago Gillian Nugent had seen India from Bombay to Lahore through train windows as one may see a cinema. Since then, in her motor, she had observed keenly the wide Mall, the shady park round the Lawrence Hall, with students reading under every tree, the big public buildings which resembled those of Australia and Canada at Wembley, the red brick Cathedral, the Y.M.C.A., the popular Zoological Gardens, the old Fort by the Ravi river, the seven miles of metalled road to cantonments, and the roads running away from the Museum, which grew more and more ramshackle every yard till Cheap John, and Suffering Moses, Japanese silk merchants, Parsi stores, and Chinese shoemakers gave place to the large, huddled city itself. Vistas changed with amazing abruptness, and offered a bewilderment of contrast. While there was but little orthodox beauty of architecture, garden, or wild nature, there was an abundance of what was stimulating and picturesque. Here were no sylvan scenes to be haunted by faun and fairy; the land breathed a suggestion of the giant and the ogre, the dwarf and the witch, so that when Gillian first beheld the State carriage of the Punjab drawn by six camels whose riders wore scarlet and leopard skins, she felt with a little gasp its appropriate character. But it was at the moment when the full moon shone upon the white bulk of Government House, where Mahratta soldiers, whose homes were a thousand miles away, stood

on guard, and the cypresses looked like colossal widows in darkest weeds, and the grass was frail and mysterious with shadows as though its dark blades half revealed an earth waiting to give sepulchre, and the broad drive was all silver and delight, while orange blossom perfumed the still air, that Gillian was bewitched by India. Under that spell, which is seldom potent to-day, she was alert, keen, on tiptoe to explore, to touch, taste, see. She sat curled up on a sofa in Anthony Nugent's private den and watched the Governor as though he were a man of magic who, having enchanted her and carried her off to his kingdom, now had in his gift power, secret, and sorcery.

But that plain man was on the rampage, hunting here and there, scattering papers, creating most awful disorder. He could not find his pipe. "I can't think where the damned thing has gone," he growled, exasperated.

"You have dozens, darling," murmured Gillian.

"But I've had this one such a long time," he lamented, frowning.

She told herself that long association exerted great influence on Tony, even in little things. "I've had you for a very short time," she remarked. "But I appreciate you, though you're a new toy."

He laughed at that. Undoubtedly he had an invigorating smile and a frown that intimidated. He tapped her on the head with a pipe which he had seemed a few minutes before to regard with prejudice, and then he put it contentedly into his mouth. "It seems odd to have you about the place. How are you getting on? You are very good-tempered over everything," he remarked.

"Am I?" She craved to know what he thought of her. "Why should I be cross?"

“Well, this isn't Sands Manor, and it isn't London. You're accustomed to that sort of thing. I thought you might be home-sick.”

“No,” she said, gravely. Tony did not realise in the least how his presence moved her. “But I want to know things.”

Nugent gave her a very searching look. “What sort of things?” He sat down and seemed prepared to go into matters with her. She thought he had rather the air of according her an interview. It seemed that in his eyes her turn had come. He was such a busy man.

“About India. I don't want to be just a society figure-head, Tony,” she cried.

He deliberated. “Got to be that, I'm 'afraid,” he said gently. “I hope it won't bore you. You'll set the tone, you know, to a very great extent. Look here, it's all quite dramatic and worth while when you realise it. You aren't asked to be a cheap mountebank. Take an actress in a big part: the character and every word and each action are created for her. She has to incarnate it, has to make an artist's convincing use of personality. Sometimes the thing is positively great. Temperament has genius just as intellect has. I suggest to you that a woman here can so play her part that she not only gives pleasure but wins applause for us. And let me tell you that to gain praise is an asset now: a definite political asset.”

He was her audience had he but known it. She played up to him. “Yes, I see. Put like that, it is worth while to do the social part well, to aim at popularity. Nothing cheap, of course.”

Nugent called, and a chaprassée answered and appeared, barefoot and scarlet clad. He received an order in Urdu, salaamed and withdrew.

"There—that's what I dislike," cried Gillian. "I don't know if that man is Hindu or Mahomedan. I don't know his caste if he is Hindu. I can't speak his language. People come and go about this enormous home of ours and its park, as mysteries to me. I'm told the guard is from a Mahratta regiment in cantonments; I've no notion what a Mahratta is! When I ask questions most people reply that no European knows anything about India."

Nugent looked amused. "I expect you ask very difficult questions. 'Is India fit for self-government?'—'Is caste breaking down?'—'How much longer will the purdah system last?' and 'What do the women of India want?' Impossible—quite impossible—to answer 'yes' or 'no' to any of these questions, except the first. I'll answer that with complete confidence: 'Not yet.'"

Gillian bent towards him eagerly. "But that is the goal?"

"That is the goal."

She was dissatisfied by his tone. "Surely no man could do a greater work than to set the three hundred millions of India upon the road that leads to free and representative institutions? You would not advocate perpetual subordination to a foreign autocratic rule, would you, Tony?"

"No," he replied gloomily. "No, I would not, Gillian. Though autocratic rule is not foreign to India. Neither would I bet that, when our domination ceases, free and representative institutions will survive it five minutes."

"But India would remain part of the Empire; we would not surrender her to anarchy and tyranny!" Gillian cried.

"Once British rule is subordinate to Indian rule within

the frontiers of India, it will have no word of *command* capable of repressing anarchy and tyranny. Do you imagine that words of *advice* from Whitehall would prevent or punish political excesses, rebellions, and massacres? Would England employ force at the appeal of an oppressed majority against the force of a constitutional and enfranchised minority? When we cease to be the greatest power in India we shall be a negligible power."

She stirred uneasily. "We shall have done our best. They will have received full opportunity for self-development and the responsibility will be theirs, not ours."

"Meanwhile every limitation is resented, every restriction hated. The extremist claims the prize, not because he obviously wins it, but because he ambitiously wants it. Independence has been conditionally promised, and the conditions that India cannot fulfil to-day the extremist declares to be unfair, intolerable, humiliating, and impossible. He says quite plainly: 'Give me that prize: it's mine.' We retort that he must earn it. He shouts that we have no right to withhold it, that it is only our ill-gotten gain. Finally it comes to this—he declares: 'It is my right, and I mean to have my right by fair means or foul,' and we reply that foul means will be resisted and penalised, while the fair means have been laid down under the reformed constitution. He scoffs: 'Laid down by whom?' We answer: 'By Parliament, and the government accepted for generations by the Indian peoples.' He asserts—*not* accurately—'Imposed by arms and invasion upon us all, and unacceptable.' That is the position between the government and the extremist. The moderate man is torn between a love of the present law and order which we still maintain, and a desire to propitiate the party that will undoubtedly be the strongest

in India—because the most definite and ruthless—if we finally abdicate. It is the moderate man who will be handed the prize of self-government within the Empire by us. He will be forced to surrender it to the extremist as the price of his survival. The extremist will then have to face the facts: the security, external and internal, of India; the union of her many castes, religions, languages, and peoples; her law, order, and prosperity. I regard the extremist as my successor, but never as my master. If he masters me—I take myself in my representative character—God help those humble folk committed to my charge until such day as they shall prove their fitness for self-government.”

Gillian sat absorbed. It was the change in Nugent as he spoke that fascinated her. The whole man was behind his words. He was no longer simply pleasant; he was deep. She exulted that he spoke to her as an equal. She adored him as her lover, but this breath of companionship expanded romance. And she strained every nerve to respond.

“You put it so clearly,” she murmured. “Will you, briefly, give me the labels for the Punjab? Who are the ‘liberals,’ who the ‘conservatives’? What of the ‘labour party’?”

He sat thinking. Then he said slowly: “You will find it easier to tie those labels to individuals than to parties. The nearest approximation to the *kind* of reasoned criticism you read in the London Press you will here obtain from British officials and their wives. The educated Indian legislator may talk like a conservative who has gone over to the labour party: but it will be jargon. The strenuous opposition comes from the extreme seditionists. The Akali is often their tool and occasionally a genuine religious fanatic. He is something

of a revolutionary, and when uneducated nothing of a politician. The balance of power lies with the agricultural Punjabi, Hindu, Sikh, and Mahomedan, who cultivates his land and sometimes sends a son into the army. He and his emotional women-folk may, or may not, be swayed against the government. They are the people." There was a pause, during which Gillian rejoiced in the strange eastern light pouring through the window and the very presence of this beloved man. Then, like a downfall, came his words. "Need you be political, Gill? Women should be like music."

It seemed to cast a slur on that sensitive, wounding, but exhilarating, effort of hers when she had plunged away from private life and gone perilously into Parliament. "I *have* been definitely political, you see," she said in a very brave little voice.

At that he gave a good-natured laugh. "Well, . . . if you and I hit it off, that's the vital thing." He rose and began to put matches and a cigarette case into his pocket. "Time to change for tennis. I like you in that dress. You must spend the devil of a lot on clothes, don't you? Quite right too."

How odd it was, the spur those words gave to her interest in her appearance, and how social ideals faded from her mind at his personal touch! She was certainly obsessed by him, she seemed to have no individuality left, she thought. When he closed the door behind him she critically observed his room. His first wife's photograph stood on the right side of his huge writing-table and his son's photograph was on the left. Her own photograph was on the mantelpiece. Gillian stood in the middle of the room looking from one to the other. Violet Nugent's photograph had not been set aside. Her own had not been substituted for it, nor placed in contrast

beside it. Each had its own sphere. A vexed smile touched Gillian's lips. 'He is a man: he can love several women,' she said to herself. Then she placed her hands on the back of the empty chair by Nugent's table and looked intently at the things on it. There were files, books of reference, official writing-paper of every size, a litter of small objects such as sealing-wax and match-boxes, a box of cigarettes, stamps. Violet Nugent's face was lovely at nineteen. 'He is susceptible to beauty and youth in women. Yet he fell in love with me too. While I imagine that *only* Anthony—with his personal qualities, appearance, touch—could hold my heart!' sighed puzzled Gillian. Her eyes fell on a big framed calendar that occupied the centre of the table: there was space for memoranda beneath the printed tally of days and months, and Nugent had scrawled rough notes there. She read these, wondering. "‘*Men, like pictures, should be seen in a favourable light.*’—NAPOLEON." In this room the Governor held many interviews. Were those words a hint to himself, or an excuse for the subtle efforts of other men who tried to create a favourable impression on him? Under that quotation was another added in pencil: "‘*The ambition to dominate men's minds is the strongest of all passions.*’—NAPOLEON." Gillian thought she detected a reminder: the idealist is seldom content to possess an ideal, or to pursue it, alone; more often he is a missionary who would not hesitate to persecute; perhaps Nugent desired to keep that fact in sight while speaking with some earnest agitator who laid claim to humility. Then a red line had been drawn across the paper, and there were written in red ink quotations from the Montagu-Chelmsford report on Indian Constitutional Reforms. "‘*We believe profoundly that the time has now come when the sheltered existence which we have given*

India cannot be prolonged without damage to her national life ; that we have a richer gift for her people than any that we have yet bestowed on them ; that nationhood within the Empire represents something better than anything India has hitherto obtained ; that the placid, pathetic contentment of the masses is not the soil on which such Indian nationhood will grow, and that in deliberately disturbing it we are working for her highest good." Bracketed with this she read : " *There exists a small revolutionary party deluded by hatred of British rule and desire for the elimination of the Englishman into the belief that the path to independence or constitutional liberty lies through anarchical crime. . . . The existence of such people is a warning against the possible consequences of unrestrained agitation in India . . . where ignorance is widespread and passions are so easily roused nothing is easier than for political leaders to excite a storm : nothing harder than for them to allay it. . . . We have no hesitation in recommending that the Government must maintain power to prevent the disastrous consequences if in any case law and order are jeopardised. Outbreaks of anarchy cannot be tolerated.*" By way of comment there was an exclamation mark. Underneath ran another paragraph from the Report. " *The Government of India must remain wholly responsible to Parliament and, saving such responsibility, its authority in essential matters must remain indisputable, pending experience of the effect of the changes now to be introduced in the provinces. In the meantime the Indian Legislative Council should be enlarged and made more representative and its opportunities of influencing Government increased. . . . In proportion as the foregoing changes take effect, the control of Parliament and the Secretary of State over the Government of India and provincial Governments must be relaxed.*" A big question mark was added. Then followed, heavily underlined : " *The Muham-*

madans regard separate representation and communal electorates as their only adequate safeguards." . . . "The Sikhs in the Punjab are a distinct and important people ; they supply a gallant and valuable element to the Indian Army ; but they are everywhere in a minority, and experience has shown that they go virtually unrepresented. To the Sikhs, therefore, and to them alone, we propose to extend the system already adopted in the case of the Muhammadans." . . . "Do the changes which we propose point to the gradual, possibly the rapid, exclusion of the Englishman with all the consequences that may follow therefrom? Is it conceivable that India's only surviving connection with the Empire will be found in the presence of British troops for the purpose of defending her borders? We may say at once that the last contingency cannot be contemplated. We cannot imagine that Indian self-respect or British commonsense would assent for a moment to such a proposition. At least so long as the Empire is charged with the defence of India a substantial element of Englishmen must remain and must be secured both in her Government and in her public services." Finally there was jotted down: "Nationhood? 350,000,000 Indians. Total European population in India, 176,000. Posts to be held by British, including doctors, 13,000: this includes 900 in the Indian Civil Service and Police." At the bottom of the page Nugent had added his own words: "Sacrifice nothing to a theory. Sacrifice your life for your principles." And lastly, with seeming irrelevance, he had quoted, "There is no disputing about tastes."

The longer Gillian confronted the calendar the more it intrigued her. These were the statements and considerations which the Governor of the Punjab to whom she was married kept in view. These were the political threads, then, that she wished to touch. She felt *incited* to touch them. Yet there was before her eyes the elusive some-

thing, very private and personal, in Anthony Nugent's face when he said, 'Must you be political, Gill? Women should be like music.'

When Nugent was a young man and most susceptible to women, they were excluded from political power and professional authority. Deep in his conservative temperament lay a prejudice against the woman whom he must publicly oppose, or with whom he must publicly compete. She was sure of his instinct in this matter. But he was no reactionary: he accepted developments. Nevertheless Violet Nugent represented the ideal woman to him in this, and she, Gillian, did *not*. It seemed to her as though India, where there were millions of veiled women, must have deepened and confirmed his sentiments. When he came to the Punjab from Oxford six years before the war the emancipation of women was confined to the wives of the intelligentsia in the big Presidency towns and to the Parsees, hundreds of miles from his sphere of action. Did Anthony mean that she was to resemble music by intensifying emotional delight and inspiring a realisation of immaterial values? Or was he on the whole like a Mahomedan, whom she supposed to be concerned to relegate women to the background and to approve the possession of more than one wife? It seemed to Gillian that one man resembled another, however alien in blood, far more than he resembled any woman. She pictured the armed hosts in the war, and saw all the men-at-arms as made more in the likeness of their enemies than of the women in their homes. In this likeness of man to man, and in the relations of man to woman, she found the distinction between unity and union. Her passion for Nugent made her long for union, dread discord. If he desired that she should in no function resemble, or imitate, his sex, she knew that she

would shrink from exerting her will and paying the penalty in the loss of power to attract him. Suddenly she covered her face with her hands and shuddered. She was Gillian : that creature who had periods when she flamed with ardour for the oppressed, the handicapped, the exploited. She believed with a dangerous faith, that might court martyrdom, in the social ideals of the labour party. Was she as a lover to cast out that faith, stifle that mental ardour, give her husband not her real self but her caresses only ?

Gillian walked back restlessly and read the writing on the calendar again from beginning to end. She took its words to the fire and began to dream over them. Four pictures formed themselves in her mind : the House of Commons during a debate on India ; Lahore ; Nugent sitting at his writing-desk ; Nugent making a speech about India from the labour benches.

Gillian felt the strangeness of the association of India and Westminster to be the most dramatic thing in the whole world, fraught with extraordinary possibilities. It staggered the imagination. She carried in her heart the doctrines she had learnt from the men of her party and housed them now in Lahore. Tides of influence might be set in motion, here, by her. Through his love for her Nugent might be won for the socialists' cause, and then—Gillian saw him winning a battle for India's independence at Westminster. She could not see him except as a man in power ; she gloried in his power over the Punjab. But she would never rest until he was on the right side, the winning side, her side.

Somewhere within reach were the Indians who were in touch with the labour party. She must make them her personal friends. More than that : she must seek out and discover influential Indians who were not active

politically but who represented Indian thought and sentiment.

What an amazing thing it was, Gillian exclaimed, that she should now be given influence over the destiny of the Punjab, through its Governor, through the men and women she would meet! She was aware that Anthony pictured her only as his wife, with appropriate social responsibilities. But as she sat there, dreaming, she saw Anthony Nugent changing, changing.

Photographs, and files, and calendar faded slowly into the darkness of evening, and the ashes on the hearth grew cold.

NUGENT and Sir Maurice Neville, a tall thin grey man commanding the Lahore District, played against fat Lawrence Prosser and Sir Said Mahomed, while six little boys, with bare feet and legs, dark blue tunics and scarlet belts, picked up their tennis balls. On the second court a younger generation played mixed doubles with four imps in attendance. Two resplendent khitmutgars and a glittering chaprassee guarded the tea-table from flies. Major Bourdillon, the Governor's Military Secretary, talked to Priscilla, the General's wife. They sat on chintz-covered wicker chairs on a striped blue-and-red dhurrie. The whole scene was as unoriginal and correct as the laying of a dining-room table for dinner. Any one with six months' experience of Northern India would expect to meet at Government House the officer commanding the Lahore Division, the Commissioner of Lahore, and the Minister of Agriculture. If they were not being suitably entertained this week, they would be suitably entertained next week, and again a few weeks later. This was inevitable, and must be 'kept up' and repeated at intervals all through the cold weather. 'Suitably' entertained implied the supply of the stereotyped paraphernalia: the dark blue tennis screens to lessen the glare, the properly clad chaukras, the well-turned-out Mahomedan khitmutgars and high-caste chaprassees, the dhurrie made at the gaol; the tennis balls, the drinks, the smokes, the cakes, the tea. Such things were taken for granted, with all the service and expenditure and

'bundobust' they demanded. It required trained and experienced authority to maintain the standard and produce at the given hour tidy, cleanly servants, the right number of balls, carefully boiled milk, and to prevent the pilfering of smokes and drinks, short measure of sugar and tea, and magic loss of teaspoons. The mistress of the large establishment was unable to insure these tremendous things; she could not speak the language nor foresee catastrophe. Fever, like an evil witch, might in a few hours set half the establishment shivering and strike them down into inert bundles in little dark rooms. Major Bourdillon, who controlled this set piece and each consecutive scene like a stage manager, had noted a dirty duster which one of the khitmutgars carried. Old Lal Chand, the Hindu chaprassee, was aware of an unseemly quarrel between two of the urchins, which was distracting their attention from the balls. There would be domestic trouble by and by. Meanwhile Bourdillon in white flannels and white sweater, with smooth mouse-coloured hair, queerly sensitive lips, and blunt eyes that were like darkened lanterns, enjoyed his talk with Priscilla Neville, who, being forty-five, was the oldest Englishwoman of his acquaintance in Lahore and the cantonment; she was also the most entertaining. Priscilla was a character. Newcomers to the Punjab were not allowed to form their own opinion of her: they were required to 'see' her as 'Priscilla,' she was never spoken of by any other name. She had an amazingly deep voice and laid erratic emphasis on all matters, that roused her strident harsh laugh or her tender and indignant pity. Her sense of humour embraced the world, with the exception of Maurice Neville, whom she placed mysteriously apart; worshipped, defended. She had a parchment-coloured, short-sighted face, which peered

at the world without the usual antagonisms and from a point of view of her own. Priscilla expressed scorn more loudly than most people, she might quite properly be described as hooting. Yet she was tolerant unless she was bored. Bourdillon she regarded as a young active soldier who loved the lap of luxury, as a snob who was at the same time a gentleman, as a man with his wits about him and an excellent manner; she would have shouted in her alarming way that she despised him, but he did not bore her and sometimes he kept her in order. Anyhow, he never pandered to her by praising Neville ridiculously.

"What do you think of His Excellency's wife?" he asked her now.

"I've known good Tony Nugent for sixteen years. I knew his first wife. There is *nothing* I don't know about him," Priscilla replied, and gave a snort at her own exaggerations. "As for the new wife, I've not set eyes on her yet. She does not seem to intend that I should have that privilege to-day. I like punctuality, courtesy. I shan't come here again if she is late." Then her whole voice changed. "Yes, I shall. Maurice, with his marvellous charity and love of peace, will say it is our duty to avoid friction. I shall come again and growl at her. Impertinent little animal. She has come out here to put us all to rights, hasn't she? Knows more than men who have given their lives to this land, I suppose. Arrogance! But we're all arrogant. I'm arrogant. I long to trample upon her. Which is absurd. This whole scene is absurd. Look at those middle-aged men playing a game while those little serious children work for them. Gentlemen and hobgoblins. The Governor, the General, the Commissioner, the Minister: the Ruler, the Defender, the Administrator, and the Politician. Three

thin knights and a fat ass. Three Foreign Oppressors and a Patriot. Two——”

“Allow me,” said Bourdillon, interrupting. “Two Kings of Hearts, one King of Clubs, one Knave : which means two husbands, one lucky grass widower, and a dark horse. You started this game. Look at the King of Clubs and the Knave, Prosser gets rounder and Said Mahomed more gaunt every day.”

“Mr. Prosser is a sentimentalist ; he waxes fat, but hasn’t a kick in him. Are you sure Sir Said Mahomed is a knave ?” demanded Priscilla.

“He’s one of the Hanky-pankys : they are all knaves,” answered Bourdillon airily.

The four players stood still, their game finished, and began to pull woollen sweaters over their heads. In that attitude, with convulsed uplifted arms and concealed heads, their figures were clearly displayed. Priscilla eyed Mr. Prosser’s colossal bulk with stern disgust. “Tub. Vat. Barrel,” her deep organ notes exploded. “Sentimental he well may be. Room for emotion there !”

“He is blushing,” warned Bourdillon.

“Not he,” said Priscilla. “*Never*. Bless him. Nobody ever overhears me because nobody ever listens to the plain truth about themselves. They prick their ears for compliments. Flattery. So do I. I *crave* for flattery. But not from you, Bill Bourdillon.”

Nugent advanced towards them. “My wife is lost,” he said, but not apologetically. “She’s the most absent-minded woman. Her thoughts go sky-larking.” He sat down beside Priscilla and said, “You’ll like her.”

“If I ever meet her,” said Priscilla harshly.

“Don’t be furious,” continued Nugent. “I tell you you’ll like her. You can take my word for it.”

It was then that Gillian emerged from the palms and

purple bougainvillæa which made a bower of the big porch, and advanced across the grass, while all her guests scrutinised her from her burnished hair to her tiny ankles. "O Tony!" she cried as she advanced, "O Tony, whatever shall I do? Isn't it too awful? I forgot to look at the clock. And now it's given me a frightful shock."

Nugent went to meet her without any sign of disapproval. He only let her pause a moment by dangerous Priscilla, and then moved her on like a benevolent policeman to introduce her to the others.

Bourdillon said to Priscilla in a low voice, "*There!* She is not a beauty, but she is an eye-opener. You don't gaze in rapture, but you look twice. That's it—you *watch* her."

Obviously Gillian was enjoying herself. Her heart went half-way to meet her guests, and was happy as could be on the journey.

"I've never seen a creature quite like her," Priscilla announced. "So extraordinarily swift. For accurate lithe movement and definite lines and slight limbs, only a fawn could rival her. She's as chic as a water wagtail, too. I'd like an etching of her. By comparison I'm a smudge. And my garments are blots. But I loathe short hair for a woman in this country. It horrifies the Indian. I detest short skirts and short sleeves. Why should she *poke* her arms and legs at me? There's no mystery, with every hair numbered and every limb exposed. I disapprove of the look of this new influence, and I dislike every single thing I've heard about her. But if I were a man I'd be attracted. Of course I should. The very way she puts on her clothes is a rapture, and her curls have the cheek of Old Nick. She is not *pretty*."

"His Excellency told you you'd like her," Bourdillon said triumphantly.

"Well, I don't so far," Priscilla retorted. "I applaud her diablerie. Applause isn't love. Clapping your hands isn't a caress. And I wouldn't select her to be a Governor's wife in India. Not from what I see and hear." But Priscilla Neville's interest was roused. Henceforth people would hear her discuss Gillian Nugent, and she would influence opinion just in the same way as criticism in a newspaper influences it. Bourdillon was right, Priscilla kept her eyes on Gillian and watched her.

Gillian stood for a few moments talking with the subalterns and two brides as a merrymaker among play-fellows. She had their youthful gestures, their note in her voice, their air of irresponsible adventure. One of the brides had the most infectious laugh; on the very slightest provocation 'she got the giggles.' Gillian promptly caught the giggles from her as children catch whooping-cough. Near the shadow of an immense banyan tree the five young people laughed, and rocked with laughter; one boy held his sides, a girl's eyes streamed, the other subaltern went stamping about in an ecstasy. Then, released from the thralldom of their laughter, they came across the lawn together. "It's nothing. It wouldn't sound a bit funny," they explained, wiping their dancing eyes.

Gillian deserted them then for Sir Said Mahomed, whom she isolated from the rest of the party and monopolised for half an hour. He had the grand manner of his race and a very masculine presence. He was tall, imposing, well-featured. Nothing could have been less subtle, pliable, or elusive than his air. His speech was blunt and direct and was volleyed out in a rough bass voice. Gillian found herself to be socially at ease with him and interested by his conversation, which was of political matters, such as the Provincial Legislative

Council and the Akali movement. She could not find anything startling or picturesque in his attitude, and his sedateness slightly disconcerted her. Said Mahomed's references to her husband made her unaccountably shy, for they seemed to indicate that the new Governor would overcome all difficulties, and solve all problems, in the Punjab. Would he? thought Gillian.

The sun went down suddenly and Gillian led the way into the house, with Said Mahomed walking beside her. They passed a mali, who bent above his work almost naked and brown as the earth. Beside him squatted his solemn little son holding a sharp and formidable pruning knife. Gillian exclaimed, "O, please tell the man not to let the baby play with that; he'll cut himself!"

The Minister for Agriculture said stolidly, "There is no fear," and then spoke to the mali, who replied patiently. Said Mahomed translated: "The man says a mali's child never hurts himself with the tools of a mali." Gillian felt as though her fussy ignorance had been exposed and baffled.

Nugent caught them up, pacing beside Prosser and the General. The Commissioner held forth for a moment on the agricultural implements employed by Punjabis, whose unwillingness to adopt modern methods and western machinery is notorious.

Said Mahomed said sombrely: "That is true. But progress is being made. The date palms are now improved by introducing Arabian varieties imported from Iraq. The people are ignorant. On certain Government farms they are shown new methods, but those who do not see do not learn. India is very backward still."

This reply seemed to rouse Prosser, but to rouse him

was merely to make his rosy face rosier, his fat voice mellower, his twinkling eyes more twinkling. The very soul of good-nature, he appeared when excited to enjoy his own words, and the world's failures, as though they were the best joke possible. He beamed upon the Minister. "Yes, but—now really, look here—why *should* India be backward, eh? Natural cussedness, what?"

His smiling goodwill exerted the most soothing influence upon Indians, who loved him. Said Mahomed replied placidly as one who was being stroked the right way.

"The people hitherto have had very little technical education. Time is required. All will come with time."

Prosser rolled his bulk up to him, wheezing and beaming. "I knew you 'd say that! I tell you what,—India has had all the time there is, hasn't she? Hasn't she? She must have lost some."

The men laughed and the Minister replied almost with pleasure. "Yes. It is our fault. Here in India we have lost much time. Now that Sir Anthony has come to hurry us we shall make up for that lost time."

The Governor said, "I shan't hustle anybody. I'm a lazy fellow."

Still talking leisurely, the group was swallowed up by Government House, with its ball-rooms and council chambers, its guest-rooms and banqueting hall. The garden and park wrapped themselves in drifting shadows. Two yoked cream bullocks paced slowly along the drive away from the well towards the rising moon. The seven sisters strutted on the lawn, the most pompous of birds, and a little grey squirrel frisked up a fig tree. A great vulture flapped on to the roof of the house, sat there awhile, and then flapped away across level acres where, the kharif having been sown and the land pre-

pared for rabi late in August, the earth deep in her womb held the food and life of a dark host.

It was late when Prosser and Said Mahomed drove away in their motors, and the subalterns went off on bicycles. The General's Ford car was to carry the brides back to cantonments. Priscilla flung on her wraps with a savage air of gloom. "This question of transport maddens me. Those poor girls can't get anywhere. We are never alone, Neville and I. People are for ever sitting on our knees."

The Governor went to the porch with Priscilla and saw her off, with Gillian at his heels. The bright picture fascinated the hostess. Outside the porch a chilly clear darkness extended for miles. Inside it were flowers and a crowded motor, with the General's handsome worn profile and the girls' gay faces and Priscilla's distinguished one vividly lit up, while two sentries stood immovable and chaprassees salaamed, and Bourdillon did the right thing and said the right word. Then the scene dissolved.

Gillian followed Nugent, and asked him why he liked Priscilla.

"Priscilla? O, I've always liked old Priscilla," he answered as he strode along the passage. Then he suddenly gave his wife a surprise. "She's one of our officers' wives who have been through the great tribulation finely. She suffered agonies of anxiety and pity and horror and made no fuss. She is a link with every other fighting man's wife from here, across Asia, to Dover. Sikhs, Afridis, Afghans, Arabs, Turks, Albanians, Serbs, and French,—she feels what their emotions feel about war: she has a fire, a valour, and a steadfastness in sacrifice they can attain. Forces to reckon with."

At his words Gillian resolved at all costs to gain a more poetic aspect than her membership of the Mother of Parliaments had endowed her with. Tony should touch, through her, romantic relationships and romantic adventures. She was jealous of his praise of Priscilla, and not a little lonely when he shut his study door behind him and left her in the long passage.

Gillian went up a wide flight of stairs to her bedroom. A log fire sparkled in the open grate. It was a comfortable spacious room, and the mistress of the house, after she had changed into a gold and green wrapper, drew an armchair up to the fire and enjoyed its crackling and the brightness of chintz and silver and high cream walls. She was responsive to the atmosphere of the house: its dominant air; its isolations which cut off official rooms from private ones; its moments of flooding sunshine, and its moments of electric lamps and dancing firelight. The immense vague Indian domestic staff, the small influential staff of the Military Secretary and his assistant, the guard of eastern soldiers, differentiated this dwelling from any other she had lived in. It was difficult to get Tony alone; she found herself constantly manœuvring to waylay him, going on an expedition to find him, and then hesitating to disturb him at his work.

There was a knock at the door: she opened it, and old Lal Chand ceremoniously offered her with both hands a tray upon which lay the English mail. She gathered up her letters and carried them to the fire. It was a great event, this coming of the mail once a week. All the civil lines and all the cantonment were suddenly 'in touch with Home.' Letters from wives, mothers, babies, were delivered in messes, clubs, barracks, and bungalows: letters ending 'with much love.' This thing, with its intimate and varied message, fired the imagination.

Gillian's mail was not quite satisfactory. Granny's spidery hand gave the family news, which did not amount to much. Patricia wrote from Scotland and asked many questions. "Do you have to entertain a lot of duds? Are the women very second-rate on the whole? Keep your head over the penniless and attractive men, my lamb." At the end she had added a postscript. "Don't waste time trying to keep your Anthony in love with you. Devote your energies to remaining in love with him. That's your job, and it will require fantasy and illusion. Just so long as you have a heart-beat for him you'll have an object in life which will banish boredom! There's all the difference in the world between reading a love-letter and writing one. It's being the author that is the real fun. Do you see what I mean?"

Yes: there was something in that. If she, Gillian, ceased to love Anthony the fire would be gone from emotion and the daylight from thought. If she lost his love it would be tragic—but . . . She felt it would be the tragedy of being slain instead of the tragedy of committing suicide. Fancy Patricia realising that! Sands Manor and all its life seemed strangely remote and dim. But it had imparted much more to her than she had realised before she married. As a labour M.P. she would have worn conscientiously a very simple useful dressing-gown. She remembered the thing: a dark blue quilted silk, quite hideous. Now she wore this clinging shimmer of colour because Anthony might pop in for a chat before dinner. Patricia had helped her to choose it. Fastidiousness and a love of beauty worked in her blood.

The rest of her correspondence was quite irritating. Subscriptions were urgently demanded for labour funds and for working women's socialistic conferences. No one seemed to realise that she might spend her income

a hundred times over in this great Punjab and then lack means to supply its urgent need of gifts. One or two political friends wrote enthusiastically to say how much enlightenment they expected from her, and applauded in anticipation the lead they were sure she would give to Indian women. They expressed their political sympathy with all India's 'impatient idealists,' with all 'the patriotic dreamers,' with all 'the real thinkers.' Gillian let the letters slip from her hands. Presently she burnt them. As they blackened, withered, and vanished they called to her political passions, yet did not rouse them fully. They were but unwillingly astir when Anthony Nugent opened the door and walked in.

"Well, my small Beloved, you seem very cosy here," said he, and, standing with his back to the fire, looked down at her. "How's England getting on without you?"

"Sublimely. How would you get on without me, Tony?" she asked in her soft husky voice.

One hand was thrust into his pocket, with the other he smoothed his fair hair; his face was red and jolly as he answered, "I? I shouldn't be able to get on at all. There would be no fun, you know."

She stretched her arms, which were graceful as the tender branches of a sapling in spring, towards the fire and warmed her exquisite hands. "I think you like women, Tony dear," she murmured without looking at him.

"Like women?" he echoed her with an amused air. "What's the point in not liking them? None that I can see. Man must dwell apart from them in work-houses, asylums, prisons, and in monasteries, barracks, and men-o'-war—poor devils. They work apart, mostly. But that's all. In life we are eternally together. We

feel your beauty, mystery, interest, attraction, whether we want to or not. It's our fate."

"Why do you like me?" Gillian asked him.

"Good God, I don't know," said Nugent helplessly. "If a man asked me why I liked him I'd want to kick him for being an ass. But it's rather nice to hear you say it like that. Perhaps it's because you are such an odd feminine little beggar."

She shook her brown head. "I could understand beauty entrancing you, but I'm no beauty."

"How can I tell," said Nugent warily, "what you mean by 'beauty'? You've got movements which are as jolly to watch as a swallow's. When you stand you are as delicately poised as a bluebell. That small face of yours nudges my heart, eh? Every man to his taste."

Gillian gave a shy laugh. "Thank heaven you aren't inarticulate, Tony. When you say a thing like that you simply *thrill* me." She caught his big freckled hand and snuggled her cheek against it.

"You're a dear, funny sweetheart," said Nugent gently.

"I wish Major Bourdillon didn't live with us," Gillian sighed. "I wish we could be more alone together, you and I."

"That's Priscilla's grouse over Neville's job, too. It's all part of the show. You'll meet the new boy, Stevens, to-morrow. He arrives to-night," said the Governor of the Punjab. "But my staff don't intrude in *here*."

He had the gift of making a sense of their relationship quiver in her, indicating to her that first and foremost he was her husband and lover, so that she always experienced a dramatic realisation of his presence and the fascination it exerted over her. She stood up beside

him and looked about her at their bedroom, and then into his eyes with a certain wild mischief. "O Tony, I could lead you such a dance!" she cried, and stood on tiptoe, laughing.

He caught her in his heavy arms: "Not a step, not a yard, do you hear?" he said, as he kissed her again and again.

It was a blissful hour. Then came dinner as a ceremony which set them apart again under the eyes of Bill Bourdillon. Gillian went to bed with every nerve active and sensitive. O, she would make this love of hers fertile and splendid. It should have a history in Asia. She would bring partisans to Anthony Nugent: men of vision, men of daring. Her memory teemed with the dreams and aspirations of sturdy British men, architects of independence, heirs of freedom. Nugent should become one of labour's fellowship. It was so surely tramping on to victory, hard won, bitterly earned. Gillian gloried in the fact that Nugent had power, but she deeply planned to win his mind to the socialists' ideals. Not by argument. She was not going to dispute with Anthony. No, she would create an atmosphere that should influence his sentiments. He knew and loved the Punjab. She had found no flaw in his fidelity to India, in his fairplay and courtesy. But she wanted him to transform the Province. She wanted a political miracle. She wanted Nugent to become a hero in the eyes of British democrats. This thought excited her to impatience, and in its exhausting power she fell asleep, tossing and turning.

The breakfast hour had assumed a character of its own at Government House. Nugent and Bourdillon rode early, and the very sound of their riding boots, the very sight of their riding kit, was exhilarating to Gillian.

Her perfect health endowed her with high spirits, and her chatter and laughter at that hour became the subject of unfavourable comment from the two men, who really thoroughly enjoyed it. Their criticism took on the robust habit of a family joke, of which the Governor with his characteristic simplicity never tired. Bourdillon seldom spoke to the servants whom he most efficiently directed, and Gillian was tantalised by curiosity whenever he gave them an order in the vernacular. Nothing could have exceeded his seeming dislike to translate for her benefit; in a tone frigidly deferential and polite he would assure her that she wouldn't understand, that the matter was technical, while Nugent chuckled. Sometimes he joined in the fray. "It's too bad, Gill. You'll have to learn the language quickly. He deliberately told the *khitmutgar* to give you the overdone kidney." This morning Bourdillon, with an effort overcoming his reluctance to upset by an order the holy calm in which he considered that service should be rendered, ordered the hot milk for the coffee to be taken from the room and the skin removed from its surface.

"Now what *did* you say that time? Do please tell me," urged Gillian.

"I'd rather not. It might shock you," Bourdillon replied primly.

"I must know. Really, I mean it. Tony, make him tell me!" she cried.

"Break it to her gently, Bourdillon," said the Governor.

"I said, 'You dirty swine, take that filthy milk and give it to the dogs to drink, and I'll kick you presently,'" Bourdillon declared, with a bland countenance.

"O! You didn't. Did you? Did he, Tony?" Gillian gasped.

The Hindu bearer, grey-bearded Arjan Das, who had

served Nugent many years and stood now like a graven image in the corner of the room, suddenly intervened. In a staccato English, which came as surprisingly as a scream from his gentle old face, he addressed his mistress : " The Major Sahib said, ' Take off skin from milk and bring back.' No abuse was given. Everything *all* right, Huzoor."

This speech had the greatest success ; the khitmutgars' faces lit up with surprise, Bourdillon's relaxed and his eyes laughed, Nugent swung right round in his chair and spoke to Arjan Das in the tone of affectionate mildness he kept for him alone. " Hi—you ! So you speak English now, eh ? Become a babu, have you ? *Shabash !*" Nugent chaffed him.

" He 'll be in the Council next," remarked Bourdillon.

" Hear what the Sahib says ? You 'll be in the Council. The khitmutgars will vote for you." The Governor was beaming at him. The Mahomedans smiled with stiff dignity.

" Nay, Protector of the Poor. I have no learning. Why should I become of the Council ? Such work is for the learned and rich. I serve the Presence. That is my work. In the service of the Sahib-log I have learnt a little English. Therefore I understand *all* that the Lady Sahib says. The Major Sahib did not tell the Lady Sahib the truth. I told her the truth. Enough !" replied Arjan Das, who was serious, self-complacent, respectful. Both Sahibs were, God knows why, pleased with him. Both Sahibs were smiling and making a hearty meal. There were peace and plenteousness within these walls. This was a propitious hour.

And Gillian, swift to react to an atmosphere, intensely enjoyed the little scene ; the sudden odd display of interest the men showed in each other, the good terms

indicated by the *tone* of their voices, the play of their faces, their easy informal manners.

When young Stevens appeared and was introduced to Nugent and Gillian, she felt that another cheerful element had entered Government House. Jack Stevens was a well-turned-out subaltern, with a bashful, freckled, boyish face, a snub nose, and a naïve expression. But he pushed his way into their hearts with his smile. At a joke—and it did not have to be a very good one, almost any joke would do—his mouth expanded into a broad smile of the most whole-hearted delight. Astonished welcome, complete surrender to amusement, were in that happy smile. Not a word did he utter, repartee was beyond Jack Stevens. He gave that marvellous smile and then a little gurgling chuckle. It was quite irresistible. Though shy, he did it twice that first morning, and the Governor was captivated. Soon after Stevens' arrival there entered the most disreputable of mongrels: the party was complete.

"Is this animal a dog?" inquired Bourdillon scathingly.

The smile burst upon them. "That's George," said George's owner without comment.

Nugent gave a laugh. "He's a great dog," he said, and patted the rough head. "Got a fine collar too. He'll give us a tone." Young Stevens adored the Governor from that moment.

Breakfast was over. Nugent pushed out his chair and looked at his watch. A khitmutgar flung open the door and held it wide. Bourdillon sprang to his feet. The day's work was about to begin. Gillian, suddenly conscious of a strain as though she embarked against a tide which a moment before had carried her, a-frolic, in a rush of generous waters, detained Nugent to make

an announcement: "Tony, I've arranged to go to tea with Sir Said Mahomed's purdah wife to-day."

Was he about to oppose her? He stood, arrested, and considered the information, then directed a glance of inquiry to Bourdillon, who showed at once that this was news to him.

"Did he invite you yesterday, or have you had a note this morning?" Nugent asked.

"I suggested it yesterday. He seemed very pleased. I am to be at his house at four o'clock," Gillian replied.

"Do you know where he lives, Bourdillon?" said the Governor.

"Just outside the Ferozepore gate of the city, I think. I'll see that the chauffeur knows. Had I better go with Lady Nugent?" asked Bourdillon.

The men were very business-like. Gillian felt as though she were a pawn they had suddenly observed on the chessboard.

"O no, Major Bourdillon," she cried. "It's just an informal thing."

"I think Bourdillon had better escort you. He won't see the lady if she is purdah. How shall you talk to her, Gillian?" Nugent's manner was non-committal.

"I imagine that Sir Said Mahomed will translate," she replied vaguely.

"Has she been educated? Do you know anything of her?" Nugent inquired of his military secretary.

"Not a thing, sir," replied Bourdillon.

"I thought," began Gillian, uncomfortably aware that this sounded like a little set speech, "I thought, as Sir Said Mahomed is a Minister, it was only right that I should be in touch with his wife. The woman question is a big one."

"I expect Mrs. Prosser knows her, but she is in England

now," Nugent said. "Find out from Prosser, Bourdillon." Then, without further comment, he left the room.

Gillian felt stimulated, excited. The Punjab had been silent and reserved to her as a newcomer. She had almost entertained doubts as to that bird's-eye view of Indian problems, which political students in England devoutly believed to be the true perspective. The intimacy of experience and knowledge had impressed her as a qualification beside which superficial observation was soon disclosed as sheer ignorance. And now, suddenly, she had seen Nugent and Bourdillon confess to a lack of information, a lack of 'touch.' The Governor had worked in the Punjab for sixteen years, Bourdillon had ten years' service in the Indian Army, but the ground she intended to explore was unknown territory to them. They seemed to admit that she might help. Would Nugent admit that she might lead, might pioneer? There were ten years of individual work, ten years of concentrated interest on social and political problems, behind Gillian's question. At twenty she might have been influenced to accept a programme in which she was wholly occupied in developing the hospitality of Government House, and in giving the support of a Governor's wife to all charitable works. But at thirty she was resolved to give only a portion of her time to such things. All her enthusiasm and ambition responded to political movements, to dreams and ideals that took little heed of visiting lists and social privileges, of established forms and prescribed ceremonies.

She sauntered out into the garden. Never had she known such light : light so dazzling that it was unrevealing, blinding. The air was clear and cool as spring water, but the sunshine scorched the skin with its touch,

The stars of white on the dark jasmine bushes formed a milky way of perfume, and the pink oleanders added their fragrance. Green parrots flashed emerald wings against a sky of blue flame. The leaves of the ancient banyan tree fell to the ground with a thud as though they were made of dry leather. Not a breath of wind stirred. Lal Chand hurried towards her carrying a hat and a sun umbrella and showing the careworn anxiety of some old hen. Gillian was conscious of his docile kindness, his faithful service, his homage, but she had been taught to hold such things suspect: they bolstered up class privileges, class exclusiveness; they accepted inferiority and disability. The day that was dawning would not justify inequalities by claiming that servitude was pleasant to the servile. She wondered what independence was being won by Lal Chand's children. At lunch she expressed her curiosity.

"Lal Chand has the most lovely manners, Tony," she said. "Will his son be quite so feudal? I rather hope not, I'm afraid."

"Lal Chand has no son," replied Nugent curtly. "Lal Chand is a man of tragedy. His wife and all his family died in his village of influenza within forty-eight hours of each other in 1918." Nugent's tone recalled to Gillian's mind the existence of forces which disregarded political aspirations, political arguments. "One million people died then in the Punjab during three months. As many lives as we lost in the war during four years. We forget that. But it troubles their dreams still."

What troubled Gillian was this reminder that she was still a stranger. There was a cool little silence. Nugent did not like her implied criticism of the faithful old man. She felt ill at ease, because Nugent obsessed her and

she could not be detached from his mood. Major Bourdillon broke the silence by saying: "I rang up Prosser, sir. He does not think Mrs. Prosser knew Lady Mahomed. So I rang up Lady Neville. She told me that she was quite sure that Lady Mahomed was not a member of the purdah club. Lady Neville says that Sir Said Mahomed's family has only lately come to live in Lahore. They belong to Chakwal. She happens to know, because a nephew of Lady Mahomed is a jemadar in the 100th Punjabis, which Sir Maurice used to command." He turned to Gillian. "Perhaps you don't know that a jemadar, a risaldar and a risaldar major in cavalry,—a jemadar, a subadar and a subadar major in all other arms of the service, are Indian officers who are permanently junior to all officers, British and Indian, holding the King's commission, like Stevens and myself. They are of the same class socially as the rank and file."

"My wife doesn't approve altogether of armaments and soldiers, you know," Nugent remarked to young Stevens. "Can't quite bring herself to give you her whole-hearted support, I fear. Don't mention martial law to her, will you?"

And young Stevens responded with that smile of his. He thought this, undoubtedly, must be a joke. His pleased face restored Nugent's good humour. The little cloud passed.

Late in the afternoon, with all due ceremony, Gillian embarked on her self-imposed embassy to the wife of the Minister for Agriculture, escorted by Major Bourdillon. That officer fervently wished that the Governor's wife 'knew India' and that it was not his lot to answer her endless questions. And yet . . . and yet . . . he was half conscious that this mastery of their conversation by the sheer force of her lively interest offered him a

refuge from a searching quality in the woman's personality which rendered him too acutely aware of her, of her presence, of her actions, of her vivid emotions. She perturbed him.

"Tell me about Sir Said Mahomed," requested Gillian, and added disconcertingly, "I don't think you like him."

Bourdillon answered: "His father was a big contractor at Pind Dadan Khan in the Jhelum District. He made any amount of money out of Frontier expeditions and gave Said Mahomed an education on western lines. Said Mahomed didn't fight in the war, but he got a lot of men to enlist. I daresay he is quite straight. I don't know. He is a Mahomedan, and the Mahomedan vote tends to be supreme in the Punjab Legislative Council. But the urban and rural interests clash, and there has been a lot of bad blood about that. The Hindus crab the man, of course. He came to the fore politically over the Khilafat movement."

"Naturally he was an adherent?"

"I don't know how natural it was. As a Punjabi I should have found it natural to remember the way the Turks treated Punjabi prisoners of war, and the awful time Punjabis had in Mesopotamia. As an Indian I should have thought India good enough to live in. However, I'm no politician. I only know what I saw of the result of the Khilafat's agitation on the wretched people of their Hajrat—women and children, too—who struggled back down the Khyber Pass from Afghanistan. Poor souls, I pitied them from the bottom of my heart. Uprooted from their homes in the North-West Frontier Province, urged to go to Afghanistan of all places! They had a ghastly time. Lots of them died. And it was all so unnecessary. Makes one loathe politics,—a thing like that. You don't catch Sir Said Mahomed

going off bag and baggage for the sake of his soul. Pointing the way to those ignorant men was a political gesture, I suppose, and all in the day's work." Bourdillon's voice was hostile but not heated. Still, he evidently saw no halo round Said Mahomed's head. And Gillian was once more confronted with the bewildering fact that men like Bourdillon and Nugent, sincerely compassionate and scrupulously merciful, were aloof in sympathy and enthusiasm from those idealists who wrote to her from England and who strove against the bulwarks of capitalism, against the 'exploitation of labour,' and the 'aggressiveness of national selfishness.'

The streets of Lahore swept past Gillian's eyes, European shops gave place to bazaars, where colour was a virtue which redeemed dirt and dilapidation as white-wash denies the horrors of a sepulchre. But what fascinated Gillian was the unself-consciousness of individuals and their variety of type and garment: here was nothing smug, nothing prim. Instead of the commonplace she beheld the picturesque. To whatever Indian conventions this eastern crowd conformed, it retained for western eyes a startling originality. There was much ceremony, and a pervading ritual; declarations of faith and caste were made by outward apparel and painted caste marks. Animals seemed to have no stables, children no nurseries, and the streets held them all with a large toleration. Temples and mosques and wayside shrines had an air of intimacy with the people, who moved superbly and bargained meanly. Laden bullock carts lumbered along. Men were shaved by the edge of the pavement. Youths loafed and ate sugar-cane, and coolie women, hurrying in single file and carrying heavy loads, stirred the dust with their little feet.

"I wonder," murmured Gillian to her escort, "I do

wonder terribly, just how much direct effect on all these lives my husband has ? ”

“ If there were any big crisis the Governor would see them through all right,” replied the Governor’s military secretary.

She gave him a fleeting glance while the motor turned out of the thronged street and approached a brick building with latticed windows and a flat roof. This soldier was an observant, critical man, not emotional, rather selfish, and lacking in imagination, she thought. But she had noticed his unflinching, his flawless, loyalty to Anthony Nugent. For a moment she felt the urge of a desire to surrender to just such a rigid and definite duty, to cry with her heart—“ My Anthony, right or wrong ! ” Then she resisted this narrow path and dedicated herself afresh to that dangerous and difficult task of calling to Anthony from afar, from the ranks of the opposition, till he heard and responded.

The motor stopped. Sir Said Mahomed and a youth came out and conducted Gillian and Bourdillon into a hall, which would have resembled any waiting-room in any railway station but for a collection of terrible ornaments which looked as though the stalls of a charity bazaar had been sacked and the loot stored here. Romance faded from the adventure : a sort of sterile awkwardness remained. Then Sir Said committed Bourdillon to his grave son-in-law’s silent care and led Gillian across a courtyard and up some stairs. “ Here,” he said solemnly, “ are my wives’ apartments. Will you please to come in ? ”

"At last!" thought Gillian. She stood as the wife of the most powerful man in the Punjab within forbidden territory.

Two women rose at her entrance. The elder was haggard and faded and had an austere dignity. Her greeting was suave, but its smooth quality did not disguise a strong aloofness: it was as though this Mahomedan lady wore silk as armour. The other woman was very comely: there was a bland well-being in her smooth round cheeks, her satin skin, her eyes that were as fresh as a young animal's, her big athletic restless limbs. Both wore ornaments of value and were dressed in rich materials, with glistening saris.

"This is Lady Said Mahomed," the Minister said, indicating the old woman. Then he turned to the young one: "This also is my wife."

The young wife shook hands with Gillian, who never forgot the thrust into her enfolding fingers of that slim, stiff, cold hand. The gesture was made with as little sense of personal touch as if an ivory paper-knife had been placed within the leaves of a document.

"She can speak English, so she will translate for Lady Said Mahomed," said their husband. "If you will now excuse me, I will go to entertain Major Bourdillon." He addressed a long sentence in Urdu to his senior wife, who replied in a tone of deep fatigue. The junior wife played with the edge of her sari and shot a glance at him which was both submissive and emotional. Standing

there, Sir Said Mahomed appeared ceremonious and kindly, yet something of a potentate. When he withdrew the two women gave a rustle towards Gillian, seeming to throw themselves upon their contemplation of her.

Lady Said Mahomed spoke to her, and the girl translated: "She says you are very welcome, and that we are pleased to see you."

"I am delighted to be here," said Gillian, conscious of constraint and artificiality. She roused herself to break it down. "Your husband works with mine for the good of the Punjab, and therefore we ought to be friends."

After this had been interpreted Lady Said Mahomed responded vaguely: "The Wazir Sahib has much work to do. I fear for his health. He is always working." And her junior translated once more.

Gillian, baffled, addressed herself to the girl. "I wish I could speak Urdu as fluently as you speak English."

Before the girl could reply the older woman demanded to be told what she had said.

There was a queer atmosphere in the room. Gillian was not so much conscious of a truce between these two wives as of a compromise. In the manner of the elder there was no enmity, in the manner of the younger no inferiority. Yet Lady Said Mahomed did not strike Gillian as a dowager who had abdicated.

"Have you a son?" Lady Said Mahomed inquired of the Englishwoman.

"I have no children," replied Gillian gently.

"I have heard that the Lord Sahib has a son," said the Minister's wife steadily.

"Yes, by his first wife, who is dead." Gillian felt that at this point she hid her secret thoughts. How much were these women hiding too?

"She is dead? Alas!" came the stately reply. Having

translated the conversation, the second wife told the first in Urdu: "They can only have one wife at a time. The other must be dead or divorced."

Lady Said Mahomed merely retorted, "I know. I know all," with the manner of one who holds her own undaunted.

Gillian leant forward and let her hand rest on the girl's arm, claiming her for the moment and absolving her from this business of translating. "Do tell me about yourself. Where were you educated?"

"I was educated at Queen Mary's College here in Lahore. I was married to a Sirdar who died of influenza in Egypt at the end of the war. After that I left school." The young face was suddenly ablaze with life, with a self-centred intense interest. Her voice was unmusical, but its declamation was eager and dramatic. "This is my second marriage."

"What do you tell the Lady Sahib?" demanded the senior wife. This time the junior wife took no notice of her importunity, and continued: "The minister has a daughter only. And as yet I have no child—none!" The girl lifted her empty hands with an extraordinarily eloquent gesture. "I would like to see an English doctor. I wish to send for the civil surgeon, but if not—there are lady doctors. Lady Said Mahomed forbids, and the minister listens to her."

The senior wife guessed the gist of this. She recognised the mention of her own name, and the words 'doctor,' 'civil surgeon,' and 'minister.' Throwing back her veil with an indescribable energy as though escaping steam tossed aside a restraining lid, she poured out a torrent of words to Gillian, who watched her fascinated. Never had she seen such pale dead lips, such dried skin, such passionate eyes.

"I wish I could understand her!" murmured Gillian, in a tone of appeal to which the childless wife responded instantly.

"She says it is better to have faith in God and to wait patiently." The educated girl put the pith of the other's tirade tersely enough, but without any intellectual contempt.

At that moment a woman-servant entered with tea. Gillian laid her hands upon the knee of Lady Said Mahomed and upon the shoulder of the young wife: caressing hands. Then she smiled into their strange faces. It was spontaneously done and finely done. Instantly the two women smiled back upon her, pacified. They plied their guest with food and showed a sense of hospitality that gave to the bare ugly room and to their simple manners a noble air.

Once more Gillian tried to tempt these women into the open: "What do you do all day?" she inquired. "Have you any books?"

"I have many English books," said the young wife. "But Lady Said Mahomed reads only the Korân."

Those dead lips parted in speech, and the other explained. "She tells you that she has read all the Korân many hundreds of times. She has much learning in that matter. She is the daughter of a great mullah."

Gillian nodded her appreciation and then asked the girl whether she would like the loan of some books.

"I should be very glad. It is hard to be in purdah now. I would like to read more novels by Marie Corelli," she replied.

It was in vain that Gillian strove to place these two women in any political category. They remained inflamingly human, feminine, and individual. She knew of no

glib social formula that would solve the problem of their dual relationship to the man and to each other, and still leave their mutual home intact as a sanctuary for all three. Because of their command of English and their western education Gillian could communicate in phrases with the minister and his second wife : but could she discover or influence the mainspring of their motives and emotions, which were derived from and reacted to a faith held with impregnable force by that dark shadow of a wife, known to a world which might not see her as Lady Said Mahomed ? Again Gillian shrank before the colossus of her own ignorance that in London had passed for up-to-date information on all Indian questions.

Once more the door opened and a veiled visitor entered. This woman was greeted with extraordinary reverence by her hostesses. Gillian had harboured a misgiving lest the deference and ceremonious respect she everywhere received were racial distinctions galling to those who gave them and invidious to those who accepted them : that suspicion died, all amazed, when she saw this greeting. Lady Said Mahomed appeared to introduce Gillian by name and to add a long description. The visitor acknowledged the Englishwoman's presence by a slow, calm salaam. She looked ill and middle-aged and was barefoot, having left her heavy native shoes at the threshold. She wore a cloth tunic over voluminous white trousers, and a white burkha had enveloped her from crown to sole, with two slits as eye-holes. She had rolled this garment up so that it clung to her head but fell back from her forehead and behind her broad shoulders in deep folds. There was a nose-ring in one nostril of her bold, straight nose, and from her ears swung immense silver ear-rings. Her dress seemed to stamp her as less rich, less luxurious,

than her hostesses, but she conformed to their type, being wheat-coloured, thick, large, and stately.

“ This is the wife of Lady Said Mahomed’s nephew, Jemadar Jahan Khan of the rooth Punjabis,” said the girl.

“ Does she speak English ? ” asked Gillian eagerly.

“ Neither she nor the Jemadar Sahib speaks English,” was the reply. “ Even in the vernacular she cannot read or write.”

A silence fell. It seemed to Gillian that it was the silence of awe. But why ? Surely the wife of a junior Indian officer was insignificant compared with the wife of the Minister for Agriculture ! And among Mahomedans there was no religious caste difference, and these women were of the same class by birth. She observed with puzzled eyes the inscrutable face of the newcomer, which had a remarkable stillness, as though it were immune from ordinary susceptibilities. This time Gillian gave up her dogged attempt to sustain conversation by questions ; she sat with the three Mahomedans without a word being spoken until the girl asked Lady Said Mahomed something. The answer was given by a movement of the head.

The girl leant forward towards Gillian with suppressed excitement and said : “ The Jemadar Sahib’s wife awaits the birth of a child.” All the associations of pain and love that this announcement heralded failed to account for the sense of mystery these women conveyed, nor did it explain the tenseness of Lady Said Mahomed and the aloofness, sphinx-like and majestic, of the soldier’s wife.

“ I am glad,” murmured Gillian, and smiled her congratulations.

“ For three years she has been with child,” the girl declared, with an air of defiance as though in making this

revelation she was propitiating the other two women and repudiating her own alien education.

"For *three years!*" remonstrated Gillian.

Lady Said Mahomed uttered a tense sentence.

"She says it is true," translated the girl.

A miraculous birth! That and nothing less the three veiled women awaited; that and nothing less this Punjab mother claimed to be her fate. All legends and fantasies, all fables and faiths of gods wedded to mortals, of apparitions and strange incarnations, here found hearts to believe and tongues to declare the tidings. Suddenly Gillian expected to see shepherd, angel, or Pan walk beside these purdah women in Lahore.

There was no harshness in her. She could say nothing to humiliate, nothing to dismay the secret sense of power and spiritual mystery that dwelt here unscathed by city or cantonment. Gillian could only ask with great gentleness, "Why is the birth delayed?"

"It is not known," replied the girl simply.

"What does the Lady Sahib say?" Lady Said Mahomed cried, and when she heard she seemed to Gillian to sink back into some stillness where her spirit met spirit. "God knows," she said, and would vouchsafe no more.

Gillian bade them farewell and left. Never in her mental intercourse with men of learning and men of affairs, in her youthful experience of the overwhelming shock of a European war, in her initiation into the emotions of married love, had she felt with such an intensity of pity and wonder the strangeness of life and its divergence from every plan declared and every path laid down.

The few moments Gillian was obliged to spend in exchanging civilities with Sir Said Mahomed jarred her. But she was interested to find by his side the husband of the strange woman whom she had left in the harem

brooding on miracles. Jemadar Jahan Khan was handsome and in the prime of life. With his baggy white trousers, his black frock-coat and his big dark-blue and white turban, he made an imposing figure. Gillian felt in him a really friendly spirit. He was, she thought, glad to greet her, and undoubtedly glad to talk with Bourdillon. As she drove away he impressed himself on her memory as a picturesque and gallant form standing by the threshold of the minister's house. 'That's a man,' thought she.

She could not talk to Bourdillon. She was speeding with all her soul back to Anthony Nugent, carrying a flame. She had a burning tale to tell. Bourdillon looked at her strange, composed little face with curiosity. He decided she was speechless because she was tired. Her hands were carefully clasped, as though she had a keepsake folded away from prying eyes. It was not yet dark, and a little sigh escaped her which was a sigh of sheer thankfulness that she was not confronted by pavements and shops. The day had gone, and in honour of its night, majesty, and dominion the evening had distilled colour from all the fruit and flowers of the earth and wafted it aloft as an incense in the invisible swift censers of the air. The vapours of the sky held the concentrated brilliance of gardens and orchards—orange, lemon, violet, and rose—and below the glitter of the painted heavens the robbed world lay faded and wan, growing cold and dark. The Punjab is no tropical land, dense and delicate with hot moisture: its territory holds glacial peak and towering pine, level sand and scrub where camels scrawl their shadows, pastures and fields and sluggish rivers. And always its cities and villages seem pitched like camps in a wildness of nature not yet entirely brought into subjection by the plough, nor

dominated by road and rail. At eventide it is stark and lonely but unafraid. Gillian found herself praying, 'God give peace here,' and Bourdillon misinterpreted her look and thought, 'How bored she is!'

She hurried along the passages of Government House inquiring where the Lord Sahib was, and at the mention of his name the servants like startled sheep made a fuss and confusion to find him. She discovered him in his study intent on cleaning his pipe with a feather. "This is how we govern India!" he said, waving it at her, and then experimented with the pipe to see if it were still foul. It was clear that Nugent had not been waiting for important news from her.

Whatever force Gillian possessed lay in her individual energy. The stimulus of another's excitement and emotion was not required to impart to her a motive power. Kneeling on the hearth by the fire, and kindling the logs with a vigorous application of carved bellows from Kashmir, she began her story. So vividly did the scene in the minister's house display itself to her mind's eye that she lived it over again while she talked. At the end she wheeled round on Nugent and gave a shy little laugh: "Well, I had to tell you. I'm bursting with it!"

His two hands nursed an ankle as he sat listening to her with one leg crossed. "You feel that you want to testify, to bear witness?" he said, and nodded gently. "And it's very interesting. I come out of this sort of home—Said Mahomed comes out of that! Yet together we discuss policy and formulae. Queer world, isn't it?"

"Anthony, what were those three women really *at*? I could not understand them in the least," she cried. "And how can you interpret their mutual relations, their motives, when the women themselves are veiled from

you? Yet if *you* don't know, *who* can know the needs and desires of millions of Punjab women?"

"O, I can grasp the situation a little, because as a district officer, the passions and crimes, the disputes and intrigues of the people came before me," Nugent replied. "The difference between the mentality of individuals in the various social classes is not great where all are uneducated. I think I can understand those women up to a point. First of all, my dear, you must remember you were a self-invited guest, eh? I doubt if you were a really welcome one, except to the second wife. You put Said Mahomed in a difficulty when you expressed a wish to invade his harem. The official and diplomatic side of him made him extend the invitation. In his own house I suppose he is master enough to ensure your reception. They are a courteous people."

Gillian's face fell and she threw out her hands with a bewildered gesture. "But surely it is necessary to get into touch with Indians and to demonstrate that one regards them as social equals? Tony, I *long* to help that girl to emancipate herself! Her position is too awful. There she is, a young, vital, educated creature married to an elderly man whom she probably didn't know before the wedding day, condemned to hold the second place—the degraded place—as a wife, and deprived of the chance to be a mother by the superstitions and ignorance of that old female. How can a man like Said Mahomed, who permits such a thing, be fit to govern? Can't one influence him about it?"

"No," Nugent replied tersely. Then he looked very straight at his wife. "Gillian, you'll be dangerous here if you don't realise that in your position as an influential foreigner you must beware of exerting the tyranny of your foreign ideas in their private lives."

Her passion for Nugent made her instantly adopt a conciliatory tone. "I see, darling. Do tell me what you think the real situation is in that house?"

Nugent was a man without device and of straightforward speech. Though in certain moods he was uncommunicative, his preference was for frankness. He would rather include you in his confidence than exclude you from it. He said gently: "I think the two elder women have a plan; an understanding. There's something of a conspiracy there. Lady Said Mahomed is orthodox and conservative. She clings to the purdah which has warped her. Hating change, she yet has turned from a young woman into an old one. And her husband has changed too; he has taken another wife. But so far she is the only mother in that house, though unfortunately she is not the mother of a son. Do you think she wants the bride to have a son? Not she." He knocked the ashes out of his pipe against the sole of his boot and gave Gillian a look as much as to say that all women were kittle cattle. Then he went on: "The Jemadar's wife is Sarah. She can't hope for a child, and she won't brook a rival. So she proclaims herself to be pregnant, and she reiterates that assertion when nine months have passed,—and when three years have passed. Nature refutes her claim, and she summons to her aid the supernatural. Her husband's aunt—a mullah's daughter, mind you—becomes her ally because she, too, is domineering and jealous. I don't doubt their weird sincerity, for they are fanatical in their faith. Motherhood is their function, their vocation, their peculiar knowledge. It must require superb blindness and denial to enable them to speak as resolute fools in this matter."

Gillian murmured: "That poor girl! Sacrificed to old witches . . ."

"Yes," he said slowly. "Yes. But poor Lady Said Mahomed, too, deprived of Said Mahomed's preference. The girl has him exclusively as her lover, I imagine. Being a widow and childless, she couldn't have expected to become the senior wife of a great match, and Said Mahomed is a very great match. The fact that she remains childless threatens her with permanent insignificance except as the toy of ardent moods. You say she seemed submissive?"

"Yes, strangely so. And yet not afraid, nor cowed. But surely her mind must rebel in anguish against so great a folly, so obvious a delusion? O Tony, I can't endure to sit here doing *nothing*, while that young strong woman is wronged without rescue. It is tragic."

A harsher note came into the Governor's voice. "I rather thought *you* held the theory that Englishmen ought to find perfect content in serving India according to Indian ideals and orders? However . . . That girl has been to school. Her mind has been informed and developed by western instruction. But I expect that her temperament is not fully released from the effect of centuries of wild will and dull thought. Those weeds of superstition grow in her home soil. Through Said Mahomed his household has touched political shibboleths. When the Khilafat movement shook his soul, the doors of it lay ajar to the Swaraj plea for the boycott of schools and hospitals. Her very education was suspect then as an evil incantation, and Lady Said Mahomed with her spinning-wheel stood for the ideal. God! what a perplexity! And now their husband is a Government man. But the girl has been thrust into a very religious family. When domestic tyranny bids her pray to Allah for a child, she dare not display a greater faith in a mere European doctor."

"You said there was a conspiracy," Gillian reminded him. "Political, Tony?"

"Not yet. Not yet. But a political torch if applied to inflammable women sets all ablaze. No: to-day the power of Lady Mahomed and the Indian officer's wife to hold their own and sway their husbands by the subtleties of zenana influence depends on a successful resistance to western education and the emancipation of women. If that girl sent for any doctor—a woman doctor is not forbidden by Mahomedan purdah custom—she might receive treatment which would enable her to have a child, therefore the other wife will use all guile in the name of religion to prevent that. And do you suppose the Jemadar's wife could maintain her false and sacred position once modern science gained a foothold within that family circle? No. So, in the name of God and the Prophet, those two women, stupefied by the purdah and their harsh pride, will subjugate the young thing and both the men to their own ends."

Gillian noticed a change in Nugent's face and voice, and exclaimed quickly, "It's the men who interest you!"

He gave a grimace. "Humph. The men come into contact with our actions, you see. The girl's first husband was an officer—she is probably a soldier's daughter—and the marvellous mother is an officer's wife. We and the army are one,—or God help India! That clever politician Said Mahomed and I have to combine and to co-operate. But their women are their own affair."

She speculated swiftly as to how much any woman could influence Anthony Nugent, but all she said aloud was, "I wonder if they believe their wives?"

"How can they?" he retorted. "Said Mahomed has culture. The Jemadar has seen the world on active

service. Both are accustomed to observe facts and weigh evidence. That old lady isn't going to have a baby, and I bet they know it as well as I do. Probably, however, they react to the women's religious fervour. And I expect they want a quiet life, Gill, and to avoid rows with their wives. They are diplomatic. Men are like that, you know, as a rule. Horrid people. Not a bit like you."

There was a silence during which she watched him play with his box of matches absent-mindedly. Presently he looked up at her and held out his hand. In a moment she was by his side clasping it. "You believe in the Virgin Birth, don't you, Gill?" he said.

"Yes," she whispered. "O, don't you, Tony?"

"I don't disbelieve," he answered, and kissed her hand and dropped it.

With the instinct of a bird she turned towards the sky, dark and decked with stars. Moving to the window, she stood there looking out, conscious only of the man she loved in the room behind her, and ignorant of the strange manifestations of spiritual energies brooding in the wide womb of the Punjab: shrines, pilgrimages, saints, and teachers. The village, called Gadian, sacred to a million followers of the Amadia movement, whose Mahomedan founder was one of a twin born on a Friday. The scattered members of the Arya Samaj cult which has its chief home in the Punjab, the majority of its members being sacred Brahmans, Twice Born. The deep well at arid Govindwal, built in the sixteenth century by the Sikh Guru, Amar Das, who carried water daily to his beloved predecessor, Guru Angad, from the river Beas to little Khadur Sahib, walking backwards over the rough ground for four grim miles. Mosques and temples and wayside tombs where lights burnt and chaplets of

jasmine and marigolds withered in the dust. The Province pondered these things in its restless heart.

Gillian's heart was struggling with pains hitherto unacknowledged. She came back to the edge of Nugent's table. "My uncle said to me once, on his last leave home before he was killed, that he always felt quite uncivilised when he staggered off a battlefield with what was left of his regiment. I think I feel rather bereft of sophisticated civilisation coming straight here from that little eastern zenana, Tony. As though I had touched older elements in nature and was, not demoralised exactly, but overtaken by hidden, unhappy, primitive things. How does one escape, I wonder!"

To which he puzzled her by saying, "Not much satisfaction in escaping alone, I expect. The communion of souls is a fact."

And at that she uttered an impetuous and heartfelt cry, her hands on his shoulders: "O, my dear, my dear. I tell you my soul is as disordered as Lady Said Mahomed's! I'm jealous, too, Tony. Jealous of another wife and mother!" She laid her cheek against his smooth hair. "I'm jealous of that little son of yours."

Quite definitely Nugent stiffened. "Young John is not robbing you of anything," he said. And she sensed his complete loyalty to his boy, his championship of his rights.

"I know I'm a fool!" she said, but she said it rebelliously. She left the room promptly, and she left it with a sense of defeat.

For a long time she paced up and down the floor of her bedroom planning victory. Anthony must share her political faith: only thus could she obliterate old loves, first things, vested interests.

AFTER the lapse of some weeks the influence of Said Mahomed's harem still worked deep in Gillian. She found herself thinking of Lady Said Mahomed as she thought of all conservative and orthodox people—that they must be in the wrong, but that their moral indignations and their fervent fidelities were derived from genuine love of what they sought to preserve, what they had tested and found good. Then, suddenly, she would realise with dismay that the Mahomedan matron was typical of the mass of secluded Mahomedan women in the Punjab. And she was forced to concede the sincerity of the claim that a true democrat must admit the sovereign rights of a majority. In the hush of the Lahore Cathedral, where she was conscious that the place was very empty and startled by the number of war memorials, her mind was apt to be invaded by the face of the barren women whose pride had attempted to triumph over nature, whose faith was stubborn as a desperate lie. But most often she thought of the thwarted girl to whom the presence of the British in India had meant the death of a husband in their wars, the imparting of a western education to her oriental mind in their schools, and the tantalising possibility of surgical aid at their hands. Gillian sent her books from time to time and received prim little notes of thanks. But she could not again propose herself as a visitor to the harem, and she received no invitation. She did not know that her visit had given offence to the household of Mr. Durga Das, the Brahman

Minister for Education. Why, inquired his fat little spouse, should the Governor's wife visit *first* the house of a Minister of a rival creed and population? When Gillian met Durga Das she thought him mild, bland, and artful, and was far less impressed by him than she had been by Said Mahomed. She did not like to invite herself to his home, and the invitation to Mr. and Mrs. Durga Das to dine at Government House was accepted only by the Minister, for Sita his wife was an uneducated woman and caste-bound. The breaking of bread with the British, or with any living soul but Brahmans, was intolerable to her.

In Madras, Bombay, Calcutta, or Simla, Gillian would have found a large number of Indian women, mostly Hindu and Parsee, free of the purdah and emancipated from caste restrictions, who were educated, influential, and conspicuous both socially and politically. But in Lahore the community of Punjab women of the intelligentsia was small. Gillian found that it was not true that Englishwomen held themselves aloof in a spirit of superiority. A little band of professional women—missionaries, doctors, schoolmistresses, and inspectresses of schools—was absorbed in duties which daily brought them into intimate contact with Indian women of all ages, castes, and creeds, both educated and uneducated. Many wives of officials in the Indian Civil Service were assiduous in their social intercourse with the wives of Indian judges, lawyers, and politicians, and with the wives of chiefs and landowners. The purdah club afforded a meeting place, and charitable schemes entailed committee work in common. Some wives of British officers in the Indian Army made efforts to become acquainted with the wives of Indian soldiers. Yet outside this intricate and often superficial intercourse

were the silent and mysterious millions who had never exchanged a word, a look, an idea with a British woman. It was towards this dense jungle of women that Gillian began to turn her searching, eager eyes.

Her interest in Punjab women had not passed unnoticed. Nothing that is the expression of an interest which may breed favour passes unnoticed in India. Nor was the knowledge that Gillian had been a labour M.P. insignificant to the Swarajists of the Punjab. They halted before the fact that her husband possessed authority over her, but they counted on her to weaken him just as they counted on the communists to infect the labour party.

The weekly mails from England brought her inquiry and exhortation. It appeared to be the mission of some of her correspondents to keep her up to the mark. They asked not only for subscriptions to labour funds, but for articles on the political situation in India. In so far as she was the wife of the Governor of the Punjab, all praise of the Administration from her pen would be suspect, but as a declared partisan of socialist principles every admission of imperfection, and all destructive criticism, would be of sufficient value to gain instant attention and credence. Her plea that she was as yet too ignorant, too bewildered, and too circumvented by her husband's official position to 'let herself go' was badly received. A rash and ill-considered statement would have been welcomed by extremists in London, provided it was suitable for propaganda and agitation against a regime which fell short of immediate and complete self-government for India.

Every day added to Gillian's popularity with the British community in Lahore and the cantonment. She was good at games, she gave herself no airs, her outlook

was youthful, her sympathies were personal and most definite. A subaltern's wife was obviously as important to Gillian as a commissioner's wife, and when she felt more affection for her that affection was demonstrative. To her gaiety and friendliness a very modern and youthful society was instantly responsive. This daily intercourse, so intimate and frank, wove a spell about Gillian : anything inimical to the welfare and hopes of those people took on the aspect of a betrayal, a treachery. The British majority was formed of soldiers and young women married to soldiers. Of these the seniors were conservatives by temperament, but some of the juniors professed a slight sympathy with the labour party. Yet their attitude to British politics was detached. They could not participate in elections by reason of their exile, and though the British Army was newly enfranchised and its political opinions were entitled to function in England by voting at the polls, its force was pledged to the support of whatever government was in power. The Indian Army reacted very slowly to the political responsibilities so recently laid upon Indian shoulders. The sepoys still looked to their British officers for guidance in all action, and Sahibs stood for obedience to orders and disclaimed political prejudices and sympathies. Many British officials of the Indian Civil Service and the Educational Service had a leaning towards liberal doctrines when they discussed British politics. What dismayed Gillian was the fact that most men she met said in so many words that they had no desire to meddle in politics, and that it was a 'dirty business,' while girls termed political discussion a futile bore. There were as many shades of opinion as there were persons. There were those who felt keenly, thought deeply, and expressed themselves tensely. More felt vaguely, considered little,

and spoke with emphasis. All officials and officers were greatly concerned with the immediate welfare of populations and military units in India, and with the efficiency of civil and military administration. There was an absence of government propaganda and political organisation. No political meetings were initiated by the British community. That community was ever good-humouredly critical of the Government of India, and it was extremely partisan as regards the Punjab. Officers of British regiments, however, preferred to serve in other provinces where the cost of living was less high, the summer heat less torturing, and sport infinitely superior. Taken as a whole, British officials and officers in Lahore were men who moved backwards and forwards between England and India frequently; they seldom prolonged their exile beyond four years at a stretch: their mentality was in no sense orientalised. A change between a pre-war and post-war British population was that jeeringly and briefly described as the Brain Wave. The Indian Civil Service as hitherto was admittedly a service of intellectual men. But after the Armistice and the weeding-out process which followed, the officers of the Army in India were men schooled by wide experience of many countries and diverse races in extraordinary circumstances. This education had been expanded by the Staff College and Senior Officers' School. Young Englishwomen came to India better educated if not better mannered than in 'the good old days.' The whole community could be divided between those merely familiar with Indian problems and with the broad aspect of local current events, and those intimate with inarticulate, inaccessible India and the languages which expressed its inmost thoughts. Roughly, nearly all Englishwomen, all newcomers, and the majority of

journalists, chaplains, merchants, and officers of British regiments belonged to the first category. Civil officials and British officers of the Indian Army, civil surgeons, and some missionaries belonged to the second after a few years' experience. All contributed to the ceaseless volume of comment on public affairs, but the latter spoke with authority and not as the scribes. Together they formed British public opinion in the Punjab, and they were unanimous only in their opposition to mutiny, revolution, political assassination, and bribery. In their view ideals, sincerely and emotionally advocated, did not sanctify political agitation which suggested or applauded conduct that led eventually to massacre, chaos, murder. Gillian, requiring no effort of the imagination to visualise husband and friends as victims, plumped for law and order.

Yet she was torn in two, for she wished to hasten the day when 'a free India' would govern herself. The transition period was one of which the less said the better: Gillian preferred to be very vague about it. The British population would depart in peace, no doubt, and cut its losses. Nothing so sordid as money could triumph over a righteous cause. Chivalrous British troops would embark with flying colours for the west. Probably some British officers would be 'lent' to the Government of India for the guidance and instruction of the Indian Army and police. But India might prefer Japanese instructors, or Germans, or citizens of the Irish Free State. There would be bloodshed and prolonged civil war in India, she feared. But freedom was ever bought at a price. All should be prepared to make some sacrifice: some great sacrifice. Pride must abdicate, privilege must be abolished, a Christian spirit must prevail. Then she would perforce remember

that she was seeing visions on behalf of Mahomedans and Hindus, and that Eurasians and Indian Christians were most unlikely to prevail even if they survived. She invoked the ancient civilisation of India and was confronted with the evidence of its present melancholy, its apathy, and its egotism in the souls of its millions. Indianisation as the cure for India resembled as a remedy that of a hair of the dog that bit her long ago.

Gillian was on the rack. She envied the people who cared for none of these things. She cared terribly. The flame that burnt in Crusaders, in the Renaissance, in the great explorers and adventurers, in the French Revolution, in the Sinn Feiners, kindled her. She did not want to care, she had no desire to make a cause, a creed, a world movement, the supreme object of her existence. And yet, willy-nilly, her imagination caught fire, her will dedicated itself; she conceived right and wrong as struggling for the mastery, and found her conscience ardently committed. But Anthony Nugent differed from her. There was the rub. She put him first. And he maintained that position: invincible and happy-go-lucky. Gillian, puzzling over the secret of his hold upon her heart, suddenly bethought her of the words with which the British people greet and praise famous men: 'For he's a jolly good fellow, for he's a jolly good fellow, for he's a jolly good fellow, and so say all of us!' Essentially British, that. Neither saint nor sage, nor crank, nor conqueror, but just a man who possessed reassuring neighbourliness of character and honesty of reputation. It was not thus that Gillian described Anthony to herself; she found him incomparably dignified and exciting; but if she had heard the queer old chorus hail him, she would have lifted her

voice to thrill with her heart in the swing of the song, carried away and happy.

But she could not get on with the story which was to record their history. Events refused to supply her with material. Around her pressed clusters of delightful English people blotting out the Punjab. She spent her days in a gay routine which served to magnify the social influence of Government House. *Vis-à-vis* with each other, the British could not lose sight of British principles, British toleration, British prejudice, and British needs. The women saw to it that home life survived. *Esprit de corps* was strong. Nowhere could the Sahib-log rely on the safety of numbers. A Belgian missionary spoke to Gillian of the splendid domestic isolation maintained by her countrymen and women: isolation which no Latin race had preserved in South America and which Portugal and Holland had failed to attain in India, Ceylon, and Java. It was, he said, a remarkable fact that the British adventure which began in 1608 had ever carried in its heart its romantic courtship of English girlhood, so that after more than three hundred years there were only a hundred and thirteen thousand people of mixed blood in India. It seemed to Gillian that this good priest—celibate and a foreigner—pointed out to her a duty which was part of her birth-right: the duty of home-making so that men should turn after the day's work to the spirit of the hearth, nor stray after strange women in city and bazaar. For a moment she saw a vision of girls on the golf-links, girls watching polo, girls dancing in the Lawrence Hall, girls withdrawing under the moon to bungalows and hotels,—all unmindful of India, but fated to preserve the fire of English love, the individuality and dignity of English marriage, in far

lands washed by tropic seas. And, instinctively, she applauded.

She was almost startled by the Belgian's sudden exclamation, drawn from him by a certain remoteness in her eyes, an absent-mindedness in her manner: "Ah, you English, you English! Do you recognise what you English are to this land, Lady Nugent? 'Ow they wonder about you, and talk about you, oppose you, fear you? You are the spirit that influences everything here. More than money, more than women, more than learning. It is a fascination of power; most strange."

So, all through November, Gillian Nugent swayed this way and that way in response to the attractions of the British community, the interest of Indian politics and secrets, and her private adoration of the Governor of the Punjab. Then something happened. She met Prem Kaur, the wife of Narain Singh, a Sikh pleader, and through Prem Kaur she met Narain Singh and his friend Tota Ram, the newly appointed editor of *The Good News*. Upon these encounters events began to move more quickly.

Gillian walked blindly into a web. The preparation of her mind and emotions consisted in the long weeks of increasing curiosity, whetted by her visit to Said Mahomed's harem; the fact of her bewilderment and conflicting sympathies; and in the stimulant of some hours spent with Nugent which sent her to a purdah party triumphant, strong, and spellbound.

Anthony met in the morning a tall, striking-looking man, who left Gillian's sitting-room with precipitation and ran hard against Anthony's shoulder in the passage. The Governor recognised him as a cavalry officer from the United Provinces who was to play polo for his regiment in the Lahore tournament. But the visitor had no

recognition of his host. With a muttered apology and unabated haste he stalked away, displaying an indignation calculated to impress the meek. Nugent stared after him, then entered the room and found his wife standing in front of her fire looking very firm indeed.

"That fellow, who was here just now, has no use for me," Nugent remarked mildly. "What have you been up to, young woman?"

"Chasing a wild goose out of the house," she answered, with a rueful smile that puckered her red mouth into a crossly rolled-up bud.

"Oho? At this time of day, too. Marvellous." He sat down on a sofa and regarded her with a broad and friendly smile. "You don't like birds of that feather, Gill?"

"Not much," she answered.

"Good," he said heartily. "You look thoroughly ferocious. But how did you let yourself in for this?"

"I didn't. It just happened all of a sudden," she told him frankly.

And there the matter ended except for a satisfactory growl from the sofa to the effect that Nugent would have liked to kick the intruder for his impudence. But Gillian felt rather excited because her husband was demonstrating such an intense personal interest in her.

He continued to do so. "How shall you spend the rest of the day? You're in extra good form, evidently."

She told him she was due at a party at the purdah club at four o'clock, and he made a wry face. "Poor girl . . . but I believe you'll find something in it. You're so wonderfully keen. Well, what about an afternoon off for me? To hell with public affairs! It is time I looked after my lovely wife. Make yourself beautiful, and I'll take you to the Zoo."

They drove there by his order in the state camel carriage. This transformed existence into a weird ceremony. The high carriage, painted black, canopied, and fashioned like a narrow char-à-banc, swung out of the grounds past the Pathan guard—Pathans had replaced Mahrattas—with two resplendent scarlet-clad servants on the box and six gorgeously decked camels ridden by turbaned sowars seated on leopard skins. The camels stalked through the world swiftly, their lurching shadows darkening the pale dust, while the people salaamed to the Lord Sahib, who for once went in splendour. Gillian realised her own strangeness then to the full: those gaunt animals were not tame to her hand, their dark riders were alien to her, and she was no rival to the Englishman who sat beside her looking down on slow bullock cart, swift motor, and plodding wayfarer with that friendly reassuring glance of his, as though he pacified a people. By no stretch of the imagination could she substitute herself for him as Governor. Here she was all wife, all feminine. Cinderella in her pumpkin coach with its white mice did not go more fantastically than Gillian with wild beasts and wild men and a ruler, who treated her as though she were something of a fairy perched beside him, a little eager face peeping out of a high fur collar.

“Now for the lions, Gill,” he said as they reached the Zoo. “No magic would ever make you mistake a wild goose for a lion. Wise woman. We’ll see everything but the snakes. They frighten me to death.”

They wandered through the Zoo together, the keepers and the public all agog to watch and follow him. The animals were very restless, and the brown-skinned folk, whose slow brown eyes watched their shifty brown eyes, seemed to stir in them a distrust and antagonism.

“Queer things here, Gill,” Nugent said. “Lots to be learnt from seeing that poor beast in the cage and that countryman outside his bars. The Hindu and his like in India fall prey to the panther, the leopard, and the tiger: get eaten, you know—reversing our pleasanter, personal touch with sheep. It’s on their minds, for the generations that bred ’em have never been immune from that danger. And the Hindu has reincarnation whispering to his nerves. He puts himself literally in the tiger’s place,—to-morrow if he die to-night. That’s an odd notion to have in your head when you visit the Zoo for fun. Then there’s the element of religious worship: different stuff from being fond of animals. It’s not in the sportsman’s fibre. Monkeys and cobras and crocodiles and peacocks have a sacred position to keep up, I assure you. Yet there’s nothing here—in this beautiful, fierce animal life—to touch Stevens’ dog George for fidelity and affection. Let’s go home to George.”

But Gillian stood her ground, enthralled. “Wait a moment, Tony. I want to take it all in. The captivity and the fear, the awe and the imagined doom. I can feel it haunting their very breath. You give me a shiver down my back.”

“No, don’t shiver,” Nugent said, quite gravely. “Laugh here. That’s what does them good, man and creature alike. It exorcises passion in the man,—and it helps to mark the distance he’s travelled. You can make those wild beasts hungry, thirsty, terrified, angry, and sorrowful, but you can’t make ’em laugh. But it is time you smiled upon your caged ladies, I’m afraid. So hurry up.”

As they left the Zoological Gardens, Gillian said to herself: ‘He likes me to be merry. I must be in earnest without seeming too serious. A long face would bore

and vex him.' So she chatted gaily, and Nugent rewarded her by his obvious pleasure.

"This is as good as a play!" she cried to him as the crowd which had gathered to see the Governor drive away stared and salaamed. "I feel like a circus!"

Through a little cloud of cigarette smoke she watched his face grow gentle. "Darling, be tender-hearted towards these Punjabis. An uneducated low-caste man who regards the cow as holy has inherited a great humility. Sometimes on his poor diet it makes him timid and servile and superstitious. But a man's a man for all that. Don't grudge him his pageant, his circus. Don't sneer if he bows to a strong government. He may well need to bow to a man for the sake of his manhood. The Brahman incarnates sacred humanity to the Hindu. But the Brahman insists on the worship of the cow, and she neither governs man nor enlightens him. So it isn't altogether against the grain in a sturdy northern rustic to find another outlet for his imagination in a Sahib who masters him with due authority, without reference to that speechless mistress of his soul, the cow, and who tells him he's a fine fellow."

At the door of Government House a motor was waiting to take Gillian to the purdah club. The camels slowly dragged the empty state carriage away, and the sowars sat slackly as though they had again lost touch with society and were off now to a wilderness and belonged once more to the eastern caravan.

Nugent squeezed Gillian's hand as he put her into the motor. "It is the greatest fun having you in Lahore, Gill. You make me think of all sorts of entertaining things. Said Mahomed does not. Nor Prosser either, confound him. You're a beguiling imp!"

So she drove away very confident of all adventure

being fine, all intercourse generous. And the first woman to attract her attention was Prem Kaur, subtle, venomous, very deadly, but gifted with brains and charm.

Prem Kaur was the daughter of a Sikh lawyer in Amritsar city. She had been educated for four years in England, and when eighteen married Narain Singh, to whom she was betrothed in childhood. Her three sisters had married Jat Sikh zemindars, and were sturdy women, calm and persistent, with pleasant manners and ignorant minds. No money had been spent on their education, and they shared nothing with their sister but vigorous motherhood. Prem Kaur was a successful young woman : her vanity had been played upon and her ambition stimulated since she was very young. Indian children are seldom disciplined, yet they early acquire grave and respectful manners, for they are not isolated in nurseries, but are for ever under the feet of their courteous elders, who treat them with a matter-of-fact politeness in conversation, and do not hesitate to strike a heavy blow when angered. Obedience, a complete lack of shyness, and a clear brain rendered Prem Kaur docile and susceptible to the suggestions of her father, who had determined to make of her a political tool. Flattery was given to her in unstinting measure, and her egotism was never thwarted. It was desirable that she should consider herself chosen, precious, enlightened. In time she became like a jet of steam. England's grey skies were hateful to her, but they freed her from malaria, and wholesome fare nourished her strong body. At school excuses were made for her, special interest was taken in her ; Prem Kaur became more and more a law unto herself. She held forth to English girls on the superiority of Hindus, on the art

and learning and virtue of India, and they listened without retaliation, fascinated. Prem Kaur was solemnly betrothed already, and she was very knowing: small wonder little girls were bashfully impressed. The mistresses fell victims to her powers of flattery, and accepted with expressions of regret and condemnation her denunciations of the lives of frivolous Englishwomen in India and the proud tyranny of British officials. When she falsely declared that the conduct of the British community in her country was such that her first yearnings towards Christianity had been shocked and disillusioned beyond repair, she gave the Head a firm political belief in the righteousness of Swaraj, which she never lost. During her last six months in England, Prem Kaur attended lectures in London, haunted the most sensational film dramas, and talked passionately with students. She was put in touch with some political Englishwomen whose sympathy with an Indian feminine movement towards emancipation was strong enough to make them condone the most extreme sedition. To such the paternal government of India prior to 1919 was anathema: they saw in it drastic male supremacy, and could not see the wood because of that tree. But Prem Kaur's demand for adulation rather rubbed these partisans the wrong way: and she gave some less gratitude and admiration than they could have accepted, because every instinct in her despised and condemned such of them as were spinsters. Yet to them she emphasised the fact that she, too, was an adult unmarried woman, hinting at domestic persecution and a spirited refusal to yield to ancient custom, though at school she had claimed the prestige of one already desired and precious. No one was better than Prem Kaur at having things both ways. On her return to India she was married,

and all the best in her conformed to the ideal of a submissive Indian wife to Narain Singh. But she twisted him round her finger, made him spend money on her comforts, talked incessantly about herself, and proved that she was blessed among women by giving birth to two sons.

Having tasted the sweets of abiding power as wife and mother, she then offered herself eagerly to the task for which she had been perfected, and her house began to open its doors to Indian students. For a year she used her arts, her beauty, and her energy to influence them, till Englishmen engaged in educating Punjab youth began to hear of her, and Indian instructors began to fear her, while Englishwomen who were doctors and welfare workers and inspectresses of schools knew some very queer tales about her. All connected with the Law Courts knew Narain Singh, and of late they had recognised the fact that he was swayed by a brilliant wife. Prem Kaur had just penetrated the consciousness of the Powers that Be when Gillian Nugent met her at the purdah club. The Englishwomen present, with the exception of Priscilla Neville, had formed no opinion on her save that she was really pretty, a perfect picture.

To Gillian, who sailed perilously on uncharted seas buoyed up as though by an intense *saltness*, by the savour of love in her life, the vision of Prem Kaur gave a shock of acute pleasure. Here in Prem Kaur was her dream of a lovely, intelligent, and welcoming Indian woman! Here was nothing subservient, for Prem Kaur was dominant, proud. She was a shimmering thing: her pale skin had the gleam of ivory; her raven hair, nearly concealed by her red sari, had the gloss of a blackbird's wing; when her vermilion lips parted there was a flash of white teeth. Long eyelashes could not soften the

hard glitter of her excited eyes. Her very nails shone, and her red dress sparkled with gold embroidery. She wore bright gold shoes, and diamonds flashed in her ears and on her neck. And she was eloquent of word and gesture like a brilliant bird that soared and sang on gay wings till the sky quivered. The Englishwomen in their tweeds looked dull beside her.

Gillian found herself claimed by Prem Kaur, given to understand that common political friends in England had heralded this meeting by letters, and that her coming was a great event. For the first time since she landed in India, Gillian had the sense of complete recognition: her own work, her own record, her own standing were greeted as well as her marriage and the unique position it gave her in Lahore. She stood for a long time talking to the lawyer's wife, unconscious of the comment and jealousy that stirred through Brahman minds and in the breasts of Mahomedan Begums. It was Prem Kaur who broke off the conversation at last: "It is like life to me to speak of the things that really matter," she said, with an appealing eagerness. "But you have many people to talk to this afternoon; and probably we shall not meet again for many months. I come so seldom to this club."

"You must come to Government House and talk to me there," Gillian said.

"Ah, but at official parties there is no real talk! And there are more senior people who must be invited first," sighed Prem Kaur. She made a tragic gesture. "You will never be able to know us really."

Something stubbornly independent rose in Gillian. "There should be very little difficulty," she said. "Shall you be at home to-morrow if I go to tea with you?"

Prem Kaur would certainly be at home. Very cleverly she cried, "And I can show you my babies!" As they

parted she murmured something that delighted Gillian : —“ It is all true what we heard of you. I feared it was too good to be true.”

Gillian moved here and there among the crowd of Punjab ladies, whose voices made a raucous chorus. They were not drooping, imprisoned in a twilight, but assertive, vigorous. She was met with smiles and courtesy, though deep in their reticent natures they preferred the wife of the General Sahib, because she showed herself friendly only to the loyal. They knew where they were with Priscilla, who was as definite as a Defence of the Realm Act. Gillian found her in conversation with a Hindu and a Mahomedan ; burly women and emphatic talkers.

They discussed divorce. “ It cannot be. Never can such a thing be,” affirmed the Hindu, who if widowed would regard herself as quick who should be dead : one being with the dead, and surviving only in the grosser elements of nature.

“ *They* do it,” said the Mahomedan, indicating Priscilla. “ It is their custom. There is no disgrace.”

“ There *is* disgrace,” declared Priscilla. “ It cannot be done without sin.”

“ Never, never can such a thing be,” reiterated the Hindu stolidly.

The Mahomedan blandly disregarded this. “ Without doubt it is sometimes necessary.” She turned to Priscilla. “ But, Huzoor, with the Sahib-log is it not a great foolishness ? My people marry without knowing each other : therefore sometimes there is such dislike that the unhappiness is too great and then divorce is good. But with your people it is different ; knowing each other and consenting, they marry,—why, then, do they afterwards desire to be divorced ? ”

“Divorce is only given for unfaithfulness,” Priscilla growled.

“Ah!” said both Indian women with a deep breath, as though they had wrested this from her after great exertion and now pondered the statement with appreciation.

“Such dishonourable women would not be received by the Queen,” said Priscilla, who had a spirit that would never say die.

The women exclaimed again, and the Hindu said courteously: “In no race are all women virtuous.”

“That is true,” conceded the Mahomedan.

Gillian, watching them, was struck by the calm of all three; theirs was not an agitating intercourse. She wondered what was the secret of their peace. When she questioned Priscilla she was told that they agreed to differ. “Our three creeds make us differ fundamentally in our social customs and standards: we meet, but we can’t mix, socially. It is not a question of manners,” said Priscilla bluntly.

When Gillian drove back to Government House the moon was shining. She was alive only to the fact that she was going home to Anthony, and that to-day he found her very fair.

Beyond Anarkalli, in Narain Singh’s dark house, Prem Kaur talked late to half a dozen students. She was emotional, exciting, very bitter. “If I were a man,” she cried, “I would die rather than let the world think me fit only to salaam to Europeans. But before I died I would rid India of at least one insolent British tyrant. Murder is no crime when it is a sacrifice for the good of Indian peoples. It is terrible to me to see Indian men so docile. Sikhs are no longer sons of lions!”

"WHERE 's my wife?" inquired Nugent next day.

"Gone to tea with some Indian lady, sir," replied young Stevens.

And on Gillian's return all that Nugent said was: "I hear you 've been up to high jinks behind the purdah again. Enjoyed yourself, Gill?"

To which she answered: "Yes, I loved it. But she was not a purdah woman, and she is very pretty and very clever."

"Oho, you make us envious: doesn't she, Stevens?" said Nugent lightly.

Stevens responded with gloom. "I 've never seen a pretty one, sir," and there the matter rested.

Gillian had been very happy in Narain Singh's house. The bungalow lacked distinction and mystery. It stood, blatant and commonplace, in a bare little compound. The wheel of the Persian well set up a moaning as it turned drowsily, as though the cradle song of Narain Singh, pleader, still murmured to him of his boyhood as a yeoman's son in the Tarn Taran tahsil, where earth and water were the powers that most concerned man and beast. Inside the house there was no evidence of taste, but Prem Kaur's drawing-room showed an aptness for imitation. It might have been the sitting-room of any Girton girl, with small means and middle-class aspirations. In Prem Kaur's kingdom her western education was demonstrated with a self-conscious air. She looked very wonderful in a gold sari and rose tunic.

Her small sons, with their uncut hair in pigtailed, their little blunt innocent faces, and round eyes darkened by khol, were simply adorable. Their salutations had all the attraction of their baby gravity and top-heavy action; the youngest upset himself noiselessly, and sprawled, a chubby round heap, upon the floor, repeating, "Sat siri kāl, Lady Sahib!" like a clockwork toy. Gillian was captivated, and she and Prem Kaur played with the funny mites for half an hour. During that time she saw the best in young Prem Kaur, the genuine motherhood in her. The Sikh radiated love when she touched her sons or spoke to them, and the picture that she made, with her supple strength and graceful draperies, holding her picturesque babies in her arms, detached itself from the background of chintz-covered chairs, and white enamelled book-shelves, and incarnated for Gillian the beauty and the vitality and the deep emotions of Punjab homes. Seeing Prem Kaur thus, she took her to her heart. Nor when the children were carried away by a venerable greybeard did Prem Kaur disclose any opinion or sentiment that could alienate Gillian. She seemed to taboo politics as a topic by crying out to her guest: "You are so different from most Englishwomen who are interested in our difficulties! They see us only as political problems. But you make me feel that you know I am a woman like yourself,—that you realise I have a home and a husband and children!"

"Don't you care about politics?" asked Gillian, checked.

"I care," answered the Sikh woman, with lowered lids. "I am proud that I am Indian and Sikh. But I have also the interests of my own personal life." Her little brown nostrils expanded with her breath as though her egotism scented such a sentence for her like a flower.

And then she used her art of flattery, adjusting the dose to the truth-loving pride she discerned in Gillian Nugent : " In my personal life of wife and mother I am happy except for one thing,—we will not speak of that one thing to-day or you would be unhappy, too, because of my pain. But in my social life as Prem Kaur who has been in England I am without content, because my mind is restless and has no companionship here. That is why it is such a joy just to sit and look at you. You have the splendid English look, and I miss my English friends."

" There are other Englishwomen here——" began Gillian.

" Yes, but their friendship is spoilt for me because I always think that perhaps their husbands do not like my husband," said Prem Kaur adroitly. " I do not know, but with the doubt in my mind I cannot be at ease. My husband is an honest Sikh, very straight and proud, and he will not bow down to any one, and some of the officials cannot endure criticism or any opposition. But I have heard my husband greatly praise the Governor, so I think he must be a very just man and above all pettiness."

" Yes, he is," said the Governor's wife promptly.

" Ah, that is wonderful for you!" murmured Prem Kaur. " The English have many happy marriages. In that Christianity has taught you much happiness. The Sikhs also have great joy in their homes, and with the education of women it will increase. The Mahomedans in India are more ignorant and their women are much oppressed. How cruel is the purdah to Mahomedan women! It is sad that for political reasons the Government stirs up trouble between Hindus and Mahomedans, so that for fear of each other they cannot

unite in the emancipation of all women from seclusion and superstition. So much could be done if mutual suspicion were not fomented."

"I cannot believe Government foments it," declared Gillian.

Prem Kaur gave a disarming smile. "You would never approve of such things. You would unite us all. My fear is that you will have no time for us. I feel that perhaps out of all the coming years I shall only have you once with me like this, and so I would rather talk of what will please you than what will fill you with regrets. India should be hospitable to you."

"I can't see why we should not meet often," remonstrated Gillian, who felt that she could spend many afternoons looking at this lovely creature and hearing Indian sentiments in an Indian home. 'This is the *real* thing,' she thought triumphantly.

"Others will need you. India will never have the good luck to really know you. India is not a lucky land, and the Punjab is the least fortunate province—such illness, such poverty, such loneliness! Madras and Bombay would have many educated Indian friends for you, but here in Lahore you will always be with the English. I shall look and long for you, but it will never be!"

"It shall be," Gillian said firmly. "I love my English friends, but I want Indian friends too."

"You cannot want them as much as they want you!" sighed Prem Kaur, whereupon Gillian made an engagement to have tea with her again in a few days' time.

"Will it be permitted?" urged Prem Kaur. "The Governor's wife has to keep herself above us all, and no one tells her the truth."

That clinched matters, of course: Gillian would be

different from that. "I suppose it is having been in Parliament that makes you different?" Prem Kaur suggested. "You will acquire great influence among us. I can tell you that already. But I think if I were you I would go and have a good time among the English, and not bother about us Indians. Why should you sacrifice yourself to our need?" She made a little light-hearted gesture as tribute to the other's youth.

"Because my husband is the Governor," answered Gillian, with a misgiving that it sounded rather priggish.

"Englishwomen have a great sense of duty," Prem Kaur declared. "But here they generally show it only towards each other, or to the sick and the poor. You are the first who has shown it to such of us as have been educated in your country and learnt to have minds of our own!" She broke off her personal remarks and, turning eagerly to the books which lined a third of the wall, she began to ask Gillian if she had read this and that. For the next twenty minutes she proved herself to be well informed, appreciative and full of curiosity. Gillian was stimulated by her brilliance and by her complete absence of sophisticated boredom. "I read many of your novels," cried Prem Kaur. "I read them for their romance. Here we have none. None. Before marriage there is no love, and afterwards just passion. Sometimes there is intrigue, but generally there is a strict life, and children bring affection and joy. Only there is no romance. I read every word of a proposal—O, to hear such words spoken! You are fortunate to have that in your lives. To me it is like a fairy story."

But it seemed to Gillian that life could not be prosaic for a woman like Prem Kaur, who at the last said, "And now I will make you an Indian farewell!" and bent her rose and gold in a deep salaam, and then flung a

heavily scented garland of jasmine over Gillian's head. Flowers, perfume, colour, and a grace that was poetic—these were the charms which held Gillian Nugent as she parted from Prem Kaur, political agitator.

The next day Gillian discovered she must cancel her engagement with the Sikh woman, for it dawned upon her that the Governor would then be on tour in the Jhelum division, and she intended to accompany him. Bourdillon took her aback by saying he had no instructions to make arrangements for her presence in the Governor's camp. Off she went to Nugent's office and broke in upon him after tea. He saw her with surprise. It always rather astonished him to be interrupted, and without ceremony; but he showed no irritability. It seemed Gillian was like that; she couldn't see why not. So he said: "You! Yes? Wait a minute, will you?" And she perched herself on the arm of a chair and waited, while he went on writing.

She watched him, and his face reminded her of the day he had made his state entry into Lahore. It had worn the same expression then of concentrated energy and will. The higher he was raised the deeper his spirit went, she thought.

Suddenly he moved his shoulders impatiently. "Must you watch me?" he ejaculated, without looking up. His pen went on moving across the foolscap paper.

Gillian beat a retreat into the depths of an armchair and sat there, mortified, but urging herself to be reasonable. Presently he put down his pen and wheeled round his chair. "Yes?" he said.

"I'm so sorry I disturbed you," she began.

"Officials are stuffy brutes, and you're an angel who takes them unawares," he remarked cheerfully. "I wanted to finish the draft of a reply which I shall have

to make to the District Soldiers' Board's address at Jhelum. Well?"

"It is only that I think there must be some muddle. Of course I am going to Jhelum with you, and Major Bourdillon seems to think I'm not."

"Humph!" Nugent began to sharpen a pencil. "Is the fat in the fire? Are you annoyed about it?"

"Good gracious, Tony, *of course* not!" she cried. "I only want to settle things definitely."

"Well, I think it is settled that I go alone this time," he said mildly.

"O!" Gillian ejaculated, looking very blank. "But why? I shan't hamper your work, and I want to see more of the Punjab than Lahore."

"All in good time," he assured her in pleasant tones. "I shall be going to Multan after Christmas, and you can come then. I shall only remain at Jhelum itself for the 3rd and 4th December, and then I move to Pind Dadan Khan, and do a short tour in the Salt Range. I'll be at it hard all day for a fortnight. There is no point in your coming."

"Except that I should enjoy it. I want to go," she urged.

"Better amuse yourself here. You've got a lot to do. Stay and keep the home fires burning," he said, and appeared about to dismiss the subject and turn again to his work.

"Is there any *real* reason why I can't go with you?" Gillian demanded.

He played deliberately with a paper-knife as he answered, "Just that I think it better to go alone this time." His tone suggested that that settled the matter.

And then it flashed into her mind,—the 3rd December was the date written under Violet Nugent's photograph.

"15th June 1909-3rd December 1912." The date of their wedding in England and the date of her death in Jhelum, where she was buried. Anthony wished to spend the anniversary alone, and to visit her grave alone. He was within his rights: more than that, he was honouring his dead wife's rights. And she, Gillian, was for the moment put away, given second place. She flared up in silence, finding misery in what she told herself was a brief repudiation. Yet she was dumbfounded; conscious that generosity, decency, frank commonsense demanded her acceptance of the situation without ridiculous display of grief or grievance. For five minutes she sat frozen in the chair fighting with herself, and confronting her own jealousy with a drastic condemnation. Then Nugent precipitated domestic disaster by a rather curt question flung over his shoulder. "Not sulking about it, are you, Gill?"

"What nonsense! There's nothing to sulk about," she said, and to her dismay her voice broke on the last word. When he turned in surprise to look at her he seemed to turn on her tears. She sat there, lips aquiver, saying furiously to herself, 'O, what a fool I am about Tony!'

He continued to regard her this time with very definite criticism. "What a funny sort of thing to make a scene about," he said gently.

The word 'scene' exasperated her. "This is *not* a scene," she jerked at him.

"Is it a quarrel?" he inquired in the same detached way.

At that Gillian fired up. "You need not be so superior about it. It is something you don't understand in the least." And two tears rolled down her cheeks.

"No, it beats me entirely," he admitted slowly. "I

simply cannot imagine why you have to cry, or how you can let yourself cry over nothing. Is there anything troubling you that I don't know about?"

"Yes and no," she said. "Something it would be useless to discuss. I'm sensitive, and . . ." she broke off.

"Sensitive?" he echoed. "Most of us are that, you know. At the suggestion that I make my wife cry I feel uncommonly sensitive. But I don't know what to do about it. It looks to me like sheer folly, and that's not a thing to . . . to back up. I'd like to help, Gill, but I don't quite know how. You women are so strange."

She openly wiped away her tears. "I'm sorry. It is all my fault," she acknowledged.

"I wonder," he muttered. Neither softened nor estranged, she thought, but just puzzled.

"And I wonder, Tony," she cried, weakly and with passion, "what would have happened to you and me if your Violet had lived and we had met?" She held her breath at her own insanity.

Nugent thought, 'So *that's* it again!' Aloud he vouchsafed: "Impossible to say, isn't it? And it is hardly playing the game to make a speculation such as that the test of what happens between us now."

They both fell silent, and then he got up and told her, "I love Violet. Always shall." He walked over to Gillian and took her by her two hands, and, yielding, she let him pull her to her feet. When she stood opposite him he said, "And I love you." At that he kissed her with a sudden fierce intensity.

Gillian whispered, penitent, "Never mind about Jhelum. I understand," and got herself out of the room as best she could. This was the second time she

had displayed the weakness of her jealousy, and she feared that Anthony would not quickly forget it. On neither occasion had he made any concession to it, though he had been patient and quite considerate.

'I'll have this out with myself now,' declared Gillian in her bedroom. She forced herself to realise that Anthony Nugent and Violet had been one, even as he and she were one now. She pictured his love for his first wife, and his demonstration of it. His grief when he lost her was not less than mental agony, she knew. And all that experience was still part of Anthony Nugent. Though like a magnet she had drawn his love towards herself, she had not separated his memory from Violet, nor torn her from his heart. 'I ought not to desire such a thing,' Gillian sighed. Yet she was tormented by the thought of Anthony, faithful, soon to stand by his wife's grave in Jhelum. 'If he wishes her alive again, and longs for the touch and the sight and the sound of her, that longing banishes me and all that I am,' she told herself. 'If at all costs he would keep me his, it implies that she no longer holds the supreme place in his heart.'

For a while Gillian savoured these speculations, and then with an impatient gesture she pushed them away from her as idle, morbid, and unworthy. 'That I feel like this about it, and am idiot enough to betray my weakness to Anthony twice, shows there is something wrong,' she acknowledged. For too long she had shirked examining the question, but now she admitted that her adoration of her husband lacked wisdom and therefore lacked dignity. 'I am besotted about him. That is why I make a fool of myself,' Gillian confessed.

Angrily she sought to find the right line of recovery. 'I've let myself become too emotional,' she decided.

'I require some stiff mental work to develop my backbone. Something quite apart from Tony.' Gillian thought with a pang that it must be awful to live with a person who was exalted to bliss, or cast into despair, by your caress, your mood, your word: 'Yet that is what I am like with him, and I am afraid he knows it.' Such a loss of proportion on her part defrauded him of the right value inherent in the ordinary trifles of everyday life, overtaxed his powers of delighting her, and penalised too heavily his omissions or criticisms. In the long run he would have to insist upon his independence of her emotions, or nothing spontaneous in him would survive his anticipation of her pounce of joy and the outcry of her disappointment.

Gillian analysed all the possibilities in her life in Lahore. She must, of course, fulfil adequately her social rôle as Governor's wife. Playing the game implied keeping all the rules as laid down by tradition. There would be difficulties, but she knew the ropes, was lucky in her personal relationships, and did not worry much about the inevitable fluctuations of popularity. Nugent applauded her success, and she intended to keep him applauding. What she needed was something so interesting that she pursued it for its own sake, free from the obsession of her feeling for her husband. She must find a definite interest, something that would impel her to do and dare. Gillian rejected the suggestion of Said Mahomed's household: that episode had come and gone like a scene of a cinema play. She would be foolish to let such transitory adventures defraud her of a real task. Prem Kaur offered something superior to that, and would prize continuity in their relationship. It seemed to Gillian that if she developed her personal touch with Prem Kaur, she could utilise all her old

enthusiasms and ideals. 'It would be worth while,' she decided. 'And I should be standing on my own feet.' The prospect soothed her and restored her self-respect, which was much wounded by the ridiculous figure she thought she had cut for some time, 'Always running after Anthony like a little dog after its master.' Upon their scene in his office that afternoon she could not endure to let her thoughts dwell. 'I'd no business in there at all,—bothering a busy man!' Gillian admitted. 'I'm always worrying about being second best in Tony's life.'

She found her patience cards after a long search. Playing with them might distract and tranquillise her. She cleared a table, drew it to the fire, and began to concentrate on the game. After a while she yawned and grew restless. She wondered whether Anthony would spend his usual half-hour with her before it was time to dress for dinner. It was doubtful, she thought, because, like all men, he hated to be made to feel embarrassed and uncomfortable. Nevertheless, she discarded her woollen clothes and adorned herself with a new wrapper of silver tissue. Lest he should avoid her from fear to find her in the depths of woe, she turned on the gramophone in her sitting-room and left the communicating door open. Then she sat by the cards again, absent-minded.

Her heart gave a quick leap when the handle turned and Nugent entered. She looked up at him across the cards, and thought what a personal gift he had of making his approach an exciting thing. It was impossible to remain indifferent. How did he manage to intensify interest to such a pitch? She could not answer the question. He had some quality that escaped her definition.

"Telling our fortunes, Gill?" he asked.

She shook her head. "I'm playing patience."

"Sounds demure," Nugent remarked. "What's that jolly tune?"

"Don't you know it?" She rose and floated hither and thither across the parquet floor, humming it. "It's 'Where the Lazy Daisies grow.'"

The long mirror on the wall and the looking-glass on her dressing-table caught the reflection of her swaying silver draperies and her silver-shod feet. The room seemed filled by her grace. Nugent watched her, thinking, 'Odd thing to be a woman, and send a man's senses adrift. Pity there are not more lively wives like Gillian.' She extended her white arms to him. "O, it's lovely. Come and dance it, Tony!"

"I'm no good at this!" he growled, but yielded, and soon the room held them circling in a rhythm that was oddly satisfying to each. Nugent seemed to himself to have escaped from rule and convention, and to be secretly laughing with all his physical energy at the personal honeymoon of life and the fun of it.

The tune ran down, their feet halted. He held her a second longer in his arms, with her ardent face tantalisingly close and lifted to his. "Cry-baby!" he muttered reproachfully, with amused eyes. Gillian made a shy little grimace, and he released her. She heard him whistling in his dressing-room, and nodded to herself once or twice, thinking wistfully: 'Yes, I can please Tony and draw him very close that way. But I could never keep it up. It is only by fits and starts that just being petted satisfies me.'

They gave a formal dinner-party that night, and Gillian wondered whether the thrill in their private life still tingled in Anthony as it did in her; where it was

as intimate to her mood as the tune of the "Lazy Daisies" running still in her head was to her memory. She dreaded that Nugent had dismissed it from his mind like a man who had played in the nursery with his children, and then turned to a serious and important task. He was so utterly unself-conscious that no contrast such as Nugent the lover and Nugent the host presented was apparent to him or could disconcert him, she thought.

Prosser, immensely admiring his hostess, caught her looking at her husband, and said to her in confidential tones: "I don't wonder you like to watch him."

A little taken aback, she laughed and acknowledged, "Well, yes, I suppose I do!"

"He looks the part," wheezed good Prosser. "And what's more, he always makes an impression when he speaks. Been discussed and quoted in India ever since I can remember. By the Indians as much as by us: or more. Probably more. But what makes my blood boil—wonder it doesn't give me apoplexy—is the accusations levelled at the man in the vernacular press."

A sudden pause in general conversation made this last remark audible to all, and Prosser's stare at the Governor gave it its personal application.

Nugent met him squarely with good humour: "Damaging my reputation in my wife's eyes, eh, Prosser?"

"I was going to tell her, sir, that you are not so black as you 're painted."

A senior staff officer said with disgust: "The things they'll believe—arrested men tortured, injured men buried alive, poisoned food, and deadly snakes introduced into prisoners' cells!"

Whereupon young Stevens, his eyes round with astonishment, exclaimed, "What—all off his own bat?"

There was a shout of laughter, and Prosser explained, "Not single-handed. But they bring the guilt home to him by implying that such measures have his approval."

Gillian gave a little cry of indignation. She noted, with sudden wonder, the vivacious faces of her guests who laughed so contemptuously at insult.

"We are the accused," Nugent said imperturbably. "All of us men at this table are denounced as being responsible for crimes which ought to hang us. When we take our pensions and go home, it will seem quite odd to be regarded as respectable and innocent unless proved guilty of oppressing the railway porter, insulting the telephone operator, murdering the postman, and massacring political opponents."

A major's pretty wife piped up: "It is a shame to let the ignorant Indians be told such lies. Can't the seditious editors be locked up? Why don't we do some propaganda ourselves?"

To which a male chorus answered that a cry of 'the freedom of the Press' was an incantation and fetish which no mere British official could overcome, and that Indian legislators would not vote funds for government propaganda. Prosser added that half the mischief was done by word of mouth, and there were no Sahibs who had the confidential ear of women and villagers, as had the Indian priesthood. Some schoolmasters in hamlets and cities spread harmful and agitating tales. He chuckled. "It always amuses me to read the press in England smugly inculcating the idea that there are *two* sides to the Indian question, and that both sides must be heard—namely, the Government of India's and the Swarajist's. That's a British conception, confirmed by our British methods. Two-party system in politics, case for plaintiff and defendant at law, and so forth.

It does not apply, except in a specialist sense, to India,—where you must hear *all* sides, and their name is Legion!”

“It is very misleading,” agreed Nugent. “What does the London press mean when it belauds ‘moderate’ opinion in India? God knows. In the British Isles you have physical courage evenly distributed throughout the male population, take it on the whole, so that in discounting the extremist, and endeavouring to consolidate moderate opinion, you look to gain reliable support for sound judgment. But, when speaking of India as a unit, you may find that vocal and politically energetic ‘moderate’ opinion is represented by men of straw,—mere verbal advocates who won’t face danger; and that all the extreme opposition, or support, comes from inarticulate martial races whose bite is as good as their bark. If, however, the statement is not so vague as to be a mere catchword—if it affirms with precision, for instance, that ‘moderate opinion among the Sikhs’ is in favour of a certain course,—the public should reckon with that factor in affairs, for all Sikhs are stout fellows.”

“Aren’t there any decent vernacular papers?” asked Gillian.

“They don’t pay and don’t count, I fear,” said Prosser. “A thing called *The Good News* has started this autumn. I don’t know what line it means to take yet. But on the whole, the vernacular press is rather a snake in the grass.”

“There’s nothing like *Punch* in the whole of India,” remarked Captain Stevens in tones of mild disapproval, and away went the conversation in search of jest and laughter. Only the officials read the vernacular press, and they were too weary of the subject to pursue it further. Here were eminent men insulted by abuse,

and accused of evil, who calmly looked elsewhere for a verdict on their honour. It seemed to Gillian that nothing could more plainly indicate their contempt for their venomous critics. 'Obviously they do not regard these seditious journalists as witnesses whose testimony discredits their action. They scorn them as mere mischief-makers,' thought she. But her heart was sore for Nugent. Why did not men like Said Mahomed and Narain Singh, whose private speech praised him, denounce such calumny? How swiftly her guests passed from grave to gay! They hated gloom and worry. To get the wind up was a ridiculous process in their eyes. Robust good-will and a capacity for sticking to a thing were the balm they used and the strength they possessed in India. Belonging to a compact, frank, and vital race, they made allowance for the queer, struggling, emotional or apathetic Indian multitudes, with their nerves and brain-storms, their dullards and intellectual intriguers. In contemplating her own guests, Gillian could discern more than the obvious, but nothing could have astonished her blind heart so completely as the nature of a conversation taking place at that very hour in the house of Narain Singh.

The lawyer was entertaining Tota Ram, the Brahman editor of *The Good News*, and the latter did most of the talking. The presence of the handsome middle-aged Sikh seemed to exercise a restraining influence on his wife, and Prem Kaur was not voluble, nor seductive, as she had been when talking to the students. But she was thoroughly enjoying herself. For she knew that her husband was impressed by her success with Lady Nugent, and that he would yield eventually to Tota Ram's advocacy of her plans. All three spoke English: the curious English of the educated Indian. The Poona Brahman's

mother-tongue was an unknown foreign language to the two Punjabis.

"Undoubtedly the Governor is a strong man," the lawyer bellowed in his sturdy way. "He will not hesitate to oppose all Akali methods that endanger public order. Already many men fear him and wish to cease from revolutionary action."

Tota Ram had a large shaven face, pale and serene. He looked his high caste, and mysterious generations of Brahmans had carved arrogance upon his features. His eyes influenced and his lips dictated, but his hands were the hands of a scribe. He gave the impression of an assumption of authority without force; as though he had not stuck to his guns. His voice was high-pitched and his manner dignified and priestly. He said: "It will be better to discredit Sir Anthony with the public in England. If he has to employ troops and there is loss of life, the British will listen to protests of victims."

"But loss of life will also be unpopular with many Akalis," retorted Narain Singh. "Always it is said: the Sikhs must use violence, the Sikhs must mutiny in regiments. But what will their reward be? The Mahomedans also are strong."

"There need not at present be many deaths," said Tota Ram mildly. "I wish for as few deaths as possible. But for successful agitation there must be real sacrifice."

"Pundit-ji," said Prem Kaur modestly, "I think it would be a good thing to get his wife to commit herself. Then if scandal were made he would resign. If he remains and governs all our work will be undone, for the people will obey."

"But how will Lady Nugent commit herself? She would be very foolish to do so," remonstrated Narain Singh complacently.

impartiality, and then to use that reputation to prejudice public opinion against government action, is good policy."

Prem Kaur made a restless movement, and her face was a picture of enterprising egotism as she cried: "I can help you in that. Lady Nugent is my friend, and I will ask her to write article for *The Good News* on the political aspirations of educated Indian women such as myself. She will counsel patience and constitutional methods. Then you can publish the article, Pundit-ji, on the day that the Governor is embarrassed by the trouble in Tarn Taran tahsil and by her presence there. She will write some foolish things, and you need not print the words that would be approved by government!"

"Ladies are very clever," Narain Singh said, and Prem Kaur glowed like hot ashes when they are breathed upon.

The Brahman rose to depart. He came from the Bombay Presidency and disliked Punjabis. Even more intensely did he dislike the Sikhs among them, flouting the Hindu loins from which they sprang, not cringing to the Twice Born as do southerners. But most of all he hated women with western education and presumptuous manners. Yet he left Narain Singh's house with all courtesy and bland friendliness. He drove through Lahore's lamplit ways in his big motor, and there was that in his eyes which marked him as a man of horoscopes, and alien to all modern engineers. His shaven countenance bore the stamp of sealed orders, the law of generations, and had none of the animation of a spontaneous word of command. He passed the motors of the Governor's guests leaving Government House, and shrank within himself as from something unseemly. Then, serene, he moved homeward to his ancient rites, his unloving gods.

NUGENT had gone to Jhelum. His wife stood alone for the first time since their marriage and felt a strange giddiness of will, a mental uncertainty. Within five minutes of his departure he had delivered himself vehemently of the opinion that 'That damned fellow Narain Singh is dangerous!' and this fragment of a conversation not intended for her ears lay heavy upon Gillian's nerves.

There had been a domestic crisis, too, when Anthony's long chin seemed to grow longer and his face flushed as red as his hair. He had growled that the mail from home informed him that all his plans for young John's Christmas holidays were upset. His brother and sister-in-law could not take the youngster to winter sports in Switzerland, because their family had incontinently developed chickenpox. "Repulsive brats!" cried their irate uncle. "John had set his heart on going. A boy is like that—wants a thing frightfully when he does want it."

Therefore Gillian, praying for unselfishness, realised at once what John's mother must have done in the circumstances, and with her heart aghast had promptly suggested: "Let me go, Tony. If I catch the next mail I can just do it. I could be back by the middle of February, and I'd give John a lovely time. Why not? I can afford the passages—I can really." To her terrible dismay, Nugent uttered no immediate refusal. She was sincere in her offer—she would go gallantly, but O, how could he consent to part from her!

He said: "That's an idea." And then, slowly, "You're a perfect sailor and like the voyage. You'd enjoy Switzerland, too." But when he turned to look at her, Nugent saw a little face white with the pallor of affliction, and so without any change in his tone he went on to say: "But I don't approve of robbing Peter to pay Paul. You shan't desert me, young woman. Not if I know it." It was a great reprieve even though she was never quite sure that his decision was satisfactorily selfish. He drew a sheet of paper towards him and wrote a cable to his sister bidding her arrange any plan that John could be tempted to jump at. "She's a sensible schoolmarm," he remarked hopefully to Gillian, and so dismissed the subject.

There had been disturbing tension for Gillian during the moment when Arjan Das, intent upon packing up, had come gravely into the Governor's office and collected John's photograph and his mother's. This, obviously, was an established routine. Then he looked round the room, advanced to the mantelpiece, and pointed an old brown finger at Gillian's picture.

"That also, Huzoor?" he inquired.

"Yes," said Nugent.

That was all, but Gillian was abashed and stirred by the expression on Nugent's face. A mischievous smile gathered there, devil-may-care, and ready for any fray. "Household gods," he murmured nonchalantly. "Jealous gods." She remained silent.

And how that man had slept! Folded away from thought or emotion, in a dreamless quiet slumber which to his watching wife suggested something touchingly innocent. She fought all night long with her acute realisation of his coming departure and the exaggeration of her feelings about it. In the morning she was sensi-

tive as to whether he would demonstrate any keen awareness that for a fortnight he would not see, hear, or touch her. But affairs had claimed his attention; only for one brief moment were they alone after breakfast. He instantly said: "Well, I'd better kiss you good-bye now," and did so very warmly. But he rather spoilt things by adding in his cheery way, "Be a wise woman." She had misgivings as to his *opinion* of her.

The dog George pleased him highly by jumping into the motor with him and showing the greatest disregard of his rightful master's expostulations. "I always said you ill-treated him, Stevens. This proves it," Nugent declared. "Poor George. Here, out you get. Bite him! Good dog." Stevens' broad smile at these pleasantries scored all the honours of the occasion.

That young officer felt desperately grave, however, when the Governor disappeared in the motor, for he was left with Gillian on his hands, and Bourdillon had said to him, "She's inclined to pick up political Indian friends, you know. You'll have to watch that. It would be a great score for the Hanky-pankys if she made a fool of herself." That was a ghastly idea Stevens considered. He enjoyed Gillian and thought her wonderful. At first he had been wary, but he soon became confident in his simple way that he could 'manage' her. Nugent, Bourdillon, and Stevens all thought they could do that, and humoured her adroitly, so that she fell in with their plans for themselves, and never tried to 'run' them. It was decidedly a masculine household in which Gillian dwelt as a thing apart, indulged and applauded, but not dominant. She and Stevens never discussed politics together. On one occasion he had confided to Nugent that he hated argument. "I always get the worst of it. I never win," said he, quite seriously.

"Never!" ejaculated the Governor.

"Never," admitted Stevens, undismayed.

"But you are sometimes right, I suppose?" Nugent suggested.

"Often," declared Stevens confidently.

"Good," chuckled Nugent. That had become one of the family jokes—that Stevens was often right.

He was immensely relieved to find, when Gillian ran through the list of a week's engagements with him, that it was quite a safe programme. She was to give away prizes at an Indian school for girls, open a bazaar for a medical mission, attend a wedding in cantonments, preside at a committee meeting on Infant Welfare and another for the Y.W.C.A., hunt with the Lahore hounds, give two luncheon parties, and go to a regimental ball. The list of guests for the dinner to be given on Monday at Government House, followed by a dance for young people, was perfectly correct, and Lady Nugent was very pleasant about it, "Are you *quite* sure that I've invited all your special friends?" she asked anxiously.

In the end she said: "On Thursday afternoon I am having tea with Narain Singh's wife. He is a pleader. Do you know anything about him?"

Stevens considered. "No. I could find out. He has had an interview with the Governor."

"I don't think Anthony likes him," said the Governor's wife. Stevens' face fell. "One can't like everybody," urged Gillian.

"No," agreed Stevens. Perhaps there was nothing in it. "Lawyers are up to all sorts of little games. I hate 'em," he added.

Gillian disregarded that. She thought Jack Stevens was a darling, but that was the kind of thing he would

say—and feel. “I have had tea with his wife once before,” she told him.

Stevens’ apprehensions vanished. If the Governor had known and approved it was no other man’s business.

So on Thursday afternoon Gillian set forth without let or hindrance, and with all her temperamental audacity urging her to make the most of her intercourse with Prem Kaur.

That lady was not alone ; her husband was present in the rôle of a courteous and genial host. They were ceremonious and hospitable to their guest, and presently Tota Ram joined them and interested Gillian by his intellectual face, his lack of all the little personal fidgets and mannerisms which obscure character by trivialities. His stillness and calm were like bare bone, stark rock. Gillian could understand Indian women being priest-ridden by this Brahman. ‘His technique is superb,’ she thought. ‘He has the self-mastery and the mystery. But he’s no gentle shepherd.’

Here, as at Government House, Gillian’s companions were confident that they could manage her. To them she was disarmed but not disarming, and the occasion was no armistice. They spun phrases for her entanglement, and she smiled upon them, glad to hear a repetition of political catchwords which had for her a British sanction, since she had learned them at home. The Brahman repudiated the idea of racial hatred, Prem Kaur spoke ardently of the removal of untouchability, Narain Singh deplored the plight of Indian widows. War was condemned as barbarous, the pursuit of wealth was deprecated as irrelevant to spiritual values, European civilisation was described as grossly material, and India was said to be suffering from moral shock under the incubus of a western education. They were all four in

such perfect verbal agreement that the conversation might soon have become suitable for an angelic choir. But the salt which savoured mental food for Gillian was not lacking; she realised that these idealists lived dangerously. And their tritest word failed to transform the Brahman and Sikhs into commonplace characters: the sacred Twice Born was ever the sacred Twice Born, Prem Kaur remained beautiful, and daringly emancipated; Narain Singh represented a reformer's race, once dominant, now victims of conquest. Her imagination blazed.

Yet she hesitated when Tota Ram asked her to contribute an article on the emancipation of Indian women to *The Good News*. She told him that she felt she did not know enough. And in truth feminism in its narrowest sense bored Gillian. Prem Kaur pressed her to consent: "We women will follow your lead!" she cried. In the end Gillian said she would write an article under a less ambitious title: "I'll call it 'Some First Impressions.'" Tota Ram urged her to let him have the manuscript by the end of the week. "We are liberal and moderate," he declared. "I wish to show the extremists that we are glad to give publicity to British views." Gillian felt that a power of reconciliation lay in her very presence among these people, was active in her words, and might be powerful as a gospel through her pen. They skilfully enabled her to think she had influence, and her dreaming heart inspired the illusion with energy and courage.

Just as Gillian was about to leave, Prem Kaur put forward a suggestion. "Your English friends will tell you that you have met only the educated Indian and know nothing of the 'real India' of the ryot and the village. Three days from now I am going to visit my

sister in a hamlet in the Tarn Taran tahsil. We can go and return in one day by motor if we start early. Will you come with me ?”

“Three days from now ? That is Sunday. I have friends coming to lunch. I wonder if I could put them off ?” Gillian looked from face to face. There was something in their anxious silence that appealed to her as pathetic. Suddenly she pitied them. A fig for convention ! Her friends were dears and would not hold her guilty of discourtesy. “I’d love to go with you,” she declared. And she agreed gaily to an early start and a long day’s journey and rough faring. Gillian pictured the village as innocent, simple, waiting for its heart to be touched.

When she had gone the three looked at each other blankly, as though stupefied by an easy success. “Lady Nugent is not far-seeing,” said Narain Singh.

“She has no fear,” Tota Ram commented coldly.

Prem Kaur exclaimed excitedly: “She is my friend and will do all that I require !”

“Captain Ford’s camp will be within ten miles of Khalsapur at 3 P.M. that day. The rioting must begin at 2 P.M., and the crowd should begin to assemble at noon,” Narain Singh said precisely. “An informer will hasten to the police officer and ask for assistance to restore order. Lady Nugent will be in my sister-in-law’s house before the rioting begins, and will remain there. On no account must she be injured.”

Tota Ram had heard these details a hundred times, but listened imperturbably. “No one can predict the exact course of events. But there must be violation of public order, destruction of property, and opposition to police, so that a sensational situation in which the Governor’s wife is concerned may be created. Unless

the Governor resigns, or forfeits public confidence, the Punjab will cease to agitate."

"Certainly," agreed Narain Singh. "A violent programme will attract uneducated Sikhs, but Congress should realise the value of Sikh agitation, and not sacrifice their interests."

"That is also my wish," agreed the Brahman, and added vaguely: "I understand that your first suggestion has changed, and that Akalis will assemble to oppose the return of Sikhs who joined a loyal jatha?"

"That is so," said practical Narain Singh gloomily. "One day there is this plan and another day that plan. Nor was it certain Lady Nugent would accept proposal to visit the village. I have had great trouble and everything remains to be done. There will have to be much improvisation, and all may miscarry."

"But you must believe in success!" urged Prem Kaur, and cracked her finger joints.

"The omens are propitious," said the Brahman to the woman.

That night Narain Singh left for Khalsapur, and Jack Stevens went down with malaria in Government House, and Gillian's lamps burned till she had finished her article for *The Good News*. No crystal-gazer was ever more spellbound by illusion than was Gillian by the incantation of her words as they fell upon the paper.

Next morning, on awakening, her hand at once sought the manuscript. Its magic still worked. Straight from the strangeness of sleep she encountered the revelation of her own thoughts: familiar, liberated, saved from oblivion, no longer fragmentary. Yet she was startled by the challenge they threw down to her little world. Not all her first impressions were favourable: her pen criticised freely and gave expression to reflections which

might in turn provoke the British in civil lines and cantonments, Indian politicians, and orthodox Indians. The article did not offer to readers of the labour party in England an unqualified indictment of British administration, for though Gillian judged rashly she also praised generously. And she was confronted by her own sincerity. She meant every word of it.

Nevertheless, she did not post the manuscript to Tota Ram on Friday. "I'll think it over," she said sedately, and enjoyed the wedding and the regimental ball. Bridal veil and soldier's sword, the rhythm of youth dancing, and the ritual of high courtesy, stimulated Gillian, who, in such things, caught for a moment of precarious possession the drifting romance of life's pageant. Saturday morning held her in doubt, because the daily paper reported in full the Governor's speech to an assembly of military pensioners. Stevens, from his sick bed, sent her a little folded bit of paper, which contained a pencilled scrawl: 'Isn't the Governor's speech splendid? The pensioners will love it. Three cheers!—J. S.' And Gillian could not stand that speech. It jarred her. It was martial. Not thus would a new world be created. She felt as subscribers to the *Morning Post* might feel on reading a copy of the *Daily Herald*. Gillian was roused to opposition. Contradiction surged within her and was expressed by her written article. By all means applaud the self-sacrifice of the man of valour, but why not deplore the mental attitude which had set man shedding man's blood? Why not urge upon those Indian veterans the imperative need to use their courage to accept the dangers of adventurous political change, their endurance to suffer the loss of invidious privilege, hampering custom, conservative tradition? "I can't follow Tony's lead!" she murmured. "He goes back to the war."

The fact of the matter was, none courted risk with sufficient enterprise, thought Gillian. She herself lacked the nerve to play the fool in the eyes of all who make plans and keep engagements and don't get excited. Yet what divine folly it would be to set off post haste to Anthony's camp, appear in his tent, and deliver with spirit her swift protest. That man thrust at her heart from a distance! His words, his actions, penetrated without mercy to her nature's 'infinite book of secrecy.' But the Gillian of the old Westminster days was thoroughly roused. She must be true to the cause she espoused. She would not give Anthony a slavish love. Impetuous again, she posted her article to the editor of *The Good News* on Saturday afternoon, when Stevens was sleeping the sleep of aspirin and weakness. A peon had carried round the notes postponing her luncheon party, on the plea of an urgent and unforeseen engagement. Lahore went to church on Sunday morning, and prayed for the Viceroy, without any inkling of what the Governor's wife was up to.

Arjan Das cherished the conviction that he understood the Lady Sahib's orders. On Saturday evening she told him that she would breakfast at six o'clock the next day. No cock ever roused a farmyard's fowls with more shrill tyranny than Arjan Das, who called the demoralised household before dawn. Many servants were stricken with fever, the Lord Sahib was absent, also Bourdillon Sahib, no man understood the speech of the Lady Sahib, and Stevens Sahib was ill. They flapped about dully in the cold dark with their mouths bound up and their heads muffled. Very early the Lady Sahib appeared; as gay as a kitten, and, in answer to many questions about to-morrow's dance and dinner, said inadequately: "It will be all right." She gave Arjan

Das a little note for Stevens Sahib, with injunctions not to give it to him till after the doctor's visit. Then a motor hooted and clattered into the porch, and the Lady Sahib jumped into it and, seated by a bundle of shawls that was Prem Kaur, sped away towards the rising sun, driven by a Sikh chauffeur. Whereupon Arjan Das, anxious to rid himself of the responsibility that itched in the chit, delivered it immediately to Stevens' bearer, Gulab Khan, who sat on guard by the sick man's door, and refused to disturb him from his drowsiness for any cause whatever, till towards four o'clock in the afternoon he demanded nourishment, and accepted with disgust the chicken broth considered suitable by the bearer. A quarter of an hour later, followed by the protesting Gulab Khan and George, he walked feebly in his dressing-gown and bedroom slippers through an empty Government House to the staff's office, and rang up the Commissioner.

Prosser knew his voice: "Good morning, Stevens. How's George?" he said pleasantly.

"Same as usual," Stevens replied. "What sort of a place is Khalsapur?"

"Is it a riddle?"

"Lady Nugent has gone there. She left a note to say so. I've had fever. . . . Yes, went there this morning. She says—I'll read it to you—'Hope you are better. Going to Khalsapur for the day to see village life. Shall be back late. Don't fuss about to-morrow's dance.' The servants say she went with an Indian lady, who had a Sikh chauffeur. She didn't take any of our people with her. So I thought I'd find out from you what Khalsapur is like."

Prosser's voice came back slowly. "I don't know offhand every mud-heap in this division. I'll find out

for you in a minute. What does she expect to see there—another Taj? Hold on, and I'll tell you where it is."

Stevens sat weakly by the receiver while George scratched himself. Presently Prosser's voice made George growl. "Shut up, you old fool," urged Stevens, and to Prosser, "Yes, sir?"

"Look here, Stevens, I can't see the point of this business. Whom did she go with? It's a damned nasty Akali village in the Tarn Taran tahsil."

"The servants say they don't know. She had tea with Narain Singh's wife last Thursday," replied harassed Stevens.

"Good Lord, what for? He's a cunning, seditious fellow. Why should she mix herself up with that lot? I'll come over and see you."

Stevens remained gazing blankly at George. "Here, we'll toddle back to bed," he said at last, with an attempt at cheerfulness. "No use getting the wind up. Hope old Prosser won't raise a hue and cry." They retreated through the echoing house rather dimly.

Half an hour later the fat man stood by Stevens' bedside radiating kindliness. "You look completely washed out," he remarked. "Better not exert yourself over missing wives. Wilful woman, eh?"

Stevens ignored this. "She's gone with Narain Singh's wife, I think. It seems a sentry recognised the chauffeur. I hope it's all right?"

Prosser sat down heavily on the side of the bed. "It may be all wrong. I telephoned the Deputy Commissioner, Amritsar. He has just heard that the telegraph wires are cut in that direction. I've asked him to keep me in touch with the situation. Told him she was at Khalsapur, and he wasn't pleased. I asked him to hold his tongue about it."

“ I ’d better follow her,” said Stevens.

“ Not an inch,” wheezed Prosser. “ A sick man is no use. Besides, she ought to be on her way back by now. Half way here, probably. Narain Singh and his wife are absent from their bungalow. Ford, the policeman, is on tour not far from Khalsapur.”

“ The D.C.’s an Indian, isn’t he ? ”

“ Yes. Well, if the little lady needs rescue we can rescue her, horse, foot, and gun.”

“ Good Lord——” began Stevens.

Prosser laughed. “ It is not war yet. I ’m not going to arrange her funeral because the naughty thing has gone to drink tea with the wrong set in a nasty neighbourhood, and wires are cut. There ’s nothing *in* it so far. But I ’m a bit uneasy. I ’ve told ’em to motor out some police from Amritsar. Now you go to sleep, young fellow. And don’t have a nightmare over what the Governor will say. I ’d give my pension to know what he really thinks of that lady ! She ’s very different from Lady Nugent number one.”

No one more simply happy than Gillian when she set forth. She was ever a traveller with a detached mind. Passing the varied show, her imagination flashed after that which surpassed it in interest: an exciting chase beyond visible horizons. While still near Lahore cantonment, a squadron of Indian cavalry mounted on bay whalers set her creating a vision of all the comings and goings of armed men to the north and west. Thus her mind's eye saw the Chitral Relief column on its yearly march climbing the ten thousand feet of the cold Lowari pass, pitching tents in deep deodar forests, meeting budmashes sniping at Warai, protecting its rations from hungry looters with fixed bayonets, and receiving the tribesmen's apologies—made promptly in the face of such formidable toothpicks—with stolid goodwill. This wayfaring of the army was much enlivened by a set of pack wireless; isolated Mirkhanni, where the Kanaur river flows into Afghanistan, gossiping with armed and sociable Rawalpindi. As the two women in the motor skirted mule lines, Gillian thought of picquets on the hills of Waziristan and the traffic on the new road for mechanical transport through Idak, Razmak and Sorarogha, to Jandola, where peace plays hide-and-seek with ambush and raid. A religious mendicant smeared with ashes, who challenged the new day's gaiety with his contempt, started Gillian upon a conception of the pains of pilgrims plodding across pass and desert and plain, now carried away by flood, now stricken

by pestilence; people with a strange curiosity as to salvation. Their humility infected Gillian, so that she suddenly pictured her day's work as the journey of a woman from the seats of the mighty to an eastern village, wherein were a manger, an ox, and an ass, and little children with big brown eyes. She anticipated finding there veiled wives and mothers who were frustrated, imprisoned, burdened, and she dwelt for a romantic moment upon the words spoken to her the previous week by a nun from Multan, who collected subscriptions from the charitable. "Surely the Blessed Virgin's heart is pierced by such sad women."

When cantonment and city lay some dozen miles behind her, nothing was visible that stimulated Gillian to hunt the invisible. She saw only the honey-coloured plain, and in the distance a herd of buffaloes driven forth to pasture. Spring crops of wheat and barley were germinating, and water gleamed in irrigated land where cotton and sugar-cane grew. The road ran to Amritsar, and telegraph wires gave the only hint that any one knew or cared what happened in this bright stillness. Here Gillian suddenly became aware that Prem Kaur was all on edge. The chauffeur slowed down the motor and brought it to a standstill under the shade of a banyan tree. He got out deliberately and collected a rag and some tools from under a cushion. The bundle that had been an inert Prem Kaur, numbed by cold air, became very animated indeed.

"What is wrong, Hira Singh?" she demanded shrilly.

"Something is wrong," replied the Sikh, and disappeared under the motor.

"Never mind," said Gillian. "All this country is new to me. I'm enjoying the whole thing."

“But time presses,” retorted Prem Kaur, with unaccountable urgency and agitation.

“At what hour does your sister expect us?” asked Gillian in polite concern.

“Before noon.”

“It is not nine o'clock yet,” Gillian reassured her.

“But if the motor cannot go on this road, how will it proceed beyond Tarn Taran, where the road is not pucca!” Prem Kaur wrung her hands and began a conversation in Punjabi with Hira Singh, of which Gillian could understand nothing.

She was amazed by the excitement of the woman, her violent voice, dilated nostrils, widely extended fingers. Never had she pictured Prem Kaur as unattractive, but now she discovered her as shrewish.

Nor did Prem Kaur recover her poise when, after an hour's delay, the motor with whirr and thud started once more. She was not still for an instant, and seemed incapable of sustaining conversation with Gillian. Every few moments she spoke to Hira Singh, either to seek information as to how the engine was running or to complain of anxiety. Finally Gillian turned a cold shoulder on her and greeted the passing show again: two countrymen riding together upon an ambling pony, a camel laden with wood, a bullock-cart carrying sugarcane. The sharp feet of a herd of goats smothered them in dust. The goatherd sang a long long song.

By eleven o'clock they neared Tarn Taran, and here the motor again broke down, and Prem Kaur showed the utmost exasperation. Gillian's raised eyebrows expressed her critical surprise at all the to-do. As travelling companions the two women were not sympathetic to each other. Prem Kaur's nervous suspense made her impatiently overbearing. She assumed the leadership:

—‘We must do this. We can’t do that.’ Gillian thought to herself, ‘You are a thoroughly spoilt young woman,’ and nonchalantly ate an apple while waiting upon the fortunes of the day. She was surprised to see that Hira Singh had lost his stolidity and emerged from his second triumph over the car with the sweat pouring down his face.

They passed little enclosed orchards, a serai outside which bullock-carts rested, a school, and a contractor’s place of business as they approached Tarn Taran, and finally the car halted in an open space in front of a sedate rest-house built by the P.W.D. Beside it was a mission church, and beyond the church a bungalow and zenana hospital. To the right was the office of the Tahsildar, and opposite its door a well, a spreading fig tree, and a little war memorial. Behind and hidden lay the city and bazaar and the temple, with its sacred tank built by that scholarly Guru Arjan, who compiled the Ad-Granth. Priest, author, merchant, and ruler, he fell a victim to Moghal hatred, and after imprisonment and torture was—so runs the tale—drowned in the waters of the Ravi river a few years before Hawkins, in his ship *Hector*, sailed into Surat harbour. Pilgrims flock to Tarn Taran, and hold a fair every year in honour of the Guru by the fort near Lahore. Daily, on waking, the good Sikh repeats the ‘Jap-ji’ of the Ad-Granth, composed by the first Guru Nanak about 1500. The murmur of words repeated through five hundred years had become part of the habit of thought of Hira Singh and Prem Kaur. The woman drew from the associations of Tarn Taran an aggressive pride. Something of this was visible in her energetic strut when she flounced out of the motor and addressed Gillian in the strident shout affected by Akalis: “This place is very holy to us, Lady Nugent.

We must remain here while I visit the shrine. You cannot come, for they will not like it."

"I thought you said we ought to hurry on to the village," Gillian remarked, rather coldly.

"Certainly I will hurry, but Sikhs cannot neglect religious matters," retorted Prem Kaur. As she spoke, a burly Khatri Sikh came round the corner of the rest-house as though expecting her. "This is the Lady Sahib," she said to him, indicating Gillian.

The man, who wore like Hira Singh a black puggaree, made a salutation. Gillian acknowledged it and said, "Salaam."

"You must not say that here!" exclaimed Prem Kaur in a dictatorial manner. "You must say 'Sât siri kâl.' We are not Mahomedans, thank God."

"But I have met Sikhs who say 'Salaam,'" remarked Gillian, with firmness.

"Alas, that is possible," agreed the Sikh merchant in English.

Prem Kaur tossed her head and spoke Punjabi to him. "I shall not be long," she told Gillian, and moved away towards the shrine with her acquaintance, engaged in voluble conversation. Ten minutes passed, and Gillian grew bored. "I shall have to snub Prem Kaur; she is above herself." Gillian yawned, suddenly feeling very British.

A worn and gentle-looking Sikh came out of the dusty garden of the rest-house, and gave Gillian a military salute. Upon his breast were war medals with shabby ribbons. Behind him emerged a more rustic-looking individual, who offered Gillian a little posy of jasmine, with one pink rose in the centre. The custodian and gardener of the rest-house appeared to be a strangely subdued pair, whose spirits were revived by the visit

of one of the Sahib-log. "Why has your Honour come hither?" inquired the pensioner, a Mazbi Sikh; and when Gillian replied in English, he turned to Hira Singh and remarked, "She understands nothing."

"This one is the Lady Sahib of the Lord Sahib," Hira Singh vouchsafed, with a swagger.

"In truth!" murmured the ex-sepoy, awestruck. "Will she drink tea?" Hira Singh turned his back and would answer none of the soldier's patient questions as to why she had come, whom she was with, and what were her plans and requirements. Gillian watched the two men: the one worn, dignified, courteous, the other strong, sullen, and deliberately contemptuous. Something instinctive asserted itself in her. "Hira Singh"—she demanded his attention. He gave it stiffly—"do you understand English?"

"A little," he reluctantly replied.

"What did that man ask?"

"Why you are here."

"Tell him," she commanded, "that I visit women in the village of Khalsapur to-day."

Hira Singh obeyed. Gillian triumphed. The soldier showed perplexity and concern.

Gillian noted how ill he looked, and having learnt the Urdu word for 'fever' from the servants during Stevens' attack of malaria, she cried it out now with interrogation to the ex-sepoy.

"Certainly I have fever," he admitted humbly, and nodded his head.

Gillian dived into her pocket and produced a bottle of tablets. She had brought it, being moved by the charm of healing the sick. The man's face lit up, but he expostulated with her generosity, and Hira Singh, unable to bear the spectacle of another's gain, declared

truthfully, "I often have fever." He thrust out a great brown hand to the Mazbi and said, "Give, brother." The sad soldier rolled a dozen tabloids on to his palm, and then, with a deep breath, ejaculated the English word "Tea?" to Gillian, bent on offering her service. Both men were now showing her goodwill, and Prem Kaur, escorted by the Khatri Sikh, found Gillian with a bodyguard.

"This motor can go no further," announced Hira Singh.

Vain was the bitter clamour of Prem Kaur and vain the commands of the Khatri Sikh. Vain, too, the suggestions of Gillian and her obvious desire to proceed. The pensioner took no part in the dispute, but regarded the motor with approval, and remarked at intervals: "Never will it go to Khalsapur."

"We must go in a tonga!" shrilled despairing Prem Kaur.

"I don't mind how we go so long as we get home to-night," laughed Gillian.

Prem Kaur's friend took to his heels with surprising agility, and quickly returned running beside a tonga, whose feeble pony galloped with frantic ill-temper towards the rest-house.

Gillian said to Hira Singh: "This motor must be in a fit state to take us back this afternoon."

"All right in two-three hours' time, Lady Sahib," he assured her respectfully.

The ex-sepoy looked anxiously at the mission bungalow, regretting the absence of the padre Sahib. As the women left in the bumping tonga, he moved off to the bazaar to take counsel with one or two men whom he could trust. Khalsapur was no place for the Lord Sahib's woman that day. And so thought Hira Singh, who had funked the affair at the last moment.

Jerking and swaying, the tonga covered several miles without Gillian and Prem Kaur exchanging a word. The latter's nerves were strained to breaking point. Too long had she quivered with emotion and steamed with hot words in drawing-rooms which lay secure and snug where British authority maintained law and order. To re-enter the harsh silent plains, and confront riot and violence, was to leave the platform in the lecture-hall to lie upon the operating table in the theatre. There was no one here to protect her from the brutality which agitators prefer to direct rather than to encounter. Well, she knew the cruel passions and crude mentality of this district. Its history was heroic yet dark with blood-stains. Despite the Hindu precept that all may resist in self-defence, India's martial valour through long centuries was vital only in one caste—second to that of the Brahman—and the mass of the people succumbed meekly to the onslaught of the conquering Moghal. That Mahomedan power sought souls sword in hand, and its sovereignty was evidence to superstitious minds of the favour of God. Islam's star in the ascendant influenced the fine thoughts of Nanak Guru, who read the Korân and the poems of Kabir. He saw that a people without caste prohibitions was a people free to unite through marriage, and free to convert. Hence this observant Guru called a man of any caste of Hindu who became his disciple a Sikh: and something of liberality, something of a puritanical reformer's commonwealth, was born in India in the sixteenth century. Prem Kaur taught her children how a snake spread his hood between Nanak and the sun's rays while he slept upon the ground, and the dharmshalas of the Sikhs are as free from idols as the Mahomedans' mosques. Great was Nanak. But the fifth Guru, who gave form and

order to the Sikh religion, brought upon the sect the jealousy of Mahomedan rulers. Hardened by persecution, Sikhs, led by Har Govind Guru, who wore two swords in his girdle, ate meat—save beef—and, growing stronger than the rice-fed man, held a Sikh superior to other folk, and also fell to bitter disputes among themselves, as was natural to the sons of Hindustan bred from different castes. It was the Emperor Aurangzeb who, by his murder of Guru Teg Bahadour, made them ripe for the wonderful leadership of Govind Guru. He turned them into men of steel. The sect—now a race—had already built itself a human form easily distinguishable from men of different breeding: he sculptured each one, making all unshorn, unshaven, wearing breeches, and twisting the turban just so. He gave them their battle-cry and greeting of 'Victory to the Khalsa!' bequeathed to them the completed Granth, and inspired the Akalis, who, aggressive and fanatical, resisted every Sikh heretic with gusto and defied Islam. He died the implacable foe of the rulers of India, and his people expressed that undying hatred generation after generation. Govind Guru bestowed the pahul upon converts and gave the proud name of Singh to the initiated, but Kuli Khan gave them dirt to eat at Panipat. So, while Sikhs bred strong men, Mahomedans remained top dog till they became luxurious. Nadir Shah invaded India, and when he left a weakened and impoverished Moghal power behind him, the Sikhs retook Amritsar from their enemies, and the Punjab quaked to the thunder of Sikh horsemen. Then Afghanistan taught them to look to themselves. Their sacred city was profaned by the ruffianly order of Taimur Khan, and, roused to fury, the Sikhs took Lahore and intrigued with a Hindu power in the form of Mahratta aggressors. Ahmed Shah

checked their pride in 1763, yet he marched back again to Kabul. They had seen many invaders come and go, but they were men of the land: they remained. With the birth and chieftainship of Ranjit Singh—Lion of the Punjab—Sikhs triumphed till they fell back before the British. Since then each generation has seen Sikh and Pathan fighting the old feud out on the Frontier; and while Prem Kaur and Gillian rattled towards Khalasapur, villages on either side held men who had been prisoners of war to the Turks and forgot nothing.

Gillian perceived a lack of prestige in her mode of travel, and felt that Prem Kaur trundled her along unceremoniously as wares to market. To the north, in a Mahomedan district, Tony was making a dignified tour. 'I hope I'm not letting him down,' she exclaimed to herself.

The tonga jolted her vigorously, the glare split her eyeballs and made the earth look white as a blister, dust gritted between her teeth, and suddenly they came in sight of about fifty men advancing from the south-west. Their boisterous bearing was mediæval. The size of their black puggarees was exaggerated, they carried formidable bludgeons—long staves tipped with iron—and a few grasped axes. Each wore a big dagger. They rallied to a banner that cast a long shadow, and one man, with a voice of thunder, intoned the words: "The protection of All-Steel is over us: the protection of All-Steel is over us: the protection of All-Steel is constantly over us!" To them the tonga driver shouted propitiatingly: "Wah Guru-ji ka Khalsa!" The Akalis looked towards the tonga, and it seemed to Gillian that their bold gestures were insulting. Prem Kaur cried to the driver to flog his horse, and raucous laughter pursued their flight.

“ My God, when shall we arrive at Khalsapur ! ” she moaned.

“ Is anything wrong ? Why are you alarmed ? ” Gillian asked her bluntly.

“ Who would not be alarmed when the government allows the country to be in such a state ? ” retorted Prem Kaur. “ The Sikhs get no justice, so there is disturbance everywhere. ”

Mystery. In that moment Gillian confronted it. Something was on foot. And Prem Kaur was in a panic. Gillian grew cool, watchful, and suspicious. It was a strange arrival at Khalsapur.

The village was visible now. Like a honeycomb on a wooden platter, its low outline hung above the biscuit-coloured plain. A turquoise sky quivered in ethereal beauty, withdrawn from dust and map. When details declared themselves, Gillian saw that a rough track ran towards the village wall between two enclosures. A Sikh sat on the ground, awaiting them. As they drew alongside he sprang towards them, and ran with easy strides beside the tonga, holding on to it. He was a young man, and he spoke to Prem Kaur without looking at her. It seemed to Gillian that he gave her news.

“ Who is this man, and what does he say ? ” inquired Gillian.

“ He belongs to this village, ” was all Prem Kaur’s answer.

There sallied forth from the village, in an easterly direction, a number of white-clad Sikhs carrying lathies. All were dressed alike in breeches that clung in close folds to the leg from knee to ankle, long shirts worn like a loose tunic, and big turbans. For a moment Gillian thought that the men of Khalsapur had come out to

welcome their Lord Sahib's wife, but they wheeled away to one side before the tonga drew near. The Akalis had gone to ground somewhere, and were not in sight approaching the village.

"Ask him what those men are doing," said Gillian to Prem Kaur, and pointed to the Sikhs.

"He does not know," said Prem Kaur, without questioning the man, and Gillian felt intense irritation. She would not forget this jaunt in a hurry, she thought, and watched the slow dignity of the marching villagers, who had all the abiding strength of those who carry the harvest home. The men were on their own ground. And too thick upon the ground. Even the wealthy could not acquire more land. There was a pushing pulse in the zemindars towards land conquest like the thrust of a blade out of the soil: the sound of their foot-falls was like the beat of distant drums to a troubled earth.

The women reached the enclosures' high mud walls and drove between them. On one side Indian corn would rustle in the spring, on the other an orchard and a well held a long silence. As astonishing as a peeping Tom, the black hood of a camera stared over the right wall, and in the shadows of the left a motor ambulance was drawn up at a rakish angle, lacking a wheel, which lay without a tire beside it. Directly in front of them was the millstone where the corn was ground, and behind it crowded the village girt by its wall. As the tonga approached and passed the great round stones of the mill and turned sharp to the right, all the pale, fanged pariah dogs deserted their haunt, the village midden, and raced with savage yelps towards the strangers. The youth who escorted the tonga flung stones at the pack, and howls of pain arose and seemed the voice of a mad-house. A narrow street led like a spoke towards the

hub of the place. Down this they rattled, with none visible to greet them. A carpenter's empty shop and school buildings were on one side of the street. Two heavy wooden doors made a gateway opposite. Here the tonga stopped.

The youth knocked, and one door creaked open and revealed a big man, with enormous hands and feet, clumsy garments, and untidy black puggaree. This uncouth soul greeted Prem Kaur, and said something to her in thick Punjabi. Gillian caught the name 'Narain Singh.' Then he turned, with deep respect, to Gillian, and his gestures bade her welcome. Here, at last, was the manner that little socialist had expected.

She was giddy with the glare and the jolting, but she followed her host with alacrity into a big ramshackle courtyard, and entered the blessed shade of a room on the left. There were elaborate preparations. Pink paper made an unexpected frill all round the walls, and an unsteady hand had painted in coloured letters on a scroll over the mantelpiece the reproachful English words, 'Better late than never.' Underneath this masterpiece was the artist, a school-boy, full of self-importance. In the centre of the room stood a deal table laden with oranges, boiled eggs, raisins, sweets, a teapot and milk. Many flies feasted. Gillian beheld the state banquet of Khalsapur.

And she was hungry, amused, touched. "Tell them I think it is very kind of them to have taken all this trouble," she said to Prem Kaur, smiling.

But Prem Kaur said brusquely: "My brother-in-law says will you please to sit down and eat? They will not eat with you here." She turned and overpowered the awkward host with a torrent of words. Then she thrust open a door and disappeared into an inner room. Gillian

vowed vengeance. What on earth was the matter with the woman? A nervous Indian is invariably inconsiderate, but Gillian did not know that. She only knew their political 'ideals.' Sitting down at the table, she ate uncomfortably to the fury of the flies, and under the anxious eye of a host whose caste was repelled by the proceeding. He addressed his eldest son with rustic harshness: "Speak thou to the Lady Sahib. Say to her that the Lord Sahib is our father and mother, and her presence here bestows a great favour."

"My father says you are welcome, sir," piped the school-boy.

Gillian smiled. "So you can speak English? That's splendid. Tell your father that I am looking forward to seeing your mother. I've come a long way to do that, because, as my husband is Governor of the Punjab, I wish to see something of the life of the people in Punjab villages."

"What says she?" inquired the zemindar.

"She speaks too fast. No man can understand such a one," replied his son.

"Fool. Is it for this you attend school? It is necessary to understand her. Tell her I make petition. Say that the tax upon my land is too heavy, and request her to intercede with the Lord Sahib," growled the Sikh, who stood with folded hands in an attitude of prayer, while young Kishen Singh took a long breath and began in a sing-song voice: "Sir, my father says the tax is too high. You will please tell the Lord Sahib that none can pay."

"Which tax is too high?" inquired eager Gillian, but before the father and son could get into their stride, Prem Kaur was upon them again and ordering them about.

A queer quartette left the room and went across the courtyard to a low one-storied building. The zemindar was brimming over with his petition, the boy with his scholarship, Gillian with her friendly heart. But Prem Kaur knew now all that was afoot. At Tarn Taran she had learnt that Khalsapur Sikhs from the loyal jatha had reached the little wayside station there very early, and after a 'jhalsa' with their friends would go home promptly. She had feared to be delayed and thus get involved in the broil. Akalis from neighbouring villages were on their way to set upon the loyalists, whose friends had marched out together to welcome them home. Khalsapur's Akalis were lying in wait within its walls. Narain Singh had despatched a youth to inform Captain Ford, and so draw the police into it. Prem Kaur's sister and brother-in-law knew nothing of the plot: the man, however, had become aware of suddenly stirred village passions, and was uneasy, but masterful Narain Singh, controlling all from the inner room, had him well under his thumb. In the last half-hour the women of the village had been given the amazing news that the Lord Sahib's Lady Sahib was present in the zemindar's house, and the lumbar dar and zaildar had summoned them to greet her. They had flocked in, while such pensioners and reservists as had not gone to greet, or obstruct, the Sikhs of the jatha were thunderstruck, and had sent a message to Gillian's host to know if she would receive them. They had been answered, "Not now. Later," and waited in their houses, wondering. All the telegraph wires to Amritsar were cut.

On the threshold of the door to which Gillian was led was a crowd of women's shoes. Here she paused and said, rather with the air of a girl who will stand no more nonsense: "If you are too tired to translate for me, the

boy must come with us. I've not come all this way, you know, just for nothing."

Prem Kaur replied: "I will translate, but I am in pain." She made an uneasy gesture.

"Where?" asked suspicious Gillian, unmoved.

"Everywhere," declared Prem Kaur.

"Then this boy must translate for me."

"He cannot. He is too old to enter the zenana when all the women are present," cried Prem Kaur, and thus baffled, Gillian followed her through the door, saying, "We shall have to begin the return journey in an hour's time. Not a moment later."

The zemindar turned to his son and asked what had been said. He was disgusted by the boy's reply that "Such speech is not taught in schools. She speaks the little talk of the women," and shambled off muttering to the room where Narain Singh sat with a photographer, a doctor, and one other in earnest consultation. A young man, lately a student in Amritsar, was holding forth: "There are many more Akalis present than the rest can withstand. The Police Sahib, having been told that there is trouble at Khalsapur, and that the men of the jatha are prevented from returning to their houses, will certainly come. When he is here he will be told that Lady Nugent is in the village. What to do, then? It will be difficult for him." The lad's delighted eyes blazed.

Narain Singh said loudly: "Do not go to the fighting. You must slip out to-night with the report which I shall write to Tota Ram. It is time that ambulance was mended. On arriving with injured at Amritsar the rumour must at once be spread of many killed and wounded. It will be better if you all go now. I must write." He scratched his head roughly, and then took

up a quill pen and adjusted his spectacles. The other three men went out.

"Bhai, I greatly fear," said the zemindar humbly.

"Have no fear. I will arrange all things. You have only to protect Lady Sahib from harm. Then you are safe," growled his brother-in-law. "That is certain."

Nothing was certain. Narain Singh gambled. For Khalsapur Sikhs answered to no roll-call as loyalist or rebel: the line did not divide so clearly, save where a serving soldier in the army drew it with his sword. Some men of the tahsil held distant grants of land from the government, wounded and veterans had pensions which fed them, a few reservists received pay. Such men had certain obligations. All saw the hand of the Sarkar in canals, roads, schools, taxation, and in police and petty officials, oppressive zaildars and lumbaridars. But the Sarkar forbid none to be Akali, and the bullying Akalis intimidated all mild men. So long as the law of the land was not flouted by violence, it was possible to abuse the British and insult the avowed adherents of government with impunity. Therefore processions and local demonstrations swelled the ranks of Akalis. But Narain Singh knew that there existed a tide which might be turned when Captain Ford's presence challenged men to choose their side. Even now in the village the fact that a memsahib was in Khalsapur was making Sikhs, who had abstained from welcoming or outcasting the men from the loyal jatha, look to their honour and security where it touched the British in the person of Gillian.

That undaunted young woman, on entering the room where a crowd was assembled, felt as though she had touched a live wire. The darkness after the blinding glare of the compound hid much, and she received distinct

impressions very slowly. First, she was aware of a ceremonious greeting from Prem Kaur's comely sister, whose manners had a genial air : she was buoyant, and had something of the rustic exuberance and strength of an apple orchard. Next, Gillian realised the awe of the massive creatures who stood up to greet her ; she actually felt the impact of herself upon their eyes, their minds, their nerves. All responded to her presence as to a revelation of a woman strange beyond all words, authoritative, possibly favourable, and possessing unknown prerogatives. Their response was emotional, and was tempered by the heavy reluctance of their village minds to accept anything new. Later Gillian noticed, with something of a shock, a big form which had not risen from a charpoy. This woman, Bishen Kaur, looked as great a swashbuckler as any male Akali. She was pock-marked, and was remarkable for her size and the impression she gave of feline strength and of having in her an element of the clod. Gillian and Prem Kaur sat upon the only chairs ; the other women rustled down upon the floor. Details jumped inconsequently into Gillian's mind, so that she knew all the Sikhs were barefoot save Prem Kaur, who wore white stockings and black patent-leather shoes, and Bishen Kaur, whose enormous feet were thrust into heavy gold-embroidered native slippers. The room mapped itself on her mind : behind her was the only door ; in front of her—the whole length of the room away—the only window. It had two quite big panes of glass, and was set high in the wall like an eye in a forehead. Beneath it were piled some sacks of grain. The only strikingly handsome woman of Khalsapur, Amrit Kaur, leant her shoulder against one of the sacks. She wore the white shroud of a widow, and never took her eyes off Gillian. Kirpa Singh, her

husband, had been killed in Gallipoli in 1915. The widows wore white, the other women had donned gay pleated skirts over their breeches, which wrinkled from knee to foot like those the men wore. Their tunics were cut after the fashion of the men's tunics. Over their heads and shoulders hung veils. The room was heavy with the smell of dust and scent and grain, and when the women spoke there was an uproar of echoes and a clash of strident voices mingling with a chink of metal as bracelets on ankle and arm, or heavy earrings and necklaces, moved on their robust persons. Every woman wanted to make a petition, but the competition to hold and dominate the gathering lay between Prem Kaur, Bishen Kaur, and Gillian.

There was a tremendous rivalry. All three had tasted the intoxication of public life, all three knew the inebriating effect of an emotional audience. Gillian was fighting handicapped because she could not speak Punjabi, but she was conscious that the women's attention was riveted upon her, and that in their slack thoughts and tense nerves she held precedence and enforced the swiftest reaction.

She turned to Prem Kaur. "Tell them that I will speak to them, and that afterwards you will translate," she said in her low voice, which was lost on them all as a sigh might have been.

Prem Kaur said: "Ari, sisters! First my friend the Lady Sahib speaks. Then I will speak."

Gillian rose and stood facing the women. Her felt hat pressed upon her forehead and she took it off. A gasp went up when they saw her disgraceful bare head and cropped hair. With her white face and her slim legs in cream silk stockings, a very miracle of strangeness was visible to their eyes. She raised her voice, but even

so it seemed to them like the whisper of a will-o'-the-wisp.

"I have come from Lahore to see you because I wish to be your friend," said Gillian. "I cannot befriend you unless I know your difficulties and your needs. You must not be afraid to speak frankly to me, nor hesitate to criticise government. I do not wish for flattery. I only ask you to believe in my sincerity and in the sincerity of all your British friends who desire your welfare. I want to hear from you about your need of female education, of widow re-marriage, of emancipation from the traditions of caste and purdah. I am here to learn from your own lips and to help you if I can. I want the day to come when there will be no enmity between one Indian and another, and I greatly desire to see peace throughout this beautiful land, and an end to the sad estrangement between Hindus and Mahomedans." She sat down, having enjoyed delivering her message, and stirred by the magnetism which the crowd of peasants possessed.

"Can you remember all that, or shall I prompt you?" she asked Prem Kaur.

"It is all right!" cried Prem Kaur, with excitement, and sprang to her feet.

An old woman interrupted. "Memsahib! I have a petition to make!" A chorus followed. "We desire to make petition. We understand nothing."

Prem Kaur, agitated and tyrannical, quivered like a flame in a wind. "Listen, you!" she commanded. "This is not the hour for petitions. This is the hour of the Sikh raj! The Governor's wife herself knows it: therefore she is here. She is my friend. I will protect her. The Sikhs have been oppressed, and she will bear witness to the whole world that they are still oppressed.

You are ignorant, but I am not. I tell you that the British raj is ended. Soon they will be forced to leave India. They will depart to their own country, which is very small and has few men. There they kill cows and eat beef. All their women are unveiled, and many never marry. I have been in England, and I know. It is a shameless land and very weak, but rich because they rob us. Now they fear the Sikhs, and they arm the Mahomedans against us. All of you must tell your husbands to be true Sikhs and refuse to obey the Sarkar or pay its taxes. Look at me! I fear none of the British. I do not admit that the Lord Sahib's wife is greater than I. I am Sikh, and you are my sisters. If you do not bid your men rise against the British, the Mahomedan soldiers will become so strong that your sons will be slain, and you will be turned into Mahomedans. You cannot trust the British, who fear the Sikhs. Those whom they imprison they torture! They . . ."

"It is a lie!" Amrit Kaur threw down the challenge: a woman of character, facing the three agitators, with her back against the wall.

The rest swayed and rustled. Gillian leant forward, uneasy, puzzled.

"It is no lie!" Prem Kaur's bosom swelled. "The Lady Sahib says it is true!"

"What are they asking? What does she say?" interrupted Gillian.

The old woman, deaf as an adder, rose and tottered forward. "Protector of the Poor. I make petition!" she mumbled.

"Wait, mother!" Prem Kaur shouted to her. "O, you without understanding, listen while I speak!"

Amrit Kaur's voice rang out: "It is not necessary to hear you speak. Let the Lord Sahib's Mem speak again."

“ I am telling you her words ! ” retorted Prem Kaur furiously.

Bishen Kaur, the Akali, spat upon the floor.

Gillian felt a violent impatience with the lack of education that made communication impossible. But she was drawn to the large unself-conscious woman, whose dark eyes groped towards her across the room. She hated Prem Kaur's shrill manner. She nodded and smiled to all the women, and, amazed, they whispered : “ Behold, she laughs ! ”

“ Thank you, ” said Gillian to Prem Kaur. “ Now please ask them to tell me their needs and their difficulties. ”

“ They do not wish to speak, ” Prem Kaur flung over her shoulder to Gillian. She seemed to expand like some full-blown flower, and cried in Punjabi : “ Many of you are so foolish that you do not realise that the time has come for Swaraj. Because of your pensions you fear, and because of the grants of land given to soldiers. I tell you *all* the land of the Punjab will belong to the Sikhs, and all the wealth. It is the taxes that keep you poor. There will be no taxes ! ”

“ Memsahib ! ” cried a very urgent voice, “ is this true ? ”

“ We cannot understand each other, ” said Gillian, in response to that voice, and still with the smile on her lips that bewitched them. “ Speak to her, and she will translate. ” Her gestures towards Prem Kaur appeared to them to recommend her, and their hearts withdrew deep, deep, deep into their race spirit of suspicion and dread.

Suddenly a shout and another and a third crashed over their heads. Akalis from the roofs of the village acclaimed something that they saw. Then voice called to voice with inquiry and information, and dogs

barked. There were a menace and an exaltation in the uproar.

“What is it?” exclaimed Gillian, and none answered her.

The women looked upward and seemed to crush together. As though they were spirits in a vault, they continued to stare towards an invisible population, an invisible sky. In the dim light they had suddenly a hushed air, but they never lost significance. Each woman counted, and their all was not enough. They, the mothers of unborn Sikhs, were so many and no more. The ambition of a people lashed itself against this fact in vain, surrounded by numerous antagonists. Not all the king's horses nor all the king's men could alter a fate to which previous generations, careless of new-born daughters, had doomed them. There lived only nine Sikh women to eleven Sikh men. Two men out of eleven were unwed, surplus, driven by blind instinct to fight rivals. These rare women could not be deserted for the fair of another race. Sikh weds none but Sikh. Maddeningly personal, the frustration of the odd man out made him bellicose. His domestic interests and ties were those of a son, not a father. The more reckless he. And Sikh women, conscious of an unrest they could not still, became militant. Male life was cheap;—let the strongest survive! This thing created ferocity as famine does. It was crying itself aloud on the rooftops of Khalsapur.

Bishen Kaur sprang to her feet, while Gillian heard a running to and fro in the courtyard. The Akali woman had the threatening strength of an ogress, and she opened her big mouth and shouted at the women with an indescribable air of brutality. She was bred to this game. Her great-great-grandfather from the ranks

of an Akali regiment was wont to hurl insolence at Maharajah Ranjit Singh himself. Her brother had burnt to death, wet with wounds, at Nankhana; her husband was in gaol. Her uncouth furious speech claimed instant attention from all. For the Akali uttered the cries of their religion, yelled that the British were satanic, yelled that Akalis were martyrs, yelled that cows were slaughtered. She shouted for sacrifice, atonement, victory. The politician and the powerful foreigner were utterly outmatched by her. This brawling woman's words bludgeoned their minds with cries of judgment, the wrath of God, the excitements of worship, the horrors of sacrilege,—and the Sikh women reacted as plant life reacts to a thunderstorm.

While she spoke the great bolt on the doors behind Gillian was slowly thrust home. And at a distance shots were heard in swift succession. Instantly the women were stampeded to their feet. But that wistful old creature, whose thoughts had never swerved from her humble petition, came stumbling forward towards Gillian, holding out in her little rough hands the medals of her only son. The Akali strode between this mother and the English woman and struck the medals from her trembling fingers. It was then that Gillian shook Prem Kaur.

She had been pouring her commands into Prem Kaur's ear, and all in vain. This insubordination at the moment of crisis so infuriated that spirit in Gillian which sought to obtain information, restore calm, and prevent panic—sought, in plain truth, to rule and maintain order in an emergency—that she grasped Prem Kaur by the arm, and, soundly shaking her, said through clenched teeth in tense syllables: “Will-you-do-as-I-tell-you!”

Then Amrit Kaur rose to the occasion. Standing upon a sack of grain, and wrapping her veil round her arm, she broke the panes of glass which were just within her reach. And her voice, clear as a trumpet, rang across the women to Gillian summoning her: "Memsahib! Memsahib!"

Gillian dashed to her through the hubbub. She would not be imprisoned in this room with these furies. She would lead them to the open. Amrit Kaur swung herself up to the window, one leg and shoulder thrusting through it. She braced herself to haul Gillian up to her, with an iron arm. Active as a cat, Gillian pulled herself on to the sash, where the broken glass cut her sharply. She looked down into an alley scarce four feet wide, with a drop of some sixteen feet. Amrit Kaur went down without hesitation. Gillian felt the surge of women trying to reach up to the window, heard the rattle of grain as a sack burst beneath thrusting feet, and saw Bishen Kaur laying about her lustily with her mighty shoe. She dropped beside Amrit Kaur.

FALLEN angels, fallen women, an apple which fell. By such enticements men discover and descend into hell; and enrich knowledge by proclaiming a proven centre of attraction, a gravity sustained through every movement, however frivolous. But women plunging out of a window and sprawling under your very nose as you bicycle in hot haste to your uncle's dwelling is quite another affair. It shocks. Houses are meant to hold and hide women, not spit them out as though distasteful. The circum-spect Punjabi signifies his wife when speaking of his 'house,' but he does not thereby invoke her to fall upon him when going about his lawful occasions in a world of men. And Gillian very nearly fell upon startled Bir Singh, who was home on leave from the Royal Indian Military College at Dehra Dun, and totally unprepared for the sight of an Englishwoman bursting out of a window. He halted, one foot in the dust, the other on the pedal of his bicycle, and the customs of his race surged over the lad so that he did not accost this lively lady who was no sooner down than up again. Still less did he—in a village suddenly grown spiteful as a wasps' nest—address a word to the veiled widow who sped, followed by the Memsahib, down the drain-like alley, into the street from which Gillian had entered the zemindar's house, and then sharply to the left. But he tracked them, in trepidation, and saw them disappear through the door of Subadar Major Puran Singh's house. That widow, then, was his daughter-in-law. On a dozen roofs men stood

looking towards the east. An army terrible with banners could not have flung its defiance to the world more definitely than did Khalsapur, flaunting those arrogant figures against the brazen sky. Bir Singh darted on to his uncle, full of wonder.

Gillian within the Subadar Major's doors was immediately confronted by that old officer, who saluted her with a dignity which mastered his astonishment. She spoke breathlessly, saying: "I am Lady Nugent, and I wish to return to Lahore immediately," and saw at once that this Sikh did not understand English. He said in his own tongue: "By the favour of the Presence I have the honour to receive you under my roof. All that I have is yours." Gillian turned to Amrit Kaur, as though inviting her to explain what had occurred, but Amrit Kaur stood as one dumb.

Gillian placed a finger upon her own breast, and then pointed towards Lahore, saying slowly: "I go Lahore, *jheldi*." Her last word was drowned by a shout and a trampling that sent Puran Singh quickly to the door, while he gave an order to Amrit Kaur over his shoulder. Instantly she led her guest across a courtyard, and to a room which Gillian guessed to be opposite the window through which they had escaped. On that side there was a blank wall. The only window in the room opened on the courtyard. A ladder led through a trap door in the ceiling to an upper chamber. A charpoy, large enough to have satisfied Og King of Bashan of the remnant of giants, stood in one corner, a spinning-wheel occupied another, and there were several substantial chests. On the white-washed walls were hung some regimental groups and a coloured print or two of Hindu deities. Amrit Kaur, by a gesture, offered Gillian a seat on the charpoy. She then busied herself with the fire, upon

which she set water to boil in a brass vessel. This woman, with her slow majestic carriage and her air of submission to something spiritual, was extraordinarily soothing.

'All this can't be an everyday occurrence to her! Why on earth didn't she tell the old man what has happened?' thought Gillian. She was bitterly restless to be up and off and to have done with the day's miserable work. In nothing had she justified herself. She was longing to get back to Government House before any uneasiness as to her prolonged absence set up an inquiry. The best way out of the outrageous fiasco was to ignore its most perturbing events. 'I'll keep it dark. Except from Tony,' determined Gillian, biting her lips.

Amrit Kaur left the fire and opened one of the chests. From it she lifted a clean turban and tore its muslin into strips. Then, carrying the brass pot filled with water, she approached Gillian, and, squatting at her feet, touched the cuts upon her guest's hand with gentle fingers and proceeded to wash and bind it up. So intent, so grave, so calm she was that Gillian felt a balm emanating from her person. This woman's soul gave to her simplest acts a magnificence. In her the undainty ways of the poor, the unknowing ways of the ignorant, the unseeing ways of the villager, were not absent, but were not the last word. She had life, and she had it abundantly. Its effulgence distinguished her. She was the aristocrat of Khalsapur.

Male voices filled the courtyard, and the Subadar Major entered the room followed by young Bir Singh. Amrit Kaur neither moved nor turned her head. Both the Sikhs exclaimed when they saw that Gillian had been bleeding, and Bir Singh, to her infinite relief, spoke English.

"Madam, how have you been hurt?" he asked in his boyish voice. He looked about sixteen.

Gillian chose her words cautiously. For Anthony's sake she must put the best face on the matter.

"It is nothing!" she assured him. "I came to Khalsapur in order to see village life. The motor in which Mr. Narain Singh's wife and I were driving broke down at a place called Tarn Taran, and we came on in a tonga to visit her sister. There were a lot of women assembled in a room, and one of them was very rough and extraordinarily rude. We heard men shouting and some shots fired. Some one outside locked the only door. This *bibi* beckoned me to follow her through the window, and as I am anxious to get back to Government House as quickly as possible I did so. I'll discuss that in a minute. Please tell me all your names first."

"This is the house of Subadar Major Puran Singh, who was in the 114th Sikhs. His son was killed in the war. His own wife is dead. This is his son's widow. I do not know her name, as it is not a custom in villages to speak our women's names aloud. Bir Singh is my name. I am at the Royal Military College, and later I hope to go to Sandhurst, please. My father has been very ill, so I have leave to come to my home two miles from here. To-day I bicycled here to welcome my cousin who went with the jatha to Nabba. But I find he has not yet arrived, and my uncle has gone to meet him, and I think there are very bad happenings. I saw you fall from a window and run here, so I have come to offer my services." He stood there, a gallant boy, all on fire to maintain the good name of his college and the ideas inculcated by its Commandant, Colonel Smith Sahib, of whom he stood in admiring awe. This newly acquired standard was very different from the standard

of Khalsapur, but it had in it that stuff of which Subadar Major Puran Singh was made after thirty-two years' service in the army.

Gillian liked the eager boy, and said to him gaily: "I want you to thank the *bibi* for me, and will you please explain to her and the Subadar Major that I must start home at once? I want you to ask her to tell her father-in-law what happened in the other house, for I could not understand what all the fuss was about. Perhaps, too, she will tell the Subadar Major how to find Mrs. Narain Singh, and send her a message from me? But I am not going to wait for Mrs. Narain Singh." Gillian looked very stern when she mentioned Prem Kaur.

Bir Singh spoke rapidly to the officer, who replied and left the room. The boy explained to Gillian: "It is against our customs for a daughter-in-law to speak to her father-in-law, or in his presence. Therefore the Subadar Major has gone away. Now she will tell me all things. You are here, and therefore I may speak with her. The *purdah* is very strange."

"Do you mean to say these two relations live together in perpetual silence?" cried Gillian.

"He may speak. How else could he give her orders? But she may not reply," Bir Singh explained shyly. Then he held forth for some time to Amrit Kaur. When he had finished she spoke at length. Gillian watched them. The woman's handsome face was raised, and she gave to her narrative all her slowly discharged energy. Without impulsiveness her voice went on and on steadily, coming from her deep lungs as though nothing but her own will could silence it. How speech failed to keep communications open in this fatal land! thought Gillian. Fold within fold, like an ear, the people hid its hearing, deaf to an Indian stranger's tongue. Intimate lips were

closed, and so silenced voices within private home walls. As if blind, the eyes of the illiterate saw no meaning in the written word. Thus everywhere full comprehension was denied or delayed. And this triumph of secrecy, distorting truth, left dumbfounded minds a prey to passion. Gillian admitted in despair that a European could carry away nothing from a tour in India save a glimpse of signs and wonders, and an echo of the debate of the educated.

When Amrit Kaur's tale was told, the lad said to Gillian, in sensitive apology: "It is a very great shame for us that you have received bad treatment here, madam. We are very sorry. If you will excuse me, I will speak to the Subadar Major Sahib."

He went out quickly, and Gillian laid her unbound hand on Amrit Kaur's. The Sikh woman looked at it and remarked gravely: "It is white and mine is brown. Thus there is a great difference." She flashed a smile, frank as her simplicity, up into Gillian's eyes, and Gillian felt as though an acceptance of destiny swept across Amrit Kaur's indomitable face.

When Bir Singh returned he brought bad news. It would be impossible for Gillian to leave the village, or depart from the Subadar Major's house, till after dark. This took her aback terribly, but she accepted her fate after a brief argument. There were budmashes, ripe for mischief, on the roofs of many houses. Encountering threats of violence, the dozen or so jathadars had withdrawn to a mango grove, and the lumbardar was parleying on their behalf with the crowd of hostile Akalis. It was now nearly three o'clock. If Gillian could start at five she would be home in time for dinner. There were several pensioners in the courtyard who wished to pay their respects to her.

She went out to speak to them, and all their eyes were immediately riveted on her bandaged hand. Here was a scandalous crime. These veterans had never before seen a memsahib injured by Punjabis. The wrath to come would undoubtedly punish Khalsapur's Akalis, and their stout hearts grimly rejoiced. Harsh but faithful men, they were bitterly jealous of Akali triumphs. Not for this had they given battle to the Sarkar's foes and suffered wounds and woe.

While the little crowd gathered round Gillian, there came a knocking, rough and determined, upon the door leading to the street. The Subadar Major opened it, and a zemindar, Gillian's late host, stumbled in. A growl greeted him. He mumbled a long rigmarole to Puran Singh, who looked at him for all the world as though he were a most astonishingly decayed and unpleasant vegetable.

Bir Singh interpreted to Gillian: "This man says he does not know why you left, and that he petitions that you will return to his house. In a little while, he says, Narain Singh's wife will return to Lahore with you. She is much puzzled by your displeasure and begs your pardon. But *I* think," added the boy, "that they are telling lies, and that it will be safer for you to remain here. Undoubtedly this fellow fears the punishment that he may get from the Governor. All the same, he is a budmash."

Gillian had flushed angrily. "Tell him," she said in her clear voice, "that I am now among friends, and that I shall remain with them until I leave Khalsapur, and that I shall not accompany Mrs. Narain Singh." She was not unmoved by the response in the Sikh's watchful faces when Bir Singh translated her reply.

With abuse as sincere as it was foul, grey-bearded Puran

Singh took the zemindar by the shoulders and hurled him out of the courtyard. There followed a short discussion, and then one of the younger men, a reservist, saluted Gillian and marched away. "He has gone to see whether it is true that the police officer and some police are on their way here. Perhaps it is only a rumour," Bir Singh explained.

Gillian went back to the charpoy in the inner room and sat down. She was weary and mortified. What *would* Tony say to this flamboyant adventure of hers?

She had not been sitting there for more than five minutes, when once again voices shouted on the house-tops, and an angrier, more terrifying noise, like that of a dog being worried—only that the sounds were human sounds—vibrated in the street. Amrit Kaur flung up her head and listened. "They are beating some one!" she exclaimed in Punjabi. But she did not shrink. She stood in an attitude of challenge, quite undaunted. To Gillian the noise grew unbearably hideous, and only pride kept her rigid. It was pride, too, that drove her to the threshold with her eyes uncovered, when she saw the Subadar Major, rifle in hand, obey a summons to draw the bolts of the door into the street. Those outside flung into the courtyard with a savage jeer all that remained—and lived—of Jiwan Singh, the reservist. They flinched before Puran Singh's rifle, and his door was slammed and bolted in their faces. From outside mocking jibes went on, while from inside men bayed defiance and something moaned and writhed on the ground. Bir Singh warned Gillian, "Don't look, madam!"; and Amrit Kaur, without grimace or vindictive gesture, called down the curse of the Almighty upon the enemy with a deadly strength.

To all but the callous pain calls for action, and Gillian,

kept at a distance and without remedies, stood wringing her hands. The right word here was no one's need; some one skilled enough to do the right thing was desperately wanted. But there was no physician. A charpoy stood in a corner of the courtyard, and to this they bore Jiwan Singh, their feet moving slowly, their voices not drowning strange sounds which were horrible to hear. Then the Subadar Major came, with sullen countenance, and fetched clean cotton from a chest and some warm water and a little packet, and took them to the group which hid the reservist. Presently Bir Singh detached his curiosity from the gruesome spectacle and went to Gillian. "They have given him much opium. Soon he will have peace," he told her.

A brief twilight lengthened all the shadows. That sensation-monger the body beset Gillian with a desire for food. Sikhs ate only twice in twenty-four hours, so Amrit Kaur had no conception of the hardship an early breakfast and the zemindar's refreshments inflicted on the Englishwoman, who now asked Bir Singh if she could have a cup of tea. The kindly fruits of the earth were not more bountiful than Amrit Kaur when this need was made known to her. Gillian's eyes followed her, fascinated. Each movement was as accurate as that of an athlete. Not an effort, not a drop of water, not an inch of burning wood, not a tea-leaf, was wasted. This woman was supreme mistress of her resources. Moreover, a strong grace like that of the ocean's splendid waves dwelt in all her activity as an enchantment.

A brief pause fell, only to be sharply interrupted. Five of the men broke into the room, tramped hurriedly past Gillian, and climbed to the upper chamber. A dreadful shouting began from all directions and made Gillian think distractedly of the silent wireless on London's

myriad roofs, reporting far-off events with no human outcry. Bir Singh went nimbly up and down again and came to Gillian. "Some police have come, madam!"

This news smashed the spell which had woven itself around her. Isolation, a sense of being besieged by something brutal and unknown, had held her mystified and helpless. But police had *savoir faire* in dealing with crime. For the moment Gillian had no political theories as to repressive action. She wanted release and a return to legal argument. In Khalsapur men resorted with disastrous conviction to a trial of strength.

As minutes dragged on her suspense increased. But she would not permit herself to show agitation. She sat nonchalantly on the charpoy, and saw with dismay how quickly darkness invaded and shrouded the courtyard and the room. It was nearly six o'clock, and quite dark, when Bir Singh brought further news. "This is what we think has happened, madam: when the police came there were only a few of them, and there was seen to be talk between the Police Captain and some of the good men from here and also with the Akalis. Then the jathadars made a rush for the village, and undoubtedly there was confusion and some firing. The jathadars ran back and their bhais remained by their side, and the Akalis are now between them and the village. It is feared that something happened to the Sahib. Now it is too dark to see, but in the darkness certainly some men will get into the village, and soon we shall have more news. The Subadar Major says there is nothing for you to fear. Just now there was a shouting, and we think more police have arrived."

Gillian lied cheerfully: "I am not in the least afraid, you know."

Lanterns were lit and little oil lamps. The air was bitterly cold and stars shone. Then there was firing in the distance. This was repeated several times. Gillian darted up the ladder into a stuffy room without a light, ascended a few rough steps, and reached the roof where the watchers squatted. She could see Puran Singh's rifle against the sapphire of the sky. All the men rose at her approach, and the Subadar Major spoke urgently. Bir Singh translated: "He says it will be better if you remain downstairs. There has been fighting, and perhaps a bullet might come here, for on the other roofs there are budmashes."

Gillian sat down obstinately. "I will stay here. If you are all in danger I will share it."

Bir Singh passed this on, and then gave her Puran Singh's reply: "The Subadar Major says that between the people of the army and the Governor's wife there is a great difference. They are used to fighting. But if harm should come to you here it would be a great injury to all the pensioners."

Gillian nodded in a friendly way. "But this is the custom of my family," she said artfully, without budging an inch.

They argued no further. Subalterns were thus, courting danger. A queer breed. The old pensioners felt they would never look upon their like again. All crouched together on the roof. Presently torches gathered and, beyond the village wall, spread moving lights in four different places. This excited Khalsapur, and there was a noise of men rushing and jumping from roof to roof. Where the torchlight flared brightest a shot was fired. The men beside Gillian whispered and grunted. Bir Singh murmured to her: "Those lights are a trap, I think. The budmashes here are great fools."

Down the dark street by which Gillian and Prem Kaur had come to Khalsapur there echoed the tramp of heavy boots. These halted outside the courtyard door. Single footfalls came cautiously down the alley. The Subadar Major's head peered over the coping of his roof. Bir Singh whispered: "Lie still, madam!"

The man below struck a match and held it so that his face was visible to the Indian officer. Then he spoke, and the Subadar Major replied. The male voices seemed to give vitality to the night. The conversation ended, and Puran Singh gave orders to the men beside him. Having said his say, he left the roof followed by three Sikhs. Bir Singh, excited, told Gillian, "A Sahib has come. Will you please follow the Subadar Major?"

She climbed down after him. Two watchers remained upon the roof. Gillian heard the dragging tread of men carrying a weight, and as she hurried through the lower room to the courtyard she saw that it was full of men and that the Subadar Major held a lantern aloft to show the way to two Sikhs and two Punjabi policemen who bore in their arms a dead man. She drew back, and they passed her slowly and laid Captain Ford upon the big charpoy. Puran Singh stood and looked at this guest, and said with disgust: "Here is the work of devils!"

For four long hours Gillian sat beside Reginald Ford's body. Never had she gazed so long upon a human face and seen no change come over it. Never had she known a countryman of hers reign without power, impose himself without influence, as this man did, lying there. The military Sikhs touched the dead Sahib, heedless of caste, and Gillian saw Amrit Kaur gasp and stare at this. But it was the presence of the Mahomedan police inspector

Raheem Bux, who had brought reinforcements from Amritsar, that made the Sikh woman shrink, and by her intense and wordless emotion force the men of her race to become aware of the deep disorder of her whole being, and banish him, genially enough, to the courtyard to witness the pains of poor Jiwan Singh. The two women remained with the dead, and Amrit Kaur kept her distance from the corpse.

He was a man of thirty, broad-shouldered and sunburnt. Now rigid, waxen. It seemed a matter of urgent regret to Gillian that she, so intimate with his dead majesty, was utterly unacquainted with those who loved him. Tears, not of sentiment, but of tribute, gathered in her eyes. He seemed so lonely and proud, she thought. A shiver shook her. Seeing this, vigilant Amrit Kaur sat down with drawn-up knees before the wood fire, and, making a bellows of her fine chest and rounded lips, kindled it to a glow, which played like a mockery over the man whose blood was motionless and lent no colour. Gillian listened to Amrit Kaur's deep breathing, watched the still and uninflated breast of the stranger, and felt an anguished longing, which rent her from head to foot, to behold Tony gay and well and ruddy. She ached to press her lips to his. That would be life—'where breath most breathes, even in the mouths of men.'

Presently, with all the bearing of a mourner in the presence of death, young Bir Singh stole in. "Madam," he began, in a low voice, "I am starting out for Lahore, and will take a letter from you to some one at Government House. Now that the Amritsar police are here you will be all right. But it is better that you should stay here till the morning, because there are many Akalis in these parts, and to-night the district is very disturbed."

“ Will it be safe for you ? ” she asked quickly.

“ Quite safe,” he assured her. While he brought her an exercise book and pen and ink she marvelled at them all. In her ignorance she had pictured Punjab villagers as physically brave but socially abject, and she found them possessed of a social independence as definite as their military discipline.

“ I ’ll just say I ’m all right and ask Captain Stevens to send a motor at daybreak,” Gillian said, taking up the pen.

But Bir Singh would not hear of this. The Subadar Major desired a full report to be written. Gillian saw the end he had in view. The morrow would belong to officials, police, and many liars. Puran Singh knew that Gillian would be removed to peace and comfort. He wanted her testimony to be in the hands of headquarters before other reports were concocted. Whereas Gillian, mindful of Anthony Nugent, was loth to give herself away.

Her sense of honour prevailed. These men had stood by her. Reluctantly she began to write. And Bir Singh spelt out name after name to her, quiet and persistent. When she wished to mention Amrit Kaur there was difficulty until the widow brought forth her pension papers from their tin case, and then Gillian learnt her name, the date of her husband’s death in battle, and the amount of her income—eight rupees a month. Amrit Kaur had economic independence ; an emancipation such as Prem Kaur had not attained. “ I have said of you that your courage and kindness have made a deep impression on me, and that I owe you a debt of gratitude,” Gillian said to Amrit Kaur, laying down her pen.

Bir Singh translated, and Amrit Kaur, with a bashful

bluntness, made reply : " I eat from the King's hand. I render service gladly."

Gillian for a moment shut her eyes and dropped her face on her folded arms. How poignantly loyal was this service ! Captain Ford and Kirpa Singh died in it, Jiwan Singh suffered in it, the crowd in the courtyard stuck to its obligations. It seemed to lift them on to a higher spiritual plane than that of plot and plan. She raised her head and looked around her a little wildly : " Mine eyes have seen thy salvation ! " she murmured.

She spoke too low for Bir Singh to hear, and he asked her anxiously : " Are you ill, madam ? " When she reassured him, he hesitated and then suggested as she folded her letter : " It would be a good thing if you said that Narain Singh is a very bad man and has caused all this trouble to Khalsapur."

" Is that true ? " Gillian exclaimed, aghast.

" He has been here three days, and stirred up the Alalis to prevent the jathadars from reaching their houses in peace. Everything is due to him," the boy declared triumphantly.

Gillian, with reluctance, added a few words. " I have written that you say this is so," she told Bir Singh, who felt that as a clerk she had irritating privileges.

The Governor's wife and the cadet shook hands when they parted. Then the boy stood to attention and saluted the body of Reginald Ford, wheeled, and went out into the night. Once more Gillian was left in a world of broken communications.

Presently, however, the Subadar Major crept in carrying a pile of letters tied up in a handkerchief. These he gave to her with an earnest request to read them if she were not too tired. She guessed what he wanted,

and took them from his huge rough hand one by one. Friendship spoke in these letters, written in English by British officers to Puran Singh of the 114th Sikhs, who had to get them translated. They told him news of the regiment, news of hockey tournaments and promotions, mentioned their wives and children, inquired after his rheumatism : all brief and to the point, as comrade to comrade. Two letters condoled with him on the death of his only son. Gillian, when setting out to visit Khalsapur, had had no conception of this intercourse between soldier and soldier : these ties, these proofs of affection. But for this fidelity, where had been her refuge to-day ?

The Subadar Major gathered up the letters and went away. Jackals howled afar off. Gillian dozed for a long time and jumped to her feet very startled when the courtyard shone with more lights, and an English voice rang in her ears. In another moment two British officers came forward, removing their helmets as they crossed the threshold. Behind them Gurkhas filed into the courtyard among the tall Sikhs.

"I am Major Walters," the senior officer said, "and this is Captain Stone. I'm afraid you've had an awful time, Lady Nugent?"

"No," she said quickly. "Only an exciting time. I'm quite all right." She saw him glance at her hand, and said : "I did this myself with some broken glass. The tragedy is here !" and she pointed to the body on the charpoy.

The two officers approached it and stood looking down at Reginald Ford. They spoke in low voices to each other. Stone then went into the courtyard and asked in the vernacular : "Where is the Sahib's revolver ?" A Mahomedan policeman replied : "I have it, Huzoor."

Stone took it and examined it. "It has not been fired," he said.

Amrit Kaur gazed with all her soul at a tale come true. She beheld for the first time in her life a man with pale gold hair and blue eyes. For a while he was within two feet of her, then he turned to Gillian. Never before had Amrit Kaur seen Mem and Sahib speak together. They appeared to do so without fear and without reproach. Here was much to marvel at.

Major Walters said to Gillian: "I'm afraid I don't know exactly what has happened here."

"Nor I," said she.

"I gather some one told Ford that Akalis were holding up jathadars who wanted to re-enter their homes. He came along with half a dozen men and found a bad show: the Akalis were in strength and he tried to reason with them. A fellow started the yarn that the jathadars' women were being interfered with, and they tried to make a rush for the village. A Sikh officer says some one told Ford that you were here, and so Ford jolly well told the Akalis to go to blazes and to get out of his way. Then some swine shot him. There was a bit of a scrap, and the Akalis got the best of it. Government House, about four o'clock, 'phoned the D.C. at Amritsar that you were in Khalsapur. It had just been reported that the wires were cut between Tarn Taran and Amritsar. Police were motored out and they shifted the Akalis, and got into the village with the jathadars and their friends. They brought Ford's body here. It was all rather a mix-up, in the dark, with the village divided against itself. A messenger had to get back to Amritsar. When he arrived we got orders to come here by motor. I'm afraid we can't do much for you to-night, Lady Nugent, but

you're as safe as a church now. Can you sleep somewhere?"

"I'll stay in here," said Gillian, still with the idea that Ford was very lonely.

The major looked everywhere but at the Sikh woman, and remarked that it was pretty awful for Gillian. But she was determined to remain where she was, and when he left her she only detained him to say: "These people have been simply splendid, you know."

"The Subadar Major seems a good sort," Walters said guardedly. After he had gone Gillian could hear his kindly voice, questioning and giving orders. His manner to her had expressed all the consideration and sympathy that his words had left unspoken. Tired and comforted, Gillian felt as though something would disarm Tony's criticism too. Men didn't jump on you for the satisfaction of jumping, she thought.

Some one hammered in the carpenter's shop, and when dawn came at last a mighty humming was heard above Khalsapur. An aeroplane swooped and soared in the sky. Amrit Kaur exclaimed: "What is that?" while the soldiers in the courtyard stared up at it with much satisfaction. There was a constant coming and going. The Sikh woman looked very weary. She had not deserted Gillian for a moment, nor broken her fast in contact with the dead.

The queer, violent scenes of yesterday and the night seemed to have vanished like shadows when Prosser and Stevens came in to greet Gillian, followed by Bir Singh and Puran Singh. In the street Major Walters gave quick words of command. The little Gurkhas had filed out of the courtyard.

Prosser held Gillian's hand and wrung it again and again. "This place ought to be burnt to the ground.

I've told 'em so. Never mind! We'll get you home at once. I've expected Stevens to shoot me at any moment for not ordering a general massacre, what?" He patted Stevens on the shoulder. "I don't know what his temperature is now, but he insisted on coming."

"The motor's waiting," said Stevens. He smiled upon Gillian, with immense pleasure.

She drew back. "I won't go till he has been taken away," she said in her low husky voice, pointing to the charpoy.

"We'll see to that afterwards," said Prosser gently.

But Gillian was not to be moved. Nerves, thought Prosser, and said so to Walters, who observed that the soldiers spoke of her courage. "She was cool as a cucumber when we arrived last night," he added.

The officers yielded to her with great courtesy; and she was quite submissive when a rough coffin was brought in, and Stevens asked her to wait in the courtyard. Amrit Kaur then beheld the crowning wonder of her life, for Gillian walked up to the dead man and kissed him on his forehead, giving him an unknown love's farewell. And no surprise, only gentleness, showed on the faces of the Sahibs when she acted so strangely.

It seemed to Gillian that there was unaccountable delay, but presently she realised that Reginald Ford was to go on his last journey with all honour. With steady short steps men carried out his coffin. Stevens and Walters came first, shouldering the weight with ease. Five Mahomedan police shared the burden with them, and young Bir Singh, who was scornful of caste restrictions. In the street Captain Stone gave a word of command to the Gurkhas who lined the route. All the Sikhs in the courtyard stood to attention, and then marched out two and two behind the Commissioner,

who followed the coffin bareheaded. In the sky the aeroplane spread its terrible wings.

When they came back for Gillian they found her holding Amrit Kaur's hands in hers. She dropped them reluctantly, and that incomparable woman drew her veil close. "Bir Singh," said Gillian, "thank everybody for me, and please tell the Subadar Major that his daughter-in-law is my friend, and I will never forget her." Neither did Amrit Kaur ever forget how the blue-eyed officer saluted her without looking at her, and how the other officers, seeing this, paid her the same compliment while the fat Sahib took off his hat and disclosed that frightful thing, a pale pink bald head.

Gillian was ceremoniously escorted out of the village, and beyond the orchard Prosser bade her farewell. "The D.C. of Amritsar and I have a lot of work to do here. I'll see the Governor to-night," he told her. As he spoke two grey armoured cars from Lahore came into sight. "That'll make 'em all sit up," said Prosser, in tones of the utmost good nature.

The motor from Government House started to loud shouts of "Lord Sahib ke jai!" Gillian asked Stevens quickly: "How much does my husband know?"

"Only what Prosser wired him after the Deputy Commissioner telephoned from Amritsar, when the police message reached him. That was about eight o'clock last night. He sent another wire when Bir Singh turned up soon after two o'clock this morning," Stevens answered, and added: "The Governor sent an urgent wire from Pind Dadan Khan that he'll get back to-day." He really couldn't expect that ominous news to cheer this dame errant, but he searched his mind in vain for more soothing intelligence.

"Have you by any chance brought me anything to eat?" Gillian inquired.

"Good Lord! I forgot," cried Stevens. "I am the most devastating fool."

"It doesn't matter a bit," she assured him, and nearly wept.

"You say my wife is resting?" said Nugent, throwing off his big overcoat in his study.

"Yes, sir. Lady Nugent went to lie down about two hours ago, and left directions that she was to be told when you arrived," Stevens replied.

Nugent looked at his writing-table. "I've got everything here, I suppose?" He picked up the letter Gillian had written from Khalsapur. "That is the letter you told me about. What's all this? O, the communications between Prosser and Amritsar. Have the military sent in a report yet?"

"Divisional Headquarters has just forwarded it, sir."

"I see. Here it is." Nugent surveyed the whole file of papers with a wry grimace.

"Shall you want to see the General, sir?"

"I expect so. Later. Prosser will be back this evening, you said?"

"Yes, sir. There's been some trouble at Tarn Taran, but he expects to get back. The police report is there, sir."

Nugent sat down at the table and growled: "Telegrams from Delhi, I see. Want to know everything all at once, of course. What's this doing here?" He flicked at a copy of *The Good News*.

"I thought you ought to read it," said Stevens reluctantly.

"Usual muck, I suppose," the Governor remarked. He turned the leaves and said: "Hullo! So my wife

has been contributing to it." He gave a snort of rueful laughter. "All right: I'll read it."

He turned to his work, and Stevens felt himself dismissed. But to a discouraging back he proffered the information that the dinner and dance arranged for that night were postponed.

Nugent looked round sharply. "What's that for? We're not down-hearted, are we?"

"Lady Nugent postponed it on account of Ford's death, sir," Stevens explained.

The Governor nodded. "I see. Do you know when they will bury him?"

"We couldn't tell, sir. To-morrow at Amritsar, Major Walters thought."

"I'll attend, if I can. See that I know in time, will you? And I want particulars. I shall be writing to his people. Find out their address, please."

Stevens got as far as the door and was detained. "Let my wife know that I'd like her to come and see me here when she has had a good rest, will you? No hurry. I won't see any one for an hour or more. I've plenty to do. I'd like to see my wife at five o'clock—not before."

"Yes, sir."

Nugent wheeled round in his chair. "Feel all right again, Stevens?"

"Yes, thank you. I'm frightfully sick that I've been so useless. If only——"

But the Governor cut him short. "I know what malaria is. It's not your fault that when the cat's away the mice will play."

This time Stevens got away. He was very depressed, and a sarcastic Bourdillon did not attempt to console him. "Well? He is the angriest man you've ever seen, isn't he? Quiet as you please, of course. That's

him all over. No bluster. But I wouldn't be in her shoes for something. She has let him down badly. He realises how serious it is, and she'll try to carry it off airily. 'Why shouldn't I have my own opinions?' and so on. He won't stand for that. It will never be the same between them again."

"Good Lord!" mourned Stevens.

"We'd better toss up as to which of us elopes with her and sets him free," Bourdillon continued in bitter jest. "I tell you he has been doing magnificent work. The Jhelum district ate out of his hand. And he knows it: couldn't help knowing it. How the seditionists must be crowing to-day! This is a big score for them. Shouldn't wonder if they've got him beat this time."

Stevens flared up. "Well, I don't know what satisfaction you find in standing there and saying so," he roared, and departed in wrath.

"Obstinate lad, that," Bourdillon remarked to the neglected George: and went dismally to answer the telephone, which seemed to make the highly strung nerve of Government House hysterical with its vibrating cry.

Stevens showed a perhaps tactless sympathy when he delivered the Governor's message to his wife. "He wants me in his office at five?" Gillian exclaimed. She had risen on hearing of his arrival, and was still waiting for him in her sitting-room, having adorned herself very becomingly as Stevens noted.

"He has got a lot of papers and reports to read through," Stevens explained.

"He isn't coming up here?"

"No. He said his office. At five." Stevens couldn't think of anything encouraging to add to his bald statement.

Punctually at five Gillian opened Anthony's door and walked in. For two hours she had reflected upon the fact that his first impulse had not carried him upstairs to acclaim her safe return from a grim adventure. Chilled by this absence, Gillian did not cross the room and kiss him now. He turned in his chair and hailed her with an exclamation. "Well!" and she answered with a little hopeful "Well, Tony!" and subsided, wistfully expectant, on to an arm of a chair by the fire.

The sun and fresh air which had seemed to invade his office with him when he came in from his journey had left no gay glow upon his face. He looked very formidable and large, Gillian thought. Big enough to fill that big chair and use that big table, massive as they were. He seemed charged with will and mind. She had never seen him convey a stronger impression of purpose and vigour. You could not look to find in him a slack decision nor an unguarded emotion. 'He won't *leak* anywhere!' she said to herself. 'He is self-contained and not a bit vain.'

He came over to the fire and stood with his back to it, and turned his candid gaze on her. "Let's have a look at you, Gill," he said. "Had a good rest, I hope? Had a good tea?" She nodded, watchful as to his humour, his manner. "You ought to be on bread and water, you know. A political prisoner—that's what you ought to be." He gave a broad smile. "Funny things, you women. Men can't get *at* you. You escape very lightly, don't you?" His voice changed. "You look cold, Gill. Are you cold?"

"No, thank you, Tony." She knew quite well how much he loved her voice when it was low and sweet and tender like that.

He flung logs on the fire for her. "Well, you 're blue. Blue with funk, perhaps. You ought to be."

Yes,—there was a queer storm coming. It made her feel shy, awkward. He didn't seem to leave her with a word to say. Gillian thought: 'I look a fool sitting here so meekly!' but she could not find an adequate remark to make, and Nugent went on in his usual tones: "I want you to be perfectly frank with me, please. I shan't turn nasty, you know. Sit comfortably in that chair and tell me your tale from beginning to end."

He strode back to his desk and sat down facing her across the table. Drawing in his chair, he picked up her letter to Stevens and placed it in front of him on a writing-pad. Then he took up a pencil and a scribbling-block and put them ready for use.

"Now!" he urged, and slowly lit a pipe.

"What do you call the beginning?" asked Gillian doubtfully.

"When you first met this Prem Kaur, wife of Narain Singh. I want all you can remember. What she said, what you said;—your impressions of her. Take your time, and give me details." The pipe was lit, and Nugent had about him an air of ease and concentration. He waited for her to speak.

But she was regretting her folly in not having rushed in under his guard and transformed by a caress this gloomy day of judgment into a special honeymoon. Nugent had to hurry her with a curt, "Well, Gillian?"

She pulled herself together, displeased. "I'm not going to say anything to get Prem Kaur into trouble, Tony. She was very rude and intensely disagreeable yesterday, and I can't make her out at all. But her political ideas are her own affair, and she has a perfect right to them. I was her guest here in Lahore, and I

can't turn round and give her away by repeating the things she said in confidence."

He listened to that reply very intently. All he said was: "She was confidential?"

"In the sense that when she spoke she regarded me in the light of guest and friend. It was the frank conversation of two private people."

"I see. Two people holding the same political views? More or less. You were in sympathy?"

Gillian hesitated. "It is difficult to accept words which are put in one's mouth. I don't know that I'd swear that we thought alike politically in every respect. But on the whole we were in sympathy."

Nugent betrayed no irritation. He went on quietly: "Should you say that she expressed extreme views?"

"No," said Gillian very definitely. "I wouldn't call them at all extreme."

"Nor her husband?"

"O, no. I only met him once."

"When did you meet Tota Ram?"

Gillian suddenly flushed. "Last Thursday. Remind me to tell you something about that, Tony."

A grim smile touched his lips. "Well now, tell me your impressions of those three, and when this visit to Khalsapur was first mooted."

"On Thursday. It was Prem Kaur's idea. I didn't see why I should not go, and I still think there was nothing wrong in my decision. But if I've given you worry and anxiety, Tony dear, I'm dreadfully sorry," Gillian said in penitent tones.

He sat up very straight, thrust his hands in his pockets, and looked at her. "I've a cousin who employs women as secretaries. A row of 'em. He told me that any one of 'em would do something perfectly disastrous to

his show and say 'Sorry!'—just like that, 'Sorry!'—and expect him to call it quits."

Gillian showed instant agitation. "But what have I done that's disastrous? I don't understand you to-day! I've been in real danger and had an awful time trying to keep my head and not show what I felt, so that those Sikhs should respect your wife; and yet, instead of letting me see that you are *thankful* to have me back safe, you sit there as cold as a stone, just like a high and mighty official! I'm not going to be snubbed or bullied, Tony! I'll tell you the whole story, but I'm not a child nor an idiot, nor your inferior, and I won't say another word unless you treat me properly!"

Anthony interposed in his deep voice, which he instantly made reassuring and kindly: "Now don't work yourself up and cry, Gillian." He thought—always had thought—that she cried very easily. "That is the last thing I want. I know you've had a bad time. I've been trying not to rattle you. But drop the personal question you've raised for the present, will you? Never mind whether I'm cold or heartless or a domestic tyrant. The government is concerned in this matter. I've got to act for the Government of the Punjab, do you understand? And I must give the Government of India the information they require."

This startled and impressed his wife, but she caught for moral support at an ideal attitude, and repeated her refusal to 'give Prem Kaur away.' Nugent made a philosophical gesture. He would not harden her in this by direct pressure. "Well, just keep to the point, will you, and tell me what you thought of Narain Singh and Tota Ram," he said.

"I thought Narain Singh a polite, hospitable man, with the sort of ideas that would not be very popular,

perhaps, in cantonments. I mean he had ideas of his own. Was against wars and military expenditure; and keen on education and Indian widows re-marrying."

"Not strikingly original, was it?" growled Nugent.

She made an impatient movement. "I mean I think I'd like him better than you would. Tota Ram impressed me as being intellectual and difficult to know. He has very broad-minded views, evidently."

"Straight, do you think?"

Gillian was guarded. "How should I know? One trusts a person till one is deceived by him."

"I see. You trusted Tota Ram."

"Yes. He asked me to write an article on the emancipation of Indian women. I refused, because I don't know enough yet. But I wrote another article instead. I don't know when he'll publish it." She found it difficult to confess to that article. "I'll go into that later. It doesn't really matter."

Nugent's silence seemed to her ominous. He merely prompted her by a question: "Now as to what happened yesterday?"

Gillian gave him an intelligent and graphic account of her adventures, and he once or twice jotted down a note. As usual she enjoyed making a vivid narrative, and she told her tale with spirit and very clearly. When she said that she had made a speech he checked her with a raised hand.

"Wait a minute. Why did you want to speechify? I thought you had gone there to observe life in an Indian village," he said gravely.

"It wasn't a real speech, Tony," she explained. "It was just a few words to gain their confidence and assure them that I really did want to hear grievances as well as

protests of loyalty. I wished them to be sincere with me. They looked such *real* people, if you know what I mean."

"You suggested that naturally government—an alien government—gave them cause for complaint?"

"No, I did *not*!" Gillian denied it emphatically.

"Try and tell me what you said."

The request annoyed her, but she produced a very fair report. He listened intently as she described Prem Kaur translating her words, and the interruptions which took place. She gave a lively account of Bishen Kaur's harangue, of the shouts and shots and the violent scene in the room: Nugent's eyes twinkled and his face went red. "Humph," he grunted. "So she gave them a shoe-beating, did she? Is that why you fled?"

"You know it isn't," retorted Gillian. "I am not quite sure *why* I did what Amrit Kaur wanted. Perhaps it was because I wished to get out into the open. I felt, 'They shan't *keep* me here!' But before I went I shook Prem Kaur. Shook her hard."

Nugent flung himself back in his chair and looked at the ceiling. His great shoulders shrugged up to his ears. "The devil you did!" he exclaimed. Then he regarded her with a hearty air. "A serious shaking? Show me what you did. Come here and shake me."

"O, you——" murmured Gillian. "I might as well try to shake the rock of Gibraltar. I gave her a proper shaking, and *meant* to." She ran her fingers through her crisp short curls, and sat there with a ruffled head, looking like a vivacious-but slightly shocked squirrel. "I'm ashamed of myself, but I don't regret doing it one scrap," she added, with calm indifference to any inconsistency. Then she asked him: "Do you mind my having done it, Tony?"

"Not at all," he assured her politely. "Though I don't knock those people about myself, you know."

"She exasperated me," Gillian told him between her teeth, and without compunction. Then she gave a little chuckle.

The Governor instantly raised his eyebrows. "Now tell me the rest, please," he said quite coldly.

His tone galled Gillian, who raised her eyebrows too. "This is no laughing matter!" she declared in imitation of his manner.

But she did not score. He spoke with slow emphasis, leaning across the table towards her, and marking the beat of his sentences by striking the blotter with his closed hand. "It certainly is not. Ford was killed. And sixteen other men. Many are injured. That is not particularly amusing."

She suddenly caught her two hands to her breast. "You don't hold my wretched visit responsible for those deaths, Tony!"

Nugent was silent. Gillian cried out: "If you don't mean to imply that, it is cruel to torture me with the fear that you do!"

He said slowly: "God knows I don't hold you responsible, Gillian. If I did I'd insist on my resignation being accepted."

She gave a little gasp. He added, with a certain show of temper: "And, look here, you are rather impulsive in what you say, aren't you? You just let fly as it pleases you. Half an hour ago I was a flint and a bully, now I'm cruel and I torture you. Pretty strong accusations. Let's get through this damned business with decent manners to each other, anyway."

Gillian leant back limply and looked away from him into the fire. Presently she murmured: "You gave me

such an awful fright. But I apologise. I simply hate myself." After a few moments she took up her tale. She was all unconsciously—for she never posed—a dramatic figure now, reciting in that moving voice of hers the strange events of the afternoon, the sunset, and the night. Yet she did not describe the pictures her memory held—a glimpse of Amrit Kaur's brow and eyelashes as she bound up Gillian's hand, her shrinking effort to attain sheer invisibility in the presence of Raheem Bux, and the air of *emptiness* it gave to her statuesque draperies, her suddenly expanding form and slow inexhaustible vigour as she blew the firewood into red flames. Amrit Kaur was beyond description: to call her noble was to ignore the beauty of her as a peasant, as though an old and honoured name was obscured by a new title. Gillian knew she failed to convey a true impression of Amrit Kaur to Nugent. Nor did she attempt to put into words the darkness of the courtyard and the picturesqueness of the lanterns which threw dim lights across it; the striking contrast of British face with Sikh face, of Sikh face with Gurkha face. What use to speak of the haunting misery of Jiwan Singh's presence, and the awe Reginald Ford inspired by his absence from his own flesh? All the colours of the night sky and the silhouettes of roofs seen in the starlight had no place in her story, but held their own indelibly in her mind; together with the difference between this voice and that, the sudden shot and the prolonged uproar, the rush and the deliberate footfall. Nor could she present to Nugent's ears the drama of manners: now hospitable, now authoritative, now comradely; considerate or formal, mindful of race and custom, or oblivious of all save a personal reputation and a common danger. Personality, which had made this word and that action memorable,

was lost in the telling. When the story of events was completed, Gillian said, with a sigh: "The little things that impressed me most I've left out. But I want to say this to you, Tony: I've taken to heart the revelation of what the British mean to those pensioners and ex-soldiers. Of course, I can't define it, but I know now that their 'loyalty' stands for a big thing, and holds them together, gives them a fine spirit. It was the salvation of Khalsapur last night."

Nugent received this tribute in silence. He seemed concerned with the time now, and consulted his watch once or twice. Having pushed away the block upon which he had made notes, he began to speak in a deliberate tone: "Now, I'll give you some information. You can accept it as correct. I've no time to give you chapter and verse. Narain Singh is an extreme revolutionary. So is Tota Ram, probably: I say *probably*. Narain Singh's house here was searched this morning, and a haul made of incriminating documents. He was arrested later at Khalsapur. He manipulated the violence between Akalis and jathadars. The latter, like practical men, tried to avoid a row. By bringing Ford on to the scene the political importance of any loss of life was greatly increased. Things worked out very much as Narain Singh had hoped. Your presence in the zemindar's house drew the Khalsapur women there. The rumour that they were being interfered with made the jathadars and their friends risk a fight. Ford was killed, and they got the worst of it. But it gave the camera its chance. And one dead and four injured Akalis were taken by ambulance into Amritsar as a sample of advertised atrocities. What queered Narain Singh's plans was your excellent promptness in beating a retreat out of that window. I give you full marks for that. Had you

been in his keeping as he anticipated, the loyal elements in Khalsapur would have had no rallying point, and the police and Gurkha detachment would have been sorely handicapped. You scored off the fellow even better than you scored off his wife by shaking her."

Gillian had listened in deep dismay. "Narain Singh must be a cad!" she cried. "I was awfully kind to his wife and trusted them both. He took unpardonable advantage of it. I never heard of any thing more treacherous."

Again Nugent baffled her by making no comment. With increasing agitation and suspense, she listened to him when he cut short her indignant outcry and told her: "But Narain Singh didn't waste his time last night. He got messengers into Amritsar and Lahore quite early. The seditious press this morning is full of the information he gave them. The whole Indian press will quote it. The British press is asking for an official communiqué. Reuter is getting busy. London will report to-morrow. There will be questions in Parliament and the Legislative Assembly, resolutions passed by the Indian Congress, and so on.

"O, wait a moment, Tony!" cried Gillian, interrupting him with excitement. "Let me speak—surely, surely there is nothing to make a tremendous fuss about? The loss of life was not great—seventeen people! I know it's tragic, but as a revolutionary movement, or as a riot, it is simply *nothing*. I can't see that any capital can be made out of this, even by revolutionaries."

"Can't you, Gillian?" he said in a queer tone which dumbfounded her. "Crime does not necessarily strike the public imagination: scandal does. Narain Singh has brought off a first-class scandal. Possibly a little *coup d'état*, as far as I am concerned."

She turned white, felt the room unsubstantial and active as water, heard herself say despairingly, "Because I was there as their guest!" Quite a long time after she heard Nugent resume: "It shocked you. Can you give me your attention now? Don't lose your head, Gillian. Keep cool. And—as I said before—be frank with me. It is the only way." He took up a newspaper from his desk. "This gives what purports to be a full report of your speech to the women at Khalsapur yesterday. I'll read it to you." He read it slowly, and motioned to her with his hand to remain silent and hear him out. The words he quoted were inflammatory, extremely indiscreet, quite intolerable to loyal ears when uttered by the wife of the Governor of the Punjab. Gillian was reported to have said that the government inspired and exploited Hindu and Mahomedan antagonisms. That reactionary conservatives desired to keep India impoverished, ignorant, and docile. That, on the other hand, government's agents, the police, by oppression and extortion, provoked outbreaks of lawlessness in order to secure public sanction for the use of troops to suppress direct action and break the spirit of the people. She had assured them that members of the party whose opinions she had represented in Parliament watched with sympathy the gallant efforts of the Sikhs to establish Swaraj in the Punjab by non-violence, and to resist British interference with their religious problems and reforms. She had begged the women to remember that war was always wicked, and to refrain from sending their sons into the Indian Army; and she had asked them to tell her their grievances so that she could champion their just cause. She had exhorted them to give their support to educated Indian women like Prem Kaur who, in the face of conservative Indian

opposition and official passive obstruction, tried to lead them into the ways of peace, liberty, and enlightenment. Finally, she had expressed approval of passive resistance and the non-payment of taxes until such time as India had full self-government and women were enfranchised.

When Nugent had finished he laid the newspaper aside and asked her, coldly enough: "Allowing for the fact that no reporter took down your words, and Narain Singh was not present and must have sent in this account from his wife's version of what you said,—how much of this is accurate?"

"None of it," said Gillian, with white lips.

"None of it? Are you sure?" His tone was curiously unrelenting.

She broke out furiously: "Do you think I'm a fool? Do you suppose I don't remember that I'm your wife? Have I had *no* political education, Tony? Don't you give me credit for any decency of conduct, or any common sense?"

He went over to her and dropped the newspaper on to her lap. "Read it quietly to yourself," he said.

Though her hands were shaking she picked it up and did as he requested. He had made the request quite gently. When he thought she had finished he inquired: "Same answer, Gillian?"

"Exactly the same," she replied, with a cold pride. "I never said a word of that."

He handed her a pencil. "Just score out the expression of views which you don't hold."

There came the rub. Her pencil hovered alert but undecided. She looked up at her husband, strained and indignant. "I never said all this. I've thought some of it. I'd have to qualify what is written here. I can't repudiate the opinions it expresses—not entirely. Except

this and *this*." She drew her pencil angrily through the sentences which accused government of guilt with regard to Hindu and Mahomedan quarrels, and misuse of the police. Then she handed back the paper with a scornful gesture.

Nugent returned to his desk and pulled the writing-block towards him: "Let me be quite clear about this, please. You give the lie direct to Narain Singh and his wife—to whoever, in fact, asserts that these words represent what you *said*?"

"Yes," replied Gillian tersely.

He made a note, then faced her gravely. "The point is, who will believe you?"

She was taken aback, but undismayed. "Everybody will! It's my word against theirs, and Narain Singh has played me false, which should discredit him. Good heavens, Tony, Mr. Prosser and Major Walters and Captain Stevens—all of them—were friendliness itself to me. They didn't regard me as being in the wrong!"

Nugent shrugged his shoulders. "The cat wasn't out of the bag then. They hadn't read the papers. And in any case, crime is regarded as crime, and political opinions are a thing apart. Political prisoners aren't subjected to personal hostility or rudeness by decent men, I assure you. But that's neither here nor there. As you admit, it is a case of your word against Narain Singh's. Unfortunately, Gillian, the article which you were enterprising enough to contribute to *The Good News* corroborates in every essential respect the version of your speech that the seditious press has published." He took a copy of *The Good News* over to her, and put it into her unwilling hands, adding: "Perhaps you'd better glance at the leading article which your friend

Tota Ram is good enough to devote to my speeches in the Jhelum district."

There was silence in the room for a long time, broken only by Gillian turning the leaves of the paper, by the scratching of Nugent's pen, and by the falling of ashes in the grate.

In the Staff's office Bourdillon remarked: "She is having a longish bad quarter of an hour, isn't she? It's after six o'clock."

Stevens grunted. "I expect she is explaining things."

"That," said the unrelenting Bourdillon, "will take a bit of doing. *You* can't explain away her speech and that article, can you? It's unforgivable—in his wife."

At last Gillian rose from the chair by the fire and went and stood at Nugent's elbow. She put the copy of *The Good News* beside him and rested one hand upon it. "Part of that I wrote, Tony," she said in a low voice. "Part he has twisted. Part he has omitted. I praised British officials—he has cut all that out. Unfortunately I have kept no copy of what I wrote. You see, I trusted him." Then she added breathlessly: "I *loathe* him for his abuse of you!"

He slapped his big hand down on the paper beside hers. "You are the author of this? That's that, then. They've got their scandal. They've got it all right. The rest—poor Ford's death and the usual incidents—will be grossly misrepresented, as to the threats used, the force employed, which side fired first, and the number of the injured. Khalsapur will swear black's white. But that's only the peg to hang the hat on. The scandal's the thing. No doubt your communist friends will champion you." His voice was indescribably bitter. He twisted his shoulder as though to turn aside from her,

and said in calm tones: "Thanks, Gillian, that's all just now."

She put her arm round his neck. She would have told you that love will out. And her lips murmured: "I'm heart-broken over the trouble I've let you in for." Then she moved to the door.

At the last moment he said to her over his shoulder: "I realise the ordeal you've been through, you know. Keep up your courage, Gillian. In the long run that always counts."

Then he drafted a letter tendering his resignation to the Viceroy.

WHEN Priscilla went to the breakfast table she found her beloved Neville with his nose in the air and a soul above women. Instantly she sympathised with him over the Nugents.

"I simply can't face the papers to-day," she proclaimed. "That poor man!"

"He married her," the General pronounced in condemnation.

"He married little Violet first. That still stands to his credit," Priscilla remarked in a voice fit to penetrate sepulchres. "You say that he told you yesterday that she denies having made the speech, and admits having written the article?"

"Having written the article more or less. The artful Tota Ram edited it. There's nothing to hang her in the article *or* the speech."

Priscilla could resist the papers no longer. She skimmed them, and then ejaculated a disgusted "Yap! Yap! Yap!" In a reaction against wild headlines she declared: "I shall keep my head over this. I will *not* hunt with that pack. She is married to my friend Tony Nugent. If she does not agree with him politically—that's his affair. The wretched girl can't let well alone. She's a missionary by temperament. I've no doubt she made friends with Narain Singh and Tota Ram and the woman in order to obtain political influence and personal first-hand knowledge. She required just that equipment to arm her for the struggle with her Anthony.

Once she had it, she meant to employ it as an argument with him morning, noon, and night."

"Night!" growled the General. "Nice sort of bed-fellow."

"This crash has not come a day too soon," declared Priscilla. "With her ardour and sincerity and her physical fascination, there's no knowing how far she might have succeeded. 'My friend the enemy' would have become his domestic attitude at Government House in the long run."

"Then the sooner he goes the better," said the General. "A house divided against itself can't inspire loyalty. He's a first-rate fellow, but she has put him in an impossible position. Look at the facts: there's a mere scrap in Khalsapur. Men—loyalists, as it happens—prevented from entering their own houses in peace. A police officer says they must be allowed to do so, and Akalis shoot him. More police arrive and carry the point. In all thirty-nine casualties, seventeen deaths. But Khalsapur has got the Governor's wife up its sleeve. So soldiers are sent from Amritsar—a handful—in view of possible developments. Aeroplane and two armoured cars go from here. Nothing doing. They *prevent* general disorder in the district and make a demonstration. That's all to the good. Governor attends Ford's funeral to-day. Narain Singh was arrested yesterday on evidence found in his bungalow. The government come out very much on top, and that should buck up the decent crowd in the Punjab, and stiffen sensible men to be masters in their own house instead of being intimidated by the extremists in their villages. *But* on whose side was the Governor's wife? Hand in glove with Narain Singh and Tota Ram. There's the article over her signature, and on the opposite page is a rabid attack on her husband!

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Don't tell me that indiscretion leaves Nugent's position intact. It makes a fool of him whatever way you look at it. The East sees intrigue inside his very doors. Think they'll trust him after that? And they were beginning to trust him here; very much so. Confidence was making the whole province healthy-minded again. What do you suppose the Indian soldiers in this cantonment think of the Governor's wife urging their women-folk not to let their sons enlist in the army? I tell you," he continued very irately, "that this won't be the first time that the government of the Punjab has pulled the chestnuts out of the fire and got its fingers burnt to the bone by a seditious political exploitation of the situation, by misrepresentation, and by a cry of scandal. And it won't be the last."

"Exit Anthony Nugent," sighed Priscilla.

Neville shook his head. "I'm not so sure. That would be a complete triumph for the extremists. It would play their game for them. But I shouldn't care to be him in the circumstances."

"Nor her," said Priscilla gruffly.

"Serve her right," he said, without rancour. "She can't have it both ways. If she marries the Governor of the Punjab and lives with him, she shouldn't make a point of siding with those who attack him."

Priscilla bit her toast as though she would like to bite somebody's head off. "Gillian Nugent is faithful to him, I'll say that for her. She worships him."

"Faithful!" The General uttered the word as though it were distasteful. "I don't consider the fidelity of husband and wife consists wholly in the loyalty of their sex relations. That is an essential loyalty, of course. But to betray a husband's cause is treachery, or I don't know what the word means."

Priscilla groaned. "Despise me if you must, I confess that this Nugent scandal fascinates me. The everlasting theme of sex jealousy doesn't come into it at all. The divorce court is competent to deal with that problem. No tribunal but a court of honour could pronounce on this. You know, *nothing* is so interesting as a real good row between husband and wife!"

"You alarm me very much," said the General pointedly.

"In every other dispute the onlookers see nothing but a display of fireworks or dirty linen. Husband and wife in private don't have to be formal, and they are terribly intimate. The Nugents' quarrel on a vital social question gets hold of my imagination and makes havoc of every hard-and-fast theory I possess. In this case there's liberty of conscience to preserve, there are the obligations of marriage to maintain, there are his official duties and her political opinions to respect."

Neville could stand no more of it. "There's human life to guard. The revolutionaries are out to kill. If she likes to join up with that lot while preaching peace, she must have a kink in her somewhere. You can't trust a woman like that. However, I'm no politician, thank God. This wretched affair has nothing to do with us, Priscilla."

But long after the General had left the bungalow his wife sat with her chin propped on her hand, thinking of the Nugents. Not for a moment was she neutral. Partisanship animated every idea she possessed. Yet she was not superficial. While the controversy spread through India and sped to London over the wires—and all the Punjab took sides—Priscilla took part. For, to her surprise, Stevens rang her up during the morning and gave her a message from Gillian begging her to come and see her that afternoon.

Priscilla waited in Gillian's sitting-room and noted the quality of her many books, the profusion of the flowers that she loved. The great size of Government House, its aspect of stubborn gravity and dignified isolation, struck the soldier's wife afresh. The Nugents' personal dispute, by involving the head of affairs, affected the will, the mind, the decisions which reacted on the whole Province.

"What bad luck for the Punjab!" she dismally ejaculated.

To Gillian's eyes Priscilla presented a discouraging appearance. Her tanned face was so worn but so real: no powder had touched it, and the lips were faded, the hair was faded, lines denied all freshness to her smile and her glance. The contours of her square figure were stiff. In her dull woollen coat and skirt, felt hat, brown furs, she looked a strong, dowdy lady without pretensions to wealth or youth or beauty, but with a calm claim to carry weight. To her Gillian made exactly the right appeal when she came in, and took her hands without a word, and then dropped on to the sofa saying in her low seductive voice: "I'm in the most awful trouble."

"If it is any relief to you to talk about it, I'm a reliable listener," Priscilla told her, adding, "and an old friend of your husband."

"I know. That's why I asked you to come. I am very grateful to you for coming," Gillian responded shyly. Then she broke out: "First, I want to tell you that I had no idea Narain Singh and that lot were revolutionaries. I thought we had a good deal in common as regards political ideals, and I wanted—as far as I could—to see and understand their Indian point of view. In the long run I hoped to bring about a greater personal understanding and sympathy between their

aspirations and my husband's official attitude. As to what happened on Sunday, I'm terribly upset, because I cannot make any one realise—and Tony seems to think people won't believe—that I was not acting politically at all. I was just being friendly. I'd hate to patronise anybody—class and race didn't exist for me: there were just the known and the unknown. I went to meet Prem Kaur's sister and see a Punjab village. I can't do more than deny that I uttered a word of that speech. No one could have been more bewildered than I was all that day and night. Prem Kaur simply wouldn't interpret a thing, and if that cadet had not been there I should never have known what anybody was *meaning* or thinking. I could only have judged by their actions."

Priscilla interposed: "Perhaps it is always safest to judge people by their actions."

"I'm being judged and condemned by words I never uttered," Gillian pleaded. "I wrote that article. The more fool I. But Tota Ram played monkey tricks with it. The article as he published it does not fairly represent my ideas."

There was no comment to be wrung from Priscilla. Her silence provoked the other into an outcry: "Freedom of speech! Liberty of conscience! Where are they? You'd think I was against my own race! Don't I love England as much as you or Tony, or any British official? Aren't socialists as patriotic as conservatives? I'm not a communist. Of course I disapprove of revolution. I'm in favour of constitutional means to effect reforms. But I'm mad keen on heaps of reforms."

Without any sign of irritation Priscilla remarked: "I don't think that any one in his senses denies you the right to hold what political opinions you please. But English party politics should have no conspicuous place

in India. A fatal weakness and a fatal intrigue begin the moment you say to India, 'I'm a conservative and therefore your master,' or 'I'm a socialist and therefore your friend.' The only fair, honourable, and protective attitude is this: I am British, and therefore I uphold law and order and the government as constituted by Parliament. This land is as large as Europe without Russia, and has a far greater mixed population: no Indian politician can command a mandate from all India to-day even by widespread agitation. The mass of the people still accept the government which all officials are bound to maintain and make efficient in method and sympathetic in manner. If government can conciliate its opponents so much the better, but if it makes concessions to them at the expense of its friends the strength of mutual defence between government and its supporters breaks down." She waited a moment, and then said vigorously: "You're more or less obliged to consider *where* you live, Lady Nugent. You are in Government House, Lahore, and not in the Palace of Westminster."

"And you don't think I'll ever go to heaven!" Gillian cried flippantly. She lit a cigarette and changed her manner. No longer an exponent of her theories, she became personal, intimate. "But I want heaven here below. And that means Tony to me. Lady Neville, I'm—it's a queer thing to say—wildly in love with Tony. I'd surrender anything but my soul to him. My soul can't surrender its ideals—and if I believe certain things are just and right, I must support them and oppose Tony."

No one could have looked more practical than Priscilla. "At once? Again? What political action do you want to take now?"

"None!" wailed Gillian, with loathing in her voice. "I only mean that if he and I argue, I can't recant to please him."

Priscilla simply could not resist saying: "Then don't argue."

The other murmured: "I've cared about these things for such years!"

"That's a conservative attitude," Priscilla triumphed. "You want to convert him."

Gillian rumpled her hair in anguished vexation. "O, I know what it is going to be like! About this big cause, Tony will be more than just to me: he'll be generous. Awfully chivalrous. And he'll be tactful: when he wants to be sure what I'm up to he'll try not to appear to interfere. He'll disguise his suspicions. To the world's eye he'll uphold me, and in a thousand little ways he will endeavour to retrieve my 'mistake.' I know that he will notice all signs of my being unpopular, and he'll keep his hands—O, ever so lightly—on the social ropes to help me. I'll admire his courtesy and forbearance, and it will fret me into fiddle-strings."

"Why not go Home for a bit?" Priscilla suggested.

"That would be worse than *anything!*" moaned Gillian.

"Humph! 'Worse than anything.' You *must* be with him, then?"

"I don't really *live* now, away from Tony," said Gillian, quite simply. "And I know he'll withdraw from me even here, and that will half kill me."

Rubbing her nose savagely, Priscilla muttered: "You must decide for yourself which comes first: your husband or socialism."

"In the war," Gillian looked at her wistfully, "you soldiers' wives put your country first."

"Before politics, of course. But it wasn't a case of choosing between country and husband; one identified them," explained Priscilla.

"What about the women who had married foreigners?" challenged Gillian, without much vigour.

"Nobody forced them to marry foreigners. They ought to have adopted their husbands' nation in peace or war the day they married, or else have refrained from marrying, if they wanted peace of mind," Priscilla declared in her downright way.

"A man doesn't have to do that," objected Gillian.

"No, he does not," agreed Priscilla, unmoved.

A silence fell, and the elder woman observed with compunction the younger's nervous hands, her restlessness, and the dark lines under her troubled eyes. But the longer Priscilla remained in her presence the more acutely did she resent her marriage with Anthony Nugent. His executive gifts, which meant the pacification and development of twenty million people, were at the mercy of this young wife's deep energies. History, thought Priscilla, disclosed appalling instances of the intimate influence of a woman upon the public career of a man. Would his great sagacity withstand the disinterested and almost religious enthusiasm with which his wife advocated her ideals? In her stout affection for the Punjab, Priscilla was conscious of resentment against Gillian. Only a dullard could be unresponsive to the appeal made by the gallant service of Punjab soldiers in the fiercest of wars, and Priscilla was a most sensitive woman. She was a true partisan of the illiterate ex-service man, the wounded, and the bereaved. Their welfare she would trust only to British authority. On Great Britain rested the responsibility for calling them to arms. Their adventurous lives could not be dis-

sociated in even one vital particular from the peace and security of the whole Punjab, and, in Priscilla's opinion, Nugent was the one man likely to give the Province its due. His successor must be chosen from among the senior officials in the Punjab Commission, and in that limited choice there was at the moment no promise of such spirited and acceptable leadership as Nugent possessed. Narain Singh and his confederates knew that fact: hence their haste to bring about his dismissal or abdication. And there sat fatal Gillian Nugent all on fire to retain Nugent's love, and through that love her personal influence which might survive this public crisis in spite of its domestic calamity.

Mahomed Khan, the head khitmutgar, came into the room and announced: "The House of Narain Singh petitions your Honour to admit her. She is here."

"I don't understand a word," groaned Gillian.

"Narain Singh's wife wants you to see her. I should not if I were you," urged an astonished Priscilla Neville.

Gillian sat rigid for a moment. Then she said desperately: "I must! I couldn't turn a dog away like that. It would humiliate her dreadfully. I'd feel as though I were taking advantage of our respective positions. And perhaps I shall be able to get her to admit to you that I never made that speech. That would help Tony!"

Before Priscilla could expostulate, Gillian signified her consent by a gesture, and Mahomed Khan ushered in Prem Kaur and vanished.

With the advent of Prem Kaur an element of secrecy entered the room. The prisoner's wife had an air of violent energy; she came forward with assurance, and pushed her veil back from her lustrous black hair, which

parted above her narrow brow. She looked like some work of art done in enamel upon bronze, all burnished and hard and bright.

"You know Lady Neville? Please sit down," said Gillian in formal tones.

"Lady Nugent, can I see you alone, please?" Prem Kaur said meaningly.

"I should prefer Lady Neville to be present. Unless she is kind enough to remain I cannot consent to see you," replied Gillian, with more discretion than Priscilla had supposed she possessed.

Prem Kaur sat down restlessly. "That is very difficult for me," she remonstrated. "I come here as your friend when all the British and officials are blaming you for acting against the interests of an alien government. If Lady Neville is here, how can we speak freely?"

Gillian raised her eyebrows: "I have nothing to say to you that I should prefer to say in private," she asserted coldly.

Prem Kaur declared with excitement: "There has been much misunderstanding. I do not know why you are angry with me. The women in Khalsapur are jungli.¹ It was not my fault that they had not well-bred manners. And if you had not run away through that window no lives would have been lost. You were safe with me and my husband, but you went away, and no one knew if you were in danger, so that Captain Ford gave abuse to the Akalis and threatened to shoot them, and to save their own lives an Akali fired. It is very sad, and all men regret it. But if the jathadars had known their women were with you in my brother-in-law's house they would not have attacked the Akalis, and all could have been settled peacefully. When you upset arrange-

¹ Of the jungle, *i.e.* rustic.

ments like that, suspicion and fear were roused and then no one was safe. Why did you do it?"

This subtle speech horrified Gillian, but she replied firmly: "You are not in a position to ask for any explanation, Mrs. Narain Singh, until you have apologised to me for misrepresenting what I said to the women. You must know quite well that I did not make that speech. I must really insist that you publicly withdraw your statement that those were my words. You have falsely attributed them to me, and that is a very serious matter."

To her amazement Prem Kaur evaded this direct challenge: "I am in such distress I cannot remember what any one said. If you do not think you used those words you can say so through the press."

"Certainly I shall deny, and have denied, using those words," cried indignant Gillian. "But surely you realise that truth and honour demand that you should admit the gross inaccuracy of your interpretation and report of my speech?"

"No one will harm you because of the speech," said the woman of the East. "But because the Governor is angry with my husband the police have falsely accused him. They have manufactured evidence against him and pretend that they found it in our house. What can he do to prove his innocence? Nothing! Because all men fear the Governor too much. Now is the time for you to show you are true friend of India, Lady Nugent. See—the British press criticise your article and speech—only the labour newspapers are just to you. But the Indian press praises your courage and wisdom. All influential Indians will give you support if you will help me and persuade the Governor to release my husband."

Here Priscilla gave a startling and inarticulate noise

of disapprobation, which sounded like the last trump. Gillian said, quite patiently: "Surely you realise that that is a foolish request? The law must now take its course. No one can interfere with the law. I sympathise with your distress and anxiety, but it would be quite impossible for me to help your husband even if I thought fit to attempt to do so."

"But what use is sympathy if you do nothing?" cried Prem Kaur. "It is foolish of the government to be so blind. By such an act of injustice many passions are roused. Students are very bitter against the Governor, and I think, because I know many things, that it would be safer for you to get him to release my husband before some irresponsible youth commits a crime."

Lady Neville interposed promptly: "Is that a threat?"

Prem Kaur flinched a little. She feared—while she trusted—the General's wife. "Why do you speak of threats? I do not know anything, and I can think of nothing but my children's trouble and the wrong done to my husband," she said. She turned her hard dark eyes on Priscilla and assumed an ingratiating manner. "You understand Indians, Lady Neville. You know we are greatly concerned with our family life, and that to us women politics do not matter at all so long as our own affairs are all right. But Lady Nugent thinks only of politics. My husband subscribed much money to the war loan, and he always said to me that India requires British officers still to prevent Indian sepoy from killing the defenceless and taking away the possessions of the rich. That is because they have no education and are like savages. But the Governor desires that all should be educated, and my husband has often praised him for that." She looked from one face to the other, baffled by their candid eyes.

Priscilla replied quietly : " Your husband is an educated man, a lawyer, and wealthy. I hope that nothing serious will be proved against him. He is neither ignorant nor defenceless. I am sincerely sorry for your trouble, but I can only offer you advice, and perhaps I may hurt your feelings. I do trust that I won't. Be *brave*, Mrs. Narain Singh. You Sikhs are brave people. Face the truth. You know it is useless to try to exert backstairs influence like this."

Prem Kaur almost screamed. Gesticulating with her whole lithe body and flashing her eyes, she poured forth a stream of words. Narain Singh's wealth had roused enmity, she said. Many people would swear falsely against him, and the cruel police would swear anything. All Indians were defenceless because the British denied them justice. If they arrested Narain Singh, why did they not arrest Tota Ram? Was it because they hated and feared the Sikhs? It would be far more just to arrest Tota Ram and release Narain Singh. She would not tell them why, because they would not believe her. But if Lady Nugent would promise to give her protection and help she would talk freely. While Prem Kaur insinuated and accused, the two Englishwomen looked uncomfortable, as though something that outraged their sense of decency was taking place. At last Prem Kaur fell silent, exhausted by the appalling discovery that she could move them to pity or to indignation, but she could not corrupt their thoughts nor shake their wills.

Yet Prem Kaur was no weakling. Their unspoken criticism did not intimidate her. In her own mind she was justified, and she saw herself as gifted with qualities which these quiet figures most ludicrously lacked. She turned again to Gillian. " It will be very difficult for you

when all officials are against you. I will try to remember what you said in Khalsapur. If I could consult with my husband it would be easier. Would you ask the Governor to permit me to see my husband ? ”

To Priscilla's unfeigned joy Gillian answered : “ I will make no bargain with you. If you make that request to my husband he will do what he thinks best.”

“ Will you ask the Governor to give me an interview ? ” Prem Kaur cried quickly. An alluring vision of triumph to come dazzled her.

“ Write to my husband yourself and ask him to give you an interview,” Gillian replied gently.

Prem Kaur exclaimed : “ But you do not help me at all ! Why, then, should I try to remember what you said ? I think you do not really care for Indians, Lady Nugent. And that is very hard on me, for I have lost all because of you. My sister in Khalsapur reproaches me, and so do my husband's relations, but all the relations of those who were killed say your visit brought terrible misfortune upon them.”

Still the two white women remained unyielding. In Priscilla's breast a riot of scorn repudiated the cruelty of Prem Kaur's words : it was so abject to strike like that at a mute Gillian, aghast, pitiful.

Prem Kaur rose flauntingly. “ I must return to my poor children,” she said. “ All day long people come to me saying : ‘ Why is Narain Singh in prison ? Why is the Governor so hard to you when you are his wife's friend ? ’ I do not know what to reply. This morning I heard that Subadar Major Puran Singh is very pleased, and is telling every one that you said his daughter-in-law is your real friend. No doubt he hopes to get great advantage from that. So perhaps he will leave off beating her. He is a very cruel man.”

If she hoped to wring a criticism from them she failed. Gillian moved silently to the door with her, opened it, and said a quiet 'good-bye.' As Prem Kaur passed into the corridor she seemed to diminish in stature, shrink into insignificance, and she followed the enriched Mahomed Khan with a knowledge that intimidated her. She stepped into her motor and drove away from the doors of Government House, well aware that nowhere outside its walls was she so sure of courtesy and consideration. To students and three of Narain Singh's friends who awaited her in her bungalow she declared that she had been browbeaten and insulted. To her whispering, credulous world she gave out a rumour that she had refused a large bribe to withdraw and repudiate her true translation of Lady Nugent's speech. But in her heart, frightening her, she carried a revelation of the sudden contempt of two dignified women. It was not racial, that contempt. It was personal. Only to be changed into admiration now by Prem Kaur herself. They would never again concede her their respect unless she earned it. Which she considered grossly unfair.

When the door closed behind Prem Kaur, Priscilla gave vent to her pent-up championship when she cried: "They are not all like that!"

Gillian uttered no comment on the woman who had made such mockery of the title of friend. She crossed the room and crouched down by the fire, very weary. Then she murmured: "I shall never know what hearts are accusing me of being the cause of men's deaths. It's not a question of evidence but of imagination. This morning Tony and Major Bourdillon kept up a great appearance of being just as usual, but the black band on Major Bourdillon's uniform was like a black mark against me." For a moment she covered her eyes with her hands.

Priscilla thought: 'She dreams, but she realises. It is a cruel fate.'

Gillian looked up at her. "I must do something for Amrit Kaur. I can't believe that any one beats that stately creature. Lady Neville, don't you think I ought to invite her here and thank her? Would you speak to Tony about it? She is a soldier's widow. But, you see, Tony is rather off my friends." She gave a sad little smile.

Pulling her furs around her, Priscilla rose to depart. "If you see Amrit Kaur her husband's family will probably petition for some big reward in recognition of any service that you acknowledge having received. They'll open their mouths wide and probably ask for a grant of land. That's the biggest reward a soldier gets after long years of exceptionally fine service or having distinguished himself in war. They have no sense of proportion, and they all feel that they owe it to their relations to be on the make. No such sordid motive animated Amrit Kaur in Khalsapur that night. Calculation and family pressure and a mad hope beset Punjabis after they've done their duty. Don't let it disillusion you. What business have we to judge them by our illusion?" Priscilla spoke with Spartan justice. She had no patience with people who demanded that their own sentiments should be gratified by the spectacle of a consistent heroism, a picturesque gratitude, a complete simplicity, on the part of martial classes and an illiterate peasantry.

Some quality in Gillian that set her apart from her folly, that was separate from her opinions, that had nothing to do with her advocacy of ideals, stirred Priscilla Neville. Its attraction lay in her activity. By a succession of movements—tense, impulsive, graceful—an

impression was conveyed that here was gallantry, energy, a being whose word was no sooner said than done. Priscilla went out from her presence unable to shake off a haunting interest in her. But she found her less than tragic, greater than the woman of intrigue, sweeter than a fanatic : a puzzling creature.

Very few English people can endure prolonged interviews with a friend who is undergoing an emotional crisis. Advice and argument lose by repetition, and to watch one hour is a stern vigil that the soul of good nature never keeps. Priscilla, always at leisure from herself, and unafraid in the presence of grief, was nevertheless conscious of a sense of release as she hurried away. She deemed it a misfortune to run into the Governor coming with a heavy tread along the corridor. He greeted her as though she displayed a welcome olive branch. " Been to see my wife ? That is uncommonly good of you. Priscilla, you're a dear. Come in here and be nice to me, too." Nugent held the door of his office open, and willy-nilly in she went, conscious of a certain surprise at his bearing. He seemed less self-contained and more free from signs of depression than she had pictured him.

But when she had yielded to his desire for a private talk, she recognised that his animation was due to excitement. This was no longer the imperturbable Anthony Nugent. He carried strain without a sign of physical disturbance, looked thoroughly comfortable in the chair opposite hers, looked warm and hard and energetic. All the more poignant to her were the downcast expression on his face, the gloom in his voice. He leant forward, his arms resting on his knees, with his hands clasped between them, so that in speaking he thrust his chin out as he raised his face to address her.

"Now then, Priscilla, between you and me—what about it?"

"About you, or your wife, or the Punjab?" she demanded clearly.

"Never mind the Punjab for the moment," he said, to her astonishment. "I don't know how long I shall be Governor. But that is confidential, please. Consider me as a husband, Priscilla."

So this man was suffering, not vicariously, but in the very core of his being. Priscilla replied: "You'd pass muster, Anthony Nugent."

He gave her the sort of smile that told her he liked her immensely, and he persisted: "As Violet's husband. You knew us pretty well in those days. We were extraordinarily happy, weren't we?"

"You seemed so. I thought you both wonderfully happy," she told him.

"There!" he declared. "And it was not mere luck. No. I definitely intended to make Violet enjoy married life with me. Yet no man holds and knows the secret of success in marriage, I think. Or if so, I do not possess it."

"Are you sure?" Priscilla remonstrated, and was startled by the violent contortion of his face. Jerking his head towards Gillian's room he vociferated: "Upstairs—a complete failure."

Appalled by this pronouncement, she held her peace, and presently he had a word for her. "A nice mess, eh?" Priscilla still offered no comment, and thought him erratically preoccupied with all the small business of lighting his pipe, till he disclosed his mind as following far shades. "Beauty—that was Violet. Loveliest thing I've ever seen. It is not easy to remember words she used, but I can see her still: exactly—exactly. She

was full of laughter and she chattered away. Great fun it was. By no means a feather-brain; and with a thousand ways of moving a man. She liked me to win at everything. She 'd have hated this smash-up." His voice died away into a growl. Then 'he cocked his eye at me,' Priscilla remembered afterwards, and said: "I think all women ought to be like Violet, and all men ought to be young and madly in love. Those were great times."

"After that it was an awful risk marrying again," murmured Priscilla.

"I knew it," he retorted quickly. "Violet was fantasy, perfection. Gillian—romance!"

Nugent frowned into the fire, while Priscilla tried to picture his two wives like that. She had a glimpse: lovely Violet, all joyous youth and sweetness, to capture the imagination. Vivid Gillian, all adventure and wild feeling, to interest a lover. But far more fully she realised this man, so spacious in his views, so deep and concentrated in his passion. Yet she was all unprepared for what came next.

Nugent began to speak in a detached tone, then fired up like a flame that towered: "Gillian is a very different proposition. Gillian wants to lead her own life. She is keen to *know* things. Comes in here and discusses affairs. Well—that's all right. But, by God, Priscilla, what does a man do when his wife turns enemy-alien?"

Here, she saw, was tragedy. Nugent held his honour to have been injured by his wife.

"Enemy-alien,—that's too strong, an exaggeration," she cried.

He made a movement of such inarticulate pain that she became silent, thinking, 'He sees it in that way.

To him her actions are incompatible with his allegiance, and fatal to their mutual loyalty.'

Nugent squared his shoulders, restless under the burden of his indignation. "It is damnably disappointing to a man, Priscilla," he said quietly, and she felt that he must have counted terribly upon romance.

He began to walk up and down the room. "I know, mind you, that the scandal is fustian. But our explanation of Gillian's actions will be more or less false, too. A tinsel. Horrid stuff. Knowing that, I'll still have to deal with this affair as if my heart were in it. Don't let's talk of it to-night, straight from that poor fellow's funeral, caught by a trap with Gillian as the bait."

Still tramping to and fro, he said urgently as though, finding himself lonely, he required her to understand him: "Suppose me to be a poet and the author of a drama, which Gillian, we'll say, dislikes. Disapproves of both theme and moral. We'll naturally concede her the right to do so since tastes differ and it's a free world. But you would believe, would you not, that on the night the drama is staged and acted, I, its author, am robust enough to accept public criticism and yet am sensitive? You'll admit that there is something passionately personal to me in its fate and the response it evokes! Well—my work is that drama. I see it staged now in the Punjab. And my wife has hissed at it for all the world to hear."

Priscilla acknowledged that there was more than mere controversy in his dispute with Gillian. So much more that she was constrained to remind him, "You love her!"

"Yes. If I don't hate her," he answered strangely. And blurted out the one thing clear to him: "She still fascinates me."

It seemed to Priscilla Neville then that Gillian's husband was contemplating sacrifice. Rather than play heart against head, he would make a clean sweep of Gillian's influence over his emotions, and stand alone at the last. Was this what it was like, she asked herself, when people of high mettle are driven to extremes? His plight hurt her so that she cried out: "Look here, Anthony Nugent! You deserve to get the best of the argument with your wife. But for pity's sake don't resist her when she persuades you to go on loving her."

Nugent stood stock still and looked at her. "Not——"

"No, not on any account," she said, rising.

"I'll think that out, Priscilla," he said in emphatic tones. "I've said to myself—squash her. Yet she's not putty. Repression seemed called for,—but why Gillian?"

"Ah, you'd have repressed your own tenderness for her instead!" interrupted Priscilla.

"How did you know that?" he demanded. "I tell you Gillian is fire, and there's been a destructive element at work here. Conflagration: you know how one guards against it in this land that is a dry tree? To keep cool is my job." As he said that Priscilla felt that Gillian had sown the wind to reap a blizzard. His eyes sparkled as frost does. She put her hand into his to make sure that it was still warm, and found it burning. She left him sorrowfully.

Prem Kaur was snapping over her shoulder this way and that way in her bungalow, beset by rustic Akalis, terribly persistent, who demanded that she should agitate on their behalf and so secure for them large sums of money as compensation for lives lost at Khalsapur. Let her but proclaim loud and long that government was in the wrong, and government would pay.

Gillian was sitting alone in her bedroom, conscious that accusations stormed around her. She shuddered, and wondered if Anthony would come and comfort her in her distress.

The anxious Punjab was besieging Authority with its petitions, which invariably began : " I pray with folded hands." Many clenched their fists.

And the Governor paced his study. ' I 'm neither an autocrat nor a politician : my duty is to govern,' he muttered. No doubts there. But he continued to ask himself this question : ' Is it necessary to resist love ? '

GOVERNMENT HOUSE was self-conscious ; anxious not to make excuses, keen to avoid explanations, intent on carrying off the thing as well as possible. Bourdillon pitied Sir Anthony when he had to see the ministers. He and Stevens had friction because Bourdillon was so susceptible to Gillian's personality that he became vehemently antagonistic to her when, as now, her actions had attacked what he upheld ; whereas Stevens condoned in Gillian what he would have condemned in any one else. During the first days of suspense they argued vigorously : Stevens holding that Gillian was acquitted of all save the indiscretion of ignorance, and Bourdillon maintaining that her folly and presumption in playing political cards had sold the pass to the adversary : ' It doesn't matter how you give away the show. That you've done it damns you.' Yet Bourdillon was as nettled as Stevens when invitations to Christmas festivities at Government House met with an appreciable number of refusals. He declared that there was no sense in withholding cordiality from the Governor in order to demonstrate disapproval of his wife. For lack of other permissible confidants, they discussed with each other the relations of husband and wife, speculated as to the extent of the breach between them, and wondered whether Gillian would give in. Stevens stoutly assured Bourdillon that heaps of things might happen which could effect a reconciliation without changing Gillian all of a sudden from a socialist to a conservative. Pressed to

be definite, he said that a baby would do it. Bourdillon asserted that Gillian would regard a son in the sacred light of an internationalist, a conscientious objector, and League of Nations orator, with a dash of Bolshevism thrown in : that she would never let him go to a public school, and would prefer to educate him in Germany. He then drew a pencil sketch of this unfortunate child, and challenged Stevens not to want to kick him at sight. Unmoved, the faithful Stevens predicted that if any one of them was man enough to disclose to Gillian the fact that her husband's life was in constant danger from revolutionary Indians, she would ' chuck all that seditious lot.' But Bourdillon scoffed ; and declared that Gillian would never let personal fears distort her political theories. People had winked at Irish murders, forgotten enemy atrocities, discounted Russian crimes, and tolerated sedition : was it likely that Gillian could not swallow a little thing like the existence of plans for political assassinations in India ? Though she would not go so far as to say they were ' quite right.' The two men disagreed hotly as to the interpretation to be put on Gillian's actions : her friendship with Narain Singh's wife, her visit to Khalsapur, her reported speech, her written contribution to *The Good News*. Stevens said the thing could be boiled down to a misplaced confidence in the wrong people and the wrong remedies. Bourdillon assured him it was useless to try to whitewash her. " A story is far more influential than an explanation," he declared. " The story damages her reputation and the explanation fails to repair it." Whereupon an exasperated Stevens told him to go to blazes.

In spite of their personal dispute, they presented a united front in their defence of the Nugents against public criticism and private mortification. Breakfast

was no longer a pleasant meal, but it was not a silent one, though conversation constantly verged on topics suddenly grown awkward. Gillian showed spirit in contributing her share of small talk with a plausible air of gaiety. She was all on edge, for Anthony Nugent had withdrawn into himself, and she could not get into real contact with him. Not daring to pursue lest that forced him to increase the distance between them, she tried to lure him towards her by an appearance of passivity. He, alone of the four, made no pretence. His silence was unusual, but they might take it or leave it. Preoccupied, grave, and hard driven by almost overwhelming work, he seemed to have lost interest in everyday trivialities, and he feigned nothing. Bourdillon, who was an irritable man, regarded the Governor's composure with respect, even enthusiasm. Cool and cynical as he liked to appear to be, hero-worship animated his temperament. He thought Gillian was unreliable; at any moment she might create something horribly like a scene.

In spite of his professed and sincere dislike of argument, Stevens now lived in an orgy of debate. Provoked by Bourdillon, his voice was uplifted as the Nugents entered the dining-room, and with carving knife in hand he was heard to proclaim from the sideboard that he loathed ideals and idealists. For the first time the Governor showed some interest. Taking a plate of ham from Stevens, who had carved for himself, Nugent slapped him on the shoulder and inquired: "What's wrong with you?"

Bereft of ham and eloquence, Stevens replied: "Nothing. All that moonshine doesn't interfere with me at all, sir. But it seems to me overdone. People propound their ideas and make a virtue of it. That's taking things rather easy, I think."

"Easy!" cried Gillian. "Why, one is obliged to get away from all preconceived notions first! And surely one requires a standard?"

"Of course," said Bourdillon soothingly. "But Stevens is content with principles."

"Must have something to start from," Stevens persevered. "The ten commandments are all right, I think. But they are very difficult orders."

Nugent looked at him with a hint of an affectionate smile on his face. "Keep 'em all? No. I can't, anyhow," he said.

"I keep some of them always," said Stevens in his unassuming way.

"Which?" demanded Gillian.

"I thought of asking that, but I had scruples," remarked Nugent. She was very much aware that these were the first words he had addressed to her that day.

Stevens answered Gillian promptly: "The whole plan depends on obedience. I keep the ones with the strictest discipline to enforce them. Murder, theft."

"I call Stevens an illuminating soul about the commandments," observed the Governor, with a laugh. "I wish I'd met him earlier in life."

"It's never too late to mend, Tony. But you are such a conservative you would not condescend to change now, I suppose," Gillian said in a chaffing tone, and Bourdillon frowned. Could not the woman see with half an eye that the Governor was dangerous?

"I'd change lots of things," Nugent said bitingly. "Lots: institutions, conventions. To suit myself, you know. I'd change the marriage service on the principle that least said soonest mended."

Gillian carried the sting in the tone of his voice out into the wide spaces of the park-like garden. Instinct-

ively she turned to the healing balm of sun and soil. Impossible to be mentally hidebound out of doors, she thought, and had a stab of pity for vigorous Narain Singh behind prison walls. The gay squirrel frisking up the pepper tree gave Gillian full liberty to think as she pleased. And she did not think at all : she let the spell of palm and lawn and flowering shrub work upon her. Nature's indifference to her moods and opinions calmed her impatience, stilled her apprehensions. She climbed a big mound which was surmounted by a little old shrine, and sat there awhile, trying to picture the great heat of summer which would make the swimming tank the one bearable spot. But she was restless, and the malis wondered to see her passing the rows and rows of flower-pots without inspecting them. Presently they would be caskets holding fragrance and colour. An avenue of stately cypresses marched across the brilliant garden, and clinging to their darkness an orange bougainvillaea blazed. The lawns were patched with damp swamps of irrigation as though the ground sweated. Pepper trees and sheshums etched fascinating outlines against the sky. Gillian stood and looked long at Government House : where it caught the light it was very white, its shadows were black. In the many windows and arches the bamboo blinds fell impassively and gave the building a quiet air. The lofty porch on twelve tall pillars made a canopy beyond the curved centre of the building, and on either side the two-storied wings spread out covering a great space. Windows and arches and pillars, windows and arches and pillars : she tried to add them up and soon lost count. But the sum total was no castle in the air. This building by virtue of its office was impressive, substantial. All that day she flitted about the grounds. Late in the afternoon Anthony Nugent sought her there.

He found a Gillian who showed no trace of worry and felt none.

"Let's walk up and down. I've something to tell you," he said. He led her off the grass, and their feet rang together on the hard white drive. It seemed to Gillian that they marched side by side on a long journey, and that at any moment they might come to the parting of the ways. Yet she did not lose her consciousness of the beauty in the garden and the perfume of the oleanders. At first the beauty and perfume gave her a mental refuge, later they stirred her sense ardently.

"The Viceroy has refused to accept my resignation," announced Nugent. Obviously he felt relieved. He was his own man again and in command.

"You resigned, then?" Gillian exclaimed.

"Yes. Don't worry. That's all over."

"You resigned because of me!" She uttered the pain of the words swiftly, and held them to her ear as though to test their murderous power.

"I've told you because it is all over. Don't be morbid about it." He was anxious to reassure her. "I heard half an hour ago, and now that I know where I am I want to talk things over with you."

Gillian, elated by her own secret discovery that this wound was fatal to neither of them, cried: "Let me ask you one thing first,—if the Viceroy had accepted your resignation, would you have felt like a condemned man or a released man?"

"A condemned man," he answered at once.

"Ah!" She drew a deep breath.

It was as though the wind veered unexpectedly. He looked at her, surprised. "What would you have felt?" he demanded.

"Personally? O, that I was in great danger of

antagonising you. I'd have been in an awful panic, Tony. But I could not have regretted a fate that set you free to follow a different course with regard to India. As Governor of the Punjab you are obliged to adopt a certain attitude. I admit that you are honour bound. And I long for you to escape from official fetters."

Tramp, tramp, tramp : they were precariously side by side. The sun, shining fierce and low over a wall, almost blinded Gillian for a hundred yards, and Nugent did not speak till they turned and walked in the direction to which all the creeping shadows extended.

Then he suffered an explosion : " So you think I'm merely penny-wise : bought by my pay ? So you imagine I'm a Governor without a sincere policy ? So you've decided that sixteen years in India have written me down a humble and obedient servant without a mind of my own ? Thank you."

She cried out in alarm : " No, no ! I realise that you have great knowledge, and I know how sincere you are. But I sometimes fear that an upright and conscientious official may be overwhelmed by his scruples and sterilised by his experience, so that he cannot break away from his loyalty to tradition, and is unable to conceive a new heaven and a new earth."

Bourdillon came out of Government House in search of Nugent. Seeing husband and wife together, he forbore to interrupt their conversation, and sat down on a bench and gave the illustrated weekly papers a divided attention.

Nugent, his eyes on the ground, rejected a dozen sentences that pitched through his brain. There was nothing to be gained by simply hurting this woman. But he must speak his mind. " You evidently hold the orthodox views of your party with regard to bureaucracy,"

he remarked curtly. "What repels me, Gillian, is that you—of all women—should fail in your personal touch, in your discernment!"

She did not fail to perceive that his anger could scarcely have been more sensitively acute had she embraced a lover. For a short distance he seemed to rage at her and leave her. She could scarcely believe that she brushed against his shoulder, so vivid was her sense of being abandoned.

"To give a fine thing like your friendship to people such as Narain Singh and his wife and Tota Ram! That's what beats me. Not to know by intuition that they were tortuous, arid, cruel. God knows what attracted you! It makes me discount your emotions, Gillian. It shakes my faith in your taste."

At that she became momentarily sick to death of the multitude and its problems. Sick of public opinion. Sick of politics. Sick of ambitions. Sick of utopias and constitutions. Sick of the press, of speeches, of plans of campaign. She wanted Anthony's praise and Anthony's passion. For such things the world was well lost. So she made love to him, saying softly: "I idealised these three. My enthusiasm blinded me. I'm not infallible, goodness knows. But I think my taste is as fastidious as yours, Tony. I wish the edge of my—my—feelings were not so sharp. I'm not a bit blunt. About you, I'm tense all the time. I *cannot* feel indifferent to your mind or your body." She slipped her hand through his arm and was horrified by its unresponsive strength. But she persisted: "Let's forget all the arguments, darling. Let's just love each other in this beautiful world. Life's so short!"

"I asked for nothing better," Nugent said sullenly "Only fools try to go one better when they can have

love. I delighted in you. But you wouldn't remain romantic."

"O!" The sharpness of her cry rang through the garden and park. "Do you only find romance in what is sentimental?"

They wheeled once more and faced the evening. It seemed to Gillian that Anthony would do a night march and never sleep at home again. She had lost him.

"Honour is essential to romance," he said. And he closed his lips with an air of finality. In the sunset the whole man glowed red. Gillian realised then that he accused her of not playing the game. Therefore it was useless to offer an explanation of her motives and actions. She fell back, aghast, on an old political trump card: a counter accusation of tyranny.

"You make me suffer for my convictions!" she murmured.

Nugent was already so exasperated by his opponents' ceaseless misrepresentation that his wife's words were the last straw. "Look here, Gillian, you and I can't go on like this: arguing and wrangling. I have enough of that in my work. You feel, I'm afraid, that you are in a false position here. It does not suit you to sail under my colours. Well—why not go Home?"

This terrified her. "So I'm to be deported!" she cried.

He growled, "That's absurd. You hinted just now at oppression. It comes to this: in my position as Governor I cannot, and will not, give special protection—a husband's protection—to your political activities. If you choose Narain Singh as your leader, the fat's in the fire. I think you'll feel happier and freer out of India for a bit. So if you want to go—go. I'd never attempt to keep you against your will."

Nugent walked on intent upon his course. There should be no repression for Gillian, no concession to their love. He would resist to the very end her efforts to seduce him.

She ceased to hang upon his arm, and felt the first fierce pang of separation. It forced her to acknowledge that an embrace, however binding, was more to be desired than this liberal gesture towards an emancipation that severed their union. "If you really loved me, you would not let me go!" she declared, with a shiver. It seemed to him that women were inexplicable, dangerous, and so strangely gifted that it was useless for a man to keep his head in dealing with them if his heart went over to their side. There was nobody in the world who could torment him and attack him as Gillian did. The sun was going down upon his wrath, yet he was compelled to ask quickly with apprehension when she gave that shiver: "Have you caught cold?"

"I'm quite warm," she answered gently. And added: "Don't thrust me out into the cold, Tony."

"Then let me alone," he urged. "Stop trying to convert me to your political views, for Heaven's sake."

"You aren't open to conviction, you old Tory," she sighed.

He broke out: "I detest the pretentiousness and the suspicions of the ignorant! You don't know the Punjab, Gillian, and I do. Yet you come with the greatest assurance to carry conviction 'in spite of my prejudices.' That's your assumption! It is preposterous."

They turned once again. It was a relief to Gillian to have their home in sight and the open iron gates behind them. Perhaps they had turned a perilous corner. She said in a low child-like voice: "I wish I could make you see life as I see it, darling. You put my hopes in

a harsh light. I don't think you ever see what I mean really. I want India to be truly self-respecting, independent, and free to plan her own destiny, but I dream more often of a day when you will lead kindred spirits in the labour party: they need a man like you. They have all the vigour of a young world movement, and you have such special personal gifts. Here British officials are in a dust-storm—only dead barren stuff whirls and settles and blinds and stings. In the west you would be in touch with all the new life that is springing up everywhere in a great revival that must sow its seeds even in the east eventually."

Bourdillon, watching, said to himself: 'What does he find in her? He left all those despatches to come and talk to her.' The soldier saw them pass and re-pass Government House and walk slowly towards the gates. He thought the Governor was drifting dangerously.

But Nugent at last had found words in which to define a dividing line between his mind and temperament and hers. In his deep voice he told her, almost violently: "*You are a fortune-teller.* This is a land you can easily mislead; it lies centuries deep in superstition. The emotional and the uneducated everywhere will half believe you. The cunning will make use of you. Whether you describe the future as though you'd seen it revealed in a crystal, or write in the press as if you were reading the fate of millions by a pack of cards; whether you prophesy as to the destiny of a race by the palms of their hands, or draw political horoscopes and predict events by stars, makes no odds. It is all the same trick, the same jargon. By the evidence you select, from the data you manufacture, you play on human hopes and fears as old as the world. Politically you are just that—one of the fortune-tellers! You believe in necro-

mancy. Your sceptre's a mere divining-rod. Promises are your bribes, not your bonds. You know the sort of thing promised in parlours: the coming of a bright young man at liberty to love, the dark stranger who must be avoided, and the windfall of wealth! I don't deny the power of suggestion, Gillian. But I can't govern this wild Punjab by conjuring tricks. I won't have its people deluded. If you want to ply the gipsy's trade, I warn you that I have no use for political vagabonds in Lahore. I stand for law, stability, promises that are contracts. I will not lend a hand to your palmistry, nor yield an inch to eloquent ignorance."

Her mind was so disordered by doubts and fears that his words stung her to a queer fury. "Ah! Now you have gone too far!" she cried. "Neither of us can go back on our true selves. We have drifted apart already!"

Bourdillon lost sight of the husband and wife in the failing daylight. They approached the gate for the last time, and neared moving figures that loomed out of the encroaching darkness. The guard was being changed. These hillmen of sworn allegiance believed in the evil eye, in unpropitious hours, in favourable omens. The sound of the woman's distressed voice reached them, and then silence fell. Bourdillon felt curiously uneasy. After a few moments he beheld Nugent coming back alone.

Something in the way he trod the hard road struck Bourdillon. 'He puts his foot down like a man,' he said to himself. But the Governor had a lonely air. He entered Government House as one who takes possession. The officer got up and followed him.

A FEW days later Prosser drove up to Government House and was met by Stevens with apologies. The Governor had been detained and would not be able to see the Commissioner at once. "Time is not *my* money. The people pay. They ought to save it out of daylight," Prosser observed cheerfully. A sentimental being, he cherished the delusion that young Stevens was in love with Gillian. He addressed him in sympathetic tones. "Things aren't running smoothly, eh? The Legislative Council was infernally unpleasant yesterday. It's too bad. How does the little lady take it?"

"Her eyes are red this morning," Stevens told him. "But she has not said a word."

Prosser gave a whistle that sounded quite dismal. "We can't help her, I'm afraid. It was bound to be a nine days' wonder. The zemindars and ryots have got hold of the queerest rumours. Widespread rumours. And Bourdillon's Hanky-pankys are using the *political* machine we've thrust into their hands as deftly as a man who isn't a pianist can play a pianola. Put the machine out of order and ask 'em to play like artists, and the discord would deafen civilisation. But while the machine is working we have to foot it to their tune, more or less." He laughed, and Stevens gave his enchanting smile.

Prosser quickly looked grave again when he said: "I've disturbing news for the Governor. Narain Singh is dead. Died suddenly last night. The prison doctor,

Wiseman, thinks it was heart. He is a good riddance. Of course, the credulous will be told that he was put out of the way. This country is never quite sane."

"I'd rather it had been Tota Ram than Narain Singh," declared Stevens. "If one's got to be taken and the other left. That paper of Tota Ram's is poisonous. Narain Singh was a stout fellow in his way."

Prosser made a wry face. "He had no regard for human life. The documents found show some pretty dark work. He was in communication with Russia all right. The old fraud! A Sikh Soviet wouldn't milk its cows for its neighbour's babies, eh? Lord, when I think what India would be like if we played the *Dead March in Saul* and departed, I positively regard myself in the light of a guardian angel. As for you, my lad, whatever happens you are the brutal soldiery, so I can't understand your resisting the temptation to run amok among the babus! After all, your pension isn't insurable, and the axe is always suspended over you, and you've little or nothing to lose. An end to the babus' rule of thumb—think it over." He chuckled. "We're writhing under that thumb, remember. Hindustan is inhabited by subject races, including the British. But you'll never rise and free us. You're disappointingly diplomatic, you warriors."

The Sikh sentry heard the sound of the Sahibs' jolly voices. Shortly after dawn he had been whispered the news of Narain Singh's death. No doubt the Sahibs rejoiced. The sentry's mother's sister's son lived at Khalsapur. That kinsman's wife had seen Gillian and Prem Kaur in the zemindar's house, and had endeavoured to follow Gillian and Amrit Kaur out of the window. Her chagrin was great because the Lord Sahib's wife had not heard her petition that she might be allowed to

retain her war widow's pension, which was discontinued on her marriage to her brother-in-law. Through her husband she had made earnest inquiries from Hakam Singh, the sentry, as to whether the Lady Sahib invariably used a window as an exit. Hakam Singh thought the ignorance of most people quite deplorable. He remembered a young territorial private who amiably offered him a cigarette. To Sikhs tobacco is religiously taboo, and a Mahomedan who had once chucked a fag-end of a cigarette at Hakam Singh with a nasty remark got a cracked skull for his pains. Hakam Singh saw the two Sahibs come down the steps and pass out of the porch and go towards the Lady Sahib, who at this hour invariably came out into the garden and gathered flowers and gave crumbs to the birds. The crows, hopping and swooping and looting, gave her much trouble. 'Such are the customs of crows, but the Lady Sahib has this custom of giving bread to the others where the crows can steal it,' thought the unmoved Hakam Singh stolidly.

Prosser gazed with pity at the eyelids which Stevens had reported to be stained by tears. Gillian certainly looked down on her luck. But she exchanged idle nothings with the two men without betraying any depression. It was not possible to say to them: "Do you know that Anthony loves me less than he did? Have you heard that we may soon be separated?" Yet the truth of such words caught Gillian by the throat and gave her an hysterical moment when she pretended to be overcome with mirth at the antics of a predatory crow. Neither of the men entertained the idea of telling her that Narain Singh was dead. That was Nugent's job.

All three turned when a motor came up the drive. Gillian and Hakam Singh were quick to recognise Hira

Singh, the chauffeur. He drove a woman, muffled in a white chaddar. "Here is Prem Kaur again!" cried Gillian in dismay.

The car stopped. The muffled figure got out and came towards them. Prosser said urgently to Gillian: "Are you sure that is Narain Singh's wife?" When she answered "Yes," he turned to Stevens and exclaimed: "I don't think an interview is advisable now." Both men advanced as though to interpose a barrier between the women, and Gillian hesitated in the background by a date palm among the clamouring black crows. But Prem Kaur, her face veiled to the eyes, seemed deaf to Prosser's gravely polite remonstrance, blind to the presence of the Sahibs. Short of holding her with their hands they could not have kept her back from Gillian, to whom she cried out: "Lady Nugent! My husband has been murdered!"

Those words brought the women together as by a clap of thunder. Prosser and Stevens closed up beside them, and before Gillian could speak Prosser intervened: "Lady Nugent, you probably have not heard that Narain Singh died in his sleep last night in the prison."

Prem Kaur, unpainted, wild-eyed, distraught, repudiated this with a furious cry: "That is a lie! I saw my husband by permission yesterday, and he was quite well. But he feared that his death was desired. He told me that those who wished to please the Governor might murder him. I said to him, 'You drive me mad with fear!' and he replied that he was willing to die for Swaraj, but that it was a bad thing for India to have rulers who do not scruple to require the murder of their enemies."

Gillian faced the widow very steadily, though a whiteness drifted into her cheeks, into her lips. "You poor

thing, you poor thing!" she said aghast. Then she laid her hand on Prem Kaur's shoulder. "Don't let shock and grief unbalance you," she urged. The other gave a bitter groan. Gillian said softly: "Don't be fooled by suspicion. I *know* that you will be told the truth. The doctor won't lie to you. You are indeed mad if you think such evil of the British." She paused, and then spoke again; clearly but soothingly, as though she tried to master a delirium in a patient's mind. "Put this wild accusation of murder away from you. It is a wicked weakness in an educated woman, even in her first hour of grief."

It seemed that her gentleness had wrought a miracle. The widow shook behind her white shroud-like garment, but it was the tremor of weakness, not passion. Her broken voice had now a pleading note. "Ah! You are right. It is a wicked thought! I will not think it. You would not deceive me, I know."

"I swear to you that I do not deceive you," Gillian declared.

"Then tell me why my husband is dead! Tell me how he died!" She commanded the sympathy of all three, even while the men's minds registered the accusations she had made. She seemed so young, so stricken, so seemly behind her veil, ignoring Prosser and Stevens, speaking only to a pitiful Gillian to whom she yielded. Her supplicating questions touched them, gathered them about her in protection. "I don't know!" Gillian answered. "I have heard nothing."

"I know few particulars," said Prosser to Gillian. "He was found dead in his bed. Major Wiseman was sent for at once. He said that Narain Singh had been dead some hours. I gathered that he had passed away painlessly in his sleep."

Prem Kaur gave a strangled sob. "Let me see the Governor," she muttered submissively.

"He can't know anything more than that,—if he knows anything at all yet," Prosser remonstrated, not addressing the Sikh woman directly.

"If I do not see the Governor I shall go mad!" Prem Kaur wailed.

"If it would help her——" Gillian hesitated.

"Shall I inquire if the Governor will see her?" asked young Stevens.

"Take me to him!" Prem Kaur implored Gillian.

The three British had brushed the accusation of murder aside. A frenzy of grief had cried out and then left Prem Kaur. She seemed now a little timid Indian woman, forlorn, dignified, having some queer need of the Governor's presence in her despair. When Gillian moved across the broad lawns leading the shrinking Prem Kaur, Prosser and Stevens followed without protest. The Commissioner thought that in such a complicated situation a gesture of consideration and chivalry would best become the Raj.

Stevens hurried on to warn Nugent and obtain his permission for the interview. Prem Kaur was supported by Gillian up the steps, through the doorway, and along the corridor. The widow moaned continually, and the soul of Hakam Singh cried fie upon her as she passed him. To-day she should have been a thing apart, purified by ceremonial, stripped of ornament, dead to the world.

The Mahomedan Minister came out of the Governor's room towards the advancing women and Prosser. Said Mahomed stood back against the wall, silent and motionless save for his bent head and raised hand: he had the manner of one who lets the dead hold the right of way.

He created a moment of perfect oriental ceremony. Stevens, awaiting them, held open the study door. Within a few yards of it Prem Kaur halted, and seemed unable to proceed. She gasped: "I will be ready quite soon," to Gillian. While Said Mahomed disappeared without a backward glance, they all paused. Nugent's voice made some remark to Bourdillon in business-like accents. Prem Kaur threw up her head and outpaced Gillian, passed Stevens, and in a flash confronted Nugent from the threshold of his room. He rose from his chair by the desk to receive her. Then she screamed at him, triumphantly, brazenly, as though she ripped a weapon from her very throat—"You murderer!"

For a second Nugent, and behind him Bourdillon, looked at a revolver which pointed waveringly at them, framed against the window. The exultation of her dramatic gesture obsessed Prem Kaur, better trained to threaten than to act. While in turn the Englishmen, the right wall, the ceiling, and the floor were covered by the deadly thing in her brown hand, she felt all-powerful, able to dictate to authority itself. Nugent and Bourdillon did not move an inch: impossible to dodge an aim that dodged them. But the armed woman was conscious of a movement behind her; the concentration of Stevens, Gillian, Prosser upon her with a swoop. It broke her nerve. She was too terribly alone. Gasping, Prem Kaur crumpled up on a chair and stiffened there. She feigned unconsciousness, but was acutely and burningly sensitive to Stevens' muscular grasp of her wrist and the deftness with which he extracted the revolver from her yielding fingers. Her insolence had domineered over the Governor's very life. Her vanity was satisfied.

The men ignored that motionless figure on the chair and the wife whose energetic and infectious sympathies had brought Nugent face to face with death. Nugent's first words were: "Was the revolver loaded?" As Stevens broke it and extracted the bullets they had eyes only for evidence.

The hard facts were there. The Governor said: "Will you shut the door, Prosser?" As it closed the tenseness of Prem Kaur increased. She felt trapped. But behind her lids, which lay like bruises over her eyes, her brain was picturing a male public that would applaud her, canonise her, treat her as a holy thing. Young students would give her incense for this act, which was the opiate her disaster demanded.

Prosser began: "Narain Singh died——"

"I know," the Governor interrupted. He had resumed his seat. "Has she fainted?" he asked. "Look, Gillian."

It was no gentle face that his wife bent above Prem Kaur. "She is shamming," she pronounced, and walked away across the room as though she withdrew all pity, all toleration. In so doing she encountered Bourdillon's glance, and was startled by its rigid, naked hostility.

"Mrs. Narain Singh," began the Governor. He spoke as if he were awaking her from a sleep. She did not stir, and he spoke again insistently: "Mrs. Narain Singh! I think you are fully conscious. It will be wiser for you to give us some explanation of your conduct."

A snake could not have been more still, or more brimming with an active life that did not seem to breathe. She was receptive of every inflexion of Nugent's voice.

"We shall have to send for a doctor," Nugent said to

the others. "Bourdillon, you can ring up the hospital and ask for a lady doctor." But he made a gesture to delay Bourdillon, who had instantly picked up the receiver. "How did she come here?" Nugent inquired. As Prosser was answering, Nugent noted a little artificial movement and gasp from Prem Kaur, and he gave a wholly sceptical wink to the Commissioner. Turning to Stevens he said: "Her chauffeur can drive you to Narain Singh's bungalow. Some relations are sure to be there. Bring one back here to take Mrs. Narain Singh away. Presently. Not just yet."

His words brought home to Prem Kaur the doom that awaited her: a lifelong servitude with her parents-in-law, who were orthodox, uneducated, unpolitical, close-fisted. The widow of Narain Singh would receive maintenance and the domestic respect due to the mother of sons. She would have no independence, little cash, complete obscurity. Suddenly she writhed, put her hands to her head and sat up. "Why am I not dead?" she muttered, with a wild air. "I meant to die."

"You are very much alive," Nugent remarked calmly. "I have no doubt, Mrs. Narain Singh, that you have received a great shock. Under the influence of shock people sometimes act strangely. At your request I consented to receive you, and when you entered this room you immediately pointed a loaded revolver at me and said, 'You murderer.' Can you explain your conduct?"

Prem Kaur looked about her vaguely, feigning to be a dazed woman. Her words came slowly, dragged from her tongue. "Your Excellency, I do not know who caused my husband's death. Yesterday he was quite well. There should be justice for all! I said to myself: 'I am a widow and I will die. But first I will demand

justice and truth.' I came here quite madly. I do not know what I said. You know that Indians still respect the spirit of sati, though our British masters have made it an unlawful act. When I came into this room I felt certain that my husband had been murdered in prison last night. Perhaps Your Excellency does not know what happens to prisoners. I meant to kill myself here in this room in front of you. How could I, who denounce the murder of my husband, be guilty of trying to cause another's death? But I would have killed myself because of my grief, and because of my shame that India is ruled by aliens, if Captain Stevens had not prevented me by force." When she ceased to speak an awkward silence fell. Nobody in the room was accustomed to call a woman a liar to her face.

Nugent broke the silence by saying dryly: "I think you have hit upon a very good explanation of your conduct. You did not intend, you say, to shoot me, but to commit suicide. That did not appear to an onlooker to be your intention, but I daresay you are not accustomed to handling a revolver and you rather lost your head." There was a pause, during which Prem Kaur grew bitterly sullen. Only those Indian students would pay her tribute, exalt and idealise her violence! This quiet Englishman saw through her: discerned her plan to shoot him, her loss of nerve, her pose and her lie. And he refused to make a martyr of her. He was consistent in his courage and his scornful courtesy. "There we shall let the matter rest," he continued. "I hope that your relatives, whom I shall duly warn, will know how to save you from yourself. For your children's sake, Mrs. Narain Singh, I advise you to keep within the law. I am sure you love them. Their existence should preserve you from despair, and from crime."

Nugent uttered the last sentence in a low voice : he employed no tone or gesture that might threaten her. And Gillian learnt with dismay that Prem Kaur was to go free, and that Nugent remained her unprotected target, refusing to take her seriously, denying her advertisement, snapping his fingers at her. The scene ended when he rose from his chair and said : " I imagine you would prefer not to speak to Mrs. Narain Singh again, Gillian. Will you find some suitable room where she can remain, Bourdillon ? I 'll see her relative here when you bring him, Stevens. Now, Prosser, we can get to work."

Prem Kaur suffered the moral concussion of one whose crime has fallen flat. From her childhood she had been in awe of British authority, which she was trained to hate ; her hatred was perfectly sincere. But she did not fear the British as individuals. On the contrary, she counted on their presence to render her immune from hampering eastern criticism and custom, she presumed on their race tradition to avail herself of their social respect for women as women, she relied on their protection. Now, across the threshold of the Governor's room, she realised with fury that they had mastered the situation, and she shrank with fear from the unparalleled power of an Indian home which waited to grip her. She turned to have her last fling : " My husband has died in your prison, Sir Anthony, but when my little sons reach manhood India will be free from British rule ! " Then she disappeared.

" Not such a bad shot," was Nugent's comment. He said no more, but waited for Gillian to follow the others.

Gillian was outraged by so much conventionality and its power to snub hate and love alike. She would not be dismissed politely and coldly from this room which

had held for her a moment of unforgettable terror. She went impulsively to Nugent and put her hands on his shoulders and looked up into his face, which grew red and stiffened: "Tony, my darling!" she cried, "thank God that little devil collapsed."

Prosser, much moved, blew his nose.

"They cast her for too big a part," said Anthony Nugent.

It did not matter to Gillian what he said, for she felt in every fibre that he had not responded to her love-making. She let her hands drop from his shoulders and reproached him very privately with her eyes. Under their influence he assumed a stubborn air. He only relaxed from tension when she, too, had gone and he could resume his work with the Commissioner.

Half an hour later Stevens arrived and alighted in the porch, accompanied by an old Sikh, who would have added to the respectability of an apostle's spoon. His scanty grey hair bristled from his worn face. He was tall, venerable, feeble, and had the dignity of a man who must have possessed great strength in his youth. This shocking errand to Government House did not mortify Sundar Singh personally. His pride found something soothing in the boyish presence of Jack Stevens. But the nervous movements of his hands, on which the veins stood out like cords, betrayed his need of sympathy. Stevens treated him as he would have treated any honoured veteran in misfortune. For Sundar Singh was the father of Narain Singh, and the hand of fate lay heavy on his house.

"I expect the Governor will be able to see you immediately, Sirdar Sahib," said the young officer encouragingly in the vernacular; Sundar Singh could not speak English.

The Sikh carried his sixty-five years with distinction. He had been twenty when his wife had borne him a son. His second son had died in infancy. To-day the only men of his family were himself and his two grandsons. The consciousness that somewhere under a European's roof their young mother had broken every decent convention that his grim character cherished shook him fundamentally. He did not enter the Governor's room as a stranger: eleven years ago Nugent had been an official in the district where his broad acres lay, and they had been friends. On the threshold of Anthony's room he bent his proud old head and raised his two hands in a respectful greeting. Nugent held out his hand to him, and Sundar Singh clasped it with both of his. When the men faced each other across the table they looked with a frank intimacy at the other's point of view.

"Stevens Sahib has no doubt told you that your daughter-in-law came here, and that I thought it more seemly that a kinsman should call for her and escort her home. Probably he did not tell you more than that?" Nugent began.

"The Captain Sahib spoke thus," said Sundar Singh in his thick voice. "Therefore I am here. You know well, *Garib Powar*, that it is right that to-day I should attend only to my private affairs."

The Governor was very gentle. "Sundar Singh, this is a sad hour. I, too, have a son. Heaven knows whether he will fulfil my hopes. If I live to be your age and follow his career with joy or sorrow, I shall still desire that my son may bury me, and that I may be spared the grief of his untimely end. Narain Singh appeared to be in good health, and he was in his prime. Yet to-day you outlive your son, and I grieve for you."

“ Sahib, thrice have I lost Narain Singh ! ” broke out the old man. “ First, I lost him when I heard that he had become the enemy of the Sarkar. I am a Sikh. But I eat my King’s salt and I am the servant of the Sarkar. On the day when I heard that Narain Singh had become a budmash I cried out, ‘ I would rather that he were dead ! ’ That was one death. Secondly, I lost him when he was thrown into prison. Then my shame was great. My face was blackened and my name became bad. That was another death. I hastened here to Lahore, for he is my only son. But I did not seek to petition Your Excellency. I have had great trouble, Sahib. Akalis and others threatened me. The father-in-law of my son is a bad man. Then this morning Wiseman Sahib came to me and said : ‘ Narain Singh is dead.’ This is the worst death.” The dignity of the Sikh was unshaken. It made him the social equal of the man across the table in the essential spirit of good breeding, and the man across the table would have been the last to question that.

“ Wiseman told you himself ? ” the Governor asked.

“ Of his favour. Two years ago he was civil surgeon in my district. He is my friend. Much kindness has he shown to Narain Singh, whom he saw daily in gaol, and whose heart he made stout with his jests. All that is known to me. I went with Wiseman Sahib to the gaol to make arrangements. By the will of God Narain Singh died.” The old eyes betrayed no secrets, but two tears ran down the indomitable face.

“ Who told your daughter-in-law ? ” the Governor asked bluntly, after a moment’s silence.

Sundar Singh responded by a change of tone. They had come, courteously, to the point. “ I do not know,” he replied, with a quite brisk air. “ I did not tell her.

The mother of my son's sons has departed from the old customs of my people. Her father is certainly a very bad man." Then he said in a tone as blunt as Nugent's own: "Perhaps the Lady Sahib of her favour sent her word? Perhaps the mother of Narain Singh told her when I departed. I do not know who told her."

Nugent groaned to himself, 'I thought we should not keep Gillian out of this.' Aloud he said: "My wife did not know that Narain Singh was dead, and she has held no communication with your daughter-in-law since his arrest, except on the occasion when your daughter-in-law came here and petitioned my wife to intercede with me on Narain Singh's behalf. My wife naturally refused that request, saying that the law must take its course."

To which Sundar Singh, who kept his own counsel, muttered: "There are many new customs."

Those two looked boldly into each other's eyes. Nugent agreed. "Among the memsahibs there are, as you say, some new customs, as also among your own womenfolk. Women no less than men change with the times, Sundar Singh. Lady Nugent visited your son's house and drank tea with your daughter-in-law. By their invitation she visited Khalsapur. You know what happened there."

"Something I know, Sahib. I have heard many lies. Men say that you were greatly displeased with Narain Singh on account of the trouble caused to the Lady Sahib in Khalsapur," Sundar Singh said gruffly.

"That is true," Nugent told him, and wondered how much the Sikh knew. "Narain Singh deceived the Lady Sahib, who is ignorant of political affairs in India. Your daughter-in-law misrepresented words spoken by

Lady Nugent. It has been a very troublesome affair for the government."

"The guilt of my house is great," said the stately old man. The flush on his cheeks was like rust on iron.

"Now I must tell you what happened here to-day, Sundar Singh," Nugent said. He leant on the table, his elbows spread out and his hands clasped, his chin thrust towards Sundar Singh, his eyes fastened upon him. In his manner there was something confidential, something infinitely sympathetic. But he did not mince matters. The Sikh drank in his words, darkly intent. "Your daughter-in-law came here this morning and seemed, as was natural, greatly shocked and excited. She accused some one of having caused Narain Singh's death in prison. Lady Nugent endeavoured to calm and reassure her, and she appeared convinced. But she implored my wife to bring her to me. She said she desired an interview. Captain Stevens told me that she was here, and that she wanted to see me. Sir Said Mahomed was with me, and I had just heard by telephone of your son's death. I had had occasion to telephone to the General—about polo, as a matter of fact—and he mentioned it. That was my first intimation. The Minister had completed his business and withdrew. Captain Bourdillon had just entered and stood behind me by the window. Captain Stevens held the door open to admit your daughter-in-law, followed by Lady Nugent and the Commissioner. I rose to receive the *bibi*. She appeared in that doorway and, looking straight at me, said: 'You murderer!'"

"She spoke those words! Then, without doubt, she is mad," said horrified Sundar Singh, and brought his fist down on the table with a bang.

“Sundar Singh, we men don't quarrel with women's words,” said the Governor philosophically, and paused.

“Sahib!” burst out the old Sikh, “you know our ways. In my presence she keeps silence. But when she spoke those words to you she cut my throat.”

“To-day I put heavy burdens on a wounded man,” Nugent declared, with compunction. “I have not forgotten our hours together in the jungle and our talks by the camp fire. I say to myself: ‘Sundar Singh fears nothing. He will not fear to hear the truth from me.’”

“Sahib, that is true,” Sundar Singh assured him, with a gleam in his eye.

The Governor told him briefly: “She had concealed a revolver. That's easy for a woman. It was loaded, and she pointed it at me. She feared to fire. It all took place very quickly, you understand. She sank down on the chair over there and let Captain Stevens take the revolver out of her hand. It is on the mantelpiece, with the bullets, now.”

A wild look flashed into the fierce old face. It came, and the room seemed to shudder. Then it passed. Sundar Singh gasped: “By the favour of God you escaped! But my disgrace is complete.”

“I asked her for her explanation,” continued Nugent steadily. “And she said that owing to her grief for her husband's fate, and her sorrow because we rule this country, she desired to shoot herself in my presence. She denied any intention of shooting me. There seemed to be some idea of sati in her mind.”

“Sati!” shouted the Sikh. “Such as she have no thought of sati.” Deep imprecations were growled into his beard. “They take no heed of religion. Obedience is unknown to them. They bring misfortune to honour-

able houses, and the world has never before beheld such women."

The Governor sought to calm him, heedful of the rolling eyes and clutching fingers. "No harm is done, Sundar Singh. None but ourselves will speak of this matter unless your daughter-in-law spreads untruths abroad. The government is pestered by lies. They are like mosquitoes, everywhere. By giving a false account of what happened to-day, and by asserting that your son was murdered in prison, the widow could be rather troublesome to government. I look to you to see that that does not occur."

"She shall be silent," said Sundar Singh grimly. "Sahib, what can I say? Mine is the fault. I arranged this marriage for my son. She made him bad. Her father is a very evil man. While my son lived I said nothing, but his mother wept. Many times she wept, and greatly desired to beat her daughter-in-law. These new customs destroy the peace of families."

There was nothing more to be said, but Nugent would have liked to soften him. "She is the mother of Narain Singh's sons. Those boys are compensations for her faults. We men owe much to the work of women, Sundar Singh. It is best to smile at their follies, since they forgive us our sins." He spoke to deaf ears. The Sikh was full of silent condemnation of Gillian. Alas! that so good a Sahib should be so ill-mated, thought he.

Rising to his great height he stood erect with the energy of anger, and said, very earnestly: "Sahib, I will take my grandsons and their mother home and teach them proper ways. *Never* will I send my grandsons to school, or allow them to learn English. In my folly I desired education for Narain Singh, and planned to make him like a Sahib. He was never like a Sahib.

Neither did he resemble me, his father. Had he remained upon the land and never passed examinations, he would have retained wisdom and peace. To-day all Sikhs are troubled and the Sarkar is weakened. I speak truth, Sahib, even as you do. I say the times are evil. But to-day I will not talk of Punjab affairs. It would have been better had I made Narain Singh a soldier. Then I should have had no shame this day."

Nugent wrung his hand. "I hope the boys will do you credit," he said, very kindly. "We are old friends, you and I. Teach the boys good-will. There is too much quarrelling in this land. But don't let them grow up ignorant and presumptuous. Above all, don't keep them ignorant of the good in their neighbour even if he is a Mahomedan."

"True, true," said the old reactionary, quite unconvinced.

The Governor went with him to the door and along the passage. No humiliation should befall Sundar Singh, a man of honourable dealing, if he could help it. Bourdillon came out of the Staff's office and murmured that Mrs. Narain Singh was in the drawing-room. Nugent said to Bourdillon: "When I was a *jawan*, the Sirdar Sahib taught me all I know of pig-sticking." It seemed an irrelevant remark, but Sundar Singh liked it.

At the door of the vast drawing-room in which sat tiny Prem Kaur, the old man paused. Across the length of the room the two pairs of dark eyes met in deadly antagonism. Her own family, political extremists, and intriguing Akalis would make of her a bone of contention, but overpowering custom consigned that bone to the keeping of her husband's father. And if she played the rebel in Sundar Singh's home, she would separate herself from her little sons, who would certainly be

submissive to his complete control. She knew—too well she knew—the fate that awaited her. And the British could not protect her. She, a Sikh, would be governed by Sikh custom, in a Sikh home, under the authority of Sikh relations.

“Come!” said Sundar Singh.

In silence she followed him: defeated, doomed, and dreaded.

“Do you think the Governor is a weak man about women?” Bourdillon asked Priscilla.

They were sitting together in the Lawrence Hall. The Christmas festivities were over, visitors had left, and only the ordinary Lahore crowd was gathered in small groups round scattered tea-tables. Big hotels and army mansions, messes and bungalows, all emptied themselves into the Lawrence Hall at this hour. The tennis courts were deserted for its ballroom. In its library optimists hunted for new books. Close at hand the Punjab Club represented an exclusively male kingdom, but the Lawrence Hall threw men and women together and loaded the dice in favour of the fair sex. There were many men in the building whom Bourdillon would have described as weak about women: they were not by any means all of the same type. No one could divide them into clever men and stupid men, nor into good men and bad men. They were endowed with a certain curiosity, a certain susceptibility, where women were concerned, and they could not hold themselves aloof when they desired to do so.

“Tony Nugent weak about us? Certainly not,” snapped Priscilla.

“Well—I don’t know,” Bourdillon murmured regretfully.

“What do you mean by weak, pray?” she demanded.

“Ah, that’s a difficult one,” he admitted. “I suppose an immoral man is weak about women, but that’s

the weakness of the flesh, of self-indulgence. The Governor's a straight fellow. He is a man of high spirit in the affairs of men. If with women he is too soft, too sentimental, I'd call that a weakness in him."

"In a word, young man, you suspect him of being less firm of will with women than with men. I see. Because he is less combative and less competitive for the mastery, the leadership? That tends to make him infirm of purpose with women, you think?" Priscilla peered at Bourdillon's haughty, wilful face.

"It gives an instability, it makes him act inconsistently," Bourdillon said slowly. "That is weakness. It must enfeeble a man who has to govern."

Priscilla chose her words with zeal. Here was something she wanted to say. "Anthony Nugent loves women strongly when he does love them. In his first wife he worshipped beauty. He did it in a very English way. In the east they think of the lust of the eyes and veil women. We English accept a warning against grosser senses—touch not, taste not; but Shakespeare calls the eye 'that most pure spirit of sense.' I tell you Anthony looked shyly and loved where his Violet was concerned. He will never feel that complete response to beauty again, I think; you can't say of him that he runs after every pretty face he sees. There is in him a strong and concentrated devotion to what he loves: it is not diffuse."

"Did he spoil her? Did he let her twist him round her little finger?" Bourdillon questioned with gloom.

"I should say he was very jolly about Violet. He played the lover with zest and made her blissful. Love-making is an art, you know, and heaps of you men lack it," Priscilla retorted. She added: "When that poor

girl died he stood up to his misery with the greatest courage. I saw something of him then, and I remember thinking what a strong man he was."

"But with the present woman——?" There was much disparagement in Bourdillon's tone.

Priscilla shrugged her square shoulders. "He fell in love with her; why not? She has enough energy and enthusiasm to fire any man. Her spirit is finely touched. She gets a move on."

"Quite so," agreed Bourdillon. "But——"

"Well?" Priscilla's blunt face was honesty itself. She wanted to have this out with him.

"I'm not so sure that he loves her now." It was obvious that Bourdillon hoped he did not.

"Poof!" jeered Priscilla.

"I see them together every day," Bourdillon asserted.

"I know what you see!" declared Priscilla. "You see a woman who wants to change the thing she loves. That is one kind of passion. And you see a man who wants to preserve intact the thing he loves. That is another kind of passion."

"But she must have disillusioned him!" Bourdillon exclaimed. "I am sure she has. He enjoyed her immensely before this row. Now he is all on edge with her. As far as I can make out he wants her to go Home and she won't budge. Yet he is taking her into camp with him next week. Personally I don't think he adopts a strong enough line with her. If she were my wife I'd say: 'Look here, this is my show. You've gone back on me. In a tug-of-war no one can pull both ways. You must either drop your beloved politics or leave Government House.'"

"But she is not your wife. No two men act alike in a purely personal matter," sniffed Priscilla.

Bourdillon was bent on pursuing the line he would have taken. "I can understand any ordinary husband and wife agreeing to differ politically," he said dryly, "but in an extreme case they must meet with disaster. If a woman were the Leader of His Majesty's Opposition in Parliament and she married the Prime Minister, the country would object."

Priscilla's harsh laugh at this absurdity drew attention to the pair from many tables. Bourdillon was not popular, but people courted his approval. If you passed Bourdillon you passed muster. Only simple souls like Stevens were immune from his influence.

"Young Stevens—who talks a lot of rot—declares that a woman herself is the whole attraction. He vows it would not matter to him whether a girl were Bosch or Bolshevik, Jew or Gentile," Bourdillon complained. "Provided he fell in love with her."

"Well done, Romeo," said Priscilla vigorously.

For once Bourdillon's voice was strangely tolerant. "Now I don't understand you a bit," he remonstrated. "You are an absolutely loyal soul. You'd sacrifice yourself, you'd give the General's life, for the country. You'd have no truck with the enemy. Yet you defend the Governor's wife who comes out here and immediately lends her encouragement not to the decent people who—whether they are British or Indian—try to prevent a smash-up, try to preserve conditions that give what's best a chance of survival, but to the violent lot who will do evil that good may come."

Priscilla screwed up her tired eyes and let her deep voice sink low. She seemed to refuse wares that were offered her. "I detest politics and propaganda." She revealed this unwillingly. "I shall never forget the slogans and the battle-cries that urged men to wage the

war once war was declared. I shall never forget the preaching and the prayers that bade us women serve the cause. *And afterwards*—the recanting, the decrying, the condemnations. Never again will my emotions react to the words of politicians and journalists, thank you. All the argument 'about it and about' leaves me unmoved henceforth."

He watched her uneasily. Bourdillon, who regarded the British as the chosen people, had relied on Priscilla. Was there a flaw in her? "No," Priscilla said, slowly, rejecting something. "No. They go back on their words too easily; that lot. I'm susceptible now only to events, to history. Our ears have heard and our fathers have declared—'the noble works.' I'm for good deeds, Bill Bourdillon. I'll judge individuals by what they've done. The faithful public servant doing his duty rouses my respect, touches my heart. That's why I am happy here. But that is a personal matter. I'm not going to hate, or love, or tolerate to order. I happen to like Gillian Nugent."

"Well, that beats me," said Bourdillon. He was impressed in spite of himself by Priscilla's disclosure of her distrust of mental tyranny, her repudiation of public opinion as a guide. Bourdillon was orthodox, but it was tradition—the sentiment transmitted to his blood—not convention—the momentary convenience—that swayed him. Priscilla was staunch. He liked her all the better for that shrinking of hers from popular cries, general reactions. She seemed to be lost now in contemplation of Gillian Nugent, who had just come into the Hall. "She is like a moth," said Priscilla. "So soft, so desirous, so ardent to break in and steal."

Bourdillon moved restlessly. Gillian's very presence agitated him. Her fascination for him and his antagon-

ism to her were both so strong. "People don't like her," he commented.

"Not at the moment," agreed Priscilla. "They'll forget. We English have no memory, but we are stubborn creatures of habit, so we never relinquish our individual liberties and become dangerous the moment our little ways are threatened. She has put us out a good deal."

Gillian stopped to speak to people. There were a stir and movement where she came and went. Priscilla observed abruptly: "Beautiful legs."

"She'll come and talk to you in a moment," said Bourdillon, looking uneasy.

"Before I escape let me tell you that she will never be able to destroy Anthony Nugent and recreate him in her own image. Until she realises that, they'll suffer. He means to run his own show," Priscilla declared.

"I hope to God he does," muttered Bourdillon.

Priscilla gathered up her gloves, and Bourdillon helped her into her tweed coat. "Don't you make any mistake," she urged. "You are dealing with lovers who differ and have come to grief."

Priscilla took herself off abruptly after reminding him that she was due at Government House the next afternoon to interpret for Gillian Nugent, who would then receive Amrit Kaur.

"I shall take care to hide under the sofa," Bourdillon remarked. Priscilla was one of the few people who knew what had happened when Prem Kaur made her attack.

He left the Hall when Priscilla had gone. Both had avoided Gillian, who made them restless, uncomfortable. Bourdillon was acutely perceptive of every youth who looked second-rate, of every woman who looked bad

form. Ties, boots, the cut of a garment, the too blatant and the too cheap, offended his taste. Gillian in every line, in each detail, and in the complete distinction of her appearance and manner, satisfied his standard, triumphed over his challenge. It was difficult to run her down except on the point of political conduct, where daily concessions were made by government and public opinion to people far more extreme than Gillian Nugent.

Bourdillon walked back to Government House feeling depressed. He saw a picture of himself at fifty: pensioned, in England. Much that he considered necessary to the salvation of the Empire would be scrapped by then. Ideas he resisted would have gained acceptance. He would be a back number, unkindly labelled 'die-hard.' And he detested the out-of-date, the useless, the disregarded. But he had a contempt for middle-aged men without tenacity who courted new ideas merely because youth was animated by them, who feared to hold their own when their own showed signs of wear and tear. There was grit in Bourdillon. He had no one near and dear who gave him the sheltered joys of an intimate life. The community to which he belonged was his most vital human tie. Therefore he was keenly sensitive to its welfare: more so than a man who in wife and son finds tremendous personal histories of triumphs and loyalties, of dangers and catastrophes which do not affect lives in the next house. Bourdillon's community held much in common: rank, pay, responsibility, work, duty, were all allotted by the state. He and his comrades came and went by order, and by order paid certain courtesies, observed certain ceremonial. They called their souls but not their lives their own. His expenditure was regulated by his duty to his neighbour:

mess and club and cantonment subscriptions. Capital he had none. His personal possessions consisted of many pairs of boots, polo sticks, racquets, golf clubs, and some odds and ends. Caste, in him, recognised neither birth nor race. The martial clans of India and the British private soldier, the Roman Catholic chaplain and the Sikh regimental priest, the Bengali military doctor and the Scottish civil surgeon, the Jat policeman, the Irish judge, and the Punjabi Chief Justice, the Mahomedan deputy commissioner and Prosser, were all members of the one community whose standards and conduct touched his character. Within the mutual bonds of their public service Bourdillon practised the only form of socialism he accepted. Outside it the world sweated and traded, affected by energies no single government could control. In Italy the lira fell and labour was cheap; in the Lahore bazaar Italian piece goods ousted the merchandise of Manchester. The zemindar would never consent to lose ground in tribute to a communist theory. Bourdillon was all for enabling a man to fend for himself in peace and security. Scope for individuality: that was the desirable thing. And co-operation was a human necessity. To level up: when all was said and done, that was what his own strict standard of criticism inculcated—a levelling up. It involved ceaseless effort, but deterioration followed swiftly on slackness. This conclusion released him from depression, from misgivings. He thought Priscilla was right, blessedly right, in turning a deaf ear to mass suggestion. It was finer, wiser, to be guided by the best one knew, the experience one trusted, and the inner voice.

As a rule, Bourdillon was only preoccupied with the standards of his professional existence. He had a mental

passion for such things as concerned the honour and efficiency of the army. The terrible circumstances of 1914-1918, combined with his experience of grim eastern conditions, had given him a personal memory that was volcanic and not extinct. Hating warfare, detesting any bullying shout, his urgency was to achieve a spirit capable of rising above the catastrophes and furies of battle, should battle be given. The virtues of courage, chivalry, self-sacrifice, mercy, obedience, simplicity, energy, and their fruits were to him matters of far greater moment than the violent events which tested them. He felt no guilt for having fought, no inclination for the gruesome adventure of fighting again; he saw defence as a manly duty, and the enforcing of his country's will as an honourable task. He knew the supreme need of preventing an army from being barbaric in thought or deed. While he appreciated the necessity for a routine that could inculcate habits strong enough to prevent an instinctive recoil from surprise or peril, he was ardent to build up morale; an *esprit de corps*, an intelligent content, a good humour, a happy loyalty. Bourdillon was humble and sensitive to the criticism that declared military officers to be professionally well-instructed, but ill-educated in a wider sense. While with his regiment the constant and exclusive discussion of motor bicycles and tournaments exasperated him. In Government House he had found a cultured atmosphere in which Gillian's crude enthusiasms for the unruly, the scandal-mongers, the agitators had struck a jarring note. Her presence and her emotions caused him to observe political forces which rubbed him the wrong way. He was sick and tired of the methods by which seditious leaders gained a position sufficiently authoritative to enable them to parley at the gate. Without a following

none could challenge a strong government. To obtain a considerable following hatred of the government had to be created, fostered, and finally exploited. Unscrupulous means were employed: lies and misrepresentations were begotten and multiplied, religious passions and racial antagonisms were inflamed, greed was stimulated, ambitions were tantalised, misfortunes were embittered. And in order to create a spirit of rebellion undeterred by fear, insult was levelled at all in authority, while forbearance was termed weakness. So that hatred should be disguised, an odour of sanctity was obtained by the constant denunciation of bloodshed and a reiteration of high ideals. Stealthy assassination and political intimidation rendered sedition formidable and the law futile, while the glory of martyrdom and the attraction of liberty and reform were claimed as spiritual and lofty sincerities only to be found in the souls of those who were brave enough to defy government and court punishment. Over and over again Bourdillon had seen this thing run its course. At first government ignored an extremist critic and refused advertisement to a rebel. Later crime had to be dealt with according to the law and the accusation of political repression faced. Methods of conciliation were employed, so that loyalists and the law-abiding alike complained that nothing succeeds like attack and rebellion. Finally, if unshaken, secure of support from Whitehall, and able to trust its military and police forces, government generally showed itself supreme. Whereupon its most astute antagonists made a gesture towards a conference on the materialistic understanding that half a loaf is better than no bread. All prigs, many sentimentalists, and not a few diplomats immediately advised government to make concessions as the price of peace. And because the enemy

now said 'please' instead of 'I won't' or 'you must,' he reaped the reward of the methods by which he had gained power and obtained a hearing. It was all in Bourdillon's view a sickening business: a manipulation of fear no less terrific than the use of weapons, and more deadly to the spirit.

The narrow mind often walks in the straight and narrow path, but to be found on that uncrowded road is no proof of a narrow mind. In spite of his pride, his hostilities, and his rigid adherence to certain outward forms and inward graces, Bourdillon was capable of appreciating new developments. In a huge empire the men of his military profession and outlook were but a handful: and perforce a silent, unwealthy handful. But if in times of violence and danger virtue ceased to go out of them, anarchy and chaos would torture their world.

Gillian, not unconscious of Bourdillon's condemnation of her attitude towards political movements and events in India, attributed his prejudice to the predominance in numbers of soldiers over civilians in British communities in the Punjab. She thought love only prevailed where disarmed multitudes toiled, and she distrusted the standards of all who bore arms. She came away from the Lawrence Hall as depressed as Bourdillon. For she had felt the low ebb of her popularity there, and she wanted to be liked, to be comforted and praised and stimulated. Gillian felt exceedingly lonely. She sought moral support and found local Christians against her; she turned to the mass of the humble poor and discovered they were adherents of the sahibs. It was all very confusing and distracting. Bourdillon, whom she liked, and whose austerity she respected, disliked her. She was fond of Stevens, and he remained her devoted friend while ignoring all her cherished theories. Priscilla

inspired her with an affectionate respect, and Priscilla was her comrade but not her ally. It was really very upsetting to contemplate Priscilla, who in the matter of personal luxury and expenditure was so much more spartan than herself: a puritan, with a great liberality towards those who differed from her. The three were not idlers, nor rich: and they did not stir up hatred. On the contrary, they had a most vigorous and conciliatory comradeship with classes and races other than their own. The spirit of rescue and championship was strong in them. To destroy conditions in which such characters developed was a sorry task. They urged: 'extend those conditions.' With such as Bourdillon, Stevens, and Priscilla she compared Tota Ram, Narain Singh, Prem Kaur, and their kind. It made her wring her frantic hands. The pen of Tota Ram injected hate, Narain Singh had roused violence, Prem Kaur was murderous. And in her own heart there grew a bitter, bitter repudiation of them all. But surely there was something amiss in conditions which produced a Tota Ram, Narain Singh, and Prem Kaur? Gillian always wanted fairyland for mortals.

Of Anthony Gillian could not think. She could only feel. Since their wounding words, spoken as they walked up and down the drive, he had avoided discussion. He appeared to assume that she would go Home in April, and she as persistently assumed that she would accompany him to Simla. Meanwhile they were to camp together in the Multan district. Theirs was a silent, tense struggle now. He cast off her spells, her influence, her possessive grip. And she sought to change and enchant him. But Anthony Nugent was in the stronger position, because while he fasted she starved. His will, not hers, prevailed.

She was haunted by certain things he had said to her. 'You are a fortune-teller' seemed to associate her with all futile, ignorant talkers and visionaries. One evening he exclaimed: 'You've changed, Gillian!' as though there were treachery in change, as though he had been cheated. She had repudiated that, and he had only said disconsolately: 'I thought you would always understand me.' That was on the day after Narain Singh's death, when the seditious press had played her article, speech, and association with Narain Singh and his wife, against the Governor. The misrepresentation of Gillian's actions was as flagrant as the misrepresentation of Nugent's policy. Lies flourished and multiplied.

To his wife Anthony was mysterious. The quality which magnetic leaders and rulers possess is mystery. Interest is disengaged from self, from obvious virtues and obvious intellectual gifts in others, from careers more successful and achievements more famous, and is involuntarily concentrated on certain personalities, certain characters: none can say why or wherefore. But Anthony Nugent, whom this widespread interest pursued, was conscious only of being a very lonely man, whose wife adhered to the political world of contentions, loud speakers, and broadcast emotions. In her he possessed no longer the immortal joy, the mental peace he desired. Gillian was now prosaic. He sought a poem and found a leading article.

While Bourdillon and Gillian went to and fro between the Lawrence Hall and Government House, tasting in turn social and official fruits, the Governor paid a visit to an Arya Somaj College in Lahore. There were nearly two hundred thousand Punjabis belonging to the Arya Somaj, whose adherents scattered through India numbered half a million, the majority being con-

centrated in the United Provinces and the Punjab ; while Bengal held less than a hundred and Madras only fifty-one. Nugent drove away from the College challenged by the Hindu conception of life. A Hindu within the four walls of India is a domestic man, who beyond these walls has no one on earth closely associated with him and his ancient civilisation. Since caste is the fabric of his social system, and caste is determined by birth, the Hindu cannot convert, cannot be a missionary, though he is often a seer. In contrast, the Mahomedan of India is a man of the world, reacting to his co-religionists in Asia, Europe, and Africa : an out-of-doors man, a man of action. Nugent knew well enough that many students were critical of government, impatient of control. Personally, he looked back on a long association between British and Punjabis with affection. Without memory there is no love, only passion : youth is therefore inflammable material, ready to destroy and eager to possess. The Governor recognised the mental dangers to which impetuous striplings were exposed. He was deeply concerned with the problem of public instruction in the Province, where nearly ninety-two per cent. of the population was engaged in agriculture. As he drove through Lahore city he thought : ' The learned can obtain wisdom. The ill-educated only develop arrogant opinions. The uneducated know their own mind, and nothing else.'

Punjabis turned their heads to look at him. He sat there, in his open motor, with placid Stevens, and returned their gaze. Suddenly he gave an order to drive out into the country towards Jehangir's tomb. He released Stevens, whose desire for exercise was unappeased, and went on alone. The burden of his office lay heavy upon Nugent to-day. As was often the case when he had been

plunged into a specialised Hindu atmosphere, he felt the spell of Hindustan, felt as though he was in the forests among whispering trees, in the jungle where birds and beasts reign, on the mountain-tops where the elements are supreme. For centuries the essential Hindu spirit has held intimate communion with such manifestations of life : that was all to the good, thought the Governor in the motor. ' Knowledge of God is truth : knowledge of action is power,' he said to himself, and went on to repeat as if dubious, ' Inactivity is innocence. Please, sir, I didn't do it.'

A Hindu idealist seeks to escape from co-operation in the affairs of men to a saintly contemplation of God. In India Nugent found attractive dreams, pure truths, very ancient wisdoms. He knew men of learning, men with holy hearts, who dwelt in realms of lofty thought and simple abdication. To write a book some day about their virtues and philosophy would be a joyful task, he thought. But he now sustained a great responsibility for the welfare of ordinary folk. They passed him by on either side of the dusty road : farmers, soldiers, goat-herds and camel-drivers, carpenters, sweetmeat-sellers and workers in brass, low-caste workers in leather. They carried broken fragments of inspiration in their hearts, queer misunderstandings of revelation in their heads, and they bred obedient followers of religious law, customs, and outward observances. Such multitudes were like dark rivers, reflecting the light of stars, that hurried on their own silent journey neither flooded nor dried up by starlight.

The Governor experienced a pang of deep affection for this toiling manhood, and he meditated on the popularity of his rule. No government is ever popular for long, he thought. The individual Sahib inspired

liking, but that was a different story. His motor passed many mosques, many temples, and none was neglected. He remembered the words of an old munshi to him : ' Where God is not praised He is not loved.' Nugent thought he might do worse than read, mark, and learn from that, and study to deserve the praise of those he governed. Everything that successfully attacked his reputation added to the terrible difficulties of his task : which consideration brought him face to face with the problem his wife created. What she had done was in a sense a trifle, a very little thing ; but looked at from another point of view, it was a great wrong that she had done to him. ' The unloved and undesired thing has no survival : ' could she not discern that in history, had she no intuition of it in her own being ? Without the goodwill of the governed the British Raj must perish.

His reflections brought him back to Government House in a mood of resolute detachment from Gillian. He found her eager to discuss with him the details of Amrit Kaur's visit, but he brushed the conversation aside with the irritability of a man whose emotions are pent up : " I've no time for all that. This province holds more than your half-dozen Indian acquaintances, and my table is crowded with files. Leave all arrangements to Bourdillon ; he understands the business."

Gillian vaguely looked for an olive branch in Amrit Kaur's hand. Here was a woman of the Punjab whom Gillian and Anthony alike honoured : it was possible that her presence in Government House might promote agreement. If Gillian was judged by her friends, the friendship of Amrit Kaur entitled her to official approval. And at this thought the Governor's wife threw up her little head. She had come out to India with

ready-made approval and disapproval to bestow on others.

The advent of Subadar Major Puran Singh and the widow found the Nugents in the big drawing-room. Anthony preceded them by a few moments and looked at Gillian with a sudden gleam of frosty amusement. She shrank from an anticipated jest over Prem Kaur's revolver, for, however gaily delivered, it must contain a jibe at herself. But the smile went out of Anthony Nugent's face, and he said: "Priscilla's late. You'll be tongue-tied with the Sikh woman. It would defeat me completely if I had to carry on with the old soldier by signs. What shall you do? Wink at her, smile at her, hold her hand?"

Before she could reply Priscilla arrived and was hailed by the Governor: "That's splendid! This unfortunate widow would have come here and not been able to exchange a word with Gillian. Enough to estrange any visitor, what?"

"Not at all," growled Priscilla. "Poof! A woman visits with her eyes; she'd have had a look round, got an impression, verified what she had heard. Besides, this is a social function to her, not a political move. Why do you suppose I attend a drawing-room? All prinked out in feathers, lappets and court train, with my stiff knees and sunburnt face? Royalty doesn't chat to me."

Nugent gave a great laugh. "Strange people, women! Do you understand their idea of pleasure, Bourdillon?"

"I seldom share it," Bourdillon answered. "But men are cleverer over social matters than women, who make a rigid routine, or a display, of society, instead of an entertainment. Boredom does not deter them. They've got little real bonhomie; and neither humour,

comfort, food, nor wine is essential to their satisfaction. They don't appreciate the niceties of ceremonial, and they are obsessed by a sense of duty to uninteresting people."

"We are handicapped," Priscilla declared loudly. "It is the dismal truth that we don't group well. Gather a lot of old men together, and their appearance is as impressive as old trees, but a crowd of old women looks like a rummage sale. I shall stand alone at the last from sheer vanity. Meanwhile I'm just as great a social success as Bill Bourdillon."

He bowed gaily, murmuring that there was no comparison. Silent Gillian noted that Nugent had listened with an alert air; evidently he liked the grind of official life to be enlivened when possible by just such an irresponsible touch. When the doors opened to admit Puran Singh and Amrit Kaur formality fell upon them all. The Sikh wore uniform and came across the floor with his hand upon his sword. Unlike a European woman, who courts recognition on entering a room, Amrit Kaur was carefully indistinguishable from the women of her race. She walked behind her father-in-law, and her pale bare feet carried her with an intensely feminine movement. All the village women might have been faring with her from the well or the temple, so typical was she of their form and carriage.

A few feet from the Governor the Subadar Major halted, saluted, and thrust the hilt of his sword forward. Nugent touched it and then shook hands.

"I'm very glad indeed to see you here," he said to the old officer in Urdu. Puran Singh saluted Gillian next, and offered her, too, the service of his sword. As she touched it she wondered how much she accepted of all that that offer implied. Bourdillon introduced

him to the General's wife, and the same ceremony was repeated. Amrit Kaur meanwhile stood in the background, folded up in her white draperies, serene as a hill among clouds.

Bourdillon handed the Governor an illumined certificate between a cover of blue velvet ornamented with gold braid. Sir Anthony took this in his hand and spoke to Amrit Kaur very gently. His mind was filled with the meaning of all knighthood as he said: "Lady, this document expresses the appreciation of the Sarkar for your faithful and intrepid action at Khalsapur, for your hospitality to a lonely woman, for your tenderness to her fatigue and wounds. I am glad to place it in your hands and to assure you of my gratitude." He held the bright thing out to her, but Amrit Kaur made no gesture towards it. Instead she brought forth in her strong fist a rupee which she tended in tribute.

"Ah!" ejaculated Puran Singh, seeing a ceremony miscarry. The woman is old-fashioned! thought he.

"Shabash!" cried Priscilla in instant applause. "That is well done."

And Bourdillon smiled reassurance to the officer.

Nugent, intent only on Amrit Kaur, touched and remitted the tribute which lay on her extended palm. He said: "Your lord gave his life for the King; may your pension grant you *arâm*, lady." Then he placed a silk purse containing a sum of money on top of the certificate, and handed them to her saying: "This purse is a token of a desire to give you pleasure. It is no mere payment of a debt."

Amrit Kaur stood there, more richly endowed than ever before in her existence or in her dreams. Nothing shook her composure. Yet she was storing up memories, gaining adventure, receiving treasure for a starved

imagination. And to crown all, Bourdillon gave Gillian a great glittering circle of golden thread, tinsel medallions, and gilt tassels, and directed her in a low voice to garland Amrit Kaur, who, if the conventional widow in her perceived incongruity in gay adornment, still entered into this rainbow as into enchantment and lifted her dazzled eyes to signal to Gillian a full and instantaneous recognition of the pleasures of society. Never from birth till death did Amrit Kaur of Khalsapur do anything more pathetic than that.

Nugent, after salutations, took his departure, while Bourdillon escorted Puran Singh from the room in order to permit speech to Amrit Kaur, who on the men's withdrawal gave a slow smile as though released from too exacting an excitement.

"I've got something for you from myself," cried eager Gillian, and brought forth a little box from a jeweller's shop. Out of tissue paper and cotton-wool she unwrapped a watch.

Amrit Kaur received this present with complete sincerity: "Of what use is this thing to such as I?" she cried, very simply. "It tells me nothing. Desiring to know the hour, I look at the sky and watch the shadows. Of the jungle am I." Wistfully she added: "Land is good. I would greatly rejoice if the gift were land."

"Alas, neither you nor I shall receive land this day," said the General's wife.

"The world is yours," responded Amrit Kaur genially, seeing a joke was intended.

"Keep the watch for remembrance," Priscilla suggested.

"I will keep it. But never, never shall I forget," answered Amrit Kaur.

Gillian inquired anxiously: "Doesn't she like it?"

"She is perfectly happy, bless her," Priscilla assured Gillian, watching the Sikh woman's face.

When Amrit Kaur left the room her eyes were free in her head as they had not been when she entered it. They found a long mirror in the wall, and for the first time in her life she beheld herself from head to heel. Priscilla realised this new adventure, and cried to her: "Look! that is you!" Amrit Kaur for several minutes confronted her own calm face, the trinkets in her hand, and the glittering bauble that encircled her stately neck and lay upon her bosom. Panelled walls, windows, curtains, and carpets made foreign land around: to her eyes that figure was a stranger growing familiar, and yet something long familiar became strange in the glass because fully observed for the first time. The astonishment of Amrit Kaur was profound, for she now made the discovery that she, separate to herself, intensely self, was like every other woman of her village: in colour, size, movement, dress, and bearing the resemblance was complete. She would not have chosen this obliteration of a difference she had felt and therefore pictured, but she was no egotist. "So it is thus," said Amrit Kaur gravely, and went back content to the plains of the Punjab.

THE Nugents' bedroom had a swept and garnished look : all the personal odds and ends which Gillian gathered about her for daily use had been packed up in readiness for the morrow's departure to Multan. Twin beds in the centre of the carpet had their bedclothes turned down with a prim tidiness. The fire rollicked on the hearth. Presently Gillian came in and switched on the electric light. Crossing over to her dressing-table, she began to take off her jewels and lay them aside. Then she slipped out of her green chiffon frock and tossed it over the back of a chair. She looked younger and simpler when that was done, but not happy. Dawdling over her undressing, she appeared discouraged, slack. She carried her comb to the fender, and sat there pulling it through her bright, wavy hair, and meditating.

The curtain had rung down on a dinner-party and had rung up on a scene which, night after night, brought her face to face with a miserable state of affairs.

Was Anthony miserable too? If he were, he had given no sign of it that evening. The discussion at the dinner-table turned upon the question of pride : racial pride. Pride was no impersonal topic to Gillian to-night. She had listened intently to Anthony when he spoke : it seemed to her that he drew the line between pride and vanity very sharply : the others were more confused. Humility was described as a virtue, but they were vague about it. Anthony said zenana influence tended to make

men vain; they strutted under its admiring eye, and they thought no improvement necessary.

"It makes Indians a processional rather than a progressive people," he declared. A guest spoke of the appalling insolence that was the reverse side of their courtesy, and Anthony described the aggressive manner of the Akalis as a reaction against the servility demanded by Moghal conquerors. Its fashionable revival to-day was a histrionic effort, and it gave them unwarranted self-confidence. By provoking pride in other Punjabis it must eventually lead to Akali humiliation. Swagger was a lack of *savoir faire*, said the Governor. The talk drifted on, and he finally said, "You can't do without pride," in very practical tones.

Gillian recognised the truth of that downstairs, where the scale of values demanded self-esteem without presumption. Was it so necessary in her private life? She had, she realised, mortified Nugent by her public actions. That was dangerous. Was it equally dangerous to go to the other extreme if in their personal relations she stooped to plead for his love, his passion? Would he become vain and indifferent?

How widely were public and private life separated? Bourdillon had said something about that, and she had seen Nugent look at him with interest and then nod. She was jealous that Nugent liked Bourdillon, who did not like her. He had said in his terse way: 'An Englishman's home is his castle: that implies individual liberty, but the word castle suggests something social; a liberality. Now, because of the purdah the Indian's home is his bedroom, not only private but exclusive: no liberality there. It is only as a man of territory that he is both free and neighbourly, provided we guarantee him his frontiers.' It seemed to Gillian

that Anthony as Governor had a castle and a territory that were inseparable: and that she must reconcile her public actions with his private life if she wished to avoid banishment.

For a moment her hands fell idly into her lap, and she thought of the two Sikh women who had come and gone to and from Government House, because of her, Gillian. Prem Kaur was allied to politics and widowed; Amrit Kaur was allied to warriors and widowed; Gillian was allied to government and—divorced. That was what it came to; not legally, of course, but since she went to Khalsapur her husband had not lived with her.

She dared not let this separation continue: its very silence frightened her to death. And yet—and yet—certain pride was indispensable? If all hers was in arms she stood fortified: she, who was soft, pliable, responsive. And she was not on her guard against Anthony—ye heavens, no! Like a chill breeze she seemed to hear a million women's voices whispering: 'I should be too proud to let him see, to let him know——' If she trimmed her sails to that breeze, she might drift on and on for ever, alone with waste waters.

She and Anthony would never partake again together of sympathy, understanding, mutual strength, unless this separation ended. Perforce she now sought not a triumph but a remedy. Yet a subtle, unacknowledged element of attack against Anthony's self-mastery animated her too. She would fulfil herself and change him. The rebel in her was alert. She was the moth again.

Nugent came in and found her standing on the hearth-rug. Her brown hair curled round her elfin face like a child's. Flames played about the white film of her

nightgown and the shadow of her pretty form. The pallor of her forehead, throat, and little straight nose, the warm red of her lips, rising above that quiver of light and shade seemed like a voice above a touch.

Nugent sat down on the foot of his bed and folded his arms on the brass rail and sank his chin upon them: resisting her, resenting her.

"Tony, my Tony, we love each other. Nothing else matters," cried Gillian.

"We've got to think things out," he muttered.

"There's a far, far happier way than the way we've been living," she said, and he rejoined very low that he knew that.

"Don't you remember, Tony?" she whispered.

It was then that Priscilla's words came back to him, urging: 'Don't resist her if she persuades you to go on loving her.' Yes . . . but none save he knew how strong Gillian's emotional powers were. He could resist her. He could. He must go on making sure of that, he thought. Speaking to the floor, into the very depths, he answered that he never forgot one single lovely thing about her.

By what miracle did she gather so much joy into her voice, so sweet a tide of delight into her movements? "There's a realisation of everything that is love which sweeps one off one's feet!" she urged. "Why merely speak of love?"

Would he go—would he stay? He stayed.

When she awoke she was happy. While she had awaited Anthony, the room was a box of hot, dancing light: small, intimate. Then it became a vast orb of darkness without visible limit. Now the invading dawn, that climbed up the walls with a white brightness like thin glass, and crept across the floor in hot pursuit

to find the furniture, seemed to make a pathway from a world outside where wheat grew and water ran and myriads of shining leaves made multitudes of men seem scanty assemblies. A beautiful, abundant world. Gillian was pacified. She had broken his fast and her starvation in passion. Her strength as an agitator was proven. But no problem was solved. They had shared emotion, for all emotion can be shared, can storm through crowds, can deliver its wordless command from heart to heart. If their union was to stand the test of time there must be concord as well. Here was the truce, but what of the treaty?

Nugent slept on, and as she watched him Gillian knew that she expected him to wake in the calm which succeeds a storm, but that the awakened Nugent would not have changed his mind. The air would be cleared between them—that was all. He was lying on his side, and his profile against the pillow seemed to suggest a signature on a document. This man would be true to his wife, true to himself. Out of all the world he loved her most, and that was glorious. Quick upon this thought was born a new humility, something of surrender.

All day Gillian regretted nothing. She was not even curious as to whether Anthony would resume hostilities. For the moment she was content with things as they seemed. Once during the afternoon she and Nugent were close together, bending over a programme of their visit to Multan. Stevens was with them, but she was able, unseen, to steal her hand into Nugent's: he instantly responded and held hers in a clasp that gave her an extraordinary thrill. After that she ceased to feel tranquil.

The night was one of noise. Their train rattled and

roared to Multan, so that only a fitful sleep soothed Gillian at intervals. The movement and the stammer of the wheels on the metals stimulated her. A sense of excitement pursued her.

Nugent, wakeful too, wondered as to his fate. He had one of those queer moments in which a man sees his own career and finds it extraordinary. All the power that was his seemed in a flash tangible. There was nothing of a figure-head about him : around him moved the political storm, and he was the man at the wheel. He saw the storm as grim and dark, not as beautiful and romantic. Only in the peasantry at their ploughs did he visualise the picturesque gallantry of men. God ! what problems pressed upon the province ! Plague : he loathed that grisly reaper who put the fear of death into the patient people year after year by rats and fleas and dirt, and the spirit which induced men to regard the slaughter of vermin as a sin. The same spirit refused to select survivors for herds and flocks, so that feeble and barren cattle ate up precious pasture in bad seasons when fodder was scarce. He thought of fever, and all the dark dark places where deadly mosquitoes breed. To minister to the sick, multiply hospitals, and increase health was a terrific task. The Punjab offered a harsh home to the halt and the blind. Yet in kindness it was no miser : the impulses of the charitable saved old and helpless folk from starvation. Dacoities, and brutal murders, and the character of the police force : these were matters for judgment, mishandled by sentimentalists. Litigation and legislation brought the population under the quill. Village panchayats, Indian magistrates, district boards, and municipalities gave local decisions that caused ceaseless eastern gossip. The Legislative Council passed opium and excise acts.

Debt everywhere dragged the people down. Vast forests shouted for labour, skill, research. His mind was never done travelling; was for ever on the roads, the communications of the province; exploring the needs, perceiving the isolations, realising the loneliness of the people. Undisciplined schools and ignorant teachers herded rustic lads into a cul-de-sac. Spinning-wheels turning and turning spoke in vain of simplicity to city youths suddenly endowed with cinemas, motors, and printing presses. There were glorious irrigation schemes which troubled the waters—ever a great act. But where were the Punjab's song, the Punjab's book, the Punjab's building? The old, old monuments stood, tomblike, over an artistic greatness that slept. The vernaculars were mute. Sikhs' quarrels about their gurdwaras made their temper savage and filled gaols. A woman without a spouse—the adult virgin and the widow—evoked emotions of condemnation and despair. So that women should all wed, men were permitted more than one wife. A Hindu widow might not re-marry. The purdah was a strong barrier and darkened the windows of life. The fidelity of Punjab soldiers was a vital factor in the preservation of law and order, and much depended on content reigning in the sepoy's villages, where were their homes and fields, their intimate scandals and private quarrels. Nugent said to himself that just as a man must keep his eye on the ball if he is to win his game, so the Governor of the Punjab must for ever watch the land and the turbaned man on the land. The outrageous error of Indian politics was this:—that the politician in India took his eye off the land and turned it on to the political situation in Westminster: watched the betting rather than the game.

Nothing disgraced a politician as a politician, growled Nugent to himself: imprison him and deprive him of civil rights if convicted of treason or armed rebellion, and in time, amnestied or liberated, he returns to authority and power if the people will it so. Democracy gave authority to the wishes of the ignorant. Nugent felt that, if the emotions of his vigorous body achieved supreme victory over his judgment, his self-determination would become merely that of a healthy animal: an instinct. He admitted that a wish was the longing of mind and body in co-operation: it was greater than will, more stable than desire. If character was fine a wish would be an aspiration. To inspire democracy with the aspirations befitting civilisation there must be education, and that education must be capable of building great character. Thus and thus only would the majority's choice fall on good men to govern all, thus and thus only would they know how to judge a government wisely: neither capricious, credulous, nor suspicious. The Punjab had still a long, long way to travel. It was now fearless, illiterate, passionate, prejudiced, divided against itself; given to bribery, corruption; susceptible to flattery and superstition. And he loved it. For all its rustic egotism its manhood was highly social: its very diversity demonstrated that. Dogs are pckinese and wolfhounds, spaniels and Irish terriers, and a hundred specialised breeds: cats are cats. There was nothing of the cat tribe about the Punjabi.

Restless Gillian thought of Anthony, who thought of the Punjab and himself in relation to the Punjab, and towards dawn of her and her only. With the peculiar candour a man uses when he addresses his own mind as it idly hovers over emotions and opinions, deciding nothing, he reflected that had Gillian been a big, heavy

woman who laid down the law in a loud voice his exasperation would have led to a permanent resentment. But she was a feather of a creature. She kissed and she whispered. He wondered whether she would become less restless and impulsive if she had a child. Through his sturdy son John he was possessed of the future and had ensured the survival of the past. Gillian would be too indulgent to a boy, too critical of every system to which fate might commit him: she would accuse all schoolmasters of narrow-minded tyranny and his father of not understanding him. Nugent smiled broadly at the picture. But he experienced a newborn desire to have daughters by Gillian; little graceful quick things, adorably loving, feminine to their tiny finger-tips. They would be his till suddenly they became women and men took them out of his house: young men, sure of their right to deprive him of his. Thereby uniting strange houses to his house, like the knots in a net. Soft, pretty playthings, those baby girls: and then pools of love. Their mother and he would not quarrel over their bringing-up, for the question of the discipline he thought necessary for a son would not arise, and it was on the point of discipline that Gillian lost her head. The old confidence that he could manage Gillian returned to him. That wild surrender of hers had given him a sense of security again, but not of self-possession. He was very conscious of the madness in life. His wife might still, with a folly half divine, drift blindly away from peace and choose the martyrdom of warfare, and so force him to contend with her or part from her. As though, he impatiently exclaimed to himself, turning his great shoulders on the hard bedding, a man did not have enough fighting with men! Why should Gillian, who could fill his nature with a rapture,

a tenderness, and an imagination which no other human communion evoked in him, deliberately challenge him to the combative angers that divide and animate opponents in public strife? That was not marriage: that was divorce. And the iron wheels clamoured in brutal reiteration, 'divorce, division, sedition, rebellion, reaction, and war,' till Multan city station broke upon the train's rattling windows with a shout.

The three days which followed were the most reckless of Gillian's life because she drifted. Drifted, all exposed to impressions and sensations. Deep within her there was always a love of excitement, a desire to share enthusiasms. Materially she was affected by the camp itself. To be a tent-dweller cut her off from a householder's pig-headed defence of established systems or cherished fads: drainage, central heating, electric contrivances. With the fall of those social bulwarks fell the whole order of bricks and mortar; parliaments and prisons. She was between the stars and the dust. There were beauty and splendour in the Governor's camp which was without past or future, was pitched yesterday and would be struck to-morrow. Though each canvas looked as if it might set sail for the sky at twilight, Gillian discovered that the camp had no mere experimental connection with the earth: she perceived with respect the precision of each tent peg, the rigidity of every rope, the regularity of all the white-washed bricks that outlined its straight paths. Like a ship, it owed its dignity to correct and accurate detail of proved efficiency. But it had none of the tame orderliness of a warehouse; it was wild as a bird's nest.

She lived a life of honeymoon there. Her tent, in which she passed hours that were timeless, became to her a personal secret, isolated from the world. Three

nights were filled with passion cut off from tumult, and each morning she was amazed to find the world so prim. She had supposed it to be brimming over with wild drama on the subject of immediate self-government for India.

The environment of Multan city and cantonment wrought upon her. The camp was pitched on a wide, pale maidan, close to a parade ground. From dawn to dusk she heard the sounds of soldiers : bugles called, a mid-day gun proclaimed high noon, there was sharp firing on the range, heavy transport rattled over the dusty roads. Multan was the headquarters of a civil division and civil lines had big bungalows, but the cantonment took the lead, though its garrison was smaller than of yore. Gillian heard that before the war an Indian cavalry regiment occupied lines that were now empty, and a British battalion instead of a detachment lived in the barracks. She was shown where an elephant battery was quartered long, long ago. Here the frontier was the next step. On the east the Indus ran from Kashmir to Karachi. Three hours by train brought one to the bridge of boats at Dera Ghazi Khan with Baluchistan behind it. To the north-east was Dera Ismail Khan, with its dangerous roads toiling into Waziristan. North again were Bannu, Kohat, and Peshawur, with Afghanistan across their left shoulder. The Mahomedan world, not cradled in Hindustan, made itself felt in Multan. Blue-tiled mosques rose like jewels from the biscuit-coloured plain. The city, cross and old, held families of Hindus and Mahomedans who mourned their dead, murdered by men of rival creeds without the pomp and circumstance of war. City and citadel had played a long suit some seventy odd years ago. Two Englishmen were murdered in

April, and the rebel Mulraj became cock of the walk in the fortress. By August General Whish's division arrived before Multan : it lay snug and warm—a temperature of over 116 degrees at night now and then—in the old brick kilns and gardens, and lost many a good man in skirmishes till the siege was raised because a swashbuckling gentleman of the Punjab, Sher Singh, decided he had had enough of the business by September, and abruptly abandoned his ally, General Whish, and went over with his whole force to Mulraj. He was a restless raider and advanced on Lahore, thought better of it and camped on the Chenab ; while another Sikh, Chattar Singh, led an outbreak Hazara way and formed an alliance with Amir Dost Mahomed of Kabul, who sent a force into India. The garrison at Peshawur mutinied, Attock fell, and the Punjab lost its temper right and left. The battle of Chillianwala gave men their fill of fighting in January of '49, and the British force had over two thousand casualties. Near Multan soldier and sepoy looked for reinforcements from Bombay and Sindh and got them three days before Christmas. Over fifteen thousand men stormed the city, carried it, and closely invested Mulraj in the citadel. He gave himself up on the 22nd of January, and the army under General Whish joined General Gough and fought their fickle friend Sher Singh, together with Chattar Singh and Dost Mahomed's merry men, in the battle of Gujerat, which ended the second Sikh war, and presently the Afghans went headlong out of India by the Khyber Pass. This was the tale Gillian heard when she saw the obelisk, visible for miles round, that marks the graves of the murdered Englishmen. Old men's fathers took memories of those fierce events to their graves or the burning ghat : and those old men saw

their sons go to Flanders, Gallipoli, Iraq, Palestine, Persia, and Siberia to fight. Yet how quiet the land lay at twilight and dawn ! the tamarisks rose like plumes from the dust, the dust rose like smoke from the ground ; the banyan trees and the neem trees and the pipals cast a serene shade, wheels crooned above deep wells and camels padded softly. It seemed to Gillian that the lull after the storm was universal, merciful, and brief.

She burnt her candle at both ends, rising very early and riding far and fast, escorted by Stevens and the English Deputy Commissioner, who was a delicate, scholarly man : an idealist with a pessimistic temperament. By long centuries of culture he was senior to his official superior, the Mahomedan Commissioner, who in rugged mother wit and domineering will outmatched him. Cotes was sensitive, proud, and scrupulously courteous to all : a kind, unhappy man. Gillian had but a faint impression of him : she was exhilarated by the movement of the three ponies, by the bite in the morning wind which sang in her ears as they galloped. The light was so vivid it seemed to consume the very air. Bamboos and cactus were like plant life encased in hard shells by witchcraft. There were no little hills and dales, no streams, no moss-grown rocks. The monotony of the gigantic plain was broken only by palm groves, shrines, small walled gardens, and the crops the ryot wrung by ceaseless toil from the parched earth. Women at the wells, pigeons circling over the blue domes of mosques, were rare tokens of a vivacity which did not evoke fear. Everything else was on a terrifying scale. Gillian returned from those rides roused to an excitable energy. Let labour cease for a season and the plain would be a desert ! Perhaps for the first time she felt

keen sympathy with the work of administrators. During the hours when Nugent was invisible, caught by the whirlpool of the province's affairs, Gillian remained all agog, as though swept at last into the tide of a great movement.

The Commissioner gave an *At Home* close to the city wall, where a horse fair was held. His veiled women were in seclusion in his official residence, and in strict truth the Commissioner would never be at home to the world. But on a striped *dhurrie*, with a tent to give shade and little tables and many chairs, he welcomed guests from cantonments, officials, missionaries, city fathers, police officers, and local gentry, with a bland air of sophisticated hospitality. Beyond the *dhurrie* a large male crowd surged: on horseback, on foot, astride camels, men jostled and roared, their big turbans and baggy trousers giving a burly air to thin frames. Gillian had never heard such a hubbub in her life: the babel of voices destroyed thought. And cleaving the mob was a narrow track down which physical energy discharged itself, as though a safety valve had been formed. Here trick riders shot by at full gallop, hanging to the saddle by their knees while their hair nearly swept the ground, or standing on the saddles and holding their hands above their head; they were everywhere and anywhere on their wild horses, and always shouting weirdly. The tent-pegging was magnificent; the spearsmen and horsemen seemed to live simply to aim true, strike swiftly, and carry away pegs on the raised points of spears flourished against the sky. Again and again they passed, one by one, to the thunder of hoofs and the shout of Punjabi invectives, or endearments, into horses' ears. The exuberance of the crowd taking their perilous pleasure, the clamour of competition, the bitter bargain-

ing over horseflesh, the daring and the pace, carried Gillian away. She was out of doors with the people, away from debate, away from the round-table game. In a scene where strength and the will to win were manifest none could make himself heard, and words were no more than the frolic of breath.

That night the cantonment danced at the club. Though it had been told sad tales of Gillian's doings, it had no intention of spoiling its fun. When the Governor and his wife came to Multan, something had to be done, and they did it. First the Commissioner had his show, then the members of the club gave a ball. On the second day the 2/100th Punjabis held their regimental sports, and the railway institute gave a concert in the evening. After a hockey match the Khattaks of the 3/50th Punjabis danced. There was also an At Home on the golf links under the palm trees. Gillian was all on wires, strung up, gay, seeking with intensity to be liked, to carry people with her. Though a guest she seemed to lead the revels, and no one thought of politics. What were politics to those soldiers who had seen war, but a grim and sordid competition in which it was a recognised practice when you lost the game to stand and abuse the winning side to all who would listen? A most degraded proceeding.

In the rhythm of the dance at the club Gillian abandoned herself to the pursuit of sensation. Could any promise of treasure, bringing plenty, be better than this delight that was in herself, needing only the music of the band and the movements of all the dancers to save it from starvation? Day after day they danced here, these young Englishmen and their wives. Surely the constant rhythm put some spell upon them, cast out some sour grievance that still life begets, stimulated a

desire to move in harmony, sharing energy? In her tent at midnight Gillian felt the reaction of the dance, its *joie de vivre*. She carried a debt of gratitude for rapture into the morning when she rode, and took it to the regimental sports, where her hosts noted the deep vivacity in her, the soft laughter of her eyes, the little curl at the corner of her lips. Here she watched, fascinated, the runners seeking their goal: their breathing, their muscles, their speedy feet responsive to an ardent wish born in themselves to run the fastest of all. And the jumpers, launched out against the long jump, springing over the high jump, gathering themselves up, propelling their weight, were unable to rest where others rested, and able to do this odd and difficult thing. Some men were unsatisfied by speed, and had to use their strength wrestling on mule back; physical comfort found where to most it was so obviously lost. In the tug-of-war an appetite for competition and exhausting effort was demonstrated as insatiable, and only to be appeased by appalling strain. Bagpipes breaking out as the sun set seemed the fitting cry of these strange athletes, the sweat of whose brow was like dew on a passionate earth.

Apart from argument, in touch with a zest and zeal that stirred her as strongly as rhetoric, Gillian changed her water into wine by night and day. Only when she found herself seated in the front row of the red brick railway institute, confronted by a platform and palms, did she feel bored, languid, able to detach herself and turn back. There was nothing here to attract her: the music was amateur, the faces in their hesitation between race and race, in their haphazard choice of colour, gave her an uneasy feeling as though she saw nationality in disguise and beheld not a fusion of east and west, but the confusion of both. Through the whole of the

performance the behaviour of Nugent and Bourdillon was so perfect that Gillian felt rebellious laughter welling up in her. She knew that their regret that the Eurasian problem existed was profound: they cherished no sentimental dreams on the subject. Their emotions were cold towards mixed blood, and Gillian immediately wished to stir them to pity and fire them with her indignation that any heart could feel a touch of contempt for such a pathetic community. But she knew that she would fail. She had, however, learnt that uninspired by enthusiasm Nugent would respect and uphold every manly right the Eurasians possessed, and gauge accurately their services to the Punjab; while Bourdillon, in obedience to his code, would give not only the devil himself but the silliest of all the angels his due.

When the concert ended a reception began, and it was then that Gillian had a strange encounter with a railway engineer called Robinson. He was a man of thirty-five, born at Swindon; the smoke of engines was the very breath of his nostrils. Among the crowd he was prominent because there were few of his type there. Rather shy, he would never have reached the Governor's wife if it had not been for the fact that though far from being a pushing fellow, he had a kick in him. The railway people made way for Robinson. And at the very sound of his voice Gillian felt around her the men who sat on the labour benches at Westminster.

He was very willing to talk about himself. "I came out in the Territorials," he said, "and thought India an unsociable sort of show. All right for the officers, no doubt. But there's no place to drop in at. Indians are hospitable, I'm told, but you can't feel at home with them. Still, I've stayed on in civil employment."

It was not interesting, and yet Gillian was all attention. The wary benevolence in the man, the good-natured politeness which liked the distance marked, and thought a long shot a good shot and any touch at close range a familiarity, were typical of that unflinching 'go' and independence in the men of her political party. She encouraged him to talk, and, sorely lacking the ease a pipe would have given him, he told her that he had not regretted his decision. Modestly, but robustly, he added: "When I go Home I reckon I'll have something to tell our fellows that will surprise them."

"What things?" inquired Gillian.

He smiled broadly. "One way and another I'd thought the system out here was contrived to keep the native down and the British upper classes up, if you understand me."

"And it is not?" the Governor's wife cried, very intent.

"No." The way he said it gave her the feeling that the 'Noes' had it.

"I'm glad to hear you say that," she murmured.

"Caste complicates the whole thing," Robinson said sturdily. "And the Hindu-Mahomedan dislike. My word, you can call it dislike. And then all the different races: it's a day's job to commit them to memory. Take just the lot that serve in the army. Gharwalis are Hindus and Gurkhas are Hindus. So are Rajputs; specially haughty, they are. Jats are Hindus, and Mahrattas and Dogras, and Sikhs with a difference. Afridis, Khattaks, and Mahsuds are Pathans, and they're all Mahomedans, same as the Afghans. I was in the last Afghan war, which wasn't much to write home about. Baluchees are Mahomedans, and so are those

nice 'P.M.' fellows. But Pathans and Gurkhas aren't Indians, and men from Kashmir and Rajputana are members of the British Empire, but not British subjects. As for Hindu castes, I soon said to myself, 'Chuck it.' 'Chuck it,' I said, 'there's no end to it.' And their customs: from quite English ones to the real particular kind, like calling a fellow untouchable. As insulting as that and all well meant, and it goes down among themselves seemingly. More 'or less. Except for a bit of talk, they stick to it and abide by it."

"You've learnt a lot," Gillian said flatteringly.

"I have," agreed Robinson, never losing his modest manner. "You've got to get rid of prejudice, of course. At first I was all for treating 'em the same as I would an Englishman, see? But they didn't like it. You have to humour them and know your own mind. I've got no complaint to make of them, but they don't think like us, nor tackle a job the way we do. And I don't blame 'em. All the same, if they want railways—and they're very appreciative, I'll say that for them. Look how they travel, and not in comfort—they require our work. And that's a fact. All the talk of alien interference is for political purpose, I reckon: when it comes to a job it won't wash."

"They could employ Englishmen if India had self-government," Gillian suggested.

"That's the idea," Robinson conceded, with an indulgent air. "But there'd be no happiness in it for any party concerned. They like to have a sahib to refer matters to when they're up against the other fellows' caste or creed, or when one of their own lot is doing 'em down. They know he's impartial like. But once he isn't the Sarkar he'd be just a foreigner to intrigue with. The whole of India'd bust up. I'm

friendly to these chaps—one can't help taking an interest. I'd be sorry to see it."

"Are you a conservative?" Gillian asked.

"No. I've always been a labour man," Robinson told her, and added: "I've read about you, of course, being on our side."

"And you've read a good deal that is not very flattering about me since I've been out here," she said, flushing.

"That's right," admitted Robinson, suddenly bashful. Then a jolly grin came over his face. "I thought the same as you when I landed in Bombay. And no doubt if I went Home to-morrow I'd think twice before I voted Tory. I'd certainly think twice. Still, live and learn: I might come to it in time. It riles me to hear the labour party hand out their goods to India in utter ignorance, so to speak. They'll do the child playing with matches once too often for perfect innocence, if you ask me,—and then I'm done with them. You don't win confidence by playing the fool: seeing a country for three weeks and knowing all about it is a bit too foolish for me. That's not brain work, that's falling down on one side of the fence with your eyes shut." Mr. Robinson looked decidedly hot and referred at large to events which had evidently annoyed him.

"I'm very interested in what you say," Gillian told him. "I'm beginning to see that India ought not to be made the victim of British party politics."

"That's right," said Robinson again, with hearty approval. "And I blame the labour party and labour press for one thing: it cries down the Englishman abroad. It's never fair to the army. No enthusiasm. When I read about Indian affairs I boil over. I say to myself, wot's all this about British luxury? None of

it's sticking to me. Where's the British tyranny? Last in the competition. The Brahman and the Mahomedan tie for first every time. When I see all that abuse written for a purpose I begin to smell a rat and I'm not taking any more of it."

"If one could only make people happier," sighed she.

"Ah," grunted Robinson. "That's not done to order. I've never heard a general thanksgiving yet that put a stop to private grumbling." He pursued a grievance. "All the talk of class hatred: it's sheer hullabaloo. Man to man it doesn't come natural, except where chaps happen to take a dislike to each other, which is sometimes the case with cousins too, as we all know. *Class* hatred? Think I intend to leave off where I began for the sake of that humbug? Not likely. If I see a small boy, do I say to 'im: 'Sonny, don't you get into the top class of your school on any account!' I do not. Nor when he gets there do I set the whole school on to him to 'teach him better.'"

"Ah, but he is not born in the top class."

"That's right. That's another story. Gentlemen, you mean? Well, some qualities take a generation or so to mature. And then there they are, and very valuable in their way. I've seen too much to deny it. There's a lot in socialism, but it don't allow enough for luck. I could do with a bit of luck myself, seeing that there's no abolishing it. I like to back a winner as much as anybody." Mr. Robinson, thick-set, melting gently in his blue serge suiting, added: "But carrier pigeons are my hobby." For five minutes he opened his heart to her on the delights of this occupation which appeared to deprive him of leisure, fill him with anxieties, cause him expense, and make life worth living.

Gillian became aware that Nugent was trying to catch

her eye, and she bade a grateful farewell to Mr. Robinson. Bourdillon left with some of his friends, and Gillian drove away with Anthony. Turning to him breathlessly, she cried: "I've met a man who says——"

Nugent flung his arm about her shoulders and interrupted her. "Ye gods, what a ghastly evening! Kiss me."

On the third day Gillian had an unsuccessful little encounter with Bourdillon. She made an overture to him, saying when he handed her the English mail: "Do you know, I dread opening these letters and papers. I want to forget that sad, mad business at Khalsapur. Shall I ever be allowed to forget it?"

He looked at her with an aloof glance and said in that polished, courteous way of his: "I should not worry, Lady Nugent. Those things are only remembered for as long as they are politically important." He added: "I've heard from Ford's mother. A nice letter." And then he rode out of the camp.

Gillian turned to Stevens. "He can't forgive me," she said sorrowfully.

Stevens said, very simply: "I expect Mrs. Ford's letter has upset him a bit." He regarded her pile of correspondence cheerfully, and suggested: "I should not read all that now if I were you."

"Not to-day?" she said, hesitating.

"Certainly not. Come and watch the hockey."

So Gillian once again sat on a striped dhurrie, which seemed to her to be a wishing carpet from which day by day, with all thought stifled, she watched men reveal the attraction they found in competition, in the exercise of skill and energy. This game of hockey drew the whole cantonment, in which the British were a small minority. The prowess of a second lieutenant

called Smith and sepoy Pertab Singh inspired their adversaries with admiration, and defeat did not prompt the losing side to agitate for the reform of the rules. To strike a blow at a ball, to defend a goal, to aim, to win: these things were essential to the game, and victory was to the swift and strong. Cheers at the end seemed to voice the creed of the crowd: 'I believe in fairplay!' Gillian, unable to resist crowds, applauded with sparkling eyes.

Then a bonfire was lit and again the blue dhurrie lay on the pale dust, and all around gathered the dark faces of the sepoys and a few British soldiers. Gillian, seated among officers and their wives, watched in silence while Khattaks formed a circle about the flames and a tom-tom began to throb. It seemed to her that this hour marked the culmination of all the noise, vibration, and vigour that had caught her up in a whirlwind. The dusk whispered, the fire tore upwards, the breath of the crowd hung in the chill air, and the Khattaks, sword in hand, began to dance. Youth and manhood displayed its lovely energy. There were Jewish features, cast in bronze, that suddenly stood out as a great dancer, passing, was illuminated by the fire; there were fair skins that appeared to be the very rind of life; if the flashing blades slit them one would expect no collapse but a gush of spirit, a spurt of flame. Shadows shuddered. Huge limbs moved as though a gale turned majestic windmills. Gradually the pace increased and each soldier in the revolving line seemed to be weaving a spell out of motion, rhythm, and his own dream. This was a dance of zealots. When such circles were spun in border villages dizzy minds saw death mirrored in shining swords, were beckoned by a mirage of glory, and went a-raiding. There was a strange beauty in this

dance, which formed a living diadem above the motionless earth. Breathing quickly, the swordsmen marked time with their voices in strange monotonous pants while the tom-toms went on throbbing. Each man's frame knew ecstasy. As time passed the darkness gave to the surrounding throning an immobility, all little restlessnesses were invisible: animation appeared centred in those inflamed Khattaks, whose physical endurance was most marvellous. The onlookers were still as statues, and the young men danced on and on and on as though to declare that their hearts beat more strongly than the hearts of others and that they would beat the world with them.

The latent energy in Gillian called forth by the emotions of cantonments took her back to the camp ready to abandon herself once more to joy. Gongs, cymbals, and dhols, making the music of the east, played the march to which she wandered through the labyrinth of desire to the crisis of her fate.

THE February sun beat down upon the camp with such force that a sunstroke was a certainty to which every bare head was exposed. Inside Gillian's reception tent the sunshine made a little golden pool at the entrance. That indolent dog, George, scratched himself languidly in the dust by the flagstaff. Not a breath stirred the flag. Just beyond the guard a sadhu in saffron-coloured robes sat telling his beads. His brown gourd and a chaplet of dying jasmine lay beside him while he murmured monotonously : ' Brahma-sakti, sakti-Brahman.'

Suddenly the magic circle of sunlight was obliterated as Nugent, stooping, came into the tent. Against the glare of high noon his figure was black as one who wears sable armour. Gillian's heart gave a great leap. Something warned her that this was a more fateful hour than the hour they spent together on the way to Aldershot. That had seen their betrothal, this might witness their final separation. In each mind the conception of their severance had been that of a divorce, a dissolution of the real bonds of marriage : without reference to lawyers. As Nugent flung himself into a chair, the sunshine burnt once more by the entrance, and Gillian saw the true colours of his face and form emerge. Saying nothing, he sat there beating his leather gaiters with his riding-whip. He looked far less vivacious and more forceful than his wife. All around were black fleur-de-lys upon cinnamon, forming the lining of the great tent. Gillian raised herself on one elbow upon the cushions which

smothered the sofa where she lay. With her small pointed chin tucked into the palm of her hand, she asked him wistfully: "Are you sorry you married a woman like me, Tony?"

Without looking at her, he rejoined: "That's a funny thing to say after these last few nights."

Torn between delicacy and daring, she sighed: "I wish I were not so afraid of shocking you."

His big laugh filled the tent. "You shock me? That's good. I wonder what sort of a place you think Asia is. But try: why not?"

"O, it would not shock you, perhaps, in another woman. Well——" There was a long pause. Then she said: "How much ought a woman to hide? I don't know. Between you and me the truth seems essential. I've let you see what I *feel*. That is the intimacy of lovers, and it is very terrifying."

His attention to her words gave her the response she wanted, and she went on in the same dreamy tones: "In public life I've been frank, too. It has not been possible to conceal where I differed from you. Our private life is at cross purposes with our public life. And so this morning when I woke, do you know what I thought? I said to myself that you and I could have spent these last few nights together if I had been your mistress, and in that case there would have been no problem to face to-day."

Nugent's silence indicated that he did not intend to stir the sacred ashes. In him there was a man's abiding awe of the burning bush.

"No problem, Tony," she sighed. "I am your wife. That is your real difficulty. Our relationship, our union—there's the rub! It's like a civil war."

"For us both," he muttered.

"No!" Gillian exclaimed. Anthony turned with surprise to see a certain bold mischief peeping out of her little face. "No," she reiterated. "You hate being attacked by me. But, in a strange way, I rather love attacking you. It brings us to such close quarters, and discloses so many exciting thoughts."

Still staring doggedly at Gillian, he ejaculated: "So you've really been having the devil of a time!"

"But now I realise the danger," she said in a very sober way. "I can't live alone. I depend dreadfully on you. When you grew so cold and remote I was terrified—it was famine, bereavement, desolation to me. All treasure lost."

There was a long silence as though Nugent did not trust impulse. When he spoke he showed a slow indignation. "So you wanted excitement? Loved attacking me! That's hell, let me tell you."

She turned her face and buried it in the cushions. Her muffled voice said: "How was I to change you without attacking you? One has to destroy before one can construct."

With stark bluntness he said: "Have you wrought no change in me through my love for you? But you have not destroyed my love for Violet."

Gillian looked at him as though wondering to whom he really belonged. "If she had lived——"

"Ah, there's the mystery," said the man.

"I'm so impatient," Gillian admitted in sudden humility. "I don't recognise mystery and bow my head. I want explanations, reassurance, a definite promise that you'll always love me most even after death."

"Then you'd have proved a confoundedly exacting mistress, Gill," was his comment. But he added in a

tone of enjoyment : " An adorable lady, though. You 've got it in you."

" O Tony," she breathed.

The big man lit his pipe and growled : "' O Tony,' indeed. You know all about that."

In a very low voice Gillian said : " I want to tell you something."

" More shocks ? " He appeared highly philosophical.

" No. But a shy thing to say." She closed her eyes to say it. Visualising other scenes, she described what she saw with her mind's eye. " Women talked to me in Lahore one day. Nicely, nothing horrid. Just touching on—attraction. One said that her husband thrilled her sometimes on the frontier when she met him at the threshold as he returned from outposts and unloaded his revolver before he kissed her. The armed man : that moved her, she said. And another wife—you know and like her, Tony—said a thrill came to her once or twice when her husband drove four-in-hand ; the great horses pulling, and his big shoulders and hands taking all the strain so easily : his physical mastery exhilarated her. To me it comes when I see you lording it."

" Lording it ! " He repudiated that, and there was a world of personal modesty and simplicity in his manner.

" Yes. Not consciously. But you do lord it. It is the power you possess and your use of it that fascinates me. Always and always I 've wanted you to be a leader of my chosen side. Yet out here every manifestation of your dominance as a ruler has dazzled me in the way— O, you know the way a woman's beauty dazzles a man and makes him oblivious of everything else."

" Yes," said the Governor, very reserved, with his eyes on the ground.

“Granny must have been quite different from me when she was young,” Gillian continued in confidential tones. “I can’t picture Granny in a tent with a guard outside: she lived in country seats with no soldier or policeman for miles and miles. Aunt Patricia told me that one evening after she was married—and not happy—Granny gave her advice and let a cat out of the bag. One of the men of the family got into a dreadful muddle with a married woman, and Grandfather made excuses for him on the ground that he was passionately in love with her. So Granny asked him, ‘Don’t women ever feel like that, James?’ and Grandfather said, ‘Nice women don’t.’ And that’s what Granny brought her daughters up to believe.”

Nugent made no comment, he only asked her significantly: “Are you going back to your nice grandmother in April, Gillian?”

This question confirmed Gillian’s conviction that the final crisis in their relationship was upon them. A quiver of startled pain passed over her, and she cried out: “You don’t suffer when we are separated! You’d rather be cut off from me than be forced to play the tyrant! If I had not sacrificed my pride we should still be living apart here. This morning you can calmly contemplate a plan which will divide us by six thousand miles!”

To which he said, almost inaudibly: “That’s all you know about it.”

She watched him closely in a nervous way. His movements were those of a man who at ease, in private, takes awkward facts into deep consideration. Presently he said: “You talk of my power. We are both powers in the Punjab. If you don’t add to my strength you diminish it.”

"How you resent anything that weakens you or your stronghold!" she exclaimed. "I love certain ideas, and I love you too, Tony. In trying to further a policy I've believed in I ran counter to the policy you maintain; but when you held me in your arms last night I did not regard myself as your enemy!"

"Just like a secret-service woman," was his disconcerting comment. "Between the devil and the deep sea and trusting to luck. Why couldn't you stick to being a *wife*?"

With a date in April before her mind she weighed the claims of wifehood against the claims of party, when he went on to say: "You must feel, yourself, that your attitude here has been incompatible with our marriage. You disclosed that feeling when you said just now a thing I hated—that we could have had all the joy of these last days and nights had you been my mistress."

"There! I did shock you," Gillian groaned, and was puzzled by seeing that once more some thought crossed Nugent's mind which amused him in a queer masculine way she could not fathom. It lifted his eyebrows and shoulders in recognition of the immortal comedy of sex.

"You!" he said, implying by his tone that he possessed a personal knowledge of her which disproved any feminine scandal she might chatter about herself. "You are a dreamer who plays the mischief with law and order. That is the maddening thing about you, for you can't plead childish inexperience: you have received a political education and known responsibility, and your mind is mature. I can't rank you as a mere *enfant terrible*."

With extraordinary irrelevance Gillian found herself wondering whether a lark's song was about the sky,

the earth, the nest, himself, or his mate? To which theme did the hen yield up her will? Was she filled with rapture by the vibration of liquid note, beating wing, and the presence in the air of that bold, tiny bird, or did she lie still and hear his interest in herself proclaimed until she surrendered to her heart's need to be the fulfilment of his heart's desire? Gillian wondered: but did it matter? For there was no shadow of doubt that she hung upon every word Anthony said about herself. She was tense, expectant, and alarmed.

"Look here, Gillian," he said. "Certain facts have come to your knowledge and must have influenced you, but in my eyes you are still ignorant of India, ignorant of the Punjab. So I am not going to decide our future by a political argument. Character and temperament survive all the vicissitudes of political affairs."

Nugent drew from his pocket a big envelope with the P. & O.'s cypher on it. He threw this on to the table and said with energy: "Two lines of action are open to me. One is appropriate to a lover: I might try to kiss you into indifference to public events. The other is appropriate to a governor whose mind is made up: that means booking your passage home."

In a low, tenacious tone she asked him: "What choice have I got?"

"The final choice," he replied. He passed his hand wearily over his face. "There's a lot I want to say to you. It is very personal. Too personal for everyday use." Having got that far he paused, threw one leg over the other, and turned to her. "Some women think that what is less than praise is lacking in gallantry, in affection. Don't make that mistake this morning."

"Tony, I wonder what awful thing you intend to

accuse me of in your next sentence!" she said, apprehensively.

"Awful thing?" Again she had aroused a deep flicker of laughter in him. "A flaw." He seemed discontented with the word, and grumbled into his pipe as he patted down the tobacco with his finger. "Flaw is not the *mot juste*. It is something elusive—part of the very essence of you. You are a lover by temperament, Gillian. And the whole texture of you is fine: fine!"

On the sofa she hid among the cushions very like a little wild creature who is tracked to her den, to her warm, dark, secret lair. A sound might give her away.

"You've got a history," he said. If he regretted it he did not ignore it. With a twist to his lips he suggested: "A woman with a political past, eh? Do I read you aright? That's the first step to coming to an understanding."

She had furnished him with many clues, she thought: too many for concealment. And she did not desire intellectual comprehension, but ardent love. When a silence was prolonged she became nervous lest Nugent should suddenly grow sick of talking, of discussion, and cry, 'What's the use?' Then he would take action.

He said very gently: "All emotion appeals to you, Gillian, and receives a ready response. Enthusiasm in others carries you away. I can picture what life meant to you at twenty when every regiment was a thing of sublime wrath, each hospital a tragedy, village after village a house of mourning. Family life to you, who had neither lover, husband, nor son, was commonplace compared to that drama. All your sympathies expanded, intensified, and became mental stimulants which intoxi-

cated you. After the armistice your agitation did not subside. If we had met then——”

“If you had caught me young!” she amended resentfully.

“There would have been a different tale to tell. Throughout the world two dynamic energies became conspicuous in 1919: a desire for pleasure and a desire for power, both sensual. Your indignations and passions allied themselves promptly to labour’s craving for power, because wealthy people and gay people did not need a champion like you. Hardships had inspired a passion of pity in you, and hardships still existed. For four years men had been exciting your mind by their appalling adventures, and when the war ended mass movements continued to be sensational. You wanted to be actively in touch with clearly defined emotions, loudly proclaimed reforms, and exalted aims. Middle-aged conservatives seemed wedded to tradition: a stolid lot. Merrymakers displayed no moral purpose. No wonder you became a socialist, Gillian.”

Gillian stared at him, fascinated: as though she inside her cave, and he outside it, discovered each other with the observant eyes of the hidden and the finder, while all around them the world’s jungle concealed dangerous paths.

“For generations the idea prevailed that you women were not to be talked about. Men hated tongues to wag about their own women and said it cheapened them. Actresses and suffragettes invited publicity and paid dearly for it. You wanted to be influential, and when women gained political power you felt instinctively that you could sway and emotionalise more people as a socialist than as a conservative or a liberal. The liberal is a brain-wave, not a heart-beat. To be a socialist

seemed a more active service. By birth and education you had points of contact with conservatives, and your opposition to their methods and theories enabled you to indulge in a lover's quarrel with them. You've admitted you enjoy that."

Gillian stiffened, and he said: "You are no tragedy queen, thank God: not a woman who in politics must have calamity or lose her job as leading lady. Half fanaticism, half vanity."

There was a challenging pause in which he seemed to dare her to deny that he had tracked her down and found her out. Then, unexpectedly, his voice became a warm sound: "And, as a socialist M.P., you obtained the pleasure of having around you in real association some of the class the immortal rank and file were drawn from! There's a lot of attraction, too, in the work of organising and assembling big battalions for a fine cause. The masses make a tremendous appeal to the heart's imagination. Don't I know it! To persuade them, seek their welfare, make life less hard for them, lead them, fight their battles, is the highest pressure life blood knows. We are on common ground there, Gillian. You have a great heart, and it was taken by storm."

All agog, she asked tentatively: "Why *don't* you join the labour party, Tony?"

"Never mind me," he answered impatiently, as though her interruption might break a fragile thread he held with the utmost care. "It would take tedious hours to explain why I think socialists are mistaken as to the remedy for admitted ills. I believe that their schemes would be disastrous to the security and prosperity of the whole nation if put into practice. I'm not cavilling at difficulties, for mankind delights to employ skill to overcome them: I deny the wisdom of the

socialists' policy." He sat in doubt for a moment, then turned to her with a hint of personal attack in his manner. "Unless you seek wisdom, Gillian, you will deteriorate into a mere agitator. It is wisdom that gives dignity to emotion."

Gillian muttered rebelliously that no one had a monopoly of wisdom.

"Least of all the intelligentsia, wise in their own conceit, or the brainy little Dago who sticks his tongue out and thinks he has displayed the master mind," said Nugent. "But the spirit of wisdom is not absent from the accumulated experience of a race like ours. I would conserve what it has constructed, and not dissipate its organised energies. The wit of mankind has devised knowledge for our learning and bequeathed us history. It is wiser to develop than to destroy, but not nearly so exciting, so passionate. Nor does it afford such scope to amateurs." He got up and moved about the tent restlessly, animated by the need to express a criticism he disliked formulating. "You stand in peril, Gillian, of losing sight of the distinction between love and passion. They have need of a close association, an incarnation; but one is immortal, the other transitory."

She flushed from chin to forehead, and said bitterly: "Grandfather would never have said that of Granny."

Nugent stopped in his stride and stood looking at her. "You are affronted? But I warn you of a real danger. I must. Passion is the impulse of creation and destruction alike. Don't we know it—you and I? The fury I felt when you allied yourself with extreme sedition destroyed all peace of mind, confidence, delight. I called you enemy-alien: you, my wife! Detachment became inevitable. But then—you marvellous lover—you gave to us both the energy that revived love."

Gillian, tense as a wire, thought, ' Shall I quibble now about words,—love and passion? Just argument and definition? No! For we are true lovers, and what we share is passionate love, supreme, the whole of us. I know, I know. He is seeking wisdom for us both to-day. And he is taking the lead. That's Tony. I wanted him to lead others,—all my party. But I can't wait for them. He is right.'

Nugent said: " We start afresh, re-united, if you choose peace to-day."

" What must I renounce? " Gillian whispered.

" All sedition, privy conspiracy, and rebellion," the Governor answered.

" Good Lord, deliver us," responded she. " I never loved those things."

Gillian did not begrudge Anthony his triumph. On the contrary, every fibre of her tingled with a delighted sense that he stood in his tent as Cœur-de-Lion might have done, Governor of all the Sher-ke-dil¹ of the Punjab, and accepted her submission. " Make room for me on that sofa," cried he promptly. Kissing her hand he said: " Love's the creator and preserver of all mankind." Then he drew her into his arms. There was a possessive something in the way he grasped her, and Gillian, captivated, remained in suspense, for she knew his last word was not spoken. She sighed: " We are so different, you and I."

" Damn those other fellows," Nugent ejaculated, with great bitterness. " They nearly took you from me."

" Socialists? " she questioned, anxiously.

" No. Agitators, the men who employ hatred. There are two ways of raising the people up: one is by a higher standard of character and achievement, and the other is by inciting the mob to rise and lift property

¹ Lion-hearted.

sky-high with dynamite. You weren't good at spotting an agitator when he called himself an idealist. Why shouldn't you love decent socialists, Gillian? And you'll go on loving them still by any other name: as conservatives if they vote that way in the next general election; as Englishmen always. They aren't merely politicians. They are seldom a match for politicians. It is so long since the democratic British were subject to an autocrat that they don't anticipate tyranny for themselves or any one else: they believe in liberty and the strength of will of organised communities. But the oriental is accustomed to autocracy. He obeys an order given by a ruler, whereas a measure debated in a legislative assembly brings into play all his passion for intrigue. What used to make an Indian a courtier, now makes him a politician, and he has learnt that it is necessary to speak to England through the voice of political parties or the shout of violent mobs. To that end many politicians organise, and *not* with the aim of enfranchising the masses. Being very clever they have gauged the influence on British public opinion of the diversity of Indian creeds, races, and castes, and the unifying effect of British power here: so they proclaim and advertise Mahomedan-Hindu co-operation, an Indian nationality, the diminished power of caste. Genuine specimen articles are exhibited widely. The whole truth is never disclosed to British eyes. England will only see the danger of autocracy to India when it is a *fait accompli* again after our abdication—if we abdicate! Before studying the facts, Gillian, you believed all you heard and lent your support to agitators. That is not playing the game." He paused a moment; then added: "You prefer active to passive virtues in mankind. Passion bestows energy, and he who makes the Indian ryot angry

makes him potent. Do you find the peaceable too inert? Well, the murderer is a man of action; a god-father as a rule is not."

In the intimacy of his embrace, in the detachment of his speech, she felt the expression of his character: warm-hearted, keen-eyed, independent. He had a gift too of delighting her imagination: he said, "Listen to me for two minutes longer, and I'll din the book of wisdom into your ears. Perhaps Solomon spoke his thoughts to Sheba in such surroundings as these, for in the east women are men's confidantes, not their counsellors. Put your wicked little head close to my lips and you'll see a certain type you've idealised in a practical light. 'Make no friendship with an angry man, and with a furious man thou shalt not go, lest thou learn his ways and get a snare to thy soul.' A fanatic misleads souls, Gill. Solomon says that when men preach, 'Cast in thy lot among us, let us all have one purse,' you should refrain because 'they make haste to shed blood.' For they and all that are 'greedy of gain' take away the 'life of the owners thereof.' And he goes further, he declares, 'he loveth transgression that loveth strife' . . . 'where no wood is, the fire goeth out—as wood to fire, so is the contentious man to kindle strife.' It is so easy to inflame the masses, for the ignorant are inevitably emotional: and where you and I have no special knowledge, Gillian, we too are swayed by sentiment. Solomon ruled in Asia, remember, and this is his warning: 'meddle not with them that are given to change, for their calamity shall rise suddenly, and who knoweth the ruin of them both?'"

Searching for permanence, Gillian asked after a long pause: "If I refrain in the Punjab from unwise action, if I strengthen the Raj against the rebel, you won't mind

if I don't agree yet with all your personal convictions about the political situation in England ? ”

Nugent left her side and went and looked out of the door of the tent. The dust of the Punjab touched his feet and a fierce light beat upon him.

‘The people here,’ he said without dramatic fervour, and simply as a shepherd might have spoken of his flock. ‘We must consider what’s best for the people here. I’m the man on the spot, you see. The peasantry is regal all the world over, it prevails even where it does not govern. And they give themselves great titles, these Punjabis. The orderly I have my eye on over there is called Fateh Khan, which means lord of victory. I was talking to him early this morning, and he told me his name. What do you suppose such lords of victory desire ? They have a Punjabi doggerel which tells me. It says that fresh butter and ripe wheat, a noble wife, and a swift horse make heaven on earth. Their food and their fields, their journeys and their homes, are their life. I’ve got to see that each man ploughs in peace ; I must take knowledge and health to his doors ; I have to guard his roads. I put it to you like this : will you have done in this province with ‘blowing hot and cold, sham policy : sure ague of the mind and nothing more’ ? Will you help me—or abet the men who want to kick us out of India ? ’”

She answered, conscious of how much she had changed : “You ! I’m on your side.”

“It means,” the Governor said, still looking out of the tent with the sun in his eyes, “accepting the law of timely development, of personality, and of a union that is strength rather than of a similarity which achieves nothing but a dead level in the long run.”