

QUEER INDIA

Also by the Author

PANCHAYETS UNDER THE PESHWAS
THE STORY OF ICHALKARANJI

QUEER INDIA

by

H. GEORGE FRANKS



CASSELL
and Company, Ltd.
London, Toronto, Melbourne
and Sydney

First Published 1932

Printed in Great Britain by Butler & Tanner Ltd., Frome and London
F20.10.32

DEDICATED
TO THE
GENTLEMEN OF THE PRESS
IN
INDIA

CONTENTS

CHAP.	PAGE
BY WAY OF EXPLANATION	ix
1. DOGGED BY SUPERSTITION	1
Witchcraft at Work ; Black Magic ; Human Sacrifices for the Gods ; Sorcerers in Profusion ; Superstition and Riots ; Everyday Superstitions ; Superstition and Politics.	
2. TRADING ON CREDULITY	48
Gold from Heaven ; Doubling Money ; Magic Made Easy ; Treasure Hunting ; Exploiting Gandhi's Name ; Fortune- Tellers.	
3. SECRETS OF THE MARRIAGE MARKET	82
The Auction in Action ; Faked Marriages ; Traffic in Women ; The Sarda Act Fails ; Efforts at Reform.	
4. LIFE MEANS LESS THAN DEATH	130
The Influence of the Goddess Kali ; Queer Death Motives ; Modern Suttee ; Suicides Galore ; Torture of Children ; Factories that Produce Cripples ; Cruelty in Religion's Name.	
5. MURDER AS AN ART	165
Killing Made Easy ; Perjury Rampant ; Family Murders ; The Eternal Triangle ; Lust for Gold ; Wholesale Murder ; Queer Motives and Methods.	
6. CASTE AS A CURSE	198
Men Treated Worse than Animals ; Caste Stronger than Congress ; Fighting to Worship God ; Murdered by Caste ; How Caste Persecutes ; Caste Rules the Village ; Pro- hibiting Education ; Some Caste Cameos.	
7. RELIGION AS A BUSINESS	221
The Cost of Sanctity ; Wealth of Temples ; Mismanaged Funds ; Fighting for Offerings ; Where the Money Goes ; Hard Times for Temples ; The Pilgrim Problem.	

CONTENTS

CHAP.	PAGE
8. THE UNDERWORLD AND ITS INHABITANTS	243
Gangsters by Thousands ; Brigandage a Safe Crime ; Facts about Smuggling ; Poisoning as a Profession ; Kidnapping Gangs ; Counterfeiters by Birth ; Crime Peculiar ; How the Police Work.	
9. AND THE REST?	268
INDEX	269

BY WAY OF EXPLANATION

THIS book presents what might be called a non-political contemporaneous picture of the India of 1932.

It is not an academic or technical study of the people and their customs ; it is a faithful account of everyday India as depicted in her own daily newspapers during the past twelve months.

A careful daily study of about two dozen newspapers during a busy journalistic life suggested to the writer that the India of 1932 was, perhaps, a different country from that which existed in most people's minds. Judged by modern standards, in fact, it is a Queer India—an India in which mediæval superstition is as much mingled with primitive savagery as it is with up-to-date ideas.

So the present book was evolved from many hundreds of newspaper reports collected during that period. Except for a background drawn from the writer's eleven-year continuous sojourn in India, every story told in these pages has the authenticity of recent newspaper publication behind it ; and lest it should be imagined that any special bias has been manifested, let it be stated here that the majority of these newspapers are Indian-staffed, Indian-edited, and Indian-owned.

Taken singly, the scores of real-life stories told in this book might have aroused a passing flicker of interest at the time they were hurriedly read in the newspapers ; but when col-

lected, sorted, and classified they reveal conditions which, at least as far as western countries are concerned, are certainly not matters of common knowledge. And if at times the following pages appear too prolific or too repetitive in examples of "Queer India," the explanation is to be found in the fact that the author thought it advisable to be generous rather than skimpy in evidence to prove the somewhat startling phrases adopted as chapter-titles.

A much more remarkable series of chapters could have been produced, however, if the writer had succumbed to the temptation to use information in his possession obtained from research, scientific publications, and semi-confidential documents from various sources. But, again let it be repeated, all essential details have been obtained only from India's own newspapers.

It will be noted that in many cases the condemnation of the conditions herein outlined has come from the lips and pens of Indians, a fact which provides the main justification for writing this survey. Now that many Indians have awakened to the appalling character of the problems that the India of the future will have to face, there are grounds for hope that solutions will be found, for the majority are, of course, problems which a "foreign" Government could never attempt to solve.

But even for Indians to tackle these great social and religious puzzles, it is necessary,—

Firstly, that their seriousness and extent should be clearly and graphically portrayed ;

Secondly, that they should be candidly recognized and admitted ; and,

Thirdly, that all available assistance in solving them should be sought for and accepted.

BY WAY OF EXPLANATION

Despite the strange picture herein painted of Queer India, the writer is convinced that the difficulties which lie ahead are not insuperable. Experiments will have to be made; risks will have to be taken; but with that support and sympathy which the British Government and the resident European community are waiting to give, but in which they could never take the initiative, there is every hope that India's small but growing army of reformers will be able within a measurable period to minimize, even if not to abolish, many of the evils whose continued existence appears almost incredible in the year 1932.

To do that, however, India must be made to see herself as others see her.

Hence, "Queer India."

INDIA,

June, 1932.

as witches, or the many other victims of what is excused under the name of black magic. And if education may be defined as the gradual expansion of the mind, then India above all places needs a widening of the mental horizon which will make impossible the remarkable incidents which will be related in this chapter and which, be it remembered, are more or less ordinary happenings recorded as part of the day's news. By delving more deeply into what actually transpires under the cloak of superstition, much more gruesome could be this recital.

It must be recognized, however, that the majority of participants in the crimes outlined here are just as much to be sympathized with as the victims. The superstitions of India spring from the awe, the inevitable awe, which the illiterate must feel with regard to powers which they can neither see nor hear nor feel; and the first instinct of human nature in such cases is always to propitiate evil lest, in unappeased anger, it should inflict greater harm. And it is with that background that India's great problem of superstition must be looked at, for it presents a picture which reveals every phase of life in the country, which touches every class and community, and which reacts on every endeavour which the people undertake in the ordinary course of their existence.

Over three hundred million people dogged by superstition. Verily, a queer India to talk about!

In India the British Government has taken a bold stand right from the outset in this respect. In the eyes of British justice a crime is a crime, whether committed under the inspiration of religious zeal or at the instigation of superstitious dread. Spiritual merit is no more a delusion than the urging of black magic. As one judge put it: "The

Hindu priest who kills a child to propitiate, as he believes, the wrath of Mother Kali, or the Muslim fanatic who turns *gazi* and stabs people in the belief that he thereby earns religious merit, are equally guilty of murder." And so is the priest who cuts off his son's head to save the village from the visitation of the Cholera goddess, and the mother who drowns her child in a well in the surety of saving her own voice. In the Indian Police Courts few ever question the religious or superstitious motive which led to the crime ; and even insanity is seldom brought forth as a defence. Whether or not that fact should serve to palliate the crime is a point of legal jurisprudence which cannot be dealt with here. But surely unless the law took up such an uncompromising attitude, it would not only encourage evasion, but would indirectly encourage "cruel and degrading superstitions which no true religion countenances and which serve no spiritual or practical purpose." Nevertheless, in many parts of India the old-time belief exists that the more unnatural the superstitious act, the greater the merit it produces.

And, of course, even a rigid law cannot hope to eradicate a national characteristic, especially when it is generally not only difficult to obtain evidence of guilt, but also to apportion the guilt when evidence has been procured.

India lives on signs and portents. For if the deities will not suggest auspicious hours, lucky days, and portentous moments, they are fulfilling only half of their allotted functions. Just as a traveller awaits a sign that it is safe to start on his trip, just so does the merchant expect an indication from his god that the time is ripe for him to engage in a new enterprise. Just as the priests of the great Jagannath temple await a secret sign on the holy tree from the goddess telling them that all is well for the installation of the new

set of idols, just so do the dacoits of Sind consult "the wheat oracle" before they set out on one of their raids, the sign in their case being dependent upon whether a snatched handful of corn will parcel out into even piles of four grains, a residue of one or three being regarded as a command to set out.

In such circumstances, it is only natural that any out-of-the-way happening will be regarded as a definite message from the gods, whilst minds already keyed up in expectation will read signs in the most ordinary events. And if to these two characteristics is added the ever fertile imagination of an illiterate and credulous people, it is clear that it is easier to receive a sign than to miss it, so that more often than not the "sign" received either just suits the purpose of the one receiving it, or else can be interpreted to mean what the personal interests of the priests or head of the house dictate.

Thus, at times, these signs take on the most extraordinary form. It is not so very long ago that, unaware of the discoveries of Sir Jagadish Bose that plants have feelings, the credulous inhabitants of a Bengal village honestly believed that at certain times a palm made obeisance when *puja*, or worship, was made to it. Hence that palm soon became a god, necessitating a priest in attendance to accept the offerings of cash and food which the pious villagers felt compelled to make out of gratitude to the deity for blessing their village with such a mark of heaven's esteem. It is in a remote Bengal village, too, that the residents will tell you with awe of the cow which turned round and rebuked a milkman for over-estimating her capacity, and, you will be assured in all seriousness, the cow spoke with the cultured voice of a Brahmin priest. Such supernatural visitations do not greatly differ, perhaps, from the activities of Balaam's famous ass

who vocally objected to being beaten ; but in queer India the Cow-Who-Spoke was quickly turned into a deity, to be worshipped with all reverence ;—and the milkman gladly gave up the animal that was his only worldly possession as a proof that he had recognized the sign sent by the gods that his village needed a living deity.

Then there is the mysterious modern version of Macbeth's three witches,—only this time they appeared as resplendent maidens to a poor Jhansi *tonga-walla*, or cabman, and delivered unto him signs which revealed that he was a chosen of the gods. At least, that is his story, a story believed not only by his family but also by a very large number of admirers who immediately became his disciples and provided him with the necessaries of life, including pocket-money. Here is his story as he told it :—

“ I was seated in my hut when there suddenly appeared at the door three maidens of heavenly beauty, which their purdah robes strove in vain to conceal, and dressed in raiment of spun gold and costly jewellery. In the sweetest of tones they urged me with one voice to drive them to a certain destination. With the request reinforced by three silver coins, I set out with the maidens safely hidden behind the purdah-curtain of my conveyance, but as it was late at night, there came a time when a suspicious police sepoy stopped me and demanded that I reveal what was behind the curtain. After some discussion in which I told the policeman all about my beautiful passengers, I found that there was nothing else to do but comply, but when we pulled back the curtain, lo, the seat was empty. With a scoffing laugh, the policeman said that he knew I was out after no good at such an hour ; and so to prove to him that I was right, I said I would show him the silver coins my passengers had given me. Then came the

next surprise, for the coins had been changed into slips of paper with mysterious writings on them which neither of us could read. So we went to the home of a learned Brahmin, who told us that the mystic signs were Sanskrit, and that the papers were undoubtedly of supernatural origin, as two of them prophesied raging epidemics and the third a bumper harvest. The policeman was so impressed that he did not arrest me, but actually came home with me and told all my relatives and friends that I had been chosen as the earthly agent of special messages. So now I have given up driving a carriage, and, thanks to the liberality of my friends, am waiting patiently until the three maidens condescend to visit me again. And I am sure they will."

Such happy results are recorded, however, only when the gods are pleased. If they are displeased,—then woe betide those against whom their wrath is turned. And "proof" is found in the fact that Mr. M. C. M. K. Ambalagar seriously declared in the Pudukottah Legislative Council that the Congress movement had failed, not because Government had met it with a firm hand, but because it had been of a character which had "displeased the gods as well as being an offence against the State."

Witchcraft at Work

But let us come to the more serious side of superstition's hold on the people, as exemplified in the prevalence of witchcraft, black magic, and the sacrifice of human beings at the behest of the gods. It may be thought that such crimes as these either are not generally committed in this twentieth century, or, at the most, are absolutely confined to the aboriginal tribes living in inaccessible places outside the control and influence of the British administration. Unfortunately

they are not isolated cases but are occurrences of a fairly common type in rural villages, as well as occasionally appearing in the large towns, producing the most horrible tales of cruelty and murder. In the province of Bihar and Orissa alone there were sixteen murders due to witchcraft in 1931, as reported in the latest police review.

"Where's Gomti? Where's Gomti?" cried a quartet of raving men as they searched the village huts of Dhanar, in the Nasik District. "She's a witch; she has cast the evil spell over the family of righteous Rambhau; she has been responsible for the illness of Ananda; she must pay the penalty!"

Utterly ignorant of the fact that four howling men were determined to drag her to her doom, old Gomti was in her house preparing the evening meal for her husband, Hanmantya. Suddenly the men burst in, seized her by the hair, and dragged her off to the village square, where all the inhabitants were seated around the *bhagat*, or holy witch-finder, who served that area. The *bhagat* had carefully investigated the complaint that Ananda the son of Rambhau had fallen as one of the victims of a virulent outbreak of malaria, and as he had been called in to see whether he could cure the patient, had made elaborate preparations to diagnose the complaint. In the presence of the whole village he worshipped the *ghat*, or pitcher of water, in the surface of which he believed he could see a vision of the person responsible for the visitation. With his audience spell-bound, and every woman trembling as to whether she would be accused of being a witch, the *bhagat* continued his mutterings for about an hour, and then, in a high-pitched voice, had suddenly shouted "Gomti is the witch; let her be brought here without delay."

So the shivering Gomti had been brought before this primi-

tive inquisition. As she appeared in the hands of her captors, who were literally dragging her by her hair over flinty ground, the rest of the women slunk away to their own huts, fearful for the fate of Gomti, but thankful that it was she and not they.

"You are a *bhutali*" [witch], shouted the *bbagat* as he pointed a skinny finger at the cowering woman.

"No, no, no!" cried Gomti; "I know nothing about Ananda's sickness. I am but the faithful wife of Hanmantya. Let him tell you how I have served him and how I know nothing about witchcraft and the Evil One."

But Hanmantya, on whom all eyes were turned, remained silent,—either through fear or suspicion, and would not defend his old wife.

Again the *bbagat* accused her; and again Gomti strongly denied that she had cast any spell.

"To the torture, then!" cried the *bbagat*; and so Gomti was taken in procession to the temple, where she was subjected to inhuman cruelty of a kind which will not bear repetition here, but which, with its savage accompaniment of bestiality and lust, certainly put the mediæval inquisition into the shade.

But still she refused to admit that she was a witch, knowing full well that by such an admission she would be asking for a death caused by tortures even more painful than those she had been tested with. As a last resort the *bbagat* ordered one of the villagers to squeeze a vitriolic juice into her eyes, as a result of which she was blinded within a minute. But even then she mingled her cries of agony with the insistent appeal that she was not a witch.

Having failed to extract any confession from her, they dragged her to the house of Rambhau, where she was kept

in confinement for two days. On the third day she was released, and her son Tamaji complained about the incident to the police *patil* of her village. But he refused to take action, saying that as the whole village was determined to persecute Gomti, he could do nothing. But Gomti and Tamaji one day slipped out to see a doctor at an adjacent dispensary, where Gomti was certified as being totally blind. They then managed to send a petition to the Police Sub-Inspector of the nearest town, who, after sending poor Gomti to hospital, commenced investigations.

In the end six men were sent up for trial before the magistrate, and the three ringleaders got off with the amazingly light sentence of fourteen months' jail each, with three others getting eight months. Foolishly they appealed to the Sessions Judge, thus drawing his attention to the absurd ending of such a serious outrage. He ordered a re-trial, and the three ringleaders were finally sentenced to seven years' hard labour, with an additional fine of Rs 1,000 on one of them. In sentencing them, the judge said: "The summoning of the *bhagat* was merely the first Act in the tragedy; the *ghat puja* was the second Act, where the interest of the villagers was worked up; and the procession was the climax. Thereafter we have the detention of Gomti in the house of Rambhau, like the fourth Act of a Greek tragedy, when the anger of the gods has been assuaged. In this case the poor old woman has been condemned to eternal darkness merely because the villagers thought she was a witch. She was subjected to the most terrible pain, being made a victim of the superstition of the whole village."

But all witches do not get away with their lives as did Gomti. Another story from the same province is even more

gruesome, this time the incident occurring only 18 miles from the district head-quarters of Nasik, which is a popular health resort, and one of the leading towns of the Bombay Presidency.

Some of the villagers contracted an illness which they believed to be cholera, and suspected the machinations of a *koli* family. Every member pleaded complete innocence; but did not satisfy the infuriated neighbours. One day they made a general assault on the house of the suspected family, but owing to a slip in the attackers' arrangements, the whole family managed to escape except an old woman who was too feeble to run and who would have been a hindrance to the younger ones. Seizing upon her lone presence as a sign from the gods that she was the person responsible for the visitation, they raised the cry of "Witch," and decided that she should pay the penalty on a blazing pyre. Bound hand and foot, and frantically pleading for her life, the old woman was thrown on to a huge bonfire which had been lit in honour of the gods. There she was burned alive, her tortured denials finally being silenced by death.

An equally painful fate came to a poor widow of Ghatsila on the other side of India. Two of her children had died unexpectedly, and immediately the whole village declared that she had caused their death by magical practices. Whilst they were discussing the best way to drive the evil spirit out of the supposed witch, the wrath of her deceased husband's brother was especially roused, fanned as it was by the fear that her witchcraft would next be turned against his family. So in order to exorcise the evil spirit, or, as he put it, to force her to give up the evil practice of witchcraft, he battered her to death with a bludgeon. Then, apparently satisfied that he had done his duty, he accompanied the

corpse to the nearest rural police station, where he told the full story.

Going back again to the western side of India, we find a witch being axed to death in a village not so very far from Mr. Gandhi's home. Khusal Kandia had lost six children and sixteen head of cattle within two years, and on the death of his sixth and last child he called a meeting of his castemen to observe the customary death-ceremony. He declared that he was certain that all his calamities were caused by witchcraft, and then whispered that he suspected an old woman of 65 named Mochdi of casting the fatal spells. And finally added, "I am just waiting for a sign." Having thus prepared their minds for anything that might happen, Khusal suddenly left the gathering an hour or so later while the whole caste were having tea and, proceeding to the hut where Mochdi was living, burst in upon her, and killed her on the spot by hitting her on the head with an axe. He then returned to the caste gathering and attempted to "wipe out the whole family" by killing Mochdi's son, but, believing that one witch for the day was sufficient, the caste elders stopped him. And that evening Khusal walked to the Mandvi police station and surrendered, saying that as he had lost the whole of his family and family possessions, it did not matter what happened to him now that he had rid the village of a dangerous witch who might easily have cast evil spells on others.

Declaring that "the Sonthalis are extremely superstitious, so that witches and witchcraft have a large hold on their lives," a Patna barrister made a strong plea for the life of Karan Tudu of Gurdwara, who was charged with murder in connexion with the death of one of his fellow-villagers. The case was a simple one. Karan walked into the hut of a woman

named Koerma with an axe in one hand and a child in the other. Placing the child on the ground, he turned to the woman, declared in a loud voice that she was a witch who had brought untold harm on the whole village, informed her that he was not going to let her cast a spell on the child sitting between them, and then severed her head with one blow of the axe, letting the blood fall on the child as proof of the breaking of any spell which might have been cast on the babe by the woman. In vain did the defence plead that these illiterate rural people "feel as their forefathers did fifty years ago and hence do not think there is anything wrong in trying to exorcise an evil spirit or to get rid of a woman they think is a witch." The man was sentenced to death, for, said the judge, "his obvious and only motive was to rid the village of a woman he believed to be a witch."

Convinced that her child had died through the witchcraft of her neighbour four months previously, a woman of the village of Kotwali, near Patna, exacted vengeance by stealthily removing her neighbour's three-month-old child from the house and then, after throttling it, laying the corpse on the doorstep of the Deputy Postmaster-General. There had been a long-standing feud between these two women which was enflamed by one of the women being called a witch.

A particularly brutal instance of how witchcraft figured prominently in a crime was that in which an unsuspecting Brahmin couple were duped, and murdered, by four men, one of whom pretended to be possessed of an evil spirit. In this particular murder, it was almost the case of the biter being bitten, because the Brahmin's own belief in witchcraft and his supposed power to drive out evil spirits was responsible for his death.

The four villains of the tragedy were Dodhu, a barber; Budhan, an ex-policeman; Mahadu; and Motiram, another

ex-policeman; whilst the victims were Vishwanath Chiman Deo and his wife,—a Brahmin couple who lived near Nasik. One evening at dusk the four villains arrived at Chiman's house, and Motiram, who subsequently turned approver and received the King's pardon, engaged the Brahmin in general conversation while Dodhu cleverly staged the part of one who is possessed of an evil spirit. He rolled and danced in an uncanny manner in an endeavour to impress the Brahmin. The "devil's" companion, Motiram, asked the Brahmin, who was reputed to be well-versed in the mystic arts, to exorcise the devil. The Brahmin, evidently taking it all in good faith, and wishing perhaps to turn his knowledge to material gain, agreed to oust the devil on payment of Rs 500. He turned round to look at the calendar when the one possessed of the "devil" smashed the only light in the room and pounced on the unsuspecting Brahmin, seized him by the throat, and slowly strangled him. The wife of the Brahmin, hearing the commotion, went to assist her husband. She was similarly dealt with, and the victims died on the spot. Becoming alarmed at the turn of events, the assailants bolted, but returned at dawn to collect their booty. They ransacked the safe and got away with gold and silver ornaments to the value of over £200.

Dodhu was hanged, and the other two were given life sentences. A specially interesting feature of this murder is the fact that Dodhu insisted that the crime should not be committed on any other day than Tuesday or Saturday, and also that, three being an unlucky figure, the number of conspirators must be two or four.

Here is a slightly lighter side of the effect of superstition, although even in this case there is a mysterious touch of the dramatic which savours of foul play.

A resident of Patna City entered into negotiations for his daughter's marriage with the son of one of his neighbours. On second thoughts, however, he broke off the bargain and opened up negotiations with another neighbour. These proved successful, and the wedding was arranged. But the match-maker had reckoned without neighbour No. 1. Flames of revenge and jealousy had been kindled as the result of such a flagrant breach of promise, and very soon the father began to receive anonymous letters containing threats that spells of witchcraft would be cast upon him and his family, bringing calamity and ruin upon them, if the daughter was not allowed to return to her "first love." With a sickly smile the recipient tried to ignore the threats, although deep down in his heart he probably half believed that the promised disaster was on its way. Then the threateners decided to bring matters to a head by sending a "witchcraft" packet with the motive, presumably, that when the packet was opened in the harassed father's house, he and all his family members would die, either through sheer fright or by the magic action of the evil packet. But the father-in-law-to-be was taking no chances; so he gingerly carried the packet, unopened, to the officer-in-charge of the adjoining police station, told him all about the threats, and warned him to beware of the contents of the very tangible sample of witchcraft. Taking all precautions, the police officer called in a magistrate, and the packet was carefully opened. To the horror of all present, it contained a piece of flesh. That was enough for the match-maker. He hurried home to postpone the wedding, leaving the police to fight the evil spell of the unknown witch.

How witchcraft was believed to have made a wife hate her husband was brought to light in a strange story from Pollach,

in southern India, by the complaint made to the police by the father of a young married girl. This was a case of two (or three) men wanting one woman. It appears that the marriage of the girl had so aroused the resentment of a neighbour who had already mentally booked the girl for his own son, that the disappointed man brought all his powers of sorcery and witchcraft to bear upon the girl and thus in revenge cast spells to harm her in various ways. As the result of the "charms" and sorceries, the potency of which was probably greatly aided by the fact that the sorcerer saw to it that the girl was well threatened about what would happen to her, it soon became common talk in the village that the girl not only hated her husband but refused to cook his food or to live with him despite all entreaties,—both physical and verbal. Realizing that witchcraft had definitely commenced to work, the girl's relatives sought the aid of other sorcerers, who proclaimed after mature consideration that the girl was not yet actually possessed of an evil spirit, but that she was definitely under some spell which forced her to hate her husband. And, of course, the spell could be removed by the rival sorcerers—at a price. Suitable financial terms having been arrived at, a thorough search was made inside and outside the house, and at last under the threshold of the front door one of the sorcerers found an egg and some very small bones. On the shell of the egg were inscribed some letters in Urdu characters, which were later interpreted by the local Imam as ancient charms designed to keep a wife away from her husband. It was further declared that ever since the egg and bones were placed under the threshold, the girl had been trying to get away from her husband and go to the alleged sorcerer's house to marry his son. Things were so serious by this time that the girl's husband and father decided to

call in the police. Investigations were started;—but suddenly the power of the spell disappeared, and the girl once again became a loving wife.

How Black Magic is Practised

Very closely allied to the ordinary working of witchcraft is the operation of black magic, which figures even more prominently in the Press than the harsh dealings with witches.

It is true that in India black magic usually takes a less ghoulish form, but nevertheless in many cases it is synonymous with murder, often because the people on which it is worked are so gullible, so superstitious, and so imaginative that they die of sheer fright. The main difference in India between witchcraft and black magic is that women are generally declared to be the sole agents of the former, whilst men usually operate the latter.

There has already been related how a villager of Ghatsila murdered his own relative because he thought that, being a witch, she might cast evil spells on the whole village. A similar case comes from Assam where, believing that a neighbour named Kurangthan had already killed several people by his black magic, and was threatening to kill others, a villager calmly chopped off Kurangthan's head. When charged with murder, he said that not only had the deceased definitely killed four of his friends by casting an evil spell over them, but also the murderer believed that his own brother figured high on the long waiting list of prospective victims. "So," said Zumthuilang in freely pleading guilty, "it was my obvious duty not only to save my brother's life but also to save the whole village from this worker of black magic." Zumthuilang was sentenced to death, with a recommendation to the Governor-in-Council that the sentence be commuted to life transportation.

Nor is black magic confined to the rural areas, for cases have come to light in such centres as Bombay, Madras, and Calcutta.

“Now I have put an end to his accursed black magic,” said Maruti Shambhar after giving evidence in the Bombay Coroner’s Court as to how he stabbed Shankar Shiva in one of the most populous suburbs of Bombay. In recounting the story, Maruti said that Shankar was known to practise black magic so frequently that he was called a *bhagat* throughout the locality. In the course of exercising his evil powers, Shankar had been harassing Maruti’s wife, despite Maruti’s appeals that she be left alone. “But,” woefully related Maruti, “he continued to cast his evil eye on her daily, with the result that I got poorer and poorer owing to my having to buy medicines for my wife’s treatment, every day’s spell causing her sickness and pain. Then, one day he threatened to weave his spells over me, pretending that I owed him money. We had a discussion, and when he hit me on the head with a glass bottle, I retaliated by stabbing him with a dagger. I did so because he refused my final appeal to remove the spell of his black magic and thus cure my poor wife.”

A fight over the alleged operations of black magic was responsible for a similar murder charge in Madras, the deceased being a clerk in the employ of a liquor-shop licensee. During the past few years the shopkeeper had been visited by calamity after calamity, including deaths in the family and considerable business losses, the result, it was believed, of the clerk practising black magic and sorcery on his master. Unable to restrain himself any longer after yet another piece of bad luck, the shopkeeper and his son waylaid the clerk and beat him so badly with sticks and a hammer that he died. It was whispered afterwards that the clerk had made no secret

of the fact that he knew all about the technique of black magic and that he would never hesitate to use his knowledge if he thought he would gain thereby.

From Central India comes a strange tale of how rivalry in black magic powers was so bitter between two fakirs that ultimately one of them stood in the felon's dock for murder and is now expatiating his crime in a life sentence. The story goes that Sardar Shah, a member of a well-known family of fakirs, was walking through the jungles of Gujrat with Ditta Sain, another fakir, when they had a quarrel over their respective fakir abilities. In the course of the debate on superiority, Sardar Shah declared that Ditta Sain's powers of black magic were so strong that he had actually enchanted him and changed him from a respectable fakir into a minion of the Evil One. Stung bitterly by such a charge, Ditta turned and declared that it was Sardar Shah who actually possessed powers of black magic and that he (Ditta) felt the influence of the charms cast over him. A scuffle followed, in which Sardar Shah used a club so heartily that he inflicted nineteen fractures and twenty-four other injuries on Ditta, who died the next day.

There are some people, however, who, instead of being afraid of black magic and its weird powers, actually seek to learn of its mysteries,—with varying results. Here is a queer case: Desiring to learn the black art of causing the death of human beings and then their resuscitation, an up-country man visited a "sorceress" of great reputation in the Hooghly district not far from Calcutta. Having fixed the terms, and had a preliminary meal together, the man placed himself in the woman's hands. She certainly showed him how to "die" through suspended animation;—but she lost her power of

reviving him. Finding him dead, she disposed of his body in a near-by gully ; but when the police asked her some awkward questions, she admitted that after giving him some " magic " food, he lapsed into an unconsciousness from which she could not revive him, although, she declared, she had never before had any such black magic experiment end so disastrously.

This desire to know the secrets of black magic, however, provides a wonderful opportunity to make money. Laxman Lala, the manager of the property of one of the widows of the village headman of Sukli near Nagpur, approached a so-called magician named Bodkoo and asked if he could give any help in making Laxman the manager of the whole estate by winning the favour of Tulsa, the other widow of the headman. With an optimism born of greed, the magician said that it would be a simple task, provided the payment was large enough to allow him to use black magic. Laxman agreed to reward him with Rs 150 and some gold ornaments as soon as the new post was secured. With the usual display of mystic activities, the black-magic merchant set to work, and in due course gave Laxman the glad tidings that Tulsa had died from its effects. The reward was duly paid, as Laxman believed that the whole estate was now the property of the remaining widow whose affairs he was already managing. But when Bodkoo had gone, Laxman found out that Tulsa was very much alive and that the black magic had failed to benefit anyone except its supposed exponent.

At Barisal there was a most appealing sort of gentleman known as Khabiruddin Fakir. Outwardly he was a simple traveller ; but once in the villages with his band of disciples, he represented himself as being capable of working miracles of all kinds, including black magic, through the help of

"Alishah, Raja of the Jins,"—the mighty king of evil spirits. But, of course, it needed money to perform such miracles; and every time it was the gullible villagers who paid. He particularly enjoyed giving demonstrations which necessitated the making of especially costly presents to the mighty evil spirit through the hands of another member of the gang who was the selected favourite of Alishah Raja. It proved a profitable stunt while it lasted, and even when the police were on the track of the gang of swindlers, the villagers' faith in and fear of black magic was so great that evidence was almost impossible to obtain.

Human Sacrifices for the Gods

Perhaps the most remarkable revelations of the hold which superstition has on the masses is the way in which they will do anything at the behest of the gods. Few tragedies are more pathetic than those which reveal murder in the name of religion, and while one stands aghast at religious principles which permit such outrages, one must also stand and ponder over the blind faith which kills all forms of love in its determination to obey the gods. "I killed her because I heard the voice of God ordering me to do so," said an old man of 82 to the police as he answered their questions regarding the death of his seven-year-old granddaughter, in his family village of Bhasin, near Lahore. All his sons had died during an epidemic, and when he got to his only daughter's house he found that she had died as well. So he murdered the last member of the family, the child of seven who was playing on the doorstep.

And that is anything but an isolated case.

Priest Muthaswamy of Somararapatti, near Coimbatore, dreamed that the presiding deity of his village temple wanted

human blood. So he went into the "holy of holies," made obeisance to the goddess, cut off the head of his eldest son (aged 12) with a small penknife, and poured the child's blood before the idol of Kandiamman as libation to the deity. When the boy's grandfather came running to the scene, having heard the shrieks as the throat was being sawn through, the priest turned and said: "Who are you to ask what I am doing? God wanted my son to be sacrificed, and I am doing it." The grandfather ran for help, and when a few villagers arrived on the scene they found the priest holding the boy's head in the left hand, and with the right hand dragging the body first round the temple, and then round the deity's chariot. He then threw the body on the ground in front of the temple, placed the head by its side, and stood mutely facing the goddess with folded hands. Suddenly, addressing the villagers, he said: "God wanted my first-born son, and I have given him." When arrested, the priest stated that the car festival in the local temple, which is dedicated to Kandiamman, the goddess of disease, had not been celebrated for two years, and that this had provoked the wrath of the goddess, so that he and the village in general were threatened with disaster. The goddess appeared before him in his sleep and said that only with the blood of his eldest son could he expiate the sin committed by the failure to hold the festival. In sentencing the priest to life transportation, the judge agreed that it was generally admitted that even in a case like that "it could never be declared that the accused performed the act in a state of unsound mind, for he was perfectly capable of distinguishing between right and wrong."

Yet another father heard the gods calling when Chutor Majhi of a village in the Dhanbad district, in order to cure himself of his brain disorder, took his one-year-old son to a

lonely field, garlanded him in the course of a ghastly rite, and then beheaded the child as a sacrifice to appease the gods. When arrested, he said that having appealed to his deity to remove the cause of his headaches and fits, he was told by the goddess that the sacrifice of his son was the only remedy, and that no other offering would be acceptable.

A terrible story of a baby sacrificed to the Smallpox goddess was related in the Cuddalore Court when Narayanswamy Gownden was sentenced to death, after a trial which revealed religious superstition in all its sheer brutality. A villager was so worried over his wife being attacked by small-pox that he approached Narayanswamy, a distant relative and a temple attendant, asking him to sing in praise of the goddess Mariamman to effect a cure. While singing, Narayanswamy went into hysterics and said that the goddess wanted two fowls sacrificed to save the woman, whereupon the husband agreed to make such an offering if his wife recovered. For two days the accused wandered about as if he were possessed. On the date of the offence, he went to the house of the sick woman, carried off the baby, and swinging it around a *chakkarikal* (a rough image in granite worshipped by the villagers when the cattle are attacked with rinderpest), threw it into a prickly pear bush, near by, after having twisted its neck. On behalf of the accused it was urged that, as for two days he was under the influence of some evil spirit, he did not know exactly what he did under its influence and in the circumstances could not be found guilty of murder. Commenting on the plea of insanity, the Sessions Judge, Mr. J. K. Lancashire, said: "My conclusion is that the accused beat his chest in the dock merely with the object of creating an impression in the minds of the assessors. I find myself unable to agree with the assessors in their view that the accused

was of unsound mind when he murdered the child. The view I take is that the accused resolved to make a human sacrifice to Mariamman, and that he carried out his intention while in full possession of his senses and entirely aware of the nature of the act."

Although police records do not reveal many devotees, there is in South India a deity called Karupurayasmi which actually demands the sacrifice of a first-born infant, and as the deity is indifferent to the age of the child, it is not possible to say just how many unregistered newly-born babes have their fragile lives snuffed out before this modern Moloch in rural areas where registration of births is not compulsory. But it is no exaggeration to say that far more cases of baby sacrifice go unrecorded than actually come to the knowledge of the authorities. Mari and Aran, father and son, are now undergoing transportation for life for the callous murder of a village boy aged 5 as a sacrifice to this bloodthirsty deity, hoping that by their deed the deity would be propitiated and reveal to them a treasure which they believed was hidden in their house. The two men had, some time before, had an idol made by the village potter before which Aran did *puja* two or three times a week. But one day he approached the potter and another man in great excitement, saying that the idol had started dancing at nights and that he knew from experience that the deity required to be appeased by the offer of a human sacrifice. So much were they in agreement with Aran that although they saw that he really meant to make such a sacrifice, they made no efforts to report the fact that a murder was being arranged. A few days later, when the majority of the villagers were in the harvest field, Aran who, by the way, was only a youth of sixteen, enticed the eldest son of the village barber to his house and there sacrificed him to

the dancing idol. Just as he had finished the ceremony, in walked Mari, the murderer's father; and the two of them disposed of the body secretly, firstly by burying it in the backyard and then, when its evil odour threatened to give them away, by sinking it in a deep pond. When a hue and cry was raised for the missing barber-boy, Aran admitted having made the sacrifice, and Mari confessed as to his share in the deed. Both were found guilty of murder, but "in view of the fact that Mari was an old man and Aran only a youth," the sentences were only transportation for life.

The murderers of little children who are sacrificed to the gods do not always, however, escape the just penalty of their crime. Jadu Sonari and his nephew Ovi, of Sambalpur, were both sentenced to death for having murdered a lad of nine by sacrificing him to their goddess in order that they might win her favours and thus achieve success in the art of sorcery which they were then learning. In their case there were no extenuating circumstances; the deed was done for the sole purpose of material gain, and no excuse of religious enthusiasm or superstitious credulity could save them from the gallows.

But there are other forms of human sacrifices besides those made at the instruction of the gods. Having taken a solemn vow to give the best possible sacrifice to the gods in gratitude for the recovery of her aunt from a serious illness, Maddila, a young dancing girl of Rajahmundry, went up to her servant who was cleaning the floor and stabbed him to death, all the while stroking his hair and repeating her manifestations of friendliness. In his dying statement the servant said that he knew perfectly well that he had been offered as a sacrifice to the gods. Maddila was sentenced to life imprisonment.

Another remarkable tale of sacrifice comes from Lucknow, where superstition cost the life of an eight-year-old girl.

Some women of Sujauli village were singing together over their work. Suddenly one of them cried out that her voice had mysteriously become weak and hoarse, and within a few seconds the other voices were similarly affected. So they all stopped their music and had a conference as to the best way to bring the voices back again. After a little discussion, they unanimously agreed that they must offer a human sacrifice at the altar of Saraswati. So without any delay, one of them decoyed a little girl named Kunie to her house and then, after performing certain ceremonies, took the poor child to a sacred neem tree, and hacked her to pieces with a spade, smearing the blood on Saraswati's altar. The sacrifice apparently had the desired effect, for all their voices returned and they were soon able to sing a hymn of praise and gratitude to the goddess. But the murderess was arrested, tried for what the judge called "the diabolical murder of an innocent girl," and sentenced to death, which the High Court reduced to life imprisonment.

A somewhat different tale of human sacrifice also comes from Lucknow. One night three men lured a companion named Dankir to a temple to listen to songs sung in honour of the presiding goddess. So affected was the man by the religious atmosphere that he fell to the ground in homage before the deity. But that was his last earthly act for, whilst kneeling, one of the three men cut off his head with a chopper. His blood was then smeared upon the goddess and poured out in front of her on the platform, after which the three men went home, leaving the severed head and corpse to be found by Dankir's nephew next morning. Two of the three men were sentenced to death, the third being acquitted owing to lack of evidence that he participated in the actual murder.

Even allowing for the fact that the superstitious and

“religious” feelings of the people of India are so strong, such cold-blooded murders as those just related hardly seem credible. Yet they occur frequently in all parts of the country. To cite just one more: A young woman of Central India actually cut the throat of a younger sister in order that the gods would save the life of her ailing brother, of whom she was particularly fond. And the throat-cutting operation was carried out with full religious ceremonial and after the performance of many sacred rites, including the purification of herself as well as the victim.

Sorcerers in Profusion

The indirect results of the general belief in sorcery and superstition are almost as serious as those directly accruing from black magic and witchcraft. Just as the best-laid plans of gods and men often “gang agley,” even so in the world of sorcerers there is frequently a miscarriage of the carefully thought-out scheme. Kanlimpam, a villager of the Vizianagram district, is now undergoing one year’s hard labour for his share in casting a devil out of his brother’s wife. The whole story is a queer one, showing that Kanlimpam was more the victim of circumstances than of any real crime. The woman in question returned to her hut one evening after a visit to a neighbouring village and, as the custom is in those parts, smeared her face with turmeric and put a caste mark on her forehead. She then sat on the doorstep of her house. When her husband arrived, he asked her where she had been for the day, and instead of replying like a dutiful wife, “she answered impertinently and rolled her eye-balls in a strange manner.” It turned out afterwards that this was but her novel way of teasing her husband and having a joke at his expense in front of other relatives. But the husband

did not take it in that way. He at once jumped to the conclusion that she was possessed of an evil spirit, and so called his brother, Kanlimpam, to help him drive it out. Kanlimpam participated willingly, and, with the intention of showing the devil that they would stand no nonsense, gave the girl a sharp slap on the cheek. Normally this rebuke would have shown the wife that the time for joking had passed, but she continued to tease her husband, and again replied rather perkily, whereupon the husband and his brother simultaneously cried, "Verily she has a devil; let us get him out while he is under control." So Kanlimpam took off his shoe and gave the wife a smart hit on the head. This at least quieted the girl, for she fell to the ground vomiting. But she died a few days later, and a post-mortem examination showed that death was due to compression of the brain resulting from a fracture of the right parietal bone, caused by the blow from the shoe.

A Secunderabad story reveals not merely that there are times when the more enlightened folk will not tolerate an unsuccessful sorcerer but also that lynching is not confined to America. Incidentally we might note in passing that in commenting upon this remarkable case, the Director-General of Police in the Hyderabad State says that "witchcraft and black magic are widely prevalent throughout this State."

In the village of Samadar Lingapur there lived Yelluga, a man of the Dhor caste who had the reputation of being a sorcerer. When any person in the village who was on bad terms with the sorcerer fell ill, the sickness was universally attributed to his powerful use of black magic. Yelluga, of course, did not hesitate to make the most, financially, of his sinister reputation; but one day, when a number of the people in the village were suffering from the visitation of an

epidemic, those not yet affected decided that it was time Yelluga used his powers for good instead of for evil. So they suddenly seized him and ordered him to cure every case of sickness in the village, no matter what its cause or its nature. This was a tall order for even the astute Yelluga, so he hedged a bit by saying that he was reluctant to perform such a wholesale miracle, especially as some of the sufferers fully deserved the punishment they were undergoing and that hence it would not be justice for him to modify the sentence or to remit any of the punishment. He promised, however, to consider the cases of some of the relatives of those who had seized him. Next day he started to recite a few *mantras*, or holy verses, but his incantations did not seem to have any effect, for none of the sick persons showed the least signs of recovery.

The sequel was short and sharp. The exasperated villagers again seized Yelluga, dragged him round the village in front of all the patients' houses to give him a last chance of showing his magical powers, and then, finding that he was an utter failure, belaboured him to death, and exposed his body on a neighbouring hill as a warning to any man who might have been tempted to wear the mantle of the discredited prophet. Five persons were ultimately arrested and sent up for trial.

Here is a story which speaks eloquently as to the very fertile field which is available for those who desire to let superstition produce its full harvest. In this case it was a schoolboy who so let "religious fervour" enter into his life that he tried to commit suicide in propitiation of Shiva. A Pandit of Muttra had visited the town of Tirwa in the Farrukabad district and had recited the *Ramayana* to an audience of boys of the local schools, in the course of which he described the incident when Ravan offered his head eleven

times on the altar of Shiva, receiving in return the gift of a head for each offer. The story so impressed a boy named Sri Gopal that he desired to propitiate Shiva in a similar manner, mentioning to one of his companions that he fully believed that he would receive a wonderful gift in return, including his own resurrection. So he fasted for a few days and then went to the temple of Shiva and, after offering the usual *Havan* sacrifice, attempted to cut his throat with a knife which he had sharpened especially for the purpose. When the gash was about $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches long and 1 inch deep, he suddenly stopped, because, as he told his relatives later, "I felt my hands tied down and a Voice ordering me to have patience and go to sleep. So I just laid down at the god's command." He was found bleeding profusely, telling his beads in the temple in front of the deity.

A strange tale of how the gods were invited to assist in the return of some stolen property, and how the failure to do so is said to have resulted in a double murder, was told in the Dinapore Court in a case which had to be referred to the Patna High Court owing to the Sessions Judge disagreeing with the jury's five-to-four verdict of "not guilty." Some months previously to the climax of the story, some ornaments and cash valued at Rs 51 were stolen from the house of Bulkan Bao, a merchant of the village of Painal. Two months later a neighbour named Lochan Kahar asked Bulkan to promise an offering to the gods if he restored his stolen property. Bulkan readily agreed, as he had come to the conclusion that his goods would never be found by the police. After a few days had passed, one morning Bulkan awoke to find one of the missing ornaments by the side of his bed. "A good start," said Bulkan, as he called for Lochan to witness the miracle. During the next few days the gods were

apparently engaged in other work, but after a week Lochan burst into Bulkan's house and urged him to search every nook and cranny of the building, as he felt sure that the gods had returned the cash that had been stolen. After a vigorous search Bulkan found Rs 29 tucked away in a dark corner. With such striking evidence before them of the power of the gods, Lochan thought the time was ripe to advise Bulkan to make the promised offering to the gods, who would then return the rest of the articles. Overjoyed at the prospect, Bulkan was carried away by Lochan's eloquence, and so handed him four goats to be sacrificed to the gods on the forthcoming Dasserah festival. But when his enthusiasm had cooled down later in the day, he made up his mind that he had been too hasty in his offering, and so went to Lochan's house and demanded his goats back again, declaring that he would fulfil no vows until the whole of his property was returned. This so annoyed Lochan that he declared that the full wrath of the gods would fall on Bulkan, who would lose considerably more than the few rupees' worth of goods that had been stolen. A week passed,—and the anger of the gods failed to be demonstrated. Then, just after the Dasserah festival, when Bulkan was away at a neighbouring village, some one entered his house, murdered his wife, and so injured the daughter that she died within a few hours. Lochan was arrested on a charge of murder, and although he would not admit either that he had killed the women out of disappointment because he could not profit from his ruse or that he considered himself the selected instrument of the wrath of the gods, the police made out a strong case against him.

“She was a child of ill omen ; therefore it was my duty to see that she did not live.” This was the explanation given

by an Irula woman named Ammakannu, who threw her ten-months'-old child into a well because it had been born with its umbilical cord around its neck and hence was certain to bring upon the family the wrath of the evil spirits. Frequent quarrels with her husband and loss of crops from various causes were attributed to the evil influence of this child of ill omen ; so the mother listened to the superstitious beliefs of her women neighbours and solved the problem by murdering the child. She confessed at every stage of her trial and was sentenced by the Sessions Judge of Cuddalore to transportation for life instead of capital punishment " as the offence was committed through domestic worry."

Superstition and Riots

With superstition figuring so largely in the everyday life of the people, it is only to be expected that desperate situations are sometimes produced as the result of differences of opinion. Probably the most common of these situations are the terrible riots which so frequently occur in different parts of the country, often the result of some silly scare or rumour based on superstition. For example, Bombay, Calcutta, Karachi, and Poona (to mention but a few places) have all known desperate riots caused by the story insidiously spread about that children were being kidnapped to be buried in the foundations of some new engineering enterprise. It is true, of course, that such superstitions are based on historic grounds, because in pre-British India it was the frequent custom to bury a child, or a woman, underneath the wall of any new fort or important building. And that idea persists in the minds of the masses, so that when the Great Indian Peninsular Railway was building a new bridge across the river at Poona, numerous riots were caused by people thinking that children

were being kidnapped in order to make the foundations secure. In Karachi and Sukkur there were many such scares over the Sukkur Barrage and the need for "propitiating" the goddess of the river Indus, whilst on one occasion it was declared by certain priests that unless a child was sacrificed under every pier, the Indus would once more forsake her course and meander through a thirsty land many miles away from the mighty barrage which is to harness its waters. In Calcutta the building of the Bally Bridge created similar scares which produced tussles between the police and certain sections of the community, whilst in Bombay, famous for riotings, more desperate situations were created by superstitious stories than were ever produced by communal disorder.

It is true that there is always a certain amount of kidnapping going on in Bombay, and in the months of February and March, 1932, no fewer than eighteen children were definitely known to have been stolen, perhaps as an aftermath of the Lindbergh tragedy. In that connexion, two gangs were definitely broken up by the police, and they were proved to have nothing whatever to do with any superstitious ideas, beyond the real fact that girl children could be sold either as brides or prostitutes. Yet, whenever there is any large construction work going on, there are always rumours of children being needed for the foundations, and although tact and wisdom generally prevent any serious riots, a small fracas is a very common thing, especially as Pathans, who are always to be found as labourers, are generally believed to be there merely waiting for the chance to snatch a baby.

A particularly interesting recent scare was that caused in Larkana, Sind, by a story that Pathans were roaming around looking for children, having been employed by a wealthy landowner who was very ill and whose local doctor

had prescribed a certain medicine the chief ingredient of which was the powdered skulls of infants ! In such cases the greatest danger is not to the children, but to any Pathan who happens to be in the neighbourhood, because should a parent imagine that the lateness of a child returning home is due to it having been stolen, then woe to any Pathan who is caught alone ! The villagers with one accord will set on him and beat him to death, resulting in a feud which grows in intensity as fellow-Pathans congregate from adjoining places.

Apart from kidnapping scares, however, sorcery often produces the most exciting times. In Mysore every year there gathers a large crowd, amounting at times to over five thousand, to witness a public display of sorcery, locally known as *modi*. During the Christmas holidays of 1931 the police anticipated an outbreak of violence and were present at the meeting in large numbers armed with lathis and rifles ; but the stampede was so great that they had to give up and leave the crowd to disperse as best it could. The following description in the *Madras Mail* of just what happened bears quotation in full :—

Jangli Shah Peer, of the Punjab, claiming to be a great and unrivalled exponent of sorcery, challenged anybody to undo the spells that he would cast. The challenge was accepted by Oomer Khan, of Nanjanjud, and the contest was arranged. Considerable interest was evinced in the show and many persons came into the city from the *mofussil* to watch the proceedings.

The man from the Punjab marked out a piece of ground about 20 yards square and sprinkled the area with ashes. The corner points were marked with the stems of a plantain with green coco-nuts attached, while within the enclosed area was a display of turmeric and red powders. In the middle was a cucumber, half buried, while in a line with this were arranged a bottle with a lime, a goat's head, an egg placed upright, a bunch of plantains, and a coco-nut. The man from the Punjab stated that all these

objects had been placed there as his special nostrums and he challenged the other party to enter the enclosed area and take out the objects from their positions. He sat at one end of this square area muttering to himself and gesticulating.

The local "sorcerer" then made his own preparations to undo the spells cast by his opponent. There was a terrible rush to look on the scene of action by the large gathering and the show was delayed for some time. Oomer Khan selected as his medium a boy of about ten years of age who, he said, under his orders would be able to enter the marked area and remove the things under spell. Oomer Khan, after much incantation and writhing of his limbs, ordered the boy to enter the area. The boy, who by now was apparently not himself, danced in front of the area and at first it looked as if he was unable to enter the forbidden ground. He fell flat and wriggled but could not roll into the area, and although after more incantations by Oomer Khan the boy was able to get into the area he apparently could not see any of the objects, as he began to grope for them. At times the man from the Punjab would make more weird gestures, and the boy would then roll out of the area for several yards. After being repulsed several times, the boy eventually pulled out the bottle, displacing the lime fruit that was placed in its mouth. The boy looked terribly exhausted; but, being restored to himself after a time and after more incantations, was again goaded by Oomer Khan to pick up the other objects. However much the boy tried to enter the area for the second time he was not successful, and in his struggle to get an entry the boy rubbed his body on the ground, causing blood to flow.

Oomer Khan himself then tried to pick up the objects and for a time he too was paralysed. At last he succeeded, and when he picked up the lime and crushed it in his triumph, a yet more interesting sight awaited the spectators. Synchronizing with this crushing of the fruit, the man from the Punjab, who was conducting the operations from the other end, rolled out of his position and it is said that the recoil of his own spell was so great that he was later seen to be helplessly rubbing his face on the ground till blood began to flow freely from his self-inflicted wounds. Rising to his feet, the Punjabi sorcerer admitted that so far his opponent had succeeded. He then demanded of Oomer Khan to try his supernatural powers to displace the other weird-looking objects within the marked area, and offered to cut his throat if his challenge succeeded in undoing his spells. The situation became tense and the keen rivalry of the two parties greatly excited the spectators, who, anxious to look on the scene from close quarters, made a terrible rush and invaded the grounds. The police, although they charged the surging mass with batons and lathis,

DOGGED BY SUPERSTITION

were unable to control the situation and consequently the show was abandoned. The police were roughly handled but eventually succeeded in dispersing the crowd. The disappointed people then made a rush on the contractor for the return of their money and for a time pandemonium prevailed. Chairs were either smashed or carried away and some of the culprits were arrested.

Not so serious, and rather more amusing, was the free fight which was caused at Karachi by the discovery of an amulet in a boat which lost a race at a fisherman's regatta. Two rival families of fishermen had challenged each other to a contest, family against family, irrespective of number. The race was held amidst great enthusiasm, and Elias Bakahr and his crew of nineteen were victorious over Usman and his boatload of five. The losers, feeling certain that something was wrong, searched their boat to see if they could ascertain the cause of their unexpected defeat, and to their amazement found an amulet secreted under a rowlock. Usman taxed Elias with having placed the charm there to bring about their defeat, whereupon Elias threw out a counter-challenge by declaring that Usman had unsportingly let his crew put the charm there themselves in order to "explain" their inglorious show, or, alternatively, to bring about the defeat of Elias's crew. The only way to settle a dispute such as that was, of course, a resort to arms, and in the fight which ensued knives and stones and sticks were used so freely that a score of oarsmen were carried off to hospital and ultimately Elias and his crew of nineteen were charged with rioting and assault by Usman.

Ghost scares, quite expectedly, are common in India, but if their visitations are followed by mysterious deaths, then it behoves every stranger in the place to stay at home after nightfall, lest he be mistaken for the ghost and dispatched

by the readiest means available "to satisfy the gods." In Arrah, Bihar, a ghostly woman called at houses night after night to sell fish, and, continued the story, anyone responding to her call died the next day. And whatever deaths occurred in the district during the next week were attributed to the evil work of the unknown ghost. Then she disappeared as suddenly as she had arrived, but not before one or two innocent women were roughly handled by the superstitious relatives of unfortunate people who had died from natural causes.

Whilst on the subject of ghosts, the following tale must find a place. A Meerut resident was induced through long negotiations to believe that certain ghosts were in need of having some ornaments prepared for the marriage ceremony of a man named Anwar, and that the ghosts were quite willing to pay for the gold and the workmanship. In order to convince the man that this story was true, the people with whom he was negotiating took him to certain hallowed places in the jungles near Meerut and by means of conjuring tricks that would do credit to Maskelyne actually produced the ghosts and introduced him to them face to face. Following such introductions, the ghosts opened up conversations with the prospective client and arranged to take samples from his shop for their inspection. A date was fixed, and the gold merchant duly appeared with a fine collection of gold ornaments worth well over £100. The ghosts thanked him, took up the ornaments, and then vanished into thin air, ornaments and all. Thus do the tales of the Arabian Nights become dramatized in modern, but queer, India.

Everyday Superstitions

There are so many different ways in which the people are dogged by superstition that it is difficult to select those

which give a comprehensive outline of its strange results in everyday life. Some are horrible, some are tragic, and some are humorous, but the chain of real-life stories which is now presented will reveal the amazing variety of superstitious ideas which are continuously working among the people.

Two *sadhus* (holy men) who were staying in an *ashram* on the banks of the river Gandheswari at Bankura suddenly felt a religious urge. So they went to a cemetery, dug up the corpse of a child who had died two months before, worshipped it with flowers, anointed it with sandal paste, removed part of it to their *ashram*, cooked it, ate a portion "to please Kali," and then hung up an arm and a leg in full view of the public. They were ultimately prosecuted, it is only fair to say, for wounding the religious feelings of the Hindu community, their defence being that they were merely worshipping the Goddess Kali in the manner she had prescribed.

Another gruesome tale of exhuming a corpse in the name of superstition comes from southern India, and in some respects is as mysterious as the sacrifice of Iphigenia for wind. Just before the rains break every year, and particularly if the monsoon is late, certain rural castes set about their time-honoured practice of digging up a body of a leper and, after worshipping it, either burning it with full honours or throwing it to the jackals. They say that such a corpse has not decayed after a month and that it is their duty to carry out the proper ritual by which a leper, or anyone suffering from such diseases as leucoderma, must be burned or eaten, and not buried. By some strange coincidence, which would probably make a most interesting investigation, people with such diseases always conveniently die in these districts about a month before the rains are due to break and, still more surprising, are buried instead of being burned. So there is

always available a corpse to be exhumed as a ritualistic performance in order to guarantee that the gods will not withhold the rains because a leper has been buried.

From Bengal comes the tale of Jalim Roy who lay for days by the side of an image with twelve arms that had been unearthed on his property along with a number of ancient Buddhist images. He said that he was waiting for a mandate from the gods, and would stay there until he heard from them. He was, in the end, carried away exhausted.

Perara, an excise department guard, was found seated on a rock trying to chip it with a sledge-hammer, instead of doing his work. When questioned as to his conduct he replied: "There is nothing wrong with me. I am guided by the gods. I know there is treasure at the spot where I am digging, because I have been given the power by the gods to see through the rocks. I do not want the treasure for myself, but my desire is to come to the rescue of the Government and help relieve the great depression."

Having announced the decision of a village *panchayet* (or Council of Elders) that a girl was dying because she was possessed of an evil spirit, the chairman of the *panchayet* was actually sued for defamation by the man who had been accused of "setting the ghost" on her. The *panchayet* had decided that the only way to cure the girl was for four of the villagers, who had been held responsible, to pay a fine of 15s. each. Three of them paid, but the fourth refused to do so. Then the girl died, and so the *panchayet* chairman declared at a public feast that the girl's death was certainly due to the man who had not paid the fine, and it was very clear that it was he who had invested her with the evil spirit. The magistrate, however, held that the chairman was protected when announcing official decisions of the caste *panchayet*,

especially when it "clearly appeared that the parties belonging to the caste undoubtedly had such a belief in evil spirits and ghosts."

Nagendranath Das visited a young lady named Neroda, and told her that he had been informed by the Goddess Taraknath in a dream that he would be cured of his serious illness if he drank a little of the water with which Neroda washed her feet, the deity having revealed in the dream that Neroda was his mother in a previous birth. Greatly flattered, Neroda agreed, and, in sheer gratitude, Nagendranath said that he would recompense her by giving her some of the "holy water of Taraknath," which would ensure perpetual good fortune. But when Neroda had taken the liquid she found that in reality it was a concoction of opium, the effects of which enabled her deceiver to walk out of the house with ornaments valued at almost £100.

A young Bengali worked the same sort of stunt in robbing a railway official of the Uluheria station. The youth arrived one day at the station and told a member of the station staff that whilst he had been fasting in penance in the Temple of Baneshwar it was revealed to him by the deity that he was the son of a member of the station staff by a previous birth, and that if he partook of a meal actually prepared for the railwayman, then he (the visitor) would get rid of a serious illness. Believing the story, the railway officer took the young man home and fed and clothed him for several days. But he returned one day to find that the Bengali had disappeared with all the household valuables, including musical instruments and cooking utensils.

Medicine said to be from the gods is lapped up like nectar by those who live, and die, on superstition. The newspapers of India are full of amazing advertisements describing the

wonderful powers of certain specifics, such as, for example, the "Mystic Medicine given by the Goddess Kali, which has cured thousands and thousands and can never fail to cure any known disease." Even fairly popular Indian doctors practising indigenous systems often loudly proclaim that their great success is due to the fact that they are inspired by the gods, who not only reveal the most secret prescriptions but actually tell them where "divine powder" is to be obtained. At times, of course, the "divine cure" does not work, as in the case of Thekkumbhagom of Alleppy, who sought the aid of a supposedly great quack in connexion with a skin complaint on his hand and was ordered to cover the whole of his body with ant-earth in which ants were to be given full play, whilst on the second day the earth was to be kept wet all the time. The mud-pack, however, caused death instead of cure, despite the doctor's assertion that the remedy had been revealed to him in a dream.

That some devil or other is at the bottom of most diseases is a belief which is certainly not dead in India. Large numbers of people all over the country still attribute cholera and smallpox, in particular, to the workings of evil spirits. So most diseases have their own deities, the most common of all being that devoted to cholera. Such deities, however, are mostly worshipped by women and children, enormous numbers of whom attend the festivals specially set apart for the worship of disease. In the Punjab and certain other areas, most villages have a separate local shrine devoted to these deities at which all the offerings are impure. Sitala, one of the ten manifestations of Kali the Destroyer, is the Goddess of Smallpox, and is dreaded by all with a terrible dread. She is supposed to ride on a donkey, and grain is given to the donkey and to his master the potter, after being waved over

the head of the child, this presumably being a superstitious form of vaccination, as it is supposed to ward off any attack. In propitiation of Sitala, fowls, pigs, and goats are offered, black dogs are fed, and white cocks are waved and let loose, although when an epidemic has seized a village, all worship is discontinued until the disease has disappeared. An adult who has recovered from an attack must let loose a pig to Sitala, or he will once again be attacked. But as long as Sitala keeps her evil hands off the village, nothing is too good for her, as she is probably the greatest dread of all Indian mothers.

In some parts cholera is regarded with more reverence than dread. In fact, one of the greatest difficulties the Public Health Department of Bombay Presidency had to contend with was controlling such pilgrim centres as Pandharpur, where thousands of pilgrims meet annually from all over India. To die at Pandharpur is in itself an almost assured entry into heaven, but to die at Pandharpur of cholera is the most exclusive passport obtainable to the better land. So why should any pilgrim look with favour on precautions which, by minimizing the cholera risk, would lessen his chance of reaching paradise? But the objection was overcome by dosing every pilgrim, morning and night, with permanganate pills;—and the authorities did not bother to contradict the rumour which spread round that the little red pills were charms ordered and provided by the goddess as a special sign of her delight at their successful arrival at the holy spot.

But where the belief is still general that all sicknesses are caused by spirits, there is a universal effort to buy them off, whilst in South India a common plan is to try to scare them away by games of bluff, such as beating of drums and firing of pop-guns. Mild men of peace are often content with

the wearing of any reputed amulet. In a vernacular newspaper of wide circulation on the Malabar coast a municipal councillor of a fairly important town gravely advised people to wear a small copper plate against the heart to be certain of immunity from cholera, which is very prevalent in those parts.

Of the sporadic cases of cholera appearing in Trivandrum an aged woman laden with the wisdom of years gives a plausible explanation: "Some time ago many houses in the town had to be pulled down to make way for the coming of the 'iron-horse.' Most of these houses were ancient ones and contained little chapels of domestic gods, inevitable devils and unrootable Kuttichattans. These have become homeless," said the old woman, "and they must be wandering about restlessly, striking down a person here and there in just anger over enforced inactivity." The citizens of Trivandrum certainly did not bargain for such complications when they hailed with enthusiasm the proposal to extend the rail-head to the centre of the town.

The peculiar thing about superstition the world over is its great adaptability, and how it can always be stretched or modified to suit local or individual circumstances. In India if a village gets tired of its deity, for example, it can just manufacture a new one, as has already been shown in the case of the talking cow which proved a most useful adjunct to the religious life of a Bengal village; but the people do not always stick at animals. The Jains will forcibly turn any young girl into a saint with as much ease as young boys are compelled to become *sadhus* in other parts of India; and there are times, in fact, when a human being can be turned into a god, even though the process of transmutation is somewhat shrouded in mystery.

In a village a few miles from Jalgaon is a dumb girl of fourteen years who, although a castaway from home and as mentally undeveloped as a child of six, has suddenly sprung into fame as a deity possessed of amazing powers of healing and casting out spirits. Hundreds flock around her to pay homage or to be cured of their ailments, and so popular has she become that her father who, eight years ago, drove her from home as an unwanted brat, has now welcomed her back and attends her like a slave. By merely standing in front of her and making a vow, if only by promising to break a coconut by way of worship, the local people believe that all their desires will be granted by her, and they tell many stories of how worshippers have been cured of terrible diseases and of how women subject to fits and "spirit-possessions" have been healed. A rich man who considered that his eczema was cured by the child fulfilled his vow by taking her away to a near-by holy place, but the large gathering of devotees were so upset by her absence that the village has now decreed that she is never to be removed.

When she was but five years old, Sayabai was such a mischievous child with such revolting habits that her father drove her out of the house, being enraged at her attempt one day to throw a baby out of its cradle. For six years the unwanted child lived on whatever waste or filth she could pick from the gutter, until some of the villagers suddenly found that, "by rubbing their heads against hers," as they put it, their headaches were cured. From that time her healing powers are said to have increased, but even to-day she will, with childish glee, suddenly leave her worshippers and run away to enjoy her favourite game of swinging, utterly indifferent to the sensation she has caused and apparently entirely ignorant of the powers she is said to possess. Yet

even the sight of a deity on a swing does not perturb the villagers, except to give them an occasional twinge when they think of what might result from an accident to this new manifestation of the gods' great pleasure.

In view of such remarkable stories as have been told in this chapter, it will not be expected that any large amount of space will be devoted to the subject of poltergeists, especially as they are to be found in most other countries. Reports of the activities of these "racketing spirits" come from every corner of India, and they all bear the same colouring, although their origin is variously described according to the imagination or superstition of the people affected. In South Malabar, for instance, poltergeistic activities are declared to be worked by Kuttichattam, a Malayese deity of mischievous proclivities. In Nagpur an "unknown god" spent his time blackening the face of a fourteen-year-old girl, whilst in Sholapur a telegraph clerk declares that he bears ample evidence of the working of the Goddess of Art, inasmuch as every night for a week he was tattooed by invisible hands, even though he locked himself up in a government office.

Very many so-called weird stories of this kind could be told about poltergeistic happenings in Poona, Calcutta, and Bombay; but as in many cases they can be explained away by natural causes, they need not be included in this survey of real superstition.

Whence mosquitoes, snakes, cholera, and terrific heat in India? An ancient legend answers the question, and during the hot spell which Bengal experiences annually in April, May, and June the old story is revived all over the province by wandering tale-tellers. Mosquitoes, they tell the villagers, were sent by the gods of the fishermen in response to an

appeal for help against nocturnal fish-stealers. Snakes were a response to an earnest plea from a committee of merchants to their gods to send some form of protection against money-stealers. Then, when the foreigner came, a convention of one million gods sent cholera as an expected means of keeping India for the Indians. But still the foreigners came; so a huge convention of 33,000,000 gods, each with his consort, was called, and it was there decided that the only way to keep the foreigner from cold countries out of India was to make the country literally too hot to hold him. Yet still they came, and so the itinerant story-tellers sing to the villagers in the cool of the dusk, "In this iron age, the gods have been rendered powerless by men, whilst the English have proved themselves a nation powerful enough to defy the ordinances of even 33,000,000 gods. The gods were right in their original calculations, but they had no idea of the tenacity of purpose of the Englishman." So foreigners in India will for ever swelter!

Superstition and Politics

This chapter has shown, by a number of concrete and often blood-curdling incidents, how potent and baneful an influence is still exercised on the mind of India by superstition. The very existence of what Tagore has so plainly called "a gigantic monster" is in itself a call for drastic action. If India is really to take her place among the nations, she can no longer afford to be centuries behind with that Europe which burned witches at the stake. As one Indian editor has put it bluntly: "The thought is inevitable that those politicians who pose as being torch-bearers of a great national movement which is social as well as political in its significance ought to find their first duty in dispelling, through education and sane

propaganda, the ignorance of the majority of their countrymen whose under-development can be capable of inhuman and barbaric sacrifices and murders."

Another thought must follow that of the national leaders' responsibility. What part will superstition play in the politics of the future India? With such dread of certain symbols, with such credence in stories of messages from the gods, with such ready willingness to murder in the name of religion and custom, one is forced to reflect over superstition's sure influence in the elections which will follow the establishment of electors in every village. To cite but one very simple example: Where electors are unable to read, it is the present practice in Indian elections to local bodies for the candidates to adopt a symbol instead of a name to help illiterate voters, using such everyday objects as a sword, a plough, an elephant, a scythe, or an image. But it has been found that certain castes and sections of the electors have their own predilections in the matter of symbols, and actually vote for the symbol rather than for the candidate whose hall-mark it is. With an enlarged franchise, it will be comparatively easy for one candidate to guarantee the defeat of his opponent by some astute superstitious suggestions about the symbol of his nearest rival; and it will only need "a vision from the gods" overnight to turn a perfectly harmless symbol into an object of derision and hatred. Then all the political schemings ever thought of, and all the usual extravagant promises of overwrought candidates, will be in vain as vote-catchers when pitted against the commands of the gods which must not be disobeyed. Fate will control the elections in many areas and her handmaiden will be Superstition.

As proof that superstition has already commenced its work in the political world, here is one final story. During the

civil disobedience movement of 1932 the firmness of the Government frequently made rural people think twice before indulging in such celebrations as *bartals*, especially as in some areas it was made very clear by the authorities that *bartals* were definitely classed among the illegal methods of supporting the Congress activities. One month a *bartal* was ordered in honour of the arrest of a leader, and it was hoped by Congress that it would be so complete as to extend to every detail of the regular daily routine. But no leader of a certain town in Bengal would take the responsibility of publicly announcing the *bartal*. Then one night the ferryman, who was making his final trip across the river, saw the figure of a woman suddenly appear in mid-stream. As he looked, the apparition broke into three figures. Spell-bound, he dropped his oars. Then each figure solemnly told him to go to the town and tell everyone that all who worked or even cooked food on a certain day would suffer terrible punishment in the form of disease and death. That was the dictum of the gods, who were displeased with the inhabitants and demanded wholesale penance. The ferryman did as he was told; and on the appointed day the majority of the townspeople, impressed by the story and scared out of their wits, refrained from work and even refused to allow their families or their servants to cook any food. When it was all over the secret was revealed that it was all a political stunt by which a rural town was made to observe a *bartal*, thanks to a judicious blending of politics and superstition.

CHAPTER II

TRADING ON CREDULITY

CREDULITY is a characteristic to be found the world over ; and tricksters who thrive on that credulity are to be found in every country. On the Continent and in America the cleverest business magnates often fall to the confidence man, even though they are the victims of a swindle whose main lines hardly vary.

But in India the very atmosphere is conducive to trading on credulity, for not merely is the country peopled with such a host of illiterate and simple villagers, but the way in which even the educated classes are so steeped in religion and dogged by superstition, makes deception extraordinarily easy. Of course, this atmosphere charged with superstition necessitates the adoption of different methods from those used by the swell trickster in the luxurious London or Paris hotel, but in general working the principle remains the same, namely, offering something for nothing. On that foundation, all of India's tricksters work, no matter whether they be fake magicians, quack doctors, miraculous turners of brass into gold, clever doublers of notes, interpreters of dreams, finders of hidden treasure, or mere charlatans who make the most of any special opportunity. Usually they "work" the rural areas, because it is there that they find the most credulous material on which to try their schemes ; but those who have studied their methods know that they are just as successful with the avaricious town merchant as they are with the simple

rustic who honestly believes that the smiling visitor is a messenger from the gods with concrete evidence of their favour.

In this chapter it is intended to relate some of the regular methods of fleecing the credulous Indian public, and although many of the cases may appear absurdly simple, it must be remembered that the most successful tricks of the confidence men in England seem just as childish when they are exposed—so childish, indeed, that one wonders how a business magnate, for example, could ever be duped by the share gamble, or the philanthropic home stunt, or the gentleman who wants to be shown the sights and merely wants a little cash to pay current expenses.

A simple introduction will be to relate three tales of tricksters as told one night by a police officer as ordinary illustrations of how India's deceivers work; tales which will reveal that it needs sound common sense, keen knowledge of human nature, and a criminal turn of mind rather than scholastic education to become a successful garnerer of other people's golden harvest in India.

"What do you want?" asked a prosperous cultivator of three strangers who approached and saluted him as he sat in the shade of a mango tree supervising the work of the rustics on his farm.

"See the pretty pictures!"—or words to that effect, replied the visitors, as they flashed in the cultivator's face a large packet of obviously forged ten-rupee notes. The man under the tree grew interested, and his eyes glistened as the strangers insidiously propounded a fool-proof get-rich-quick scheme which was so marvellously simple. "Send your servant to the bazaar to change this," said the three men as

they extracted the only genuine ten-rupee note in the packet ; and whilst the servant was gone they quickly showed the man inks, acids, bank paper, and all the paraphernalia of the forger's trade, with which the one note was said to have been made. " All we want is capital, just capital, and then," urged the strangers, " we shall be able to make even one-hundred rupee notes in unlimited numbers." Meanwhile the servant returned with ten shining rupees, telling his master that he had no difficulty whatever in changing what the visitors said was a home-made note similar to hundreds which they would soon be able to make. Is it any wonder that the cultivator fell for the trick? He advanced the men a large sum of money as capital on the advantageous terms of fifty-fifty ; and off they went to buy the necessary materials. Of course, they never returned, and it later transpired that they were not even real forgers, but merely common cheats who had purchased their stock-in-trade from forgers and were wandering about trading on that greatest of human weaknesses, cupidity.

Story number two is just as simple.

" Pamu, pamu ! " screamed the Brahmin occupiers of a house, wringing their hands as they rushed helter-skelter into the street. " Snake, snake ! "

In the street, by welcome coincidence, they ran into a party of Pamulas, members of a wandering tribe who practise snake-charming. To them the Brahmins made urgent and pathetic appeal : " It is a big cobra. We cannot kill it ourselves, nor let it be killed. So come into the house and catch it for us." For a time the Pamulas demurred, shaking their heads dubiously ; but after money had been brought into the discussion and a bargain struck, some of them eventually entered the house whilst the others stayed outside with

much muttering of sacred phrases, and the playing of weird strains on reed instruments. A great deal of melodramatic peering about resulted in the fanged cobra being caught,—to be quickly returned to the basket-home which it had left not so long before when the crafty Pamulas had quickly slipped it through a window into the Brahmin's house. A common trick, that, but one which is often found successful, in a slightly different form, with a frightened European *memsabib*, who has been told by her servants that there is a snake in the garden and that it must be caught before it bites the children. At a price, the snake is caught,—by its regular owners ; and the servants and the catchers share the spoils.

The third story is likewise almost too simple to be listed as a confidence trick ; but it is so common and so successful that it must find its place. As the train slid into the crowded railway junction, a smartly-dressed townsman, complete with coloured socks and suspenders showing beneath his snowy dhoti, turned to a worried cultivator seated beside him in the third-class compartment and said : “ Come, brother, I will take thee to thy connexion train. May thy holy pilgrimage prosper and may the gods be good unto thee ! ” There was an hour to wait for the connecting train, and in that period the cultivator chatted freely with his new friend, even telling him how he was making the pilgrimage in the hopes of obtaining the gods' assistance in improving the health of his son and the state of his crops. With grateful thanks, the cultivator finally said good-bye to the townsman ; but the train was hardly out of the station before the latter was at the desk of the local telegraph office sending off the following telegram to the wife of the talkative cultivator : “ Pocket picked. Stranded. Wire me fifty rupees Wadza Post Office.

Also news of Ratnam's health and whether rain yet fallen." Then, turning to the clerk, he said, "I will wait here for a reply, so that you will have no difficulty in identifying me." The good wife in the far-away village saw sufficient proof of authenticity in the telegraphic mention of the son's health and the old man's anxiety about the expected rain to justify her sending the money; but when her husband returned home a fortnight later, they discovered the trick that had been played on them. Thus was one more telegraphic money order swindle added to the ever-growing list, almost hopeless of detection, in the police records of India.

So endeth the three tales of the policeman. But his simple stories will merely initiate the reader into the methods and schemes of the Indian trickster who thrives so splendidly on the credulity of the people. Many of the tales which follow will be full of tragedy, as they will reveal a life's savings cruelly stolen from trusting villagers; others will have a touch of humour about them as one wonders how people could ever be so foolish as to put themselves so readily into the hands of those who can tell such ridiculously futile stories. Yet it must ever be remembered that these are true-to-life incidents of modern queer India, where simplicity is linked with superstition, and both are bathed in religious fervour.

And through it all the thought persists, if they are so easily duped in matters of everyday life and on points in which they are experienced, how much more easy will it be, in the future, for political adventurers to dupe them and obtain their votes by merely claiming to be especially deputed by the gods to be their elected representatives!—and backing up that claim with some simple conjuring tricks so dexterous as to appear like a miracle to those credulous village folks on whom the franchise is to be conferred.

Gold from Heaven

Money for nothing ! Rupees from heaven ! How natural it is that simple villagers should be deceived by the fakir who, with two disciples, one morning appeared in the village of Gojra, near Multan, and seated himself, in the traditional manner of fakirs, in the heart of the village with all the appearance and appurtenances of a travelling holy man. Before long a few small boys had gathered around him, chatting and hoping with all the curiosity of childhood. Imagine, therefore, their amazement when suddenly the holy man held up his hands to heaven and literally produced a shower of rupees, which he distributed among the boys. The good news speedily spread, and within an hour a large crowd of villagers encircled the fakir and his two disciples. The magic shower of rupees was brought down again by the mere raising of the fakir's hands to heaven, followed by unbounded delight as the coins were distributed among the fortunate spectators.

Thus did the fakir establish a reputation for piety,—not, of course, only by reason of his generosity (for what does a holy man want of money or wealth ?), but because the gods thought him so religious as to permit him to perform miracles. The entire village became his followers, whilst day after day he harangued them and told them that he was especially deputed by God to help them all out of their troubles. With full faith in his claim—for had they not with their own eyes seen him bring money out of heaven ?—they accepted every word, so that when one morning he hinted that he could change silver ornaments into gold, and one-rupee coins into five-rupee notes, there was a mighty rush to find him the wherewithal to show more of his powers. Villagers ran

into their huts and fields and dug up their hoarded wealth ; visitors from neighbouring villages hurried breathlessly to their homes to do the same thing, so that when evening came, the holy man and his disciples had a store of over £1,000 in ornaments and cash waiting for the sign from the gods that all was ready for the miracle. But no sign came that night,—and when the villagers awoke next morning and went to pay their usual sunrise homage to the fakir, they found his resting-place vacant. The holy trio had vanished with all the wealth of the gullible villagers who had tried to do what hundreds of more experienced folk of other countries had also unsuccessfully tried to do. Few people nowadays can get-rich-quick,—except people like the fakir and his two disciples. Simple ? Yes, amazingly so ; but quite understandable when one realizes the implicit faith these people have in their so-called religious advisers.

Another gentleman who could get money for the mere asking was the Lahore trickster who persuaded his neighbours that he had the power to force the spirits to multiply sums of money placed in a sealed box. All went well until he overstepped the mark by taking £75 from a friend on a promise that he would make the ghosts of his ancestors turn it into £350. And the failure of the spirits to redeem the promise of their earthly mentor resulted in the trickster getting eighteen months' hard labour.

Doubling Money

Probably the most common of all confidence tricks in India is the note-doubling scheme. It has various forms, but is always based on the boast of the performer to increase the number of currency notes in a box. For example, Sundararaja was introduced into the home of a well-to-do contractor

of Tinnevely, as a man who had discovered a special way of making a fortune. Without any demur, he gave an exhibition of his powers. Borrowing a five-rupee note from his host, he put it in a trunk, said a prayer over it, and then asked those present to look inside the box. What a surprise! The single note had turned into fourteen currency notes. Sundararaja waited a few days. He then told his host that he could do even more if he had larger money, and offered to turn £75 into £375. But his host could only raise £60, and so for three days the visitor wrestled with the problem of making money grow spontaneously, although all the time the contractor kept a watchful eye on the so-called miracle worker. Finally it was announced that the transformation had taken place. So they all went upstairs to where the trunk with its precious contents had been placed adjacent to the family deity. But this time when the box was opened, it contained only ashes and burnt paper, which Sundararaja explained by saying that as the master of the house had not recently given liberally to charity, the gods were displeased with him and had concealed the money. This, however, did not satisfy the merchant, and when the police were called in, they found the notes hidden among the tiles. Nor did the magistrate accept the contention that the gods in their displeasure had put them there, and Sundararaja got six months' hard labour and a fine of £25.

In pulling off this note-doubling trick with illiterate villagers, two confederates usually enter the village, one man and one woman. The man does the talking and the initial demonstrations, and then, when the woman has collected the villagers' notes all ready for "doubling," a special ceremony is gone through to bless the experiment. The woman is then told to shake the box. She does so; but when it is opened, only

ashes fall out, whereupon she is soundly berated, and even mildly beaten, by her accomplice for having "spoiled" the miracle. With apologies and expressions of regret, they then pass on, having scored anything up to £7 10s. for their day's work. As an alternative, one of the women of the village is sometimes asked to shake the box, and, of course, she gets the whole of the blame for the notes having turned to ashes,—a crime for which she suffers not a little, both from her husband and from her neighbours who have lost owing to her alleged carelessness.

Hard cash can also be multiplied in much the same way. Here is a typical case. A woman named Tabu introduced a male friend named Buta to a number of women in a Lahore suburb, declaring that he was a very holy fakir who, by his saintly powers, could double and treble any money or jewellery which was given to him. Within an hour or two he was well supplied, and so, at a given signal, he told the donors to recite a small prayer whilst they counted twenty-seven beads with their eyes shut, after which their wealth would be doubled or trebled according to their will. The recitation took about ten minutes, and when they looked up with hopeful eyes, the fakir had vanished. When arrested Buta had in his possession about £100 in cash and jewels worth about £400, all taken from poor people.

Magic Made Easy

Some one has stated that there are ten thousand professional magicians in India, touring the country and fleecing the rural population. If anything, that estimate is low,—for it is an easy thing to be a magician in queer India. Just learn one or two sleight-of-hand tricks of which not even the veriest amateur western conjurer would boast, and, hey presto! you

are ready to earn a handsome living as a result of your specially endowed powers. You can cure sick people with your magic herbs and charms ; you can help wives regain the affection of their wayward husbands ; you can drive out evil spirits ; you can even earn a substantial sum by pretending to murder a tiresome relative.

Here are a few examples.

This first little incident actually happened in India in 1931, but surely it ought to be told like this :—

Once upon a time there was a woman who had two sons, who were always quarrelling. “ My sons,” she would say, “ don't quarrel so much ! ” “ No, mother,” they always replied. Then they quarrelled worse than ever.

In desperation, the unhappy mother summoned Muthuchakrapani the wizard of Mayavaram, famous for his supernatural powers, magician and astrologer, hardworking exorcist of evil spirits and finder of hidden treasures. Muthuchakrapani muttered and groaned when he heard the sorry story. “ You have a devil in the house, who not only guards a treasure but lives in the bodies of the two sons,” he decided. “ I will cast the evil one out,—for 750 rupees,—and,” as his eyes rolled round the woman's kitchen, he added, “ and those brass pots.”

He departed—with the rupees and the brass pots.

Shortly afterwards, he sent word that he must have some more money if the mother's favourite goddess was to be appeased, and the treasure be revealed. So he was sent more money. The two sons continued their quarrelling. The hidden treasure remained hidden. And Muthuchakrapani the Wizard suddenly took up his residence elsewhere, calmly saying that apparently the evil spirit had expected a larger payment than a paltry £75.

Pandurang's wife was suffering from a chronic disease,

which no doctor could cure. One day he met a *sadbu* in Bombay who not only "miraculously" informed him of his wife's actual condition but offered to cure her. Pandurang took the *sadbu* home, fed him on the choicest food, and permitted him to recite his holy prayers over the suffering woman. Next day she appeared a little better, and, seizing his opportunity, the *sadbu* said that he could completely cure her if only Pandurang would allow him to take the wife's ornaments into a closed room to perform a special religious ceremony over them. "And whilst I am there, you eat this," said the *sadbu* to the man as he gave him a piece of sweetmeat. When Pandurang recovered from his drugged state three hours later, the *sadbu* was gone with the ornaments. A week later, however, he was caught repeating the performance in a village one hundred miles away.

"Fold your hands. Close your eyes. And I will recite the sacred and miraculous prayers." This was the recipe of another magic healer who made a good living in Bombay. This particular magician, however, always found that the gods would not permit him to recite the prayers unless the recipients of their favours first placed a sum of money of not less than £20 in his hands. The consulting-rooms of doctors and the out-patients' department of the hospitals were carefully watched for gullible-looking Hindus who were obviously very sick, and then, through an accomplice, the magician obtained sufficient access to the sufferers to be able to tell them that he could cure any disease by magic. The terms of treatment having been settled (minimum £20), the magician took his new patients out into a lonely place under a banyan tree, made the patient place the money under a coco-nut shell placed over mystic marks on the ground, and then solemnly said: "Fold your hands. Close your eyes." By the time

the patient became sufficiently curious to peep out of one corner of a half-opened eye, the magician and the money, but not the disease, had disappeared.

Here is a far more elaborate scheme which includes a spectacular "murder" by magic. Whilst out walking one morning, Ramrao met two strangers who got into conversation with him. When they all became better acquainted, the two men, Luxman and Bhima, asked him casually if he knew a good magician, as they had heard that a very rich merchant was in urgent need of one to carry out a small task, for which he would pay £1,500. Ramrao replied that unfortunately he did not know anything about magicians, although he had heard that some of them were very clever. "Well, never mind," said Luxman as they left, "we will tell the merchant that we cannot help him, although," added Bhima, "it is a pity, because he was prepared to pay handsomely for any help we could give in finding one."

So they parted.

Two weeks later Ramrao met another man named Raoji, who also casually got into conversation with him. Suddenly Raoji was accosted by a passer-by who was obviously in a great hurry, and after a mysterious whispered conversation, Raoji returned to Ramrao, commenting that he was very glad he had met that old friend, because it meant another chance of earning money. Interested, Ramrao asked Raoji what his profession was. Raoji replied: "Oh, I am a magician, that's all." Here was Ramrao's opportunity, so he begged Raoji to go home with him so that he could get into touch with his other friends who so badly needed the services of a magician. By sheer "coincidence," however, they met Luxman and Bhima ten minutes later, and so the four men retired to a café to talk things over.

Luxman, however, wanted good proof that Raoji was really a good magician, so an exhibition was staged the next day in which Bhima was "killed" by magic, necessitating the payment of £1 by Ramrao to bring him back to life. This little stunt so impressed Ramrao that he insisted on their getting into immediate touch with the rich merchant. So next day Raoji and Ramrao were told that the "small job" was merely the murdering of the merchant's adopted son by magic within three days. If they agreed, the £1,500 would be paid in advance. So in the afternoon Luxman brought to Ramrao a man who was introduced as the cashier of the merchant, carrying a bundle containing, so they said, the £1,500. With the recognized caution of an honest cashier, however, the man said he could not part with it unless Luxman and his friends paid him £3 10s. for stamps and £100 as deposit and commission. Ramrao was therefore induced to supply half this amount, and so he returned home for the cash, from which he paid £3 10s. to Luxman for the stamps and £50 to Bhima to give to the cashier.

That, of course, ended the story, until the police arrested Luxman, Bhima, Raoji and the cashier on a charge of cheating.

Now for the story of the two magicians and a wealthy money-lender, named Gangabishen, who was unfortunately not on good terms with his mother owing to litigation connected with the family estate. Driven to distraction at the thought that his mother might make other arrangements for the disposal of her wealth when she died, Gangabishen confided his troubles to a Hindu quack doctor, who comforted him by saying that he would guarantee to help him regain the affection of his angry mother. So he introduced him to a man named Sivanna from a district famous for the production of wise men, and Sivanna demonstrated in various ways

that he really had the magic power to bring about the reconciliation, if only the moneylender was prepared to pay him for his trouble. Gangabishen fell into the trap and agreed to pay £150 to the magician and the quack doctor on the day that he found a change in the attitude of his mother.

Without any delay the magician got to work, and performed daily incantations at Gangabishen's house and shop. After about three days a boy came riding post-haste to Gangabishen with the news that his mother had been suddenly taken ill and wanted to see her son at once. Gangabishen was about to hasten to his mother's side when he was stopped by the magician who, after impressing upon him that his mother's summons was a direct result of his magical powers, reminded him of the agreement and demanded payment of the fee of £150. The money-lender in his turn asked them to remember that he said he would gladly pay the money after he had seen his mother and proved that she really was reconciled. But the magician and his accomplice, however, were insistent that he should first pay their fee as agreed, hinting that if he did not the magic might be used to return to the *status quo*. After some haggling on both sides, Gangabishen gave the men £30 and promised to pay the balance on his return. He then dashed off to his mother's house, only to find not only that his mother was in the best of health but that she was so much her old self that she slammed the door in his face as soon as she caught sight of him. Disappointed and furious at having been swindled, Gangabishen hurried back to his own home, to find, of course, that the magician and the doctor had done the disappearing trick.

There are whole tribes of wandering magicians, such as the Gachials, for example, who, although feeble and half-

witted folk, practise comparatively harmless deceptions in outlying villages, mulcting the villagers of little more than a daily ration of food. But another tribe of deceivers prove a little more dangerous, for they deliberately set out to prey upon the superstitious element in the average rural inhabitant, and a description of their methods might well be inserted here.

Having arrived in a village, the leader of the tribe will first select a good pitch and then, by various popular methods, collect a crowd, who stand agape at his grotesque attitudes and his queer incantations by which he proclaims himself a master magician.

In the meanwhile a boy (a confederate) faints inside or on the edge of the crowd. The magician goes to the boy, bends over him, and then declares that the evil has been wrought by another magician who is somewhere in the crowd. The man is challenged to declare himself. After a while a man (another confederate) steps out. The two glare at each other and employ what in the law courts would be styled abusive language. Taunts follow the abuse, and presently the gaping audience hear the two magicians challenging each other to a demonstration of strength. "I can hurt you, but you can't hurt me," shrieks the first magician. "You try," shrieks the second. On that word, the first man plucks from his pocket a handful of mustard seeds and throws them upon the other. The latter, thereupon, cries out in great agony, pretending to be stricken to the death. After a minute or two of rather remarkable acting and with perspiration pouring down his face, the second magician is prepared to admit that the first has by far the greater powers.

Then the real business side of the scheme commences. The spectators have been so impressed by the power of the

TRADING ON CREDULITY

magician that when he starts to sell amulets and charms there is a tremendous rush. There are amulets for curing diseases, for preventing accidents, for guaranteeing the birth of a son, for winning law cases, for procuring the death of an enemy, for obtaining a beautiful bride, for passing examinations, for getting a government job, and for even making the tax-collector forget the house of the amulet-wearer and pass by on the other side.

Stunts such as these, moreover, are not confined to the country districts, for the game has often been played in large cities like Calcutta, Delhi, Lahore, and Bombay, and educated folk like barristers, professors, doctors and students are always among the most eager buyers.

In some respects, of course, there is very little difference between the charm or amulet purchased in gullible faith by an illiterate villager and the mascot which a world-flyer carries on his plane to help him establish a record. In fact, one very great authority insists that mascots are the product of civilization and not of superstition; but in western lands mascots are worn more out of fun and sentiment than in any honest belief that they will really be efficacious; and even if there are a few definitely superstitious folk who candidly believe that bad luck will dog them if they forget their lucky hoodoo, confidence tricksters in other lands could never make a fortune out of selling such charms.

Moreover, in law the amulet-seller in India frequently comes out on top. The case of Shib Dayal certainly proved that. Shib was one of those men who could never keep out of trouble, and when he came out of jail after serving his third sentence, he looked about him for an easy way of making money. Knowing his fellow-men well, he journeyed to a shrine in the Hardoi district which had a peculiar sanctity

amongst a certain section of Indians. At the shrine he collected sundry small pieces of brick, which he sewed up in cloth handkerchiefs, and sold at a farthing each in his home-town as amulets. One of his customers had the temerity to open up the package, and on finding only a piece of ordinary brick promptly reported the scheme to the police. Shib Dayal was arrested and sentenced to five years' hard labour, but on appealing to the Allahabad High Court found a judge who took a totally different view of the case. Said Justice Pullan :—

“What the purchaser expected to get for one pice in the way of an amulet does not appear, but why a piece of brick, alleged to have been brought from a reputed shrine, should not be as efficacious in curing diseases as many of the fraudulent specifics advertised daily in the newspapers is not easy to say. There is a demand for quack medicines and amulets all over the world, and the people who meet that demand are only doing what the people wish them to do and pay them to do. There is no misrepresentation except the misrepresentation produced by the credulity of the public. Nobody takes any action against persons who advertise in the newspapers their so-called specifics, but this wretched man has been sent to jail for five years because he is an ex-convict and because he made the mistake of trying to sell amulets in his own district. Had he gone farther afield he might have derived greater sanctity in the eyes of the public, and I have no doubt that many persons would have believed themselves cured of their ailments by the use of his amulets.”

So lucky Shib won his appeal and was acquitted, and thus with the sanction of the High Court of Allahabad was permitted to collect more chunks of sacred brick, wrap them around with rainbow-hued cloth, and sell them as the finest

disease-curer yet known. Quackery and charlatantry? Yes; but not illegal—in queer India.

Perhaps the greatest number of “faked” advertisements especially designed to entrap the credulous are those which profess to cure snake-bite, probably because that is such a common form of death in India. Hundreds of so-called magical antidotes and cures are on the market, many of them taking the form merely of charms and marvellous remedies “resurrected from ancient India.” Some remedies, of course, are more tangible than mere amulets; but these generally prove less magical than they are proclaimed to be.

In order to show his special powers as a snake-charmer who could either prevent or cure snake-bites at will, Dasarathi Kajuria gave frequent demonstrations of his art in the large village of Bhandimal in Bengal, attended by hundreds of awe-stricken villagers from all around. He even went so far as to distribute free doses of his *gada*, or snake venom, claiming that one draught would give immunity from the bite of any kind of reptile or insect. After about a week, the villagers were so convinced of Dasarathi's powers that they willingly produced a boy of twelve as a subject for a practical demonstration of his medicine-charm, and amidst a large crowd of chuckling villagers, poor Ujal was forced to let a cobra bite him. But the *gada* failed to work. Even the holy prayers and incantations of the charmer failed to work. Within three hours the boy was dead, and within three weeks Dasarathi was sentenced to seven years' hard labour on a charge of culpable homicide for his novel advertising display.

A problem in mental healing, or excess credulity, is produced by the story from South India that two marvellous cures

of snake-bite were brought about by a mere message of encouragement sent over a telegraph wire. According to the story, which is accepted by thousands of people, two passengers were bitten at a wayside railway station. A Mr. Narasayya, who was in charge of a railway station more than one hundred miles away, and who is a reputed snake-bite healer, was informed of the incident by telegram, and after sitting down and thinking for about five minutes, he sent back a telegram stating that both of his patients would soon be restored to health. And, says the story, within fifteen minutes of receiving that encouraging message, both of the men suddenly sat up and walked home, although they had been unconscious for several hours. It is further claimed on behalf of Mr. Narasayya that he has many such cures to his credit and that he has never received a penny for his work.

Treasure Hunting

India has always been a land of buried treasure, and hence it is not surprising to find that the confidence men trade to the full on the knowledge that almost every peasant has the belief that buried somewhere underground in the vicinity is some ancient hoard of gold or ornaments. A large proportion of the illiterate, and not a few of the educated, people even to-day keep their money and jewels buried for safety rather than trust them to a bank ; and in the long-established custom is a wonderful opportunity for those who make it their profession to trade on the cupidity which is in all of us. In other words, the Indian villager is as ready to take a chance of obtaining a hidden fortune at a spot pointed out to him by a travelling treasure-finder as most of us are to spend a few shillings on buying a ticket in the Irish or Calcutta Sweep. But in many cases the methods adopted in queer

India are a bit more spectacular than the mere buying of a ticket under a *nom-de-plume*. Here are some examples.

Two snakes made of gold and over £150 in cash formed the price demanded and received by a Delhi astrologer and palmist from a wealthy Cawnpore contractor to unearth a hidden treasure which existed nowhere except in the astrologer's fertile imagination. On the pretext of finding this hidden wealth at a spot "pointed out by the gods in a dream," Vaishnav Varma persuaded the contractor, Joti Prasad, to let him organize the treasure hunt. Joti agreed. The first step, however, was to perform the necessary *puja* (religious ceremony) to placate the spirits who were guarding the wealth. So Joti handed over £25. A few days later the astrologer confided to Joti that he had learned from occult sources that there were two deadly snakes guarding the treasure and that to bring them under control before digging was commenced, it would be necessary to have two snakes made of pure gold. Lured by the vision of untold wealth, Joti had the golden serpents made and delivered to Varma, adding a purse containing £75 in order to expedite the discovery of the money. Then one night Varma had a dream which showed him that with another £75 the gods could be so propitiated that the treasure would appear almost at once. So Joti entered another £75 on the debit side of this venture. But next morning his dream of gold was shattered when he found the astrologer, the gold snakes, and the money all missing. Varma was sentenced to nine months' hard labour of which two were in solitary confinement, and a fine of £75; but Joti got not a penny back.

This method of obtaining substantial advances to "persuade" the spirits, or the gods, to part with hidden treasure is common all over India, and seldom fails to be successful.

Tricksters often work out the most elaborate schemes of deception, such as the case in Kurnool, where a money-lender was double-crossed in a remarkably easy manner. Vaigandla Rangayya had loaned £30 on a mortgage bond to a neighbour named Muktojir, and £15 to the wife of another named Dilaver. As they refused to make payment he threatened to file a suit against them, whereupon they turned up at his house one night and promised to unearth for him a box of treasure which they assured him was hidden in his grounds. Vaigandla was so delighted at the news that he promised to give them a fourth share for their labour. For several days the two debtors went through a process of incantations and ceremonies, and one morning at 2 a.m. they took Vaigandla into the family *puja*, or worship room, showed him the rim and mouth of a brass vessel, and said that *puja* was necessary for a week more before the treasure would be revealed. The money-lender fell a prey to their scheme, and immediately executed, in the presence of the family goddess, two promissory notes, one for £60 in favour of Muktojir and one for £30 in the name of Dilaver. The days rolled by; and the regular *puja* was continued. By this time Vaigandla was so enthusiastic about the wealth that he was going to get, and so certain of getting it, that out of sheer avarice to obtain the best bargain from the two who had been promised a quarter of the treasure, he agreed with their suggestion to endorse full satisfaction on the mortgage bonds in return for the promissory notes which had been executed in their favour. But that night the mortgage bonds and the promissory notes were stolen from his room, followed by the usual disappearance of the two debtors. Contrary to the attitude of many of those who are duped in this fashion, Vaigandla reported the whole story to the police, and although he did not get

his money back, or his mortgage bonds, he had the satisfaction of seeing both his deceivers sentenced to one year's rigorous imprisonment, and a fine of £3 10s.

Stories of hunts for hidden treasure, however, must not be regarded as always being wild-goose chases. Very frequently there is sufficient credibility about them to encourage considerable support from influential quarters. Dewan Luxmichand of Multan, for example, had revealed to him by a wandering hermit that there was a treasure amounting to £125,000,000 lying just ten feet below the surface at a spot in Bahawalpur State. So the Dewan and His Highness the Nawab of Bahawalpur signed a contract that the treasure should be dug for. The Dewan was to bear the costs of the excavations in return for seven-sixteenths of the treasure when found. And so commenced a treasure hunt the like of which has never before been staged, even in the queer land of India ; but up to the time these words are being written, no treasure has been found. It is interesting to note, however, that the site of this supposed treasure is located in the midst of the desert on the track which Alexander the Great took when he came to India, and the present writer, who is one of the few Europeans who have ever visited it, certainly received a thrill when he trod on such historic soil, little dreaming then, of course, that somewhere beneath the glittering sands was a colossal fortune merely waiting to be picked up.

Similarly, in the State of Sangli in western India, there was commenced at the same time a search for buried wealth said to amount to several millions of rupees, an agriculturist named Shivalingappa of the village of Marihal having been informed by an occult *sadhu* from Madras that a great store of wealth was lying hidden in the forest. But after months of digging, ending only in 1932, the wealth was not found.

Exploiting Gandhi's Name

Here are a few stories selected at random from the newspaper scrapbook which lies before the writer as he makes his survey of India's tricksters, which for simplicity, ingenuity, and heartlessness, will be hard to equal.

Making but passing mention of the great ease with which men can most successfully travel among the villages collecting for such charitable objects as new temples, wells, *ashrams*, and relief funds, reference must be made to the way in which the magic name of Mr. Gandhi has been exploited to the full. Until recent months a *khaddar*-clad "volunteer" need only walk into a village saying that he was one of Gandhi's workers, to obtain free board and lodging for as long as he liked to stay. If he suggested that he was collecting money to further "the great cause of the Mahatma," he had only to open a notebook with a few names in it to collect anything up to £3 10s. The villagers probably knew nothing of the "cause." All they knew was that Gandhi was a magic name which they must honour by giving their mite; and so all over India bogus collectors made a fat living out of the halo which surrounded the name of Mr. Gandhi.

One such example might be given, and although the subsequent prosecution showed that the collector was a little too greedy in his methods, the fact remains that it revealed a very popular form of cheating. As the magistrate said: "Systematic frauds of this nature are committed on the unsuspecting public by exploiting their sentiments in the name of humanity and religion, and the name of Mr. Gandhi is invoked to lend it an importance and grace to make the propaganda workable." The accused, Brahma Din, was collecting funds for a Gandhi Ashram Orphanage, and exhibited

printed appeals (supposed to be signed by Mr. Gandhi), and also a receipt book in duplicate for acknowledging all sums over eight annas. Had Brahma Din been satisfied with his eight-anna pieces, he might still have been amassing a small fortune, but when a resident of Allahabad gave him a five-rupee note out of which to take the requisite eight annas, Brahma felt the urge to get rich even quicker, so he decamped with the whole sum. When arrested, he confessed that he was but one of several who were carrying out the scheme. In sentencing him to six months' hard labour, the Indian magistrate said: "This is a nefarious practice and should be thoroughly condemned. How long the system has been in vogue, who are at the bottom of it, and how many innocent persons have been duped are not, however, known."

Another interesting case connected with the name of Mr. Gandhi was the result of a scheme whereby public competitions were run with entrance fees. Although the resultant police-court case went in favour of the accused, it is worth noting that amongst other contests advertised by the promoter was one called the "Gandhi-Nama-Koti," or "writing Mr. Gandhi's name" many times. One man said he sent in a parcel of books with Mr. Gandhi's name written 17,000 times whilst another had given up at the 12,000 mark. But both accompanied their entries with the five-rupee fee demanded. The prizes offered ranged from £75 to £3 10s.

Whoever heard of a suit being taken to court against a goddess? India can produce just such cases. A prominent man, who can be called Harilal B, had for years yearned for a son. A friend of the same caste, Harilal S, comforted him by declaring that his own special goddess would satisfy all

desires if properly propitiated. So first vows, then ornaments, and finally money were placed before this insatiable deity ; and whilst the offerings kept disappearing, Harilal B's wife languished and died. Whereupon he visited Harilal S and demanded the return of his money and jewels from the goddess, who had not merely failed to give him his heart's desire but who had actually taken his wife from him. Apparently impressed with the justice of his namesake's demand, Harilal S returned the money ; but immediately fell down in a supposed trance before the goddess and, purporting to speak in her name, threatened the early ruin of Harilal B unless £350 was immediately forthcoming. Properly scared, Harilal B said that as he did not possess so much money, he was prepared to sign a promissory note in the joint names of the goddess and Harilal S. But later, seemingly repenting of his act, he refused to pay up, maintaining that he had been duped into signing the note, and so Harilal S sued him in the Bombay High Court for the money. But the trick did not work, for the judge decided that there was no consideration and that the money could not be recovered.

A case of making the poor poorer came from Madras. One Sunday old Ramanna, a Brahmin priest, was walking down the road when he was accosted by a stranger who told him that at a place near-by, new clothes were been given free to poor Brahmins. As such charity is not unknown in India, Ramanna believed the tale and asked to be shown the place. But as Ramanna was wearing ornaments and rings, the unknown guide advised him to hide them in order to make himself look poor. So producing a cloth and tying something in the corner, the stranger handed it back to Ramanna, having, of course, by sleight-of-hand substituted pebbles for the rings and jewels. He then gave him a fictitious address of the place

where new clothes were being given for old, and quietly turned and walked off in the opposite direction.

No sum is too small for these "opportunist" confidence men to purloin. A seventy-year-old *sadhu*, who had journeyed to Calcutta from the Punjab with the object of achieving his life's ambition of worshipping the god Jagannath at Puri on the occasion of the car festival, had to wait for an hour or two at Howrah station. Whilst there, a passer-by offered to buy his ticket for him, saying that as certain changes had been made in the booking office the *sadhu* would probably miss the train if he tried to find the place himself. Un-suspectingly the *sadhu* gave him the few rupees for a third-class ticket to Puri, and the man returned a few minutes later with a ticket. But when the *sadhu* tried to get into the train, he was soon shown how he had been duped, for he had been given only a platform ticket. Childishly simple, admittedly, but the sort of thing that goes on almost hourly all over India.

Transmutation of metals is, as might be expected, a very favourite form of village "miracle," and hence is one of the most profitable schemes of India's tricksters. The recent world's demand for gold, and the excellent prices obtainable for it, set the confidence men at work in full swing, various methods being adopted according to the credulity of those to be fleeced. In some cases, for example, special envoys toured the villages finding out which people had gold in their possession, and thus prepared the way for their accomplices who followed later with enticing schemes purporting to make the gold worth more. In this connexion the old-fashioned "doubling" stunt was introduced with modifications. The villagers were told that by some special magic power the visiting philanthropist could turn brass into gold by the mere

shaking of the two metals together in a consecrated box. The magician was to provide the brass and the villagers brought out the gold. With the usual incantations and mystic wavings, the villager's gold was placed by the side of the transmuter's brass, and the box securely sealed, with the promise that, by the blessing of the gods, the brass would be turned into gold in about two hours. Certain that their family wealth was to be doubled, the villagers sat by the box and waited the expiry of the stipulated period. Amidst great excitement the box was then opened, but, to the apparent amazement of the transmuter as well as the villagers, the gold had turned into brass instead of the brass turning into gold. With a shrug of the shoulders, the magician told the disappointed villagers that the gods were displeased and that there was nothing else to do but to learn whatever lesson the incident might be designed to teach. "And better luck next time," cried the trickster as he walked out of the village to find another group of people waiting to be duped.

Another "gold" device of confidence men which seldom fails to work in the outlying districts is to sell alloys in place of the real metal. A Madras case showed that even an experienced *marwari* (merchant and money-lender) was deceived to the tune of £35 over an ornament which was said to be pure gold but which turned out, on chemical examination, to contain sixty per cent. of copper.

A bunch of beggar women from Rawalpindi were finally arrested at Lahore after having made a small fortune by selling brass beads as gold beads. Their method was simple. On the first day they would expose real gold beads at a very low price, and after selling a few would substitute brightly polished brass ones to the rest of the ready purchasers.

Land sharks are just as common in India as they are in other countries under the name of real estate agents. There was one such scheme instituted by two men with the express purpose of enabling villagers to become landholders on very attractive terms. After registering the society, the promoters distributed pamphlets and posters throughout the Punjab and other provinces stating that by becoming members of the society land could be secured for 10s. a "square," provided the cash was paid immediately. Comprehensive tours of the villages were arranged, an elaborate series of lectures given, and the promoters themselves travelled long distances dressed in European clothes to convince the enthusiastic villagers that the scheme was authentic. By such means they collected many thousands of rupees without handing over a square inch of land. Fortunately they were found out, and the three leading tricksters went to jail for seven years, two years and one year respectively.

Similarly "People's Banks" and the ordinary "snowball" schemes of western lands have found ready promoters and thousands of supporters in India, although these schemes are run on such well-known "confidence" principles that the police usually get on to their track before they have really established themselves, particularly after an important test case in one province established a precedent.

So gullible, indeed, are the people that it is even a comparatively easy thing to open a bank without any capital, and obtain depositors within a few hours. A typical case was that of two brothers who opened a district branch of the Mangalore "Charitable Bank of India." Depositors poured through its doors, owing, presumably, to the very favourable terms which were offered, and when the police began to investigate, they found that there was no such bank estab-

lished at Mangalore, that the two brothers owned not a penny's worth of property, that their father was insolvent, and that the whole scheme was a bogus one. The cashier, who was appointed after answering an advertisement, fell into the most common of all traps in India by agreeing to deposit a security of £75 before being given the post. (Incidentally it might be mentioned that a survey of well over a hundred advertisements in reputable newspapers over a period of a week showed that more than one half of the posts being offered which demanded deposits as security were undoubtedly of bogus concerns which live entirely on the proceeds of such deposits.) Other "employees" of the bank also paid handsome securities before they were appointed.

A somewhat similar stunt to this was the scheme in which two men instituted a Medical Hall in Lahore and opened up so-called branches in various parts of the Punjab, employing people on cash securities to run them. A goodly sum was obtained by means of these deposits, but no medicines were ever sent to the branches. The Medical Hall then closed down, but the police traced the promotors and they got three years' hard labour each.

Whilst speaking of advertisements, it should be mentioned that the newspapers form a most fertile field of exploration for the tricksters, enabling them to reach the more educated section and fleece them as ingeniously as the villagers are robbed. A hundred examples could be given, but the following might serve as typical, especially when it is noted that it is reported that a large number of replies are received daily, accompanied, of course, by the requisite request for the "interpretation" to be sent by V.P.P. (which is the same as the continental C.O.D.) for one rupee (1s. 6d.). This is the sort of thing which attracts so many in India:—

TRADING ON CREDULITY

IF YOU DREAM

Draw ten unequal lines of ciphers
on a paper. Send this by post. A
correct explanation against Re 1.
by V.P.P.

UNIVERSAL DREAMERS.

For the express purpose of examining the "correct explanation," the writer, through one of his Indian clerks, drew the required ten unequal lines of ciphers; and this was the interpretation which he received for his one rupee:—

Gentle Sir, Thy dream denotes that thou art faithful, but that thou hast full many unfaithful friends.

What value for money!

Here is a tale of a burglary which just failed to succeed. A Bombay merchant had his safe rifled one night, for which two men were arrested. Apparently a third was implicated and expected arrest, so he endeavoured to anticipate police action by appealing to the superstitious side of the wife of the robbed one. He went to the house and said: "I had a dream last night, and some apparition told me the place where your stolen money is hidden. I can recover it for you if you will agree to pay me a good reward." But unfortunately the apparition had been rather unfair to the informer, because it forgot to remind him that, up to the time of his revelation, no one knew of the burglary except the merchant's family, the police, and those who had stolen the money. So burglar number three, sitting in his cell, wished he had not had such a dream.

Confidence tricksters do not always work singly or in small bands. A huge village swindle was very successfully carried out in Hyderabad State by a gang of over 200 low-caste men, women and children. Dividing themselves into groups of eight or ten, they used to move about disguised as peaceful

villagers, hawking grain and foodstuffs which they offered at ridiculously low prices. But whilst the commodity was being weighed out, some members of the party would attract the attention of the purchaser by offering some cheap trinkets or performing some simple conjuring trick, thus enabling the actual salesman to give short weight without being detected. Even after they had gone, it was generally several days before any fraud was noticed, and then it was usually thought that thieves had been helping themselves. This gang of tricksters even "worked" the police lines and the head-quarters of the C.I.D.

The colossal ignorance, or wilful stupidity, of some of the village officers in India is well shown by the story which relates how a village *munsiff*, having received Rs 1,198 in small sums as land revenue, agreed to change a Rs 1,000 note (£75) tendered to him by a stranger who was passing through the village. This Rs 1,000 note was then sent with the balance of Rs 198 to the district head-quarters. But imagine the surprise of the clerk there who found that the supposed currency note bore the inscription "One thousand hearty greetings and thanks," although in other respects it certainly closely resembled a regular Rs 1,000 note. The *munsiff* was sentenced to two months' rigorous imprisonment and a fine of Rs 150, as the Court did not believe his story, although he refunded Rs 1,000 in cash whilst the case was proceeding. The result almost makes one think that if he had not demonstrated that he actually possessed Rs 1,000, he might have got away with his yarn.

Fortune-Tellers

Readers of this chapter will probably be disappointed if no mention is made of the ubiquitous fortune-teller. Of all

places in the world he is at home in India, and although both residents and visitors often obtain a good deal of fun from him, it must be remembered that most of his money is made from the gullible villager. Too much attention need not be paid, however, to the wiles and deceptions of the itinerating tribes-people who take the place of the gypsies of western lands and who will tell all manner of nonsense when their palms are crossed with silver ; but nevertheless their prophecies have a strange psychological effect on the illiterate listeners which is far more dangerous than any monetary loss they may suffer.

That fortune-tellers have a definite place in the life of the people is readily seen by all who tour the country, but an interesting sidelight on their activities is to be found in an Allahabad High Court case in which Rs 50,00,000 (£375,000) is being claimed by Agha Barkat Husain, the grandson of a fortune-teller, on the strength of a prophecy made by his ancestor about the Indian Mutiny as far back as 1854,—three years before it occurred. The grandson, who is 70, hopes, if he substantiates his claim, not merely to lift himself from his state of pauperdom but also to demonstrate that fortune-telling is a family art which is worth untold gold, thereby amply corroborating the claims of his dead ancestor that he was the finest fortune-teller of the nineteenth century. The claim covers a number of villages in the Agra district, and the claimant's contention is that his grandfather had predicted the Indian Mutiny to the ancestors of the present occupants and also told them that they would be richly rewarded by the Government if they rendered loyal service at that critical time. A definite agreement was then alleged to have been drawn up in which it was stipulated that if the prophecy became true, the fortune-teller would receive half

the amount of the reward. Another alleged condition was that if the fortune-teller did not receive his share of the gift within one hundred years, he, or his descendants, would be entitled to claim the entire property received from the Government for the loyal services rendered.

Having obtained permission to sue *in forma pauperis*, Agha Barkat went as far as the High Court. But there he was informed that "the suit was very fanciful," with the result that the defendants were given "protection from harassment at the hands of a pauper from whom no costs could be recovered." It was also held that they were entitled to demand a strict preliminary examination of the claim in order to see whether it disclosed a cause of action.

Fortune-tellers by the thousand lurk in the rural areas, not merely squeezing a few annas from poverty-stricken agriculturists already crushed by a load of debt, but working "schemes" with other charlatans to ensure that the squeezing process is a lengthy one. The poor agriculturist, hoping against hope to hear some good news that he is to receive money, or that he would win a suit against his neighbour, or that a handsome man would come along and buy his daughter in marriage, willingly agrees to give the fortune-teller his fee;—and then will proceed to the quack doctor to buy medicine to prevent the diseases which the fortune-teller has told him will attack him shortly, will go to the money-lender to borrow the money (on interest up to 250 per cent. annually) to prepare for the coming bridegroom, and to the local legal adviser to get him to launch that long-contemplated lawsuit. But he little thinks that if he were to be given a peep behind the scenes, he would see the fortune-teller, the quack doctor, the money-lender, and the amateur lawyer not merely dividing the spoils but planning new ways

TRADING ON CREDULITY

of fleecing another credulous villager next day. And as the majority of these wandering seers of the future are Job's comforters, prophesying most direful happenings, the psychological effect of their trade cannot be estimated. The agriculturist's dismal pessimistic outlook is as much attributable to the jeremiads of the fortune-teller as to his poverty, indebtedness and struggle against religious superstition.

CHAPTER III

SECRETS OF THE MARRIAGE MARKET

IN most countries marriage is a lottery; in India it is an auction.
Here are two stories.

“Oh, why did you not wait?” cried an irate Indian father to his son who had just announced that he had succeeded in securing a handsome bride with a dowry of Rs 2,000 (£150).

“But, Father,” said the youth, “Mother and I have certainly struck a good bargain. You said you badly wanted about two thousand rupees to settle that long-standing family debt.”

“Yes,” bellowed the still angry parent. “I admit that your bride has brought me two thousand rupees as her dowry; but you should have remembered that you are now only a matriculated student. Had you waited until you had secured your B.A. degree, I could have got ten thousand rupees for you as a dowry, which would have been well worth waiting for, even though I should have had to borrow money in the meantime to pay that pressing debt. Why, even as a failed B.A. you would have been worth five thousand rupees to me.”

The scene changes. This time it is a well-known *ashram*, or retreat, in Calcutta, a so-called philanthropic institution which is encouraged by an annual grant from the Government

of Bengal as well as handsome yearly donations from the Calcutta Corporation and a large number of leading citizens of Bengal. According to its announcements, this *asbaram* is a home for destitute and erring girls and women of India, and as such has appealed to many soft-hearted people, with its lady superintendent and many "rescue" facilities.

A feature of the working of this *asbaram* is the effort that is made to find the girls comfortable homes by obtaining husbands for them; and theoretically the plan is a good one. But in actuality the *asbaram* is an authorized and officially recognized marriage market, where girls are forced, by various means, into marrying men who are prepared to buy them for sums varying from Rs 25 up to Rs 500. The amazing details of this selling of brides in the name of philanthropy will be outlined later in this chapter, but it surely is a scandal that the British Government should not merely tolerate, but actually encourage, an institution which, by starvation and beatings and chainings, forces girls to submit themselves to be sold to purchasers from distant towns for sums of two pounds and upwards which figure (sometimes) in the books of the *asbaram* as donations to the funds of this benevolent cause of saving fallen and destitute women.

These two stories show the two extremes of the marriage market in everyday life; and between the two there is to be found an appalling system which reveals that in the majority of the marriages in India the actual ceremony is preceded by a haggling and a bargaining on the part of the parents. Young men are deliberately sold by a generally-accepted system for a dowry which will either pay the family debts, raise the social status of the youth's parents, or merely add to the accumulated wealth of the father. Young women

are sold either to get rid of a superfluous mouth to feed, to give her family a "rise in life," or as just another business transaction by which her parents will benefit, irrespective of her happiness.

It is admitted, of course, that in all countries,—not excluding "civilized" Great Britain and America,—the aristocracy has been redeemed financially by marriage with daughters of our newly-rich commoners just as frequently as the sweet-faced favourites of the stage have been translated on to a higher social plane by marrying into a title. But such instances do not form part of a definite system of marriage auction. The buying and selling of bridegrooms and brides as adjuncts to dowries of English baronial castles and ancient titles is certainly lamentable enough, if unaccompanied by the ordinary feelings of sentiment and love; but not by the wildest application of the pot-calling-the-kettle-black theory can it be compared with the Indian system which is so general, so guarded by tradition, and so ingrained as to make a love marriage among Indians a topic of consternation and amazement for months.

Love and marriage are not affiliated terms in India,—not even idealistically. Marriage is neither the outcome of love, nor does it guarantee to produce love. At the best, marriage is a compact of convenience; at the worst, it is a blunt business transaction. Hence, as a general rule, all life in Hindu India is but a journey to, or a rushing from, the marriage market, where both brides and husbands are bought and sold, where children are auctioned like chattels, and where youth, and particularly feminine youth, is regarded as living produce,—perishable perhaps, but not unreplaceable.

It has been epigrammatically said that the Oriental loves the women whom he marries whilst the Westerner marries

the woman whom he loves. But with India that is only a half truth, for it is a matter of sheer luck if the woman who provided a handsome dowry for his parents ultimately demonstrates to her husband that she possesses those characteristics of body and mind which automatically attract or inspire his love. And as far as the woman is concerned, she may in course of time learn to respect, revere, honour and even admire the man who found her in the local marriage market, but she seldom loves him with that warm affection and holy passion which makes real love marriages in western lands.

In saying this, blame is not necessarily cast on the people of India. Their lives are ruled by custom, caste, and creed, even in this present year. Indian society has its own laws,—but they are laws invariably bound up with religion and caste which provide no scope for real love or free choice in marriage.

It is true, to a degree, that the western idea of marriage is slowly finding a place in the minds of young educated Indians of both sexes. As one young man said on his return from England in May, 1932: "One thing is certain: Indians will not find it so easy in the future to love any women they are forced to marry. The two factors which have contributed to the outward smooth working of the existing machinery of marriage are the practice of early matrimony and women's backwardness in education. Domestic friction arises only when either the husband or the wife does not come up to the ideal the other has in mind. But no such dissension is likely to happen when marriage is consummated before the parties to it are old enough to develop any definite idea of an ideal partner. Since both grow together, there is little chance of their tastes differing to any considerable extent."

One of the results, therefore, of the great modern move-

ments, inspired and inaugurated and controlled by Indians, to improve female education and to raise the age of marriage must necessarily be a production of a series of domestic and social problems which will be even more difficult of solution than any of India's present political puzzles; as they will literally and definitely introduce real love into lives which have never known its full fruition. It has been said of old that love will always find a way; but when the love of man for woman and of woman for man enters the Indian village with all the fervour of a mighty torrent suddenly let loose, then India's social reformers will find themselves faced with an enigma the like of which has not been known in the history of a nation. Love and affection are natural attributes none the less powerful because they have been long dammed up in a national breast by a wall of caste prejudice, human selfishness, and religious law. And it must be remembered that whilst love may be potent, it is also often blind to consequences, so that none can tell where it will finish.

Says a westernized Indian: "It would be calamitous to introduce the western marriage system to Indian society without considering the inconveniences and unhappiness which must result from marriages between individuals belonging to different religious castes or social strata." Surely, only in India could the coming of love into marriage life be definitely characterized as a calamity. It will, however, take many years for love to dominate marital relations in India, despite all the excellent efforts that are being made by Indians themselves to remove what is admitted to be one of the greatest social evils.

In the meantime, through the dowry system, and its many adaptations and ramifications, the marriage mart must and will retain its place, and every ordinary Hindu wedding will

still be the result of a carefully considered financial bargain between the parents of the bride and bridegroom, or their guardians. That bargain may sound dignified and decent when called a dowry, and when neither bride nor bridegroom has any share in the financial proceeds of the sale; but nevertheless, every dowry is the purchase price of a human body.

But it is not with the general dowry system of India that this chapter will deal, for sufficient has been said in the foregoing pages to show that as a general rule marriage to the ordinary youth and maiden is not merely a lottery, but an auction. Seldom does either bride or bridegroom see one another. Their future existence is just bought for them at a price; and the philosophy of it all can be well summed up by an experience of one of the author's own Indian subordinates. He had obtained leave for a fortnight on the occasion of his wedding, but he returned within a week. The reason? Just this, in his own words: "I was disappointed. My wife was both ugly and very black, so I shall not bother much more about her. Never mind, I have done my duty, for her dowry of three thousand rupees [£225] has paid the debt left us by my father, and we shall now carry on as before, with my monthly salary being put into the family pool to pay for my old mother's food and the education of my two younger brothers. My wife can go back to her father's house. He will understand; and as I do not intend to marry again, he will not mind keeping her as long as all his friends know that he was able to marry her off."

And that incident is but one of many thousands which are recorded annually. A philosophy of fatalism, undoubtedly, even in an occasional case; but surely most pathetic when it is realized how universal such a philosophy is in India.

The Auction in Action

In seeing India's marriage mart in action in the unorthodox fashion, it will be easily revealed how the system lends itself to the most appalling abuses, not only in the criminal world of fraud and kidnapping, but also in the social life of India.

The first example will be the *ashram* referred to in the opening paragraphs of this chapter, from which girls are deliberately and cold-bloodedly sold under the very eyes of Government. And lest there be any doubts as to the authenticity of the revelations, the exposure will be practically confined to quotations from a report which was very recently published in the Indian newspaper *Advance* on the workings of the Abala Ashram of Calcutta. Following a series of allegations that girls' shrieks had been heard at 2.30 p.m. on July 15th, 1931, emanating from within the *ashram*, an influential body of Calcutta citizens at a public meeting next day appointed a reliable committee from among themselves to go into the affairs of the institution; and their report was a damning indictment of the general organization which, however, for some unknown reason, received neither the publicity nor the attention it deserved, although in fairness to the Indian Press, it must be stated that at least one prominent Calcutta Hindu paper published the report in full, and others summarized it. The Committee held 26 sittings and examined 61 persons, of whom 18 were female inmates of the *ashram* and 8 were ex-inmates.

Regarding the general running of the Institution, the Committee said that there was much room for improvement, but, serious though the charges were that were levelled in the report against the ordinary administration, this chapter can deal only with its comments on the system of arranging

mariages for at least 179 of the inmates, representing, according to the somewhat incomplete figures in the books, about fifteen per cent. of the total inmates. The Report then goes on :—

“ Attempts were and are made to secure bridegrooms for the girls from the Province of Bengal, but the response from Bengalis has been generally meagre, and we find that only about thirty-three per cent. of the mariages have been with Bengalis.” The majority of the bridegrooms came from Sind and the Punjab. After pointing out that the whole system was wrong, the main Report continues :—

The interval between the proposal and the wedding was in most cases not sufficiently long to enable thorough and sifting inquiries being made or to allow the girls to come to well-thought-out decisions about their future. In some cases there have been complaints that husbands from Sind and the Punjab were thrust upon the girls. In other cases the manner in which the consent of the inmates appeared to have been obtained was such as hardly afforded them time and opportunity to make up their minds in a matter of such great importance to their future. When a proposal for marriage came up, the Members of the Marriage Committee asked the girl if she would marry the person in question. Other members also made inquiries. Such a summary procedure can hardly be said to be satisfactory in the matter of mariages, especially when the girl has no friend or relation to sympathize with her and advise her in her true interest, the few relations who kept any count of her being anxious to get rid of her anyhow.

A little more enlightenment on this “ summary procedure ” is given in another part of the Report which makes the following revelations :—

The evidence of many girls shows definitely that the use of chains on the girls with considerable force was a routine form of punishment resorted to by the Lady Superintendent with the help of the male attendants whenever these girls did not submit to the Lady Superintendent's dictation, be it for household duties or for marriage. From the evidence placed before us it is clear that the Lady Superintendent used to starve the girls for long periods to make them submit to her will.

The medical side of the Committee's report, moreover, reveals abundant evidence of what are termed "brutalities" which came to a head on the afternoon when the girls' shrieks were heard by some passers-by, and the Committee found evidence to show that on many occasions such brutality was an accompaniment to the persuasion of a girl to marry one of the selected bridegrooms.

Turning now to what the Committee members themselves call "the commercial side of these marriages," the Report says :—

Though we find that advertisements were sometimes issued for Bengali bridegrooms, we cannot say that besides occasional advertisements any organized endeavour was made with the help of local Hindu *Sabbas* (or associations) and influential persons and organizations to find suitable persons whom the Bengali inmates could marry. And as for inquiry about the bridegrooms who had proposed to marry the girls, it appeared to us that in some cases the inquiry, if any, was practically nominal or absent.

The gentleman who was acting as secretary for six months when the regular secretary was in jail (for civil disobedience), speaks of only one advertisement being issued during his time, during which period there were five marriages, two with Bengalis and three with non-Bengalis. Dealing specially with the complaint against the *ashram* that they sold the inmates to Sindhis and Punjabis for money, and that men from Sind and the Punjab were preferred by the *ashram* authorities inasmuch as they paid more money for their wives than men from Bengal, the Report says that the acting secretary stated that the terms of payment of money were settled by the secretary alone; whilst Mr. J. S. Sen Gupta, pleader of the Police Court, and member of the Marriage Sub-Committee, who was connected with the *ashram* for six years, says, "The question of contribution to the *ashram*

depends upon the tactics of the secretary in bargaining, and the amount varied accordingly." The Report further states :—

Most of the members of the Marriage Sub-Committee had no knowledge about the payments made by bridegrooms. There is no reference to the donations or contributions in the proceedings of the Marriage Sub-Committee, so far as the same were placed before this Committee. It is also clear that there was no well-defined procedure and that there was room for some irregularity in the matter of the fixing and payment of contributions on the occasion of marriages. There is no doubt that the bridegrooms were asked for donations to the *asbram* on the occasion of weddings, and that the Sindhis used to pay such donations, large or small. The donations given by the Bengalis were small. But the fact of payment of donations almost in every case lends colour to the impression that to the *asbram* there was a commercial side to these marriages.

The various lists of "donations" given by the many bridegrooms were kept in a separate book from that containing the ordinary donations from the public, for although the Committee of Inquiry found that "the denial of facilities and inspection of books and papers has shut out many facts and figures from the public eye," there is no doubt about the outstanding revelation that Rs 4,220 (£310) was realized from the marriages of 24 girls in 1929-30, and Rs 5,910 (£450) from 31 marriages in 1930-31. For the previous years no figures are available; but there is ample evidence to show that equally profitable bargaining with bridegrooms went on. From the figures that were made available, moreover, it is revealed that the purchase figure of the brides varied from Rs 20 (£1 10s.) to Rs 250 (£18 15s.) in 1929-30 and from Rs 20 to Rs 300 (£22 10s.) in 1930-31, the average price per bride being Rs 175 (£13 2s.) and Rs 185 (£13 12s.) respectively.

Another factor which shows how this disposal of brides was carried on along commercial lines is exposed by the following extract from the Report :—

The system of marriage as practised in the *asbram* can hardly be considered to be in accordance with strict Hindu rituals, as in that case the authorities would not have any occasion to take the help of law courts to get these so-called marriages legalized. Many girls did complain about the disproportionate ages of the bridegrooms, and money seemed to be the principal factor in the settlement of marriages. It is curious that the Marriage Committee were not informed by the secretary about the actual amount paid by individual bridegrooms, and that none of the members ever expressed any desire to know the details of the marriage transactions as far as money is concerned.

As a final revelation as to the manner in which this remarkable marriage mart was run, the following paragraph from the Report should be given :—

There is one thing that will appear rather peculiar in the Report, namely, the absence of any statement regarding accounts which ought to have been published, as large sums were collected from the public, the Government, and the Calcutta Corporation for conducting the *asbram*. But the *asbram* authorities all along tried to avoid presentation of documents, papers, proceedings, and accounts as far as they would facilitate the work of the Committee, and the repeated requests for the submission of accounts were not complied with.

The details of this particular *asbram* have been outlined extensively because this institution has been officially recognized by the Government and has all along been regarded by the public as a worthy charity to support. And if such an *asbram* as this is so whole-heartedly condemned as a marriage mart by its own Hindu supporters, the mind almost falters when it comes to think of the financial possibilities of such institutions if they were to be run by definitely unscrupulous people who were really out to profit from the misery of fallen or stolen women.

During the past few months a number of private "abala ashrams" have been started in Bengal by people claiming to be philanthropists who use these so-called homes as hiding-

places for the young girls who have been abducted for the sole purpose of selling them as brides. In one district of Bengal two rival institutions of this nature were started, thanks to the help of a gullible public whose donations provided the necessary finance for the buildings and the food. The organizers' agents kidnapped or lured young girls from the villages, and then did a brisk business selling "young and pretty and accomplished girls as brides" through the advertisement columns of the newspapers, which offer such a fruitful field for this sort of business. But owing to strong rivalry, caused partly by jealousy and partly by double dealing, the Banita Ashram exposed to the police the work which the Abala Ashram was carrying on, with the result that a most interesting criminal case has been started.

But Bengal is not the only province which harbours this regular traffic in brides. Almost every part of India has its branches of this infamous marriage mart, for this kind of trade thrives on so many of the desires of man. In many cases, of course, it is the result of sheer lust, a branch of the white slave traffic made possible and almost legal by the prevailing customs and traditions of India. In other cases, it prospers thanks to the pride of man which makes him ever eager to rise above his ordinary status by marrying into a higher caste. From the Punjab and northern India come the stories which prove how the first need is being supplied, whilst in the Bombay and Madras Presidencies are to be found countless examples of the second.

For example, in April of 1932, an appeal was heard in the Allahabad High Court which brought to light the existence of bogus Widows' Homes in Lahore and other parts of North India. The manager of these "Homes," and his wife, had been arrested at Muttra while they were actually conveying

young girls to Lahore to sell them through the medium of the "Homes." They had been sentenced to five years' and one year's imprisonment respectively, and in dismissing the appeal Mr. Justice Banerji said that "these institutions under the names of Widows' Homes are really the places where the illegal trade of the sale of women in the Punjab has been carried on. This trade must be put down with a strong hand, and the present case proves the lamentable state of affairs of alleged widows' homes run by such people as the accused."

These particular homes were established in Lahore in 1929-30 under the name of "Arya Anath Ashrams." In 1931 four such places were closed down by the police. On an average about 200 girls and women passed through each such home every year, to be sold for sums varying from Rs 150 (£11 15s.) to Rs 200 (£15) each. Each home is an "authorized" matrimonial agency, and the selling business is legalized by the execution of registration deeds, as the claim is made that the inmates are widows for whom the institution is endeavouring to find husbands. The majority of the inmates, however, are unmarried girls who have been abducted from the United Provinces and the Central Provinces and literally terrified into silence by threats that if they do not agree to go to the husband who is found for them, they will be sold as prostitutes or, perhaps a better fate, be silently murdered.

Faked Marriages

Occasionally gangs of about a dozen of these bride-sellers, with agents and ramifications spread all over the country, pull off a big coup by stealing as many as twenty girls from lonely villages and selling them in a totally different part of the country; but the majority of the stories of the workings of

this section of India's marriage market are to be found centring in a man and his wife, or a small group of men, who carefully lay their plans after having selected their victims. Basing their operations on the principle that there is always a price on the head of a girl in India, whether she be ugly or attractive, they first of all secure their commodity and then start their bargaining. From the area made so famous by Mr. Gandhi, namely, Gujerat in the Bombay Presidency, there have of late come tales which show how unmarried girls, especially of the backward and lower communities, have been represented by interested parties as belonging to the respectable and higher classes, and married in large cities for the contracted price paid on delivery of the promised spouse. Tales of this kind abound from Ahmedabad, Surat, and Broach.

In one case, some men and a woman went to the victim and promised to get him a really good wife for about £25. The bargain was struck after a good deal of haggling which extended over a period of a week, a stamped agreement was made out, and the money paid over. In due course the wife arrived, coy and demure as all brides should be. She stayed with her trusting husband for two days, and then, one evening disappeared, having obtained her lord and master's permission to go down into the bazaar, never to return. Her name, appropriately enough, was "Vijli," which means lightning. This particular trick was repeated many times before Vijli and her accomplices were caught and sentenced.

In other cases, of course, the bride is not such a willing participant in the transaction, such as, for example, the one where the purchaser found out that for his £55 he had not only secured a bride who was already married but who had also been fraudulently enticed away from her lawful husband, to whom she most willingly returned.

From Poona comes a real drama of the marriage mart, with a man named Tikam Soma as the villain of the piece who was sentenced to six months' rigorous imprisonment and a fine of £75. In this case a Hindu widow was sold as a virgin to five separate husbands for prices at times running into four figures. Her tale is an amazing one, and reveals just a few more of the wiles of those who profit so greedily by the sale of human bodies. And this particular drama, moreover, has three acts, because the unravelling of the threads of the first mystery exposed other girls who had been sold by the same small gang in much the same manner.

The first act of the drama had scenes laid in several places in western India. On May 3rd, 1931, Surupchand Kushalchand, a wealthy village banker, was informed by his brother that he could find a girl in Poona of whom the brother had heard through the accused. He and his brother accordingly arrived at Poona and were given the choice of four girls, each of whom had a price. Mani was catalogued at £67. As she was the least expensive, Surupchand decided that she would have to do, and after some hard bargaining, the price was dropped to £62, which was regarded by the vendor as being "remarkably cheap," as the girl was declared to be a maiden belonging to a higher caste than that of her future husband. Surupchand paid down £56 in cash and gave a promissory note for the balance, whereupon the marriage was immediately celebrated, with the "happy couple" leaving for the banker's village next morning.

All went well until Surupchand was visited a few days later by a police officer, and it then transpired that Mani was most certainly not a maiden, and that she actually was of a caste lower than that of the man who had purchased her. Seized with mortification at his degradation, Surupchand set about

making arrangements for purifying himself, as his religion laid it down that not only was his bride to be a virgin but that also she must be of the same caste as, or of a higher caste than, himself.

Then Mani let the cat out of the bag, and told a tale which will take a lot of equalling, even in the annals of the marriage market in queer India. She was first married at the age of twelve, became a widow twice during the next ten years, and was deserted by her third husband because he found out she was not of his caste, after she had been sold to him for £67. She then went back to the accused in this case, who had acted as her "manager" in these matrimonial adventures, and he finally palmed her off on to poor Surupchand.

In act number two of this drama, Trikam (yes, pronounced trick-'em) was again charged with an accomplice named Manecklal for the selling of another girl named Ichcha, this time to the brother of a banker from Kurundwad State on the same terms as he had offered Mani, with the exception that the price this time was much higher. The unfortunate purchaser, Deepchand, had agreed to pay £150 for his brother's new bride, believing that she was of an exceptionally high caste, having turned down an offer of an elderly woman for £140. So he returned to his village, borrowed the money by mortgaging his house, and sent it on by post to Trikam at Ahmedabad. Next day Deepchand's brother Chunilal and Ichcha were married, Manecklal performing the ceremony. They had a honeymoon in Poona for a month, but when Trikam returned there he asked Chunilal to look after two more girls, of whom Mani was one. As business in the sale of brides was apparently slack, Trikam let Chunilal and Deepchand feed his three saleable products for four months. Then Mani was married to Surupchand of Act One, and one

day Trikam called for Ichcha and her companion to "take them out." From that day onwards Chunilal lost his bride until the police informed him of the way in which he had been deceived. More annoyed at losing his money than at the way in which he had been made look so foolish, Deepchand asked the police to prosecute, with the result that Trikam has been sentenced to another six months' imprisonment, with a further fine of £75.

Nor was that the only case of its kind during that period in Poona, for within six weeks five such instances of the sale of bogus brides were unearthed by the local police. The *modus operandi* in most of them was practically the same, except that in one of them a girl of 16 was a leading conspirator, inasmuch as she willingly vamped the prospective customer, and then, after marrying him, disappeared with all the family jewels which she had been given by her adoring husband in return for her great kindness in agreeing to marry into a supposed lower caste. In one case the purchase price was £100, and the jewels were valued at £150. Not a bad haul for a group of adventurers from one of the depressed classes! And in another case of a very similar nature, a sixty-year-old pearl merchant was the victim, and his fifteen-year-old bride not merely walked off with the poor old man's heirlooms, but also ransacked his safes of a fortune in pearls and his wardrobes of his rich gold-embroidered raiment. It later transpired that the girl was already a much-married maiden, despite her lack of years.

These marriage-mad old men are, however, very tempting bait for bride-peddlars all over the country. At the same time as the above dramas were being carried out, an old gentleman in one of the suburbs of Calcutta was "fed up," as he expressed it, with his second wife, who was very sickly,

and gave him no children. His first wife had given him four sons and two daughters, and he believed he could teach the second wife a lesson by marrying a third time. So he advertised for a suitable bride. Thereupon five young men approached him with a photograph of a handsome girl, offering to conduct all the necessary negotiations with her parents who lived some distance from Calcutta. Money changed hands, and the youths departed. A few days later they returned and told him that the date was fixed and that more money was needed to complete the preliminary arrangements for the festivities. Again he paid out gladly. But on the day before the wedding was due to take place, the youths came to the old man with tears in their eyes and said that the poor girl had died, and that there could be no marriage. When it was too late, the old man realized that he had been duped.

A more elaborate case in Calcutta which showed both ingenuity and credulity is that in which three brides were victimized by the lure of false university degrees, and although in its essential principles this case is little different from the hundreds which take place monthly throughout the country, it is interesting to note that a very influential Hindu paper, the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, prefaced its account of the police court proceedings with the following strong words: "Pathetic stories of how the lives of three innocent Brahmin girls were blasted in their prime on account of the insensate operation of the universally condemned dowry system which is alleged to have been exploited by a party of five persons who dangled a bridegroom with bogus diplomas before the father of three brides in succession, and extorted huge sums of money from each party, was narrated in the Chief Presidency Magistrate's Court."

The story is a simple one. Banerji, one of the five accused, having forged a series of Calcutta University Arts and Medical Faculty degrees, obtained access, through a professional woman match-maker who was also one of the accused, to several high-class families, into which he was introduced as a Deputy-Magistrate who had resigned during the civil disobedience movement. In this way he ingratiated himself with the parents and guardians of several eligible girls, ultimately obtaining marriage contracts with three of them accompanied by dowries of £375 and over, in addition to cash advances, money for jewels for the bride, and presents for himself. All the accused were jailed.

Traffic in Women Increasing

The most disconcerting feature of this traffic in women is that it is on the increase. As the latest police report of the Punjab says: "In some places the demand for wives among the peasants is said to be so acute that even low-caste women fetch high prices on the sole condition that they adopt the creed of the highest bidder. Provided that the parties are satisfied, no report reaches the police, and so the traffic goes undetected." The business is particularly brisk in such districts as Ambala and Simla, for even the fact that the latter place is the seat of the Government of India for a number of months in the year does not affect the trade. And so serious is the traffic in many districts that a proposal has been officially made that a special staff be appointed to investigate its real nature and to evolve measures, if possible, for its prevention and protection. Says the official record on this point: "In several features traffic in women resembles cattle-theft. The statistics regarding it are so unreliable and furnish no real indication of its extent; to indulge in it brings no disgrace

in the eyes of the public ; reports concerning it are never made to the police until some other element, such as failure to get a fair deal, enters into it ; whilst the participation of many influential men adds yet another difficulty." In face of such conditions, the Punjab Inspector-General of Police had to admit that " the law of supply and demand must for some time regulate the trade in the province and, as long as the public acquiesces in the present situation and regards the trade as necessary and unobjectionable, and as long as the element of cheating is absent, it is impossible for the police to tackle the problem effectively." Tired of rural monotony, or fearful lest they should reach the age of puberty before becoming betrothed, or even faced with the prospect of eternal widowhood, many of the women who are thus bartered in the market-place are more or less willing parties, so that with the buyer, badly in need of a young wife, satisfied, and with the seller making good profit out of his strange trade in human flesh, all concerned are more or less contented. Hence police interference in such cases would be strongly resented. And even when the women are kidnapped, as more than thirteen hundred were in the Punjab alone in 1931, the difficulties of detection are so great that seldom are even twenty per cent. of the culprits actually convicted.

So this trade in women goes on ; thus does India earn the reputation of being so " advanced " in 1932 that the enticement and kidnapping of girls and young women for sale in public auction is actually on the increase, the traffic presenting such a problem that the highest police authorities admit that they have little hope of being able to cope with it.

As definite illustrations of the extent of this traffic in brides, here are a few of the more everyday stories of the past few

months of how women are treated as cattle when it comes to marriage. The tales could be enlarged in detail and extended in number to fill the whole of this book, but those related will at least prove that it is no exaggeration to say that the sale and purchase of brides is one of the most profitable trades in all parts of the country. The majority of the accounts are "lifted" straight from the newspapers; others are ordinary newspaper accounts shorn of their trappings.

The magistrate of Coondapur (Madras) well summed up a true-to-Indian-life story in the following judgment on a marriage market case: "Tragedy and comedy are equally blended in the events of this case. An elderly Brahmin widower spending Rs 500 (£37 10s.) for a bride and finding her (too late) to be a non-Brahmin girl already married, provokes amusement; but the plight of the girl abandoned by both her husbands at the age of 13 and doomed perhaps to a life of infamy evokes sympathy. These are mean and treacherous tactics and as long as caste continues to have binding validity in the country they are bound to bring shame, infamy and humiliation in many a household."

Whilst looking out for work in a stone quarry, two girls from Lodipur, Bengal, were inveigled by two men to accompany them to the female quarters, where they were handed over to a woman who told them that they would be given everything they wanted. They were then locked in a shed, given some fine new clothes to replace their old ones, suddenly confronted with two men, and ordered to accept them as husbands who were looking for nice-looking wives. Neither of the girls agreed, however, and so one of them was taken to Calcutta and kept in hiding for some weeks, during which time she was introduced to several hopeful husbands, but declined to have any of them. At last, however, the police

got on to the track of the kidnappers, and as a result of prolonged investigations, two men and three women were convicted. In this instance, the gang was caught, but how many girls had they successfully disposed of in this fashion to their long list of waiting husbands?

After selling his daughter for thirty shillings, a villager of Manjeri, Malabar, saw a more prosperous-looking suitor coming up the street. So he promptly revoked the bargain and sold the girl to the new-comer for £3, on the condition that the lucky bidder squared things with the disappointed loser. And the village council of elders supported the father's action.

Whilst watching the Muharram procession in Allahabad, a young Brahmin wife aged 9 was kidnapped and carried off by a band of eight people who sold her successively as an eligible bride to seven different "husbands" during the two years which elapsed before the police got on to her trail after she was married for the ninth time to a wealthy landowner.

A band of three smartly-dressed men walked through an up-country village in Sind with a demure Marwari girl, offering her to the highest bidder. Two residents immediately engaged themselves as brokers to negotiate a bargain, and eventually sold her to a third villager for £120. It was arranged that the deal should be registered and a bond executed at the nearest town; so the party set off in the next train. But on arriving at the railway station, one of the men was recognized as a woman-seller by the police on duty and the whole band was arrested, when it was found that this time even the Marwari girl was one of the conspirators.

A surprise visit by the police to a house in the southern part of Calcutta saved a young up-country girl from being sold in marriage to a sixty-year-old Marwari. The girl, aged

about 13, had been kidnapped from her village home by a party of men who drugged her and took her to Calcutta with a view to selling her to an elderly Marwari who had already commissioned them to find him a comely bride. Apparently the old man wanted the thing done properly, for the rogues arranged for a man and a woman of their gang to play the part of the girl's parents. The nuptial preparations were completed; the sale price was handed over; and the girl arrayed in all her wedding attire when the police arrived as uninvited guests. Result: another temporary slump in the marriage market.

Poor little Ramayee of Madura literally fell out of the frying-pan into the fire when she was abducted by five men and five women from a house where, as the thirteen-year-old drudge, she was very cruelly treated. The child had not known a moment's happiness since she had been supposedly married to a ten-year-old boy, for the mother-in-law gave her a typical daughter-in-law's existence. But when the abduction case was being investigated, it transpired that little Ramayee was not even married as she believed, for the *thali*, or Hindu symbol of marriage, had been tied round her neck at night whilst she was asleep. The abductors, however, had worse in store for her, but as no case could be proved against them, little Ramayee had to return to the house where she was treated little better than an animal.

Seldom do we hear of a father being convicted of enticing his own daughter away from her husband, but the law in India is so queer that Abdul Motif of Dinapore was fined because he tried to save his daughter from a most difficult position. The girl had been married to Mohammed Huq, but when he got tired of her he married another wife in another village. Seeing that his daughter was neglected, and

an object of both scorn and pity, Abdul Motif called for the girl and carried her away. All would probably have been well had not Mohammed Huq learned that the father was actually marrying the girl again to another man who agreed to pay a handsome dowry, so he promptly demanded his wife back again. The law gave her to him; and fined the father £4.

Hutchanaika of Ubbur village in South India suddenly missed his wife and daughter. Doing a little detective work of his own, he soon found out that they had been enticed away to Bangalore, whence they went to various other villages before he traced the wife to Haggadadevankote where she was being forcibly detained as a sort of hostage for her daughter's safety, the girl having been sold as a bride to a wealthy villager of Linganathapur for £75. As the girl had been legally married according to Indian custom, the father had no redress except that he could take his wife home again—leaving the fortunate kidnapper to profit by the handsome dowry.

A bride-seller in the North Arcot district did not get off so lightly, for his sentence was eighteen months' rigorous imprisonment. Kairam Bai was a girl of 9 years old who was stolen from her village and taken to Sholapur for the express purpose of disposing of her to the highest bidder. While she and her captors were seated in a building near a tank, a *bakim* (herbalist) passed by, and on getting into conversation with them was told that they proposed to sell the girl to a sweeper for 7s. 6d. This so affected the *bakim* that in order to save her from the sweeper he purchased her himself for £2. So the *bakim* passed on; but he was so pleased with his bargain that he mentioned it the next day to a fellow-traveller. Ultimately the story reached the ears of an

organization which had been investigating a number of cases of kidnapping of young village girls for sale in Bombay, Sholapur, and Poona. The outcome was that the girl's parents were found, and the child was redeemed for the purchase price.

After being married at the age of 9, Promila was sent from her village to a Home to learn a little about domestic arts. On the day that her course was finished and she was to leave the Home for her husband's house, two men called at the Home one of whom said he was the child's husband. Being unable to recognize this visitor as the man she had married a few weeks before, Promila refused to go with him, and she made such a fuss that eventually the police were called in. Inquiries showed that the girl was right, and that the whole incident was a scheme on the part of the pseudo-husband, who had offered 7s. 6d. to the "broker" for the girl to be handed over to him as his wife without his being called upon to pay the usual dowry and wedding expenses. The two deceivers had bargained on the girl being so shy and dumbfounded that she would not raise any objection to the substitute husband. The "broker" was fined 15s., the false husband got away with the loss only of his 7s. 6d., and the girl was handed over to her real husband.

Rajja Bibi, a rich widow of Tranquebar, was suddenly drugged at a friendly dinner, carried off at dead of night, and then given a "secret" marriage to a prospective husband whilst still stupefied by the drugs. Fortunately one of her neighbours was alive to the scheme, and promptly filed a petition with the nearest magistrate for an injunction "restraining" them from living together on the grounds that the marriage had been "secretly completed without the free consent of the widow and in defiance of all requirements of

the law and the customs of the Shafis." The order was granted, and it was then revealed that the widow had been abducted and married for the sole purpose of purloining her property, inasmuch as the supposed husband was already married and was merely a partner in a scheme whereby he would have left the woman penniless as soon as he could have laid hands on her wealth.

Narasimhiah was an old Brahmin who badly wanted to marry but could not find a bride. Whilst on a visit to Mysore he met a young couple who said they had an orphan girl staying with them who could be turned into a bride for £58. The bargain was struck, and the Brahmin became a bridegroom. After a few weeks, however, he was visited by the police, and he then learned that his wife was not only a maiden who had been abducted from her home, but was actually the niece of the couple who had sold her.

That the course of true love sometimes leads to jail is shown in a remarkable story of a young man who appealed to the Allahabad High Court against his sentence of eighteen months' rigorous imprisonment. "This," said Mr. Justice Pullan in sympathizing with the oppressed couple, "is one of those cases which could, I believe, only come before the Courts of India." The appellant, Budha, a young man of 25, wished to marry Chameli, an orphan of his own caste, who had reached the age at which most girls of her caste were already married. The girl was living with a distant relative who, the judge remarked, "apparently wished to make money out of her." And as the young man could not obtain the relatives' consent, he took the girl away with him. He even went through a formal sort of marriage with her, but on a technical point it was found to be illegal. "The only people who objected," added the judge, "were those

who could have nothing but a pecuniary interest in her, yet this unfortunate youth has been twice tried and finally sentenced to rigorous imprisonment. It may be that he has committed a technical offence of kidnapping, but had the case been tried with ordinary common sense, he would have been sentenced to simple imprisonment during the sitting of the Court and then directed to marry the girl properly the next day. It is a matter of regret that the marriage has been postponed so long, but I hope that it will now be celebrated without delay, as I reduce the sentence to the period this young man has already undergone." If only all such cases were handled in this common-sense manner, with due severity to real roguery in the marriage market, many of India's women would have a much happier time.

The final story comes from Delhi and illustrates not merely the extent of the nefarious practice of kidnapping girl minors for sale, but also how the police do their very best to put a stop to it. Here is the girl's story in her own words: "About four years ago Nathia, the wife of the accused, came to the house where I was living with my mother. As my mother was out most of the time working, Nathia asked me to go out occasionally with her. I refused at first, but when she kept on insisting, I finally agreed. After locking up the house, I went with Nathia to the railway station where we boarded a train for Ghaziabad. On arrival there I was taken to a house, where I was handed over to Nathia's husband. I stayed there for about fifteen days when I was taken to Delhi to be sold, I was told, to one of two men who wanted a wife. Apparently I did not suit either, for I was then told that I should be taken to Calcutta and sold to a man living there, and who had sent Nathia £7 in advance. So I was given a wedding dress and ornaments, and all arrangements

were made for my wedding to the unseen and unknown bridegroom. Then my captors heard that the police were on their track, and so the whole party packed up everything in half an hour and went back to Ghaziabad. With the police still in pursuit, we again took to our heels, travelling to Hardwar but stopping at several villages on the way. Later we again returned to Ghaziabad where I was locked in a house for many days, until Nathia and her husband took me to a far-away village and handed me over to a man who was told that I was Nathia's sister, and that he would return in a few days with a bridegroom for me. When my supposed brother-in-law did not turn up, the old villager grew suspicious, and as soon as he expressed sympathy for me I burst into tears and told him my full story. Thus was I returned to my mother, and my abductor caught by the police."

But not one in five hundred such cases of stealing and selling girls comes to light, especially as those who are thus fleeced often regard the incident as just one more example of Fate. Custom forces them to associate marriage with a financial transaction, and the majority care little whether it is in form of a dowry or a deliberate cold-blooded auction-room bargain.

The Sarda Act Fails

In view of these manifold examples, the conclusion is inevitable that the much-condemned custom of child marriage is largely attributable to the custom of selling girls and boys under the dowry and similar systems. It is true that many months ago the Indian Legislative Assembly passed the Sarda Act, or, to give it its full name, the Child Marriage Restraint Act; but that has been almost a farce.

In March, 1932, the Law Member of the Madras Govern-

ment, for example, candidly admitted " that the Government are fully aware that the Sarda Act is being honoured more in the breach than in the observance, in that a large number of marriages of minors are being performed." And in response to a further question, the Law Member said that up to January there had been only one prosecution in the Madras Presidency under the Act, and in that case two accused were fined 30s. each and the third got off with a fine of 15s. 6d. The Law Member pointed out, however, that as Section 9 of the Act provided that a prosecution could not be initiated except upon a private complaint, the enforcement of its provisions generally was not within the province of the Government.

That is just the difficulty. Comparatively few people in India will take the trouble to do the little bit of social reform work that is necessary to make a success of such a useful piece of legislation as the Sarda Act. It is true that in some other Provinces the prosecutions have been a little more numerous than in Madras, but the sentences have been so light that it still pays to defy the law, inasmuch as the fines imposed are usually not a fraction of the amount received by the promoters as dowries or other emoluments.

Before giving concrete examples of child marriages that have been made public since the Prevention Act was passed, the position can best be summed up in the words of a Hindu who wrote to a leading Indian paper (the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*) in May, 1932. The letter is given here in full :—

A few days ago I read in your paper that a man of 70 summers married a girl of 13. Again, in your paper I found that a man of 50 married a girl of 11, and that a case has been instituted under the Sarda Act. It will not be out of place to mention here that about a year ago in a neighbouring village of ours in Burdwan a girl aged 14 of a respectable Kayastha

family committed suicide the very next day after she was given in marriage to an old man against her will. Needless to say, hundreds of such marriages take place every year and only a few are published in the newspapers or brought to the notice of the police. Who can fathom the depth of sorrow and indignation to the young girls when they are wedded to those who have one foot in the grave? But none care to think and feel for these helpless girls, none take their side and raise a finger in protest. So their grievances remain unredressed, unexpressed, unnoticed. Our society does not think it worth while to take any steps. Far from that, it draws no line of demarcation between liberty and licence regarding man's dealing with the weaker sex, but it is just the reverse with respect to the latter's with the former's. Of the many evils that have crept into our society, this sort of marriage of a girl with a person who has obtained the age of a father or a grandfather is the worst. For it is another name for ignominious slavery. We should not therefore suffer this practice to continue any longer. Twenty years, in my opinion, should be fixed as the maximum difference of age between a bridegroom and a bride, and the consent of a girl to marry a particular person should in all cases be taken beforehand. I appeal to all, especially to the fair sex who know where the shoe pinches, to rise to the occasion and make an agitation in society so that this evil of enslaving young girls in the sacred name of marriage may soon be a thing of the past.

Now no words could be more strongly condemnatory of the indifference of Hindu society than that letter written by a Hindu very many months after the actual passing of the Sarda Act. But what will be the response? Unless a miracle happens, the position will be very much the same in ten years' time as it is to-day. Already the orthodox Brahmins are up in revolt against such social reform, for at the second anniversary of the Sanathana Dharma Sabha, held in 1932, at Tanjore, it was definitely agreed that the time had come when "the orthodox Brahmins should follow the example set by Mr. Gandhi, and perform *satyagraha* and violate the Sarda Act as often as possible."

On the other hand, of course, there are some who realize that it is a social duty to put a stop to child marriages. In

Vizagapatam, for instance, there is a Sarda Act Vigilance Association. Yet its work has been hedged about with so many difficulties that the secretary has been forced to admit that it is necessary to call a special conference of all social reformers "with the sole object of combating the alarmingly increasing disease of child marriages performed in flagrant violation of the Sarda Act, unmindful of the resultant danger to society." But what a task awaits them! Even the formation of a hundred thousand Vigilance Associations would find it difficult to guarantee that the Sarda Act was not broken every day somewhere in India.

The Government's position in this matter is difficult. Admittedly they have not let the Act prove a dead letter, but for good reasons they have exercised the utmost caution in legal processes against the violators of the statute. No matter how harmful a social custom may be, tradition dies hard amongst millions and millions of illiterate and simple people, and when the so-called social reformers, who are always claiming that India is at last tackling her more dangerous evils, sit more or less idle and let the Act be so regularly defied, then Government are well advised to act with caution.

It must be further admitted that there is a dislike the world over to legislation which controls domestic matters, particularly when such matters are directly or indirectly affiliated with religious and social customs. To this general feeling, of course, we might attribute the constant defiance of the Sarda Act and the ingenious attempts of lawyers to defeat its provisions. A remarkable illustration of the length to which the opposers will go is shown by a case in which the Calcutta High Court set aside the committal of a man to the civil jail for defying an injunction under the Sarda Act restraining him from marrying off his minor daughter. It was

argued by the man's lawyers that the Act was subversive of two ancient and forgotten Acts of Parliament which have remained on the statute books for the past century and a half. The British Government in India from the beginning of its administration has been committed to "a policy of non-interference in the religious, social, and domestic affairs of the people of India, and the laws have generally left intact the internal autonomy of families and castes as far as practicable." But the Acts of 1780 and 1797, which were resurrected in the Calcutta case, were also intended to secure and maintain inviolate "the rights and authorities of fathers of families and masters of families, according as the same might have been exercised by the Hindu and Mohammedan laws," so that nothing done "in respect of the rule or the laws of the caste, so far as respects the members of the family, may be deemed a crime, although it may not be justifiable by the laws of England."

But if those "obsolete omnibus Acts of the time of Warren Hastings" were to hold force to-day, what an India it would be! Not merely would the anti-slavery laws be *ultra vires*, but there would be nothing to prevent a father permitting or ordering his widowed daughter to commit *suttee* (self-immolation) on her husband's bier. Infanticide also would come back into fashion. As one observer has commented: "If a father cannot be punished for giving his infant daughter in marriage, why is he to be hanged for killing her to propitiate his goddess? Surely they are equal manifestations of the father's domestic authority within his family, and equally in accordance with his religious beliefs and usages."

As a matter of fact, the Indian Legislature has been definitely empowered by the Government of India Act "to make laws for all persons, all courts, and for all places within British

India, and for all subjects of His Majesty within British India," whilst as regards Acts of the British Parliament, it is only Acts of Parliament passed after the year 1860 and extending to British India which the Indian Legislature may not repeal or affect by its own legislation. Yet even with such technical legal points as these cleared up, the fact remains that in India, more strongly than in any other country, the people place greater importance on a supposed invasion of their rights than they do on the removal of crying and very concrete abuses.

Since the passing of the Sarda Act, the writer of this survey has endeavoured to collect every reported case of prosecution for its violation, and in order to show the deliberateness of its defiance and the ultimate success which has so often accompanied that transgression of the law, a few typical instances will now be related.

The story of how two bridegrooms, although actually convicted of child marriage under the Sarda Act, earned a most useful fortune by their defiance of the law was revealed in a case decided at Noakhali in Bengal. A man, aged 50, and his brother, aged 45, married their two cousin-sisters, aged 4 and 2, against the wishes of the girls' mother. It appears that they insisted on the double wedding in order to take possession of the property, valued at many thousands of rupees, left to the girls as co-sharers by the father when he died a few months previously. The defence was that the marriages were arranged during the lifetime of the father and before the Child Marriage Restraint Act came into force, but the District Magistrate found them both guilty and fined them £10 each. Yet as these convictions did not invalidate the marriages, the two men have succeeded in their object of obtaining valuable property at a cost of only £10 each.

A more severe sentence was imposed in an Akola case in which a wealthy merchant of 55 had married a girl 41 years his junior. With the object of preventing the marriage, the Marwari reformers of the district applied to the Sessions Judge for an injunction restraining the parties from marrying. The injunction was granted, but later the bridegroom and some of his relatives arranged the marriage, which duly took place. The bride's relations, however, took the matter to the Sessions Court again, and the bridegroom, his brother, father-in-law, and maternal uncle were all sentenced to six weeks' imprisonment, whilst the bride's mother was fined £37 10s.

Injunctions of the Court, however, are not always defied, for some men have a wholesome respect for the dignity and the power of the law. Within a month two such cases came before the Madras Court. In the first case, three friends moved for an order preventing the marriage of a girl of 13 to a retired Government official aged 70, who was feeble in health, half blind, an imbecile, and being forced into this wedding by his two daughters who wanted to palm him off on to someone else now that he was a trouble to look after. The injunction was granted.

In the second case a girl of 12 who was to inherit two lakhs of rupees (£15,000) from her father's estate was being forced to marry a boy of 13 who was described as a drunkard and mentally defective, the scheme being that the girl's step-mother and the boy's guardian should ultimately secure the fortune.

In a Madura case the Court's protection was sought for a girl of 8 who was to be married by her relatives to a man of 38. In this particular case it was pointed out that it was the custom of her caste to marry the girls only when they

had attained the age of 14 or 15, and then only to the nearest cousin on the mother's side. There was such a cousin aged 16 ready and willing to take the girl, and the whole caste was waiting for the girl to pass the Sarda Act limit. But her mother and uncle were over-anxious to get the girl off their hands, so her marriage was arranged with a stranger aged 38 of doubtful character. The caste elders, therefore, approached the Court for help, pointing out that such a marriage "would submit the girl to life-long misery more especially as the parties belonged to a caste in which divorce was not permitted." Again the injunction was granted.

Two cases of actual child marriages were unearthed in Vizapagam by the Vaisya Seva Sangha, an organization which was formed for the discouragement of early marriages and the encouragement of widow remarriage. In the one case, where a girl of 10 was married to a boy of 20, the two fathers and the priest were fined £3 10s. each, and the bridegroom fined £2. But as all concerned were fairly well-off, and as the marriage was not thereby annulled, where was the punishment? In the second case, the father of a girl of 10 was fined £2 as a warning to others. Surely this wealthy timber merchant smiled at such a sentence!

Mysore also has on record two cases. In one a girl of 6 was married to a boy of 12, resulting in the girl's father and the boy's brother each being fined £4. The second case saw a girl of 4 married to a boy of 13, and the outcome was the same, for the girl's father and the boy's grandfather were also fined £4.

At Cuttack, in Orissa, the first prosecution under the Act resulted in the bride's father being fined £2 and the bridegroom's father £6, whilst a second case has just been instituted there owing to the activities of the Nari Mangal Samiti, an

organization formed to assist the Sarda Act by acting as both informants and complainants.

At the last minute the Madras Police Court stepped in and stopped the wedding between a girl of 11 and a boy of 13, the magistrate deciding that the marriage was being rushed through in order that the girl's mother might obtain the sum of £750 which had been set apart in the father's will for the wedding expenses. The case revealed a remarkable family tangle, for the complainant was the deceased's first wife who sought to restrain his second wife from marrying the first wife's daughter to the second wife's sister's grandson. Both wives were living and have for months been fighting a legal battle in another court over the husband's inheritance.

Social reform volunteers of Barase stopped one wedding and instituted another, substituting a young man of 18 for an old man of 65 as bridegroom to an orphan girl of 16. Having lost his second wife two weeks previously, the old head master of the Government school decided to marry one of the local girls who was living with her uncle. The ill-sorted match, however, stirred the local young Congress volunteers, who promptly selected one of their eligible number to become the bridegroom. Despite the disappointed professor's protestations, a real Congress wedding was held, the participants and guests clad in *khaddar*, with the Swaraj flag on the bridal car, and with the local Congress committee arranging the wedding feast and entertainment, including a band of conch-shell musicians.

But although there are a few reformers determined to stop flagrant cases of child marriages, it will be a very long time before their influence can be appreciably felt, as is shown by the fact that in Bhavnagar State it was reported that in 1932 there were 75 marriages of children in three days. It

is only to be expected that when such marriages are forced on children, their lives are frequently accompanied by tragedy. Here is a sad story of an unhappy couple at Allahabad. The wife was aged 19; the husband a boy of 14. For months this disillusioned pair quarrelled and fought, hating the married life together which had been forced upon them by their parents. The climax came when the wife decided to get rid of her boy husband. She put poison in the dish of rice prepared for his supper. But one taste was enough. He yelled for the neighbours. But his wife was gone, to be found hiding in the jungle two days later. She is now in jail, working out a sentence of eighteen months' hard labour for attempting to murder her husband.

An Ambala story in Court showed how a Hindu girl of 19 had eloped with a Mohammedan youth because, as she said bitterly, she was "not willing to live with my husband who is merely a child of 12 years while I am in the prime of life."

Here is another real tale of tragedy. Because she did not want to marry the man selected by her parents, a pretty young girl of Nagpur admitted that she framed false charges against two unknown young men by complaining to the police in an elaborate story that they had abducted her by taking her off in a bullock-cart at midnight with the promise of a nice dinner. Her tale had every chance of being believed by the magistrate to the discomfort of the two innocent youths, until she broke down under a searching cross-examination and revealed the truth, declaring that her real intention had been to run away to Bombay to become a singing-girl rather than be forced on a man she knew she would hate.

As a final proof that this selling of babies to be brides is so common as scarcely to attract attention in the ordinary

course of events in India, there is the judgment in a case in which a youth of 17 was charged at Khulna in Bengal with raping his wife who was only 8 years old. The accused pleaded guilty and was sentenced to enter into a bond of £22 10s., with two sureties of like amount, to appear for sentence when called upon and to be of good behaviour for three years. Said the Sessions Judge: "The nature of the case calls for consideration. This is not a Court of morals, nor is it a tribunal to sit in judgment upon traditional and social customs. I cannot fail to observe, however, that while it is customary for parents to give their daughters in marriage while they are yet infants or young children, cases of this sordid and unhappy nature must be expected. If a young child has to submit to the importunities of a mature husband merely because marriage, which I understand is looked upon as a sacrament, is accepted as licence, the guilt lies not only with the husband, but more especially with those—the parents—who place the happiness, the health, and the very souls of their daughters in jeopardy, merely because they are compelled to follow blindly the dictates of custom or tradition. A system which permits cases such as this to occur, is one which in an enlightened age should, by the desire of the community itself, be exorcised. The Legislature, in its wisdom, has now placed in the hands of every wise-thinking person a weapon whereby the evil can be stamped out. It is for the people to see that its provisions are not left unused."

Further comment or example of such daily horrors is unnecessary, except to add that for one such case which is taken into Court, there are many hundreds which, for obvious reasons, are kept hidden behind the tortured brides' purdahs. In literal truth many parents say to their daughters on the

wedding day, " There, we have made your bed, and now you must lie on it." In the Punjab alone last year there were fifty-eight husbands definitely charged under a special penal code section with raping their child-wives.

Now for a story to show that real love, which defies all obstacles, is at times found in Indian marriages. Chapala was a beautiful Hindu girl who suddenly disappeared from her father's house in the village of Nasirpur in Bengal. Declaring that one of his servants and two of his neighbours had abducted the girl, and failing to get them to produce her on demand, Kalibar, the father, appealed to the council of elders who advised him to inform the police. In due course the three men found themselves before the judge, and although the girl was still missing, there was produced sufficient evidence to implicate them. Just as the verdict was to be announced, Chapala gave all concerned a most unexpected surprise by suddenly appearing in Court, striding into the witness-box, and declaring that she was there to save her husband. It then transpired that one of the accused, Mandar Sardar, was her husband, who had been " converted " to Hinduism in Calcutta and clandestinely married to the girl three years previously in the place of the bridegroom already selected by the girl's father. The girl asserted that it was her father who had really abducted her and had kept her in close confinement while professing to be searching for her ; but, she added dramatically, " hearing that my beloved husband was in trouble, I broke out of my prison and came here to save him. And if my husband again embraces Mohammedanism, I shall follow him." The jury, however, found the three men guilty, but the judge, disagreeing with the verdict, referred the case to the Calcutta High Court.

Efforts at Reform

There is, fortunately, another side to this bleak and black picture, for scattered all over the country there are a few devoted reformers who are struggling against the antipathy and indifference of their neighbours. To declare that their labours are fruitless would be as unfair as it is untrue ; but one need not be labelled a confirmed pessimist if he states that it will take a very long time before they can even persuade the masses that dowries and child marriages are evils which must be eradicated. To do any real good, of course, there must be legislation which will strike at the root of the trouble, but in the face of the doubtful working of the Sarda Act, it is not to be expected that any new laws will be passed in British India to prevent the sale of brides and bridegrooms. Admittedly, public opinion in some parts of India is slowly awakening to the necessity of preventing the ordinary primitive sale of women as brides, but the first legal steps have yet to be taken in British India. In Baroda State, it is true, a measure has been introduced " to prevent the sale of bridegrooms," the idea obviously being to put a stop to the almost universal custom in that State whereby poor agriculturists mortgage their last square inch of land and fall into the money-lender's clutches in order to find the dowry which would purchase for their daughters bridegrooms suitable to their status. This system of buying the consent of the bridegroom's parents is, as one social student has pointed out, " largely responsible for the orthodox Hindu preference for sons and the general dread of having daughters who would prove an expensive proposition to settle in life." This, in its turn, leads to that peculiar inferiority complex which the many disabilities placed on the legal status of

Hindu women have bred in them, but which is a slow but definite diminishing quantity.

Baroda State, moreover, is setting the pace in many matters affecting this complex problem of the marriage market. Another Bill recently introduced was "to prevent the barter of girls in marriage," which prohibited the acceptance of money from the bridegroom or his people by the parents or guardians of the bride except in the form of ornaments or other presents given to the bride in her own right. This Bill definitely shows that dowry and barter are offshoots of the same principle, namely, that of auctioning the marriage vow for the best terms obtainable. Some supporters of the present system would have us believe that there is nothing inherently wrong in the dowry system, inasmuch as at the worst it is "but a vestige of more rough and ready times when marriage by capture was freely indulged in and led perhaps to vengeance which in more degenerate days could be bought off by the payment of money." But so far as India is concerned, that explanation seems to be more in the nature of an apology than an explanation, because it must be remembered that even in the nuptial ceremonial prescribed by some of the most ancient Hindu sacred texts, "one mode of marriage is the *Asura* form, which is a regular sale of the bride for a pecuniary consideration called *Sulka*."

So again we are brought back to queer India, for, curious though it may seem, there is no law in British India, nor in any other Indian State than Baroda, forbidding this or any other kind of sale or barter in marriage. Did such a law exist, the many examples of cheating and deception which have been given in this chapter would not have been possible. Said the *Times of India* editorially recently: "The time is overdue when public opinion should be so able to fortify

legal reform as to make the system of paying a price in marriage totally out of date." With that all Westerners, and a growing number of Indians, agree; but until there is a definite "public opinion" among the many millions of people who care little for reform and progress, no such legal action will be possible. During the past five or ten years there has certainly been noticeable "a trend to make Indian women more independent than social barriers ever before allowed," but as that movement is for the time, and probably will be for a number of years, confined to a very small minority of India's vast feminine population, the age-old notion of the necessity to buy brides and sell bridegrooms will persist. Sad, but true; unmarried children will long be regarded as a disgrace to themselves, and a stigma on their families.

To return again to Baroda's progressive moves. Amongst other features of the year 1930-31 is to be found an Old Men's Marriage Prevention Bill, the Infant Marriage Prevention Act, the collection of £2,500 in fines from offenders against the Child Marriage Restraint Act, the working of a Bill legalizing Hindu divorces based on the principles embodied in the laws of other countries, and other social reform schemes which have been almost unanimously approved by the higher classes after many years of education and propaganda.

Mysore State originally took the lead in discouraging child marriages as far back as 1894, but, like Baroda and a few other States, it has now found it necessary to bring its legislation up-to-date in harmony with the Sarda Act in British India, for it was found that in order to obviate trouble in British territory a large number of parents journeyed into Indian States to carry out the illegal marriages. Of course, all States have not yet manifested that admirable desire to

fall into line with the saner section of British Indian opinion ; but the examples here given, to which more could be added, will prove that a start has been made.

Before leaving the Indian States, however, mention should be made of the bold move on the part of Cochin Legislature in taking up a Bill to abolish polygamy, which is still theoretically, if not practically, a part of the Hindu religion all over India. It is a fact, of course, that many Hindus, " either through the refining influences of education or through force of economic conditions, have only one wife ; but the fact remains that the number of wives that a Hindu may have is unlimited." So that when a bride, forced upon a bridegroom by his or her parents, does not suit the man, he may just cast her off, giving her the choice, as a rule, of staying in his house as a wifely understudy subservient to the orders of the second wife, or returning to her own family as a rejected woman—if they will have her. But Cochin State has made a commencement in the new reform, and even though for the time being it will be restricted to Nambudri Brahmins, the experiment will be followed with great interest.

It must be admitted, however, that there are many reformers who have not waited for legislation to combat the evils which have been outlined, and this chapter may be concluded with a few true-to-life tales of their ingenious and interesting methods, such as that adopted by some young men of Cochin State who set to work in their own way to stop polygamy just before the new Bill just mentioned came up for discussion.

A strike at a wedding breakfast ! There was a festive board surrounded by guests who not only refused to be festive, but who positively declined to touch a thing, merely sitting in glum and stubborn silence—all day and all night. That was the setting of this queer little comedy ; and here

is the scenario. Protesting at the third marriage of a Nambudri Brahmin, the young men of the village decided that it was their duty to try and dissuade the man from marrying again whilst his first two brides were alive. But the bridegroom would listen to neither appeals nor threats, so the guests as a body decided to practise *satyagraha* by hunger-striking at the wedding feast. The wedding itself took place; the third bride took her place; and the wedding feast was set. All night long the passive resistance lasted, and then, when the guests went home to have their own breakfasts, the conquering bridegroom sat down to enjoy his own wedding banquet, alone with his three wives.

A catastrophe of a somewhat similar kind took place in Gujerat when half a village went on hunger-strike as a protest against "the improvident expenditure on a banquet announced against the bridegroom's wishes by his father," the invited guests declaring that they refused to attend a sumptuous feast whilst their neighbours—the uninvited guests—were starving.

The heavy expenditure which traditionally attaches to all Indian weddings, both in the form of cash payments and expenditure on ceremonies and festivities, is another matter which is gradually meeting with opposition from enthusiastic reformers. Here is one instance. Determined to put a stop to what he called "the enormous waste of money on unnecessary extravagance at the cost of basic necessities of life," a well-known Moslem priest of Dharwar organized a ten-rupee (15s.) marriage to which he invited the leading citizens. He himself officiated at the religious part of the ceremony which he made remarkably simple, and then at the conclusion handed ten rupees to the happy couple and told them to spend the money on a quiet little dinner with only a handful of close relatives as guests.

A student named Abdul Hamid went one better at Lahore. Anxious to show "that in these days of economic distress it is not necessary, as enjoined by custom, to spend large sums in useless celebrations," he announced that he refused to consider any bride until she agreed that not more than ten annas (elevenpence) was to be spent on the wedding. Within a week he found such a priceless jewel of a helpmate, and they have started off together on the road of life with no money, but with no debts, a state of affairs which, to say the least, is a queer one for India.

But here is a direct attack on the dowry system. The village *panchayet*, or council of elders, of Padalshe in East Khandesh (Bombay Presidency) have passed an order that no dowry of more than two annas (threepence) is to be given for a bridegroom. Two rebellious villagers, however, broke the rule by paying a "consideration" of over £60 to the parents of the proposed husband for their daughter. The *panchayet* heard of it, and fined them £30 which had to be paid immediately, on pain of boycott and excommunication of the whole family, including the innocent wedded couple. It was paid. That these elders really mean business in the matter of social reform is shown by the fact that they have just confirmed another rule that although polygamy is permitted by caste custom, it must not be practised, under pain of terrible penalties, except in very urgent circumstances to be decided by the *panchayet*.

In passing, an illustration might be given of the hold which the dowry system had on the young generation, especially in those cases in which, his parents being dead, the bridegroom has to find a suitable dowry, or purchase price, for his bride's relatives. A young tailor of Cawnpore, anxious to wed and encouraged by his mother, finally found a girl who attracted

him. Her parents, however, put a stiff price on her head, and although the youth worked day and night at his tailoring in order to collect the money, he was kept waiting week after week because the parents, and two middlemen brokers, grabbed all he had for "expenses." He did not give up hope, however, even though it was hinted that another suitor with more money was in the running. His mother then let escape the fact that it was she who wanted a daughter-in-law to do her work more than she wanted him to have a wife for his own establishment, and when the two brokers turned up with a demand for another £10, the youth gave up the unequal fight by taking a dose of poison. Similarly, it is a very common thing for young brides, either just before or just after marriage to an unwanted man, to do away with themselves, the most common method being soaking their clothes with oil and turning themselves into living torches.

That there is ample scope for "reform" in marriage customs in India is further shown by the fact that in the north a special society has been formed to simplify every feature of the ceremony. Religious rites, which usually occupy several days, are now being reduced to an hour, much to the chagrin of the priests, who charged on the time basis; the wedding dinners are reduced to mere snacks; the concentration of massed bands is being dispensed with altogether; dowries, where given, become the property of the bride; and the two contracting parties make a solemn declaration that "as man and wife they will share each other's joys and sorrows." In the south of India a "Self-Respect League" has been inaugurated, part of whose activities are concentrated on reducing the marriage expenditure to the lowest possible figure, and on proving that there is no such thing

as "an auspicious minute" for the ceremony. These Self-Respecters believe that it is just as important to save time as it is to save money, and hence they are even going so far as to declare that India must be freed from the power of the priests, who not only extract all the money they can from both poor and rich, but who, by their superstitious ways, also compel the people, in the name of religion, to waste long periods, extending into weeks, during which they might well be earning money.

With these various agencies at work to abolish the commercial side of marriage in India, there is hope that in due course the marriage market will disappear in the same way as it has done from the Europe of the days of the early Britons, the Romans and the Goths. But never were there such traditional barriers to overcome and such social customs to transform. With ten per cent. of the available women shunned because they are widows who have never seen their dead husbands, with a further eleven per cent. married before they are 10 years old, and with forty-four per cent. more leading regular married lives before they are 15 years old, marriageable girls must always be a marketable commodity with a good commercial value. Release the virgin widows alone for remarriage, and there will be a slump; make it possible for all widows to get second husbands without losing social standing, and the marriage market will speedily lose much of its appeal to those whose sole aim is to amass money. But even that seemingly simple remedy is not so easy as it appears. The feeling against widows in many parts of Hindu India is more than that of it merely being *infra dig.* to marry a woman who has already had a husband. It goes deeper than that. And the proof is to be found in the story with which this chapter will be concluded.

During recent discussions on the Hindu Widows' Remarriage Bill, a well-educated Bengali clerk in a leading solicitor's office went to his superior one day and urged him to oppose the Bill. Pressed for reason, the *babu* said in all seriousness : " If widows are permitted to remarry, where shall we get all our official and non-official prostitutes from ? " And when the solicitor expressed consternation at such an admission, the *babu* added, " Why, surely you have noticed that in Bengali the old-time word for widow was *bewa*, which is now the honorific title of prostitute."

Queer India !

CHAPTER IV

LIFE MEANS LESS THAN DEATH

WITH Kali, Giver of Life and Mother of Destruction, as one of the most-feared and most-worshipped deities in Hinduism, it is not surprising that a great majority of the masses in India honestly believe that life has less meaning and significance than death. When it comes to murder, the illiterate section of the people, at any rate, have no compunctions, no twinges of conscience. Mother Kali, who rules their existence, lives in an atmosphere of blood; those who disbelieve it can see for themselves at the famous temple of Kalighat in Calcutta where the pavements run red with rivers of blood all the year round.

Ancient Hinduism had a sacrificial system the extent of which was so amazing as to sicken any careful student; and although Buddhism is generally believed to have terminated that gory system, there is still blood, blood always and everywhere. Pious Brahmins and super-sensitive religionists will say that the sacerdotal system is a relic of savage aboriginal worship and not a survival of Vedic rites; but the fact remains that it forms an important part of India's religious life even in this twentieth century. And, more vital still, it is a controlling factor in the peasants' outlook on life.

Kali's Influence

Kali and her husband Shiva can only be worshipped and propitiated with blood. She who is all-producing must also

demonstrate that to her also is the power, and right, of taking away that life which she has given. A terrible deity in appearance—a black fury dripping with blood and of hideous mien—she still sways the mind of the masses, and whilst theoretically some of the higher classes worship her metaphorically rather than realistically with blood, the low castes still shed the lives of thousands and thousands of victims at her feet.

Moreover, it would seem that the worshippers of Mother Kali, Life Giver, can do no wrong, for at a Parliament of Religions held at Chicago a few years ago, an exponent of Hinduism, Swami Viveka Ananda, made man the master of his soul, the maker of his own conscience, for he announced as his creed the fact that human beings are holy and perfect, sharers of immortal bliss: "You divinities on earth, sinners! It is a sin to call you so. It is a standing libel on human nature. The worst lie you ever told yourself was that you were a sinner and a wicked man." With a confidence in your own infallibility and with a deity who ordains that you should shed blood in order to worship her, what more can be expected than that all life is regarded as of little account, and that, thanks to the doctrines of transmigration of souls and reincarnation, life in most cases is reckoned as being less important to worry about than death? It is just that belief and the prevailing influence of Kali that made loving mothers throw their first-born children to the crocodiles in sacred rivers and pools, fully believing that their sacrifice would be rewarded by many future children. And surely only a woman maddened by Kali-worship could bathe her body in the warm blood of a newly-murdered child of a neighbour in the belief that so holy a method would cure her of barrenness by the re-birth of the babe in her own womb.

Gone, fortunately, are the days when the Khonds of Orissa kidnapped infants, fattened them up for years, drugged and tied them to a tree, and then hacked them to pieces in a mad scramble for shreds of flesh to fertilize their fields, the mere burying of such hallowed bits of humanity being sufficient to ensure that Tari, the Earth-goddess, would bless them with good crops. But practices of almost equal hideousness still persist in India, and although the worst of them are admittedly confined to backward and aboriginal classes, there are still people by the thousands who regard the shedding of blood as essential to salvation. Even to those who have progressed beyond the days of the worst forms of sacrifice, the Kali-atmosphere remains, thus explaining, if not altogether excusing, the remarkable indifference towards death.

Just as the anarchical terrorists of Bengal appeal to their members, in documents freely distributed, to seek their inspiration for their despicable crimes from Mother Kali, even so has the idea of cheapness of life so ingratiated itself in the minds of the "ordinary" folk that a police sepoy, giving evidence before an inquiry into the shooting which occurred during a riot in a Bengal Internment Camp at the end of 1931, actually made the amazing statement that he did not think only to use the butt-end of his rifle to disperse the rioters, "because that would damage the gun, and I considered Government property to be more valuable than the life of a Bengali babu." Deplorable, perhaps; but surely typical. Is it any wonder, with such an atmosphere, that in the province of Bihar and Orissa the number of murders averages almost one a day, that in Bombay Presidency it is over one a day, that in both the Punjab and Bengal Presidency it averages two a day, and that in Madras Presidency it actually works out to four murders daily?

Nor does education appear to be improving the general situation amongst all sections of the lower classes, no matter what community. That is as far as the question of lack of abhorrence in taking human life is concerned. Police officers, in fact, are now almost in despair at the outlook, especially in such provinces as the Punjab, where there has been no improvement for the past ten years.

Here is a quotation which may well be an extract from an official report of 1831 instead of from the Punjab Police Report in 1931: "Life is cheap and public opinion apathetic. The commission of a murder is considered as an act of chivalry. As long as a murderer is hailed as a hero and praised by his fellow-villagers, there cannot be any material decrease in the crime, especially when he has every sympathy."

At the risk of anticipating what will be the definite subject-matter of the next chapter, this study of cheapness of human life can best be introduced by giving a number of striking illustrations. In most cases of murder, or any serious crime, in other lands every real detective says to himself, "Find the motive." But in India it is just there that he will find himself up against a brick wall—unless he knows the intricate details of the everyday life of the Indian. Motive in India is often so trivial that it ceases to count; and where it does count, its very triviality makes conviction most difficult to obtain. In one province, for example, although 537 true cases of capital charges were put up in 1931, only 91 men were sentenced to death, and of these 48 were reprieved, leaving the maximum penalty to be carried out in only 43 cases, or about eight per cent. Again, the latest Madras Presidency Police report says that the year saw 1,355 murder cases under investigation, in which only 265 convictions were obtained, although the number of true cases put up amounted to 848.

Of the balance, there were 294 acquittals, 287 not detected, 20 proved to be false, and 60 declared non-cognizable owing to mistake of law or fact. That means to say that the year's murder investigations in that progressive province resulted in only one in every five reported murderers paying the penalty. This poor show is due partly to the triviality of the cause and partly to the great difficulties in obtaining evidence, for, as one police report admits in this connexion, "witnesses are so reluctant to give evidence that it is surprising that the police are as successful as they are." And when the eternal blood feuds of many parts of India, by which murder follows murder in quick succession and against which the law is practically powerless, are added to the general inherent crime difficulties, it can readily be seen that the position is really put mildly when it is described as life being cheap. Human life is, in many parts, a glut on the market.

Queer Motives

Now for a few of the motives, some of which are more or less understandable, even though it is hardly credible that they should be the cause of deliberate cold-blooded murder. They are selections from a year's murders:—

In Rajasingamangalam a son killed his father for refusing to return a plough which had been loaned.

In Sivagiri a man murdered his own eighteen-months' old child in the hope of implicating eighteen of his enemies, although a careful investigation showed that he himself was the murderer. He was sentenced to death, after excellent police work.

In Tellichery a mother killed her four-year-old girl for innocently informing the husband about a clandestine visit of her mother's male friend.

LIFE MEANS LESS THAN DEATH

In Shivapet an old bricklayer who was unpopular with some local young hooligans was seized by them, soaked in kerosene, and burned to death. Three of the offenders received various terms of imprisonment and the fourth was sent to a Borstal School for three years.

In Bellary an acting village magistrate poisoned a young boy who had the hereditary right to the magistrateship.

A Barisal student who was not satisfied with the wife whom his parents had found for him, "took her for a ride" in a boat and murdered her in midstream. He is now undergoing a life sentence.

Two brothers had a quarrel in Tirumangamam over the cutting of a few palmyra leaves from trees the proprietorship of which was still in dispute. One of the brothers refused to have the case arbitrated by the village elders, so the other decided to settle it himself by murdering the obstinate one. The sentence was one of life transportation.

Dragging in their nets in expectation of a fine catch, judging by its weight, two Baruipur fishermen in Bengal were amazed to find that their haul consisted of a ten-year-old girl bound hand and foot and gagged. When she recovered consciousness, she told a pitiful tale of how her husband and a woman companion had tried to drown her because she persisted in going back to her mother after constant ill-treatment by the husband during the six years of her married life.

Another child wife, this time twelve years old, was told by her husband that she could not go to her mother's house. She waited until he was asleep and then hacked at his neck with a sickle. But her hand shook with nervousness, and he awoke in time to catch her. Found guilty of voluntarily causing hurt to her husband, she was bound over by the Belgaum Sessions Judge to be of good behaviour for one year.

A young landowner of Ghazipur was so attracted by a dancing girl at a marriage party that he invited her to go out to his home. She declined. When her stipulated period of dancing was finished she made ready to go home, but the people shouted "encore"—which she refused to acknowledge. So the priest on duty lost his temper and shouted, "Beat her," whereupon the landowner promptly shot her dead. He was given a life sentence.

Dissatisfied with her middle-aged husband, a fourteen-year-old girl living in the Naini Tal district gagged him with a cap and then strangled him with her fingers. Result: life imprisonment.

Carrying a blood-stained sword in one hand and the severed head of his unfaithful wife in another, Raghubar, a village watchman in the Farrukhabad district, gave himself up to the police, and asked that justice be done. He got off with a life sentence.

Two priests, one aged 16 and the other 18, of a Siva temple in the Mayavaram district, were arrested in connexion with the disappearance of a little girl who had been playing with a companion on the temple steps. The story goes that they murdered the child for her jewels and then hid the body in the inner sanctuary before throwing it into the river.

Objecting to the conduct of his daughter, and her continued refusal to listen to him, a father of Kottavam taught her a lesson by lopping off her head, and then surrendering himself to the police, carrying the head wrapped in a cloth.

To teach his father-in-law a lesson, Subedali of the Faridpur district beat his wife to death, declaring that he could best punish the father through the daughter. The two men had fallen out over a small matter of accounts in their joint business, and after the woman was dead he gave out that

she had died of cholera. Subedali, however, was found out and sentenced to seven years' hard labour.

An old Meerut lady of 70 was strangled to death by two girls, one of whom was the deceased's granddaughter, because she objected to their friendship. Both culprits confessed, each trying to take the whole blame.

What is the best way to reply to a maintenance order? A villager of Katalia, in Bengal, who had divorced his wife, was ordered to pay four shillings monthly as maintenance for the child. Whereupon he one night grabbed the babe from the mother's breast and threw it into a near-by tank. That settled the maintenance order—until the police found him and he discovered that his simple remedy cost him four years' hard labour.

Because the leader of the opposite faction in the village of Tirumanahalli refused to subscribe to a certain charity and also failed to send his rival an invitation to his sister's wedding, a murder was arranged and duly carried out with a chopper. Yet this clear-cut case of murder, supported by a confession, resulted once again only in life transportation rather than the capital punishment.

A certain man had two wives. Wife number one said from the outset that she would not let wife number two gain her husband's affection, and despite the warning of the village arbitration board that she must not interfere with the course of true love, wife number one continued to express her resentment. Now these two wives occupied one room—which was asking for trouble. One night groaning was heard from that room, and on going in, the husband found that wife number one had stabbed her matrimonial rival. After much resistance the murderess was captured, covered with blood, but triumphant in her victory.

Declaring that her new-born babe would be more trouble than it was worth, a Coimbatore mother threw the child into a prickly-pear bush. Transportation was her punishment.

Indignant because his wife refused to spread his bed when ordered to, a Bombay man promptly taught all disobedient wives a lesson by stabbing her in the stomach. She died next day.

Two other undutiful wives paid the death penalty for their obstinacy about the same time, one in Peshawar and one in Bangalore. Both, strangely enough, were asked by their husbands for a drink of water. The Peshawar bride literally told her husband to do his own dirty work, whilst the Bangalore curmudgeon retorted that she was too busy to attend to small matters like that. So the irate husbands proceeded to deal with their rebellious spouses, with fatal results.

Feeling that he wanted a change of wives, a Lahore youth of 14 set light to the clothes of his first wife and then threw her out of the window to let the neighbours think it was a case of suicide. But the girl's dying declaration revealed the whole story, implicating an old aunt as well.

Here is a tragedy indeed! Torn with remorse and disgrace because her husband had just been executed for murder, Bhati returned to her village, pushed her two eight-year and four-year children into the well, and then jumped in after them, with an infant of eight months in her arms. A passer-by rescued her by using his turban as a lasso, but the three children were drowned. She was sentenced to transportation, but her case was referred for clemency to the Punjab Government.

Because his eleven-year-old wife was not allowed by her mother to live with him, Adiluddi Din of Khulna seized the girl and cut her throat in circumstances of great savagery and cruelty. There was no sympathy for him when he was sentenced to death.

A somewhat similar case occurred in Etawah district when a twenty-five-year-old husband, who had taken a strong dislike to his young wife, started a relentless campaign of cruelty against her. One day whilst seated on the roadway some distance from the village, a neighbour saw the wife crying, and when he asked her what was wrong she told him that her husband, who was seated by her side, was taking her into the jungle to murder her. The pair were taken to the village headman, and the girl was, as a result, handed over to the mother, who planned another marriage for her. But stung with jealousy before that could be arranged, the husband walked into the girl's room one night and speared her to death. For this, he too paid the full penalty.

Vengeance of a particularly brutal kind was meted out on a poor little deaf and dumb boy by a man in Rae Bareilly. Annoyed because his cousins had prevented the members of his own brotherhood from joining in a religious ceremony, Ganga Charan enticed one of his cousin's sons into a secluded spot and there murdered him out of sheer spite. Although only 22, this murderer was hanged.

Having sold a buffalo in Amritsar for Rs 100 (about £7) a father gave the one-hundred rupee note to his wife to take care of. She placed it in a basket. The four-year-old child of the family spied it, quietly took it from the basket, and threw it on the fire. So angry was the father that he killed the child on the spot.

Suspecting that his wife was up to mischief, Rangiah Naidu of Arcot took her into the jungle in order that "the gods of the trees might speak the truth." When he asked her to tell the truth, she replied angrily: "What a fool you are! Why should I answer your questions?" The husband's reply was short and sweet. "Dare you insult a man, you,

a mere woman?" he shouted as he tore a creeper from a tree and strangled her. So now they are both dead, as the judge found no extenuating circumstances.

Thanks to the carelessness of a boy who cared more for making mud-pies than looking after the cows, the banana plantation of Mammed of Tellicherry was invaded by the cattle of the boy's father. Mammed took the law into his own hands and gave the youngster a good hiding, whereupon the boy's father took a hand in the squabble—and got stabbed to death in the *mêlée*.

Resenting her father's friendship with a girl friend, a Madura girl of 18 watched her father for a couple of days, and then stabbed the girl to death.

Pappu Pillai of Alleppey thought that Sankara Pillai had tried to defraud him, so he soaked him in petrol and then set fire to him. His escapade only cost him five years' hard labour, even though the case was so serious.

A Cuddalore dispute as to whether one man had given a piece of silk to a friend or whether the silk had been pledged for three shillings was ended by one of the friends stabbing the other with a dagger. The judge said that the motive was so trivial as to be almost negligible; but the fact of the murder remained without any extenuating circumstances.

A temple festival in honour of Kali was in progress in Madura. Whilst watching the dancers in the procession, Oomayan decided that the dancing was not being done correctly. He told the professional dancers so, and emphasized his remarks by knocking a pot of sacred water off the head of one of them. That act settled his doom, for the dancers and a crowd, all aflame with the worship of Kali the Destroyer, chased the critic. A rare pursuit ensued, and when one of the crowd thought they had Oomayan, the latter quickly

turned and stabbed his captor. Thus did Kali sanctify her festival.

Janki was blind in one eye. His wife, who had a good sense of beauty, felt she could do better, and frequently railed him over his disability. Unable to stand her teasing any longer, Janki, one eye notwithstanding, took her into the jungle and killed her, an act which gained him ten years' hard labour.

Attracted by a glittering ring, a cook employed by a wealthy landowner of Pudukottah took his master's three-year-old boy for a walk, stripped off the ring, and drowned the child in a well, going back home and stating that the child had fallen in. But the tragedy had been witnessed by a passer-by and the cook was arrested—but not before he had tried to sell the ring and found it to be worth less than sixpence.

An unconcerned child of 14 was placed on trial in Calcutta for murdering a tea-shopkeeper because he did not give the impatient boy a cup of tea the moment he asked for it. The shopkeeper was asleep, so the child picked up a pointed rod and drove it right through the body of the man with a shout of, "That will teach you to keep people waiting."

Following a lawsuit in which two factions of the Konakundla village had been engaged for several days, a fight took place on the way home in which five of the disputants were murdered. None but the members of the two gangs saw the fight, but when a policeman arrived on the scene a short time later, he found one charred body with the turban still alight, one man with his throat cut, one dead from gunshot wounds, and two so severely hacked about that they died within a few hours. A man who was said to be one of the gang stated that he believed the fight was caused by an argument as to the probable verdict to be given in their law-case.

And so on and so on.

Verily human life is cheap, appallingly and amazingly cheap in queer India—where Kali still holds sway.

Modern Suttee

Perhaps the strangest examples of the manner in which life means less than death is the ingrained system of *suttee*, by which the widowed wife immolates herself on the funeral pyre of her husband. That custom, indeed, was one of the first which the British administration sought to stop by legislation, and for about a century it has been prohibited by law. Although the rite has no direct authority from the Vedas, it has existed in India for over two thousand years and, says one authority, "the women murdered in its name must have amounted to millions." There it is. Some would call *suttee* plain suicide; others dub it murder. Although outwardly it might be theoretically classed as suicide, the custom and, at times, popular opinion, which has demanded such a sacrifice from a widow, undoubtedly make it murder.

The majority of people outside India, and many who actually live in India, fondly believe that the awful rite of *suttee* is no longer practised. Even as far back as 1905, a missionary who had lived in India for almost half a century said as he was leaving the country: "When I was in India in 1838 the rite still existed in several Indian States, and I well remember the horror I felt when we heard of the burning alive of nine women along with the corpse of old Ranjit Singh, the Lion of the Punjab. But such deeds of darkness are possible no longer, for even Hindu opinion would now hardly tolerate the enormity."

Yet every year there are in India at least twenty known cases of *suttee*—apart from unknown numbers which, for

obvious reasons, are not reported and hence never come to light.

It matters not that the fact still remains that to many a widow in India the comparatively short pangs of being burned at the funeral pyre are as nothing compared with the tortures of body and mind which in all probability she would have to endure as the widow outcast of an appalling social custom. Nor is it any excuse that a widow can drug herself into complacency and heroism for the performance of *suttee* amid the plaudits of the husband's relatives, whereas she cannot live for twenty, thirty, or forty years in a state of drugged indifference to the cruelties and indignities heaped upon her by a family circle which resents her very existence.

Thanks to the so-called influence of western civilization and the loose use of such terms as "love" and "sentiment," certain of the 1932 cases of *suttee* are declared to be "the story of the love between a husband and wife." It would be both unfair and cynical to say that no such love exists, or that the death of the husband does not at times make the widow feel that life will be an eternal blank without her loved one; but those who know the Indian mind will also have to admit, as many a Hindu has admitted to the writer, that behind it all is the terrible fear of widowhood, a fear not based merely on the absence of a husband's love and protection but rather on the terrible prospect which faces the widow. Bleak, cruel, and hopeless. That is the prospect in almost every case. So death, sudden and heroic, invested with an atmosphere of piety and devotion, is often far more attractive than life which offers nothing but degradation.

Two instances of ordinary *suttee* will suffice, as both occurred in the year 1932 within four months of these lines being written. One story comes from Jubbulpore and the other from Cawnpore.

Khilona, a resident of Mahova town not far from Jubbulpore, died after a protracted illness. A few hours before he died, he called his wife and sons to his bedside and told them that he knew he would be shortly leaving them. "And, my boys," he said to his sons, "look after your mother who has never been left alone since we were married twenty years ago." But before the sons could give the expected assurance, the wife, aged 35, placed her hand on her husband's brow and said, "Don't be afraid, Khilona. You can die in peace, because I am coming with you. What would life be as a widow without you?" The following morning the man died. When the relatives heard that Rajrani intended to commit *suttee*, they threatened to inform the police, knowing full well the penalty attached even to abetting or tacit agreement to *suttee*. Hearing that they might thus interfere, Rajrani herself went to the local police station and declared her intention. Failing to dissuade her, the subordinate police officer on duty seized her, took her to the town dispensary, gave her a dose of drug, or sleeping mixture, to keep her away from the cremation ground, and carried her home. Thinking that the *suttee* problem was solved, the cremation was started. But so strong was the woman's will that the drug failed to work. Just as the pyre was well alight, Rajrani suddenly appeared, clad in spotless robes and well anointed with sandal oil. Before the relatives could stop her, she had leaped on to the pile of blazing logs which formed the last bed of her husband, and in a moment was a mass of flames as she settled down beside him. Thus did Rajrani show that *suttee* is not a forgotten rite in India, even though it might be forbidden by law.

The next scene is in the village of Kadauli, near Cawnpore, where a case of *suttee* resulted in nine villagers being put on

trial for murder, abetment of murder, and abetment of suicide. When Bhure Singh died, his widow promptly announced that she intended to commit *suttee*. There was no poignant death-bed scene as in the Jubbulpore case, but at the outset the dead man's relatives sought to dissuade her by telling her that the practice was prohibited by British law. "What care I for the law?" cried the widow. "My husband is dead, and I am going to do what all good Hindu widows should do. India is no place for widows." Hearing of the woman's intentions, two police constables were sent with instructions to take Bhure Singh's body to the River Jumna instead of allowing it to be cremated, with the idea of frustrating the woman's plan. But the widow was so determined that before any such scheme could be carried out, she threatened to visit the whole village with a terrible curse if they dared to stop her, a threat which had its effect inasmuch as none would dare to interfere. So when the police party were preparing to lay other plans, they suddenly heard a noise. Looking up, the sepoy's saw a column of smoke arising from the middle of a crowd of about 250 villagers. On reaching the place, they found that the bodies of Bhure Singh and his wife were half consumed, with the villagers refusing to permit the police to interfere in any way. Later investigations showed that the widow was given considerable assistance in preparing herself and the funeral pyre for the cremation, that solemn obeisance was made to her as she mounted the pile of logs, that friends garlanded her amidst enthusiasm, and that one of the relatives actually lit the match which enabled the widow to carry out her plan.¹

¹ Whilst this book was in print, news came from Fatehpur-Sikri, near Agra, of a case of *suttee* in which the police had to open fire on a crowd which insisted on helping a widow to commit *suttee* after

Not always is *suttee* nowadays committed on the funeral pyre. The will to die is at times so strong that the widow does not find it necessary to wait for the funeral. Cases have been known, indeed, where a dose of poison is less painful and just as efficacious; although in fairness to the widows of India it must be admitted that very seldom do they shrink from any time-honoured custom, no matter how great the agony or how inconvenient the method. Nevertheless, to some of them the thread of life is so slender, and the love of life is so much less than the desire for death, that they merely lie down on the bier of the dead husband and die with him. Incredible? But nevertheless true, as two instances in 1932 prove.

There lived in Bankura, Bengal, a happy couple who had scarcely a care in the world. Then the husband fell sick. Despite all that his wife could do for him, his condition grew worse. Doctors were helpless, and it soon became apparent that he had little longer to live. For weeks, however, the devoted wife hardly left his bedside, imploring him to hold on to life, as she could not face the world without him, especially as that part of Bengal is famous for its bigotry and intolerance in matters of religious custom and social observances. But not for ever could her pathetic appeals keep the spark of life alight; and one evening the young husband died. Without saying a word to anyone, without telling the closest relatives that the expected had at last taken place, the young widow observed the usual religious ceremonies, anointed her husband and herself, and then lay down on the bed beside him. Some hours later when relatives

the police had already rescued her from the crematory bier. Three people were reported killed and about half a dozen injured as a result of the affray.

called, they found the two dead bodies. The wife had committed *suttee* by sheer will power. A pathetic, even a romantic idyll; but *suttee* none the less, though of a less gruesome character than that which forms a double marital blaze before applauding relatives.

The other example was published in the newspapers on the very day that this chapter was being written, and is hence produced here exactly as it appeared in the *Statesman* of May 31, 1932:—

HYDERABAD (SIND),

May 29th.

A wife's promise to commit *suttee* on her husband's death had an unusual sequel at Karachi when the husband, Mr. Khanchand Hiramandani, a retired *nazir* (official) of the Sind Civil Court, died following an attack of paralysis. Mr. Hiramandani and his wife were on a visit to their daughter in Karachi when the former fell ill. The doctors having given up all hope of recovery, his wife begged him to "take her along with him" as she had vowed to commit *suttee* after his death. As the wife was persistent in her request, the dying husband promised to "take her with him," and, according to Hindu custom, ordered death charities to be distributed for both of them, as also the performances of religious ceremonies connected with their deaths. Mr. Hiramandani died immediately after. While arrangements for his funeral were being made, Mrs. Hiramandani bade farewell to her family, made a bed near her husband's body and lay down. She developed a high temperature in a few minutes, and in spite of medical attention died a short while after her husband's death. The bodies of both husband and wife were cremated on the same funeral pyre. It is said that Mrs. Hiramandani's parents had made a similar compact and that they died in similar circumstances.

It may be asked, why does *suttee* in various forms still exist in spite of the efforts that have been made through legislation and education to stop it? The answer is easy. In the first place, the Brahmins do not, as a class, seem really opposed to *suttee*. Their opposition to any such reform in the early nineteenth century almost caused a rebellion; and ever since then they have harboured a lingering regard for

what one of them called the "crowning act of piety in marital life." Secondly, it must be remembered that there are scattered all over India memorials and temples erected in honour of women who have practised *suttee*, and the memory of those deeds is thus kept alive not merely as a tribute to those who blindly and heroically followed custom but even as an incentive to others to remember that, after all, but for the intrusive law of a "foreign power," it would still be as much a crime against Hindu society to remain a widow as it was an insult to the husband to let him die alone.

Bankura is a striking case in point. For who will dare deny that the wife who refused to leave her husband even in death, whose story has just been told, did not obtain her inspiration and her heroism from that very temple which is revered throughout the Bankura district as one of the holiest spots of local Hinduism, but which was erected only a little over a quarter of a century ago in honour of the two widows of a very religious Brahmin who performed *suttee* in a manner which is still spoken of in admiration in every village of the district?

As an illustration of a state of mind which still exists all over India, the full story, which has never before been published, might well be included in this survey.

Krishna Prosad Mukherji was a learned Brahmin of a respected family of Gogra village. When he died, his two wives promptly declared their intention of committing *suttee*. Efforts were made, perhaps half-heartedly, to dissuade them; but they were adamant. So hand in hand they went to the village tank to bathe, put on new gaily-coloured sarees, scented themselves with rose-water and sandal-paste, worshipped before the family god for half an hour, returned to their husband's bier, sat at his feet and tied their own sarees to the corpse, and bowed down in deep reverence before their

departed lord and master. At the suggestion of some old women in the village, two pounds of vermilion were taken to the scene, which was consecrated by the two widows who touched it with their foreheads, whereafter the vermilion was carefully kept by the family and is still in great demand throughout the district by the women who believe that the smallest particle placed on their foreheads will secure them from widowhood.

But there were even then a few "reformers" in the district who believed that such sacrifice was not called for, or at least was not advisable; so the elder of the two wives stood up and declared: "You fear that we shall suffer pain when we lie on the bier, that we shall shrink and tremble and prove false to our determination to join our husband in death. But you are wrong. Our husband was very dear to us. We both felt that we lived in him. We can never feel that we had any separate existence. Now that our lord is dead, we do actually feel that our bodies are only dead bodies and that we shall, therefore, feel no pain when we are burned. Moreover, we will now show you by an experiment that we are right, and that our bodies are dead." And so saying, they both lit a fire in the courtyard and held their little fingers in it for fifteen minutes, all the while talking heartily with the amazed crowd of onlookers.

This experiment silenced all criticism and opposition, and the funeral procession started. On reaching the outskirts of the village, by the side of the tank, a large pyre was made, the wives garlanded their dead husband and themselves with flowers, looked deeply into his marble face, and then took their places, the elder one on his right side and the other on his left. The match was about to be lit when two police officers appeared and ordered the proceedings to stop.

Taking charge of the ceremony, however, the elder wife ordered the police to go away, gave instructions to her sons to light the pyre, and so enthused the gathering that the police were rendered impotent. Oil and butter were poured on the pyre—and the double *suttee* was quickly beyond the power of men to prevent. A beautiful temple, known as the *Suttee Temple*, now stands on the spot, and even to-day passers-by, including many pilgrims, bow down before it in memory of those two women. A son and grandson were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment for having permitted and aided the strange ceremony, but the family still retains the respect and admiration of the whole Hindu populace. There are still residing in the village old folk who well remember the incident and who are never tired of recounting the tale to open-mouthed child brides and matronly widows who gather round to hear it over and over again.

Many such *suttee* temples are to be found as objects of special admiration, and whilst the known cases of modern *suttee* are admittedly few, the fact remains that the spirit of *suttee* still exists and occasionally finds expression.

Undoubtedly the performance still confers a kind of canonization, the honour of which attaches for ever to the family. But does the practice make the woman a heroine or a martyr? That is a question of psychology which need not be debated in this book, but whether we look upon it as the outcome of uncontrollable grief, insatiable love, or overwhelming fear, the fact remains that few Europeans to-day would, with deliberate organization, order the preparation of a fiery furnace, and then jump headlong into it with a shout of triumph on their lips. To perform such an act as *suttee*, whether out of faithfulness to one's husband or out of fear of the family, demands a courage which makes the performer

a heroine of romance as well as a martyr to custom, no matter how misguided we might think she is. There are still Hindus who insist that the widow performs *suttee* out of sheer devotion and reverence; but never do the newspapers give stories of similar love on the part of the bereaved husband. Which seems to prove that there is a great deal in the suggestion that the majority of *suttees* have always regarded a speedy death in the roaring flames as decidedly more preferable to a lifetime of misery and degradation.

Suttee: murder or suicide? It may be either, or both, according to the circumstances. But its very existence at the present time is another proof, not only of queer India, but also of the scant respect that is given to life when death's finger beckons.

Suicides Galore

With life so cheap, it is only to be expected that suicide is frequent in India. The total for 1931 in Bihar and Orissa, for example, was 1,329, of which 923 were women and 11 were children under ten years of age. And their causes are as trivial as are those of murder. So, equally, are the methods as varied. Apart from the large number of girl-wives who set fire to their sarees to free themselves from the unwelcome attentions of their old or cruel husbands, there is ample evidence to show that people will take their own lives as readily as they will take the lives of their enemies or friends. To prove that general statement will be as easy as it was to prove the assertion about the frequency and artistry of murder. But why be unduly gruesome? So just a few typical cases will suffice.

Because he was denied new clothes to attend a family wedding, Arunachellam, a youth of 19 living near Villupuram,

took revenge on his parents by hanging himself ; because her father would not give her as many jewels as she wanted for her wedding, a Calicut woman drowned herself in the family well ; because he had no money with which to redeem a kettle which he had pawned, and thus was unable to make himself a cup of tea, a Madras man hanged himself with a dog's chain ; because their relatives would not let them marry, an Alleppey couple climbed a tree, tied the opposite ends of a rope around their necks, and jumped into space ; because she objected to being scolded by her mother, a Balurghat girl of nine cut her throat ; because his younger brother obtained a wife before he did, Malik Kesra Ram of Multan poisoned himself ; because he was frightened at having given evidence to the police about those responsible for a burglary, a Lahore man went to his room, drank petrol, and then lit a match ; because his catch was not as large as his neighbour's, a Quilon fisherman ended his life by swallowing a live fish ; because his relatives passed adverse comment on the appearance of the wife he had personally selected (instead of leaving the choice to his parents), Jitendranath Das of Calcutta took an overdose of opium on the day after his wedding ; because he thought he had broken the law by killing an elephant in a protected area, an estate agent turned the rifle on himself and blew his brains out, although it was later found not only that the elephant was not dead but also that the man was within his rights in shooting a wild beast which was doing immense damage in his master's estate ; because she believed that she was doomed to die unmarried, being of such hallowed birth that she could accept no mortal hand in marriage, a girl of Masulipatam dressed herself in her bridal clothes whilst waiting for the bridegroom on the marriage eve, mounted a pyre which she had secretly

made in the backyard, and set it alight, burning herself to death; because the first wife of a fakir of Bagerhat, Bengal, had quarrelled with the husband, and hanged herself in an out-house, the second wife went to the out-house and did likewise.

Such a chain of "because" could be indefinitely extended. But no more are necessary. In western lands it has been suggested that a Royal Commission be appointed to investigate whether suicide is a disease, for it is maintained that in many countries the suicidal tendency moves in ever-changing cycles. But surely no such commission is needed in India;—or could do any good. Suicide most certainly is not a disease in queer India, unless superstition, indifference to life, and general religious and social tyranny be regarded as both symptoms and causes of a disease.

* * * * *

It is not a very long step from murder and suicide to ordinary cruelty, and before passing on to deal with one of the most remarkable phases of queer India in connexion with the treatment of animals in the name of religion, very brief reference might be made to the frequent indifference to the sufferings of others. The many instances of diabolical methods of murder have proved that when passions are roused or feelings are intensified, cruelty is almost a hobby; but even in ordinary life there are frequent cases of almost unbelievable brutality.

A too-attractive wife has often been rendered less beautiful by the husband suddenly slicing off her nose,—for that particular method of dealing out home discipline might almost be termed "common" in many rural areas. Ears and breasts are also frequent objects of punishment by irate husbands. Then there was the Belgaum husband who took his thirteen-year-old wife into the house, tied her arms

together, and then drove a double-pointed plough nail into each foot, "to keep her from wandering." In defence the man's lawyer had openly pleaded that "the husband had only done what he thought was the right of every husband to do." In sentencing him to six months' hard labour, the Sessions Judge, Mr. N. R. Gundil, said that he agreed that "ignorance and illiteracy were partly responsible for such cruel treatment," and added that "it is a pity that among the poorer classes husbands still assert their rights in such a manner."

Here is one more selected at random: A shopkeeper in Calcutta employed two servants, a man and a boy. The boy saw the man steal some of the master's money, and exposed the thief. In revenge, the man tied a bag round the boy's leg, soaked it in oil, pinned him down, and then set light to the bag. The boy spent six weeks of torture in hospital, but again in this case justice was not too stern, because the man only got one year's rigorous imprisonment.

Factories that Produce Cripples

One of the little-known "trades" of India is that which deals in the hideous monstrosities which crawl about the streets as beggars. In earlier times children were deformed by their parents in order that they might be useful as a means of livelihood through begging; and in a few cases the mutilation was done in the name of religion. But nowadays there is a regular business in this line. Small, it is true; but lucrative. Although the greatest secrecy is observed in the location of these cripple-factories, it is known there are at least two, one in the north and one in the south, which keep up a never-failing supply of mutilated and deformed cripples for the leading towns as well as the pilgrim centres. The Beggars' Syndicate, partly run by wealthy men, makes good

use of these cripples and from them obtains a goodly portion of its profits.

It may be argued, of course, that India's cripple factories are little different from that factory in Central Europe which produces human freaks for circuses and side-shows. True, the ultimate aim is almost the same, namely, financial gain; but how different the methods! The western "freak" factory ensures a lucrative income for the freak, because bearded ladies, owl-faced men, and over-fat children earn good salaries and live under excellent conditions, whilst even in the preparatory period every care is taken to minimize pain. But the Indian freak factory must be an appalling place. Kidnapped or discarded babies are literally tied into knots in order that they might later be able merely to crawl about the streets and successfully excite public sympathy to the advantage of those to whom they are sold. Only those people who have visited India's pilgrim centres and temples and out-of-the-way shrines can picture the terrible agonies which must have accompanied those years of horror during which young children were tortured to make them into unbelievable shapes. More like animals of another world than human beings, these poor creatures, disfigured and mutilated and twisted so inhumanly as to make one wonder that they could ever have survived the processes by which they were crippled, collect their charity during the day from those who feel their duty done when they religiously give alms. Then, with oncoming night, they drag their hideous forms back to their owners, prepared for beatings and kicks and starvation if their collections are not up to standard.

The beggar problem in India is now so great that even in large towns it has been given up as unsolvable. Efforts have been made to control it, but the organization of the Beggars'

Syndicate is too strong financially to allow any amelioration schemes to be successful. So the appalling trade in the pain-racked bodies of men and women and children goes on. The factories still turn out their annual quota of human distortions. And, worse still, there have been instances where these terrible cripples have been deliberately crossed in the hopes of producing an even greater monster which will prove especially profitable. As much as £75 has been paid to the cripple-maker by a speculative buyer of beggars, and, if a poor creature is particularly repellent, he or she will earn up to ten shillings a day, which all goes to the owner who, in grateful acknowledgment, gives back just sufficient food to keep body and soul together—that is, provided the very character of the beggar's deformity does not render persistent malnutrition and semi-starvation essential.

Cruelty in Religion's Name

But cruelty *in excelsis* is to be found more in the treatment of animals than in occasional outbursts of parental rage or financial cupidity. By some strange method of logic, the religious law which says that it is both cruel and wicked to kill any living creature of the animal world actually commands that no effort must be made to put any creature out of its misery, no matter what tortures it is passing through. One may smile at the foolish obstinacy which prevents people from killing rats in spite of an outbreak of cholera; one may almost refuse to believe that so-called educated people in 1932 still feed poisonous ants with sugar or collect caterpillars rather than kill them, or feed fleas and other vermin with human blood rather than let them starve. But the fact remains that there is more cruelty in India than in any other country in the world, thanks to a "ritual reverence for life

which does not even include the performance of acts of mercy." Many an Indian farmer would still prefer his family to starve than kill the monkey, the wild pig, the black buck, the parakeet, or even the caterpillar which maraud his crops, although nowadays they have not so much objection to "foreigners" ridding the crops of pests which have for centuries thrived at the farmer's expense. And a few of them, when their neighbours are not looking, will even do a little hunting work themselves, although the indefatigable workers in the various agricultural departments of India alone know how formidable is their task when they try to introduce new methods of fighting crop pests. Some agriculturists, for example, would not even steep seeds before planting lest by so doing they kill some invisible insect, which, of course, was the sole purpose of the steeping.

Life may be sacred so far as the animal world is concerned ; but the *feelings* are not. One's heart literally seems to curl up as the eyes see some of India's animal sights ; but still India moves placidly on, smiling somewhat superciliously as such organizations as the S.P.C.A. try, with very limited Indian encouragement, to improve the lot of those who are too holy to be killed but who are not worth worrying about in matters of suffering. While hesitating to include too harrowing tales in this review, honesty demands that the question of cruelty to animals be thoroughly exposed, for surely it is one of the strangest characteristics of queer India that a land dominated by a religion which forbids even vermin being killed should have no equal anywhere in the world in the matter of cruelty to dumb creatures.

The cow, for example, is a super-sacred animal the killing of which has a hundred thousand times been the cause of battle, riot, and murder. Yet it is no crime to allow a

barren cow to rot to death, nor is it necessary to do any form of penance for starving a male calf to death. Nor, for those who want to profit by an animal's death, is it regarded as a sin to drop poisoned food within a cow's reach or scratch it, accidentally, of course, with a poisoned thorn. The phrase, "It's about time we twisted his tail to make him work," had its origin in India, where every day bullocks can be seen with the last three or four segments of their tails, including the indispensable tuft which serves as a fly-swish, twisted right off as a potent goad when nail-studded sticks and iron-barbed whips have ceased to be regarded by the animal with fear. And then, with lacerated tail, raw back, maggot-eaten legs, perforated ears and tongue, and ill-nourished body, the bullock, as with all animals that serve the Hindu, is left by the way-side to starve, with no one to save him from the lingering torture of birds of prey whose beaks torment but cannot kill outright. A broken leg, or a broken-down constitution, is merely the beginning of the end, for the creature may live for days in agony, with its eyes picked out by crows, yet perfectly conscious, as the religious laws of the land sternly prohibit such an animal being shot or otherwise painlessly killed.

* * * * *

Seldom have the "ordinary" sufferings of India's dumb animals been fully described, although India's Penal Codes provide punishments for such regular practices as the flaying of goats alive. For well over a quarter of a century the various branches of the S.P.C.A. have been trying to stop this terrible custom which has developed into a trade, but there is still any amount of it going on. The latest police report available shows that a dozen cases of this crime were detected in 1931 in the province of Bihar and Orissa, but

only four convictions were obtained. Travancore State has recently instructed its Municipal Councils to insert a clause in all future slaughter-house licences forbidding this practice in the killing of both sheep and goats, despite the appeal from those concerned that the only way to get a valuable full-sized skin is by taking it from the animal whilst it is still alive. In many other parts of India, particularly those provinces which deal with the export of hides, this practice is very common, but Travancore State has certainly set an excellent example in a most practical manner, even as that State has also, within the past few months, stopped by royal proclamation animal sacrifices for religious purposes. Incidentally it might be mentioned here that Cochin State has also recently followed suit in this latter respect, ordering that cucumbers should in future take the place of animals in sacrifices made in all State-owned or State-managed temples, whilst officials have been instructed to use all possible influence to persuade the general public to abandon the custom of sacrificing even fowls in temples.

But perhaps the best method of revealing the real extent of this appalling cruelty throughout India will be to quote an appeal issued at the end of 1931 by Mr. Justice G. H. B. Jackson, I.C.S., on behalf of the Madras S.P.C.A., although every reader will probably marvel that conditions necessitating such an appeal could possibly exist even in India. After referring to the ordinary cases of cruelty, of which every city has thousands and thousands annually, such as using animals of burden when they are red-raw with sores, working bullocks day and night in oil-mills with sores and tumours on their necks, starving calves in order that the cow might give the maximum drop of milk, and the appalling transportation methods in connexion with fowls and goats, Mr. Justice

Jackson proceeded to deal with ritualistic cruelties which such organizations as the S.P.C.A. cannot touch, owing to "great and unsurmountable difficulties which cannot be overcome without the willing and hearty co-operation of the public at large." He then continues :—

Possibly some enlightened people are found to support such sacrifices and are actually of the opinion that these old and time-honoured practices should not be interfered with. Many may not be aware of the extent of the cruelties and sufferings the animals offered as sacrifices (namely sheep, goats, pigs, buffaloes, fowls, etc.) have to undergo. The limbs of sheep and their ears are severed from their bodies piecemeal, their heads broken and in other ways mutilated before they are actually done to death. In sheep sacrifices, sometimes, the animal is cut into 32 parts of its body and its flesh is taken bit by bit. This is done at dead of night, perhaps to avoid public gaze. Pregnant sheep are also offered as sacrifices. The young ones are pulled out from the womb by the hand being thrust inside and they are killed first and then the mother. Live pigs are thrown from a height over sharp spikes planted on the ground and left there until a certain height is reached. They are thus made to suffer excruciating pain for several hours before their actual death. They are then removed for others to take their place. Buffaloes are let into pits specially dug for the purpose and then pierced with sharp swords in several places by a number of persons standing on different sides of them, and after the infliction of much pain and suffering the head is finally severed from the body.

In the case of the offering of fowls to temples they are tossed up and down because of the so-called time-honoured custom. This results in the infliction of unnecessary sufferings on them. They are also bitten while alive and their blood sucked by the men engaged in that "holy" work.

Though it may take some time before public opinion is strongly educated against such sacrifices, it must be the duty of all human beings to lend a helping hand in seeing that much of the needless and untold suffering is avoided. The municipalities while granting licences for the slaughtering of animals may be pleased to insert a clause in them prohibiting such acts of cruelty. I make no personal strictures, if persons are conscientiously convinced that such practices are demanded by their religious faith; but I am asked by the Society of which I am President, in that capacity, earnestly to appeal to the authorities concerned to take needful steps to put a stop to such acts of cruelty practised upon animals within their respective jurisdictions.

In this appeal the more sordid details of cruelty have been omitted. It is a sorry tale, indeed. And much more could be added about the stitching up of birds' eyes to use them as decoys ; about using live birds in special firework displays ; about biting lumps out of the backs of sheep by the " tiger-men " in religious processions and then flinging the lacerated animals distances of eight or ten feet ; about loading goats and sheep into ships by squeezing them through a tiny hole in the side and then letting them drop perpendicularly into the hold ten feet below, causing fractures which are not even seen for days ; about carrying sacrificial fowls for miles tied head downwards to the axles of carts ; about burning live fowls with corpses in the belief that by so doing the other members of the family would be saved from early death ; about tail-biting and ear-clipping and many other forms of cruelty which are not only indulged in and enjoyed by men and women, but which also become the kindergarten school of brutality in which children from one year upwards receive their first lessons in cruelty and callousness.

Even the ordinary Indian slaughter-house scenes are a disgrace to any country, and should long before this have aroused the feelings of all those who eat the meat which comes from them. It is no uncommon sight, for example, to see two hundred sheep herded into a stall. Slaughtering then commences, each animal being butchered in sight of the rest, and the butchered—and sometimes half-butchered—animals being piled one upon the other until the heap of squirming carcasses becomes too high for easy handling. The killing of a cow or bullock is frequently the age-old hand-to-hand wrestling match between the animal on the one side and three men on the other, until by sheer force of dragging, prodding, tail-twisting, and spear-jabbing the animal is jerked

off its feet, coming down with a heavy thud and usually fracturing its bones or its horns. Then the "orthodox" method of killing it comes into play, for the "halal" method only can be sanctioned, which means that the neck must be just cut so that the animal can bleed to death. By the complete severance of the head from the body the meat at once becomes unclean.

Pigs get an even worse time. They are chased around the stall by men armed with bludgeons, and beaten until they collapse. They are then pierced with spears, causing gaping wounds, the method at the very best being a shamefully amateurish game of pig-sticking indulged in by men who actually bet with each other as to whose animal either makes the most noise or sustains the greatest number of spear-thrusts before dying.

And all this is quietly put down to "public ignorance and apathy," mixed up, others would say, with "stupidity, carelessness, and confused thinking." Still others would excuse it all on the grounds of "thoughtlessness." But at last it would seem that an awakening has come, at least in Madras. In response to the appeal of Mr. Justice Jackson, one resident wrote saying: "It is unbelievable that such things exist after our long rule in India. Surely it is time to stop making excuses for the perpetrators of such crimes on the grounds of 'ignorance.' Is it possible that any human being should need education to persuade him of the savagery and unspeakable cruelty detailed in that appeal? If so, how many more hundreds of years will it take for those responsible for the civilizing of India to set about this education and do something real to mitigate the sufferings of these dumb creatures?" Support for that point of view was forthcoming from another who was amazed and stunned by the revelations: "That old

slogan of ' custom of the country ' is now too thin to cast a shadow. If bad old customs take so long to die, they should be assisted out of this world with swiftness and dispatch by means of drastic methods."

Life is cheap. But pain is cheaper, for it costs nothing to the one who gives it. And often it pays. Witness, for example, that very common sight in India of cattle with a fifth leg flapping from the shoulder, which poor animals are led about at fairs and religious festivals by both holy men and beggars. That fifth leg may appear odd to those who are looking for freaks of nature ; but in order to get it on the shoulder, a leg is cut off a living calf and then sewn on to the selected animal after having laid open the skin for an area of about a square foot on the shoulder, or the hump. Nor are anæsthetics known or worried about by those who make a special profession of this leg-grafting business. If the operation fails, and gangrene sets in, then there is always the local *pinjrapole*, or charitable animal home, for it to go to.

And there? Things certainly are improving a little, but for any visitor to India who wants to see the most amazing collections of diseased, decrepit, and horrid-looking animals, then a tour of the *pinjrapoles* is to be recommended. There are some, very few, which are reasonably well conducted, but in the main the very nature of the institutions prohibits anything more than throwing food and drink to dying animals. Few of them retain qualified veterinary men, and in none of them can animals be put out of their misery in hopeless cases. At the best, therefore, these so-called proofs of India's care of the animal creation are refuges for the halt and maimed and dying animals for whom nobody cares ; and at the worst, they are badly-run asylums demonstrating more cruelty and neglect than the ordinary mind can imagine, for animals

with unset limbs broken years ago drag their atrocities about with them, and are driven mercilessly down steep banks to the nearest watering hole to scramble for a few mouthfuls of water which the attendants are too lazy to carry up for them. In the institution itself these same animals are to be seen fighting for food, hobnobbing together irrespective of contagious diseases, and producing heart-rending sights which make the visitor want to use a much stronger word than "queer" when referring to India.

Thus this chapter ends up on the same note as that on which it commenced, for even the attitude towards animals shows, in a different way, that a life full of pain and misery means less than death through humane dealings. This is not declaring, however, that there is any deliberate and abnormal tendency to sheer cruelty. The masses of the people, those who mainly come into contact with animals, have been demoralized by custom and, perhaps, necessity. Many of them, in their illiteracy, are still living in much the same atmosphere as their ancestors did when the ancient autocrat lived and thrived on cruelty of every kind. Slaughter in a wholesale and revolting form has ever been present in the rite of sacrifice. That on the one hand has produced an indifference to pain and suffering, and a gloating over the shedding of rivers of blood, in the name of religion; whilst on the other hand the vague reluctance to take life by a positive sudden act, except for sacrifice, gives animals a security from a death which would come as pleasant release from unmeasured suffering.

Queer India, where the people are certainly better than their creeds, but where their creeds are stronger than their own better natures.

CHAPTER V

MURDER AS AN ART

DESPITE all the so-called education in the rural area of India, there is an appalling daily toll of murders and crimes of violence, perpetrated alike by the apparently well-educated as well as by the half-educated. In fact, the more one studies the criminal side of India, the greater is the impression that, despite the educational system, murder continues to be the fine art it used to be. Indeed, it has been reduced to a much finer art. Gone to a great extent are the professional murderers of India, the Thugs. But every day sees life taken with the utmost callousness, ruthlessness, gruesomeness. Of India it can be said that murder is often only a passing event in the day's work. Mother kills son or daughter. Father disposes of wife or children. Son cold-bloodedly puts father out of the way. Daughter casually wreaks her vengeance on the mother. Neighbour thinks nothing of battering neighbour to death. Friend forgets friendship as he uses knife or bludgeon on friend.

In other words, everyday life almost appears to be the preparatory school for those more opportune times when communal riotings develop into orgies of indescribable brutality, such as have been witnessed in Cawnpore, Bombay, Calcutta and a hundred other places. As was shown in the previous chapter, life is very cheap in India. Very cheap indeed. And in no way is that cheapness more readily and frequently

demonstrated than in the record of murder. The study of the criminal killer is always a fascinating one; but in queer India it has a fascination of its own. True, at times murder is attributable to the same origins as in other countries—greed, jealousy, the eternal triangle, human nature, and inhuman nature. But the manifestations of those characteristics are different in India. Likewise the methods and the consequences are different. That is why this chapter has been declared to be a description of murder as an art.

Killing Made Easy

Perhaps the outstanding feature of murder in India is the difficulty of obtaining both evidence and conviction. Facts and clues which in western lands would place a man on the scaffold in a few weeks would never even take a suspect before the investigating magistrate in India. The outstanding murder trials of England, for example, during the past five years would not have stood the slightest chance of succeeding had they been heard in India. Circumstantial evidence in this country is almost unknown. Legal technicalities and the slightest unexplained incident in an Indian murder trial are more useful than the most cast-iron alibi or the strongest defence. Why? There are two outstanding reasons. Despite the fact that the Indian Police are among the finest in the world, it cannot be denied that there is no detective system such as exists in other countries. Give the Indian Police a suspect, and if it is humanly possible, they will collect the evidence to convict him, and even obtain his confession. But where suspicion falls on no particular person, then the working up of a sound case from such slender clues, for example, as a wisp of hair, a half-burned match, or a bent pin is seldom found possible by the police in India.

And in saying this, we are not depreciating the police, for circumstances in India are so vastly different that the building up of a definite case in many murders would be a task which would balk even Scotland Yard. There are outstanding instances in which the Indian Police have shown that in certain classes of detective work they will never give up until they have got their man, even though it might take seven years, and almost daily they complete tasks which prove that they are worthily maintaining that reputation which they gained when they were pioneers of the finger-print system.

Perjury Rampant

The second reason for the failure of so many murder cases in India is the amazing unreliability of the evidence and the witnesses. On the one hand, evidence can so easily be destroyed or camouflaged, and on the other, there is so much false evidence concocted merely to implicate an innocent person out of sheer spite. It must be remembered that in the rural districts every murder is discussed in the village from every angle before the trial, and generally before any arrests are made. In other words, the exact facts of the case are very frequently known to the villagers and not to the police. If the actual culprit has any hold, financial or moral, over the villagers, then he can depend upon them to shield him, whilst if the villagers are particularly anxious to get rid of one of their number, then there are always ways and means of giving the police evidence and witnesses which will convict him, even though he may be innocent. Only when one understands the real village system can the power of caste and prestige be fully appreciated in its relationship to the silencing of material witnesses, the destroying of valuable evidence, or the production of false "proof."

Equally must it be admitted that the extent to which the villagers will go out of their way to commit perjury to pay back an old grudge or to wreak vengeance on an enemy can only be fully realized when the Indian villager and his everyday life are thoroughly understood. On this question of perjury, both for and against an accused, the Sessions Judge of Trinnevelly said, in acquitting seven men of murder : " The evidence of the prosecution witnesses is obviously untrue from start to finish. To such a pitch has perjury gone in this district that it is almost impossible for any prosecution to end in conviction. The remedy, as I see it, is not for judges to rely on their intuition and a sort of second sight for truth, but to decline to act upon anything except real evidence. Evidence to be acted upon must be believed, and must be the evidence of persons who can be trusted to tell the truth."

It is very easy to see how such a state of affairs, which is now existent in the majority of the districts in India, must at times prevent a murderer from being found guilty or, alternatively, frequently tend to result in the conviction of innocent men. To avoid the latter, acting on the old British principle of justice, most judges insist on the most convincing of evidence, so that a case must be absolutely proved in every conceivable particular before the death sentence is passed. Circumstantial evidence does not stand in Indian Courts, so far as actual practice is concerned, as can be well understood when it is pointed out that in a large number of cases it was proved that the prosecution witnesses not only gave false evidence themselves but incited others to come forward to support them when they really knew nothing whatever about the case, and were presenting an absolutely artificial story especially concocted. Yet how few are the prosecutions for

perjury in India! The utmost that usually happens is for the aggrieved parties who were falsely accused to sue the complainants and witnesses for damages, and the relief they get is shown by a recent case when five respectable men who were admittedly maliciously charged with murder obtained damages amounting to £18, £18, £11, £4, and £4 to cover their lost reputation, their expenditure on defence, and the loss of their normal earnings whilst they were in jail under trial for a period of ten weeks.

Expressing the murder problem in figures, it might be stated that the annual total averages well over three thousand in British India alone. But that figure is only the *reported* total, and even with the police as well organized and thoroughly efficient as they are, there is still a great deal of crime which goes unrecorded. As the Chief Commissioner of the North-West Frontier Province said of his 1930 record, "There are many more which, owing to general contempt of constituted authority, are rarely brought into court, with very many more definitely concealed." That Province, admittedly, is on a somewhat different plane from the other provinces, but the general principle remains the same all over India.

There is a saying in India that murders are almost always attributable to the three Z's, namely, Zan, Zar, and Zamin—loot, lust and land. And even in this twentieth century, the vast majority of murder cases can be traced as originating in one or other of these things "which are springs of elemental and almost primitive passions." Thus does murder come to be regarded far too generally as an offence against one individual only rather than as a crime against society. The day of the hired assassin is far from gone in India, and

even where that useful method is not resorted to, wealthy men still commit murders or have them committed "in the hope of being able to save themselves by bribing magistrates, police, or witnesses." Thus we are faced with a series of most disquieting features of life in India, a series which has turned murder into an art. But what else can be expected? Life is so cheap; the people are so illiterate; the professional murderer is always available; the wealthy man can buy both witnesses and evidence to suit his own ends; the lower grades of police are so poorly paid that bribery is rampant; perjury is regarded almost as a virtue; the very prevalence of such conditions makes the judges over-careful in accepting and weighing evidence; and the quality of mercy is so strained that barely one-third of the convicted murderers pay the supreme penalty. Judges in India always have the alternative sentence of life transportation to fall back on, and there seems to be an increasing tendency to utilize that useful way out of a difficult and disagreeable duty, particularly when the convicted persons are women, youths, maidens and those whose "excuse" is superstition or religious enthusiasm.

It is not surprising, in view of the foregoing, that murder stretches to the very extremes of age as well as of society. It is no unusual thing to find men and women of eighty being charged with murder, and at times, happily not so frequent, children of tender age are in the dock on the most serious charge which can be levelled against any human being. Moreover, in such extremes it is very rare that the capital sentence is inflicted. A Nagpur murder found a boy of 12 in the dock. He was convicted and sentenced to transportation for life, the judge declaring that he could not possibly pass the death sentence. Under the Indian Penal Code there

is complete immunity from criminal liability only in the case of a child under seven years of age, whilst with regard to children between seven and twelve, there is a special section providing that it is not an offence unless the child has attained sufficient maturity to judge of the nature and consequence of his conduct. In the case in point, the Nagpur boy most certainly understood what he was doing, for not only did he take a little girl with him out to play, rob her of her jewels and throw her into a well, but he actually attempted to pawn the ornaments which he had stolen. But even though he acted with malice, craft, cunning, brutality and forethought, few would advocate the extreme sentence to that youth under sixteen. There have been very few juvenile executions in England during the past century, even though in cases of proved murder the English judges have no other alternative than to pass the death sentence, leaving it to His Majesty and the Home Secretary to exercise the prerogative of mercy in special cases. But, with one of those flashes of legal administrative inspiration which are all too rare in our national life, in India the law itself provides the alternative punishment of transportation—a provision which is in itself a striking proof that conditions in India are so vitally different from those in western lands.

Yet there is nothing to prevent children of the most tender age from being examined as witnesses, and in the Nagpur case above mentioned, a boy of 5 and a girl of 6 were placed in the box and carefully questioned as to the circumstances of the crime, as they had admitted that they witnessed the murder from behind a bush. In few other countries could such a spectacle be seen as two babes in the box, but even in India evidence given by children is always most carefully scrutinized to prevent any possibility of injustice being

done, resultant from the children having been tutored as false witnesses, who have the added advantage of being cheap.

For the purpose of convenience, the various examples of murder given in this chapter have been classified into such sections as family murders, the eternal triangle, murder for greed, wholesale murder, and queer motives and methods. And in that order they will be related.

Family Murders

It is only to be expected that, with marriage itself merely a commercial transaction in which the husband and wife have no voice until it is too late, there would be comparatively little love in a very large number of homes. Hence it is not unusual to find that a dissatisfied husband or a disappointed wife, unable in most Hindu castes to utilize the avenue of divorce, settles the problem of incompatibility by killing the human obstacle to happiness. Thus there was Ramaswami of Triplicane setting fire to his fifteen-year-old wife and then confining her in a garret until she died a terrible death, merely because "he did not get on with her." And in the murder Ramaswami found a ready assistant in his brother.

The opposite occurred at Chittoor when Gangulu was charged with her father Yellappa for having poisoned her husband because "he did not make her happy." After frequent quarrels she found her opportunity one evening when he was sitting in the dark corner of the veranda playing a flute. She took him some food; and in half an hour he was beyond all aid, even though the neighbours fetched a native physician and a sorcerer from the next village. In defence, the woman said that she was so upset at the continued family disruptions that she had purchased a love potion from a travelling sorceress so that her husband might show more

affection towards her. In the meantime, it was believed that Gangulu had given her jewels and ornaments to her father and sent him to a neighbouring town to procure some poison. Commenting on the father's share in the murder, the Sessions Judge said: "Even if the evidence does not conclusively prove that the father procured the poison, it is, in my opinion, conclusive that he instigated his daughter in the sense of encouraging her, and that he entered into a conspiracy with her for the murder of her husband." So the Sessions Judge sentenced them both to death, but in an appeal to the High Court, Gangulu had her sentence commuted to life imprisonment whilst Yellappa was acquitted through lack of real corroborative evidence.

Equally tragic is the story of Rukma and her life of unhappiness at Wardha. Unable to stand her married life any longer after twelve years of misery since she was wed at the age of 12, Rukma succeeded in obtaining the support both of her own relatives and of those of her husband. A conspiracy was hatched, and on the suggestion of the husband's aunt, a family pleasure trip was arranged to Selu. On the way two people talked with her husband declaring that they could win back the love of Rukma with the help of black magic. He willingly agreed to a plan which would give him happiness in his home, and so he went off with some of the party to a lonely place, where he was killed. After some trouble in disposing of the body, they buried it under a tree, and all returned home saying that the husband had decided to stay in Selu. But prolonged absence aroused suspicions locally, and ultimately Rukma and one of the black-magic purveyors agreed to tell the whole story if they were promised a pardon.

Parental love is not always what it should be in India,

although the majority of mothers seem to concentrate all their affection on their children. Firemen who were called to fight the flames at a house in Amritsar were amazed to discover the body of a gagged and trussed-up girl on the floor in such a position as to leave no doubt that she had been deliberately tied up, soaked in kerosene, and set on fire, presumably with the idea of the burning house being her crematorium. Investigations were carried out, and her father and other relatives were arrested for attempted murder, that being the father's way of punishing his daughter for some misdemeanour.

Another case, still more terrible, comes from Samastipur in Behar, revealing a poignant tale of rural love and romance. There lived in the village of Dasauta a pretty girl named Katoria, who had fallen in love with a young man of a neighbouring house named Phulbaria. It was apparently a case of real love, but for some reason, undoubtedly connected with finance, the match was not looked upon with approval either by the girl's father or the village elders. Hoping to break off the romance, the girl's father, Sarwan, moved to another village with the whole of his family. That is, minus Katoria, who refused to move, saying that she would not live without her lover. Finding his daughter deaf to all his entreaties, Sarwan in a rage informed the rest of the village. Quickly the word went round that the girl and her lover must be taught a lesson. That night a *panchayet* (council) of men of all the castes in the village was held, and the unanimous decision arrived at was that as Phulbaria was a Daswad and the girl was a Katbani, who should have no dealings with each other, they both should be killed. So on the following morning about 150 of the villagers made a mass attack on Phulbaria's house, to which Katoria had also run for refuge.

For a time Phulbaria held them at bay, but ultimately he was forced inside, where he was speared to death—but not before he had shown Katoria a back way by which he hoped she could escape into the river. But she was seen whilst running away, and so some of the mob chased her down to the water's edge and dragged her out of the reeds, two of them then deliberately throttling her between two bamboos. The two dead bodies were then soaked in oil and burned, the police arriving just in time to drag the charred remains off the pyre to serve as evidence. Twenty-three villagers were sent up for trial, and of these two were sentenced to death and seven to life transportation.

Here is a terrible story of the tigerish cruelty of an old man towards his nine-year-old daughter-in-law, a story which caused the Judges of the Lucknow High Court to say that "although the accused is an old man of seventy, the crime is one of the very worst character that has ever come to our notice." Because he did not like the girl, although he had selected her as his son's bride, old Mani Ram Pasi treated little Maikji in an inhuman manner, adding to her tortures whenever the nine-year-old boy-husband raised any objection. One day, almost starving through neglect, Maikji took a piece of bread which was on the table. Leaping across the room, Mani seized the terror-stricken girl, stripped her of the one torn rag which served as clothing, and then branded her a score of times with a red-hot cooking implement, each time re-heating the tool before applying it. Gagged and stricken dumb with fear, the poor child writhed in agony, whilst the old man chuckled with glee in between his bursts of anger, and told the cowering boy-husband that if he dared tell anyone what was happening, he would be treated similarly. After three days of terrible agony, little Maikji died, where-

upon old Mani forced the frightened husband and his brother to promise to say that the girl, suddenly possessed of an evil spirit, had inflicted the burns upon herself in her frenzy. When arrested the father admitted that he had done the branding, but said he had done so to drive out the evil spirits which had entered into her body, adding in the Sessions Court: "My daughter-in-law was possessed of a ghost. One day when I came back from the field I saw that the ghost had started to work. The people had warned me beforehand that any day when she should get possessed I should brand her. I remembered that warning, and so I did as I was told."

This was the damning indictment of the judge:—

"It is obvious that there was a tigerish determination on the part of the accused to cause her such extensive injuries as he must have expected or must have had reason to believe, as an ordinary man of the world, would cause death. The monstrous and fiendish nature of the man appears from the terrible way in which the accused caused the burns to the girl. One can scarcely believe that a strong man of the accused's age and build could have possibly dealt with the girl in the way in which he did, sitting on her legs, gagging her mouth with cloth in order to prevent her from crying for help and in order that he might not be prevented from carrying out his foul purpose, and then deliberately causing her burn after burn all over her body and on the most delicate organs, which he almost consumed up with the hot weapon which he handled. One recoils from even a consideration of the facts as they appear from the evidence, and one does not like to realize in one's mind all the terrible and painful torture that the girl must have suffered while the burns were being inflicted and up to the last minute of her life."

So despite the advanced age of the old man, the High

Court Judges declared that no other sentence was possible except that of hanging.

Likewise filial love also often passes understanding in India—by its absence. In Mayavaram, Annammal, a widow of 30, annoyed at her mother's treatment of her, battered in her head with a crowbar. Crude ; but conclusive. And anything but an isolated case, although as these disagreements between children and parents generally contain the same sort of sordidness and motive, differing only in method, there is no need to give many instances. Yet it must be stated that it is no uncommon thing for a son to murder his father when the latter is either a long time in handing over the family heritage, or when some petty dispute arises based on prestige or spite. Here are two cases:—

In Ahmednagar there were two friends, Ashru and Bapu. Ashru's father did not like Bapu, so he forbade him entrance into his house. This did not suit Master Ashru, so after a series of quarrels, Ashru decided that the only way to solve the problem was for the father to die, so that the house could offer hospitality to as many of Ashru's friends as he liked. So one night Ashru and Bapu entered the former's house, and while Bapu sat on the chest of the sleeping father, Ashru cut the old man's throat with a butcher's knife. Ashru was hanged, and Bapu is serving a life sentence.

Ashrafi and Daruao were two brothers living in the Budaun district. One day they had a quarrel over a piece of tobacco belonging to a relative. Ashrafi lost his temper and rushed at Daruao with a spear, but the boy's father just then appeared on the scene and sought to intervene. He was successful for a time, and the brothers' blows were again reduced to a verbal dispute. Then the father, Ganga Din, said something which did not suit Ashrafi, with the result that another spear-

charge was made, this time the father instead of the brother being the target. As he was dying, Ganga Din called his two sons to his bedside, said that he would not make any report about the case, but urged them to learn a lesson from the tragic incident. But the police heard of Ganga Din's death, and Ashrafi was sentenced to life transportation.

The Eternal Triangle

The eternal triangle is apparently to be found in every land. In India, however, the very conditions not merely encourage it, but actually produce it. Where there are very few love matches, it is only natural that love will find an outlet in another direction. That, perhaps, does not excuse love-murders, but it does at least explain them. And when love is added to circumstances, superstition, and a general disregard for life, numerous examples of the tragedies connected with the eternal triangle must figure largely in a review showing how murder has been developed into a fine art, for no atmosphere is more conducive to ingenuity and intrigue than that of romance and sentiment.

To start off with, a case will be told when to love meant to court certain death. A girl of Nagpur had been forcibly married to an old man who lived a most immoral life and who obviously only married her because the father had agreed to give the daughter a handsome inheritance. Not knowing one moment's happiness, and always aware that the husband kept a jealous eye upon her, she received a visit one day from a youth who had been a great friend in her village and whom she had wanted to marry. The days passed, and the youth's visits became more frequent. One day he revealed his love, and although she admitted that she reciprocated it, she warned him that it was only asking for trouble of the direst

kind if he insisted on visiting the house. With all the impetuosity of romantic youth, he pointed out that he would not ask her to run away, but would wait until her husband died. "And as long as I do no wrong," said the lad, "surely your husband, who never gives you a minute of his company, can have no objection to my being friendly." But even as he spoke, the old man, who had been spying from a cupboard, pounced on the boy with two servants, bound and gagged him, and then took both the girl and the youth to a deserted hut where, still gagged, they were both left to die of starvation. Their bodies were found several weeks later, and the whole crime came out. Such is a simple tale of pure love on the one side and of cruel hate on the other.

Love tangles often cause the deaths of innocent folk in India. Thangiah Vaduvan, of a village near Vallanad, forbade his wife to have any friends of any kind. Despite his ban, she apparently found ways and means of obtaining a little welcome society at the house of a neighbour, named Andy Vaduvan. Believing the worst, Thangiah one morning took his wife, their own one-year-old son and Muthiah, Andy's eleven-year-old son, out into the jungle surrounding the village. After tying a root to the foot of their own child to "protect the boy from evil spirits," he induced Muthiah to hold the branch of a date palm. One stroke of an axe, and Muthiah was dead. "That will teach Andy a lesson," bluntly commented Thangiah. He then tackled his wife to force her to confess that she had misbehaved with Andy, and when she vigorously denied any such intimacy, he picked up a knife and slashed off both of her breasts. Two hours later she staggered, with a baby in arms, into a police station several miles away. Thangiah admitted the offences, and calmly accepted the sentence of death.

Another story shows how a dispute over the possession of a married woman, which was referred to the caste elders for decision, resulted in murder. Yida Venkadu, a farm servant of Ellore, was married to Manikyam. Along came Nagadu, another farm servant, and decided that Manikyam would suit him admirably as a wife. So Manikyam, helpless, went off with her second husband. Yida, instead of going after his lawful wife and making her return to him, referred his domestic troubles to the caste elders. After duly considering the love triangle, they fined Nagadu £5 5s. Thinking that his bride was worth that amount, he agreed to pay, but as he was short of ready cash, he handed over £3 10s. and promised to pay the balance in ten days. But mere monetary compensation was not sufficient for Yida, so he made a vow to some of his friends that he would kill both Manikyam and Nagadu—and then make a new start in another part of India. He found Nagadu by himself one night, and squeezed him to death with a stick whilst he slept, but before he could find Manikyam, who had thought discretion the better part of love for a while, the police arrested him on a charge of murdering his rival.

There are times when the women take the lead in these tangled affairs of the heart. But fortunately there are only a very few who will go to the extreme like the wife of Mohammad Latif of Lahore, who pleaded with him to kill her because she was afraid that her many liaisons would get her into serious trouble. Like a dutiful husband, Mohammad Latif complied with her wish, and then found himself arraigned on a charge of murder. It appears that the lady in question had lived a very chequered and questionable life, and was always finding new acquaintances. Mohammad did his best, but even when he locked her up in a room she

somehow managed to receive her friends. When one day he remonstrated with emphasis, she pleaded helplessness, saying that unless she was murdered she could never break off her relations with her many friends. Mohammad sought to encourage her to turn over a new leaf, but she was hopeless, and finally went to him one afternoon saying that as she feared that she would soon turn to open prostitution, she begged him to murder her. Mohammad agreed. So she had a bath, combed her hair, decorated herself with flowers, kissed her husband, and then held up her neck for the razor. After the sixth cut she again kissed him, and then in her own blood wrote on the wall her last message that she loved only him. A sordid tale, indeed, in which not even the encouraging note of an appeal to the caste elders is introduced; but surely indicative of a very queer mentality on the part of both husband and wife.

Here is a story of how a villager's curiosity and a policeman's quickness led to the tracking of a murder along a trail of blood. The participants were the usual three: husband, wife and lover. In this case the lover was a head constable of Hyderabad, the husband was a relative, and the wife was a lady who was apparently in love with both of them. The preliminary details were the same as usual. Determined to clear the way for a less tempestuous romance, Head Constable Sheikh Mahbub, according to the police story, decided that murder was the only possible course. So when his relative Abdul Karim went to fetch his wife (who was also in love with Sheikh Mahbub), a scheme was evolved whereby Abdul was lavishly entertained by the policeman. Next day he was taken to a neighbouring village on the pretext of having some special clothing made; but unfortunately they visited a toddy shop and left it rather late for their return. On the

way poor Abdul Karim fell from his pony, according to the story which the breathless and sobbing servant told when he got back, and Abdul was duly buried amidst the loudly expressed regrets of Sheikh Mahbub. All would have gone well, and Sheikh Mahbub would have taken a new wife back to the police lines, had not a villager on the following day been walking along the road with his eyes and ears unusually open. On his way he saw some children standing on the road, pointing out to each other the spot where Abdul Karim was said to have met with the fatal accident. But on proceeding farther towards the village where the party had taken their toddy, the observant villager noticed a trail of blood on the ground for a distance of about two miles. So when he got to his destination, he happened to mention to some of his friends that the riding accident of the previous day could not have taken place at the spot pointed out by Sheikh Mahbub—otherwise how could the trail of blood be accounted for?

A young police constable who was standing by overheard the traveller's remarks and, thinking over the puzzle, saw in its solution an opportunity to make a name for himself and, perhaps, even to step into the shoes of a head constable. So he quietly went to the spot, traced out the blood-trail, and reported to his superior officer that he suspected foul play. Then the whole story came out, for the low-caste Hindu servant who was with Sheikh Mahbub as an accomplice turned informer on being promised a pardon. He told how the party had got sleepy after their toddy, and how Abdul Karim had been persuaded to dismount and have a rest. Whilst asleep Sheikh Mahbub dropped a heavy stone on Abdul's head, braining him instantaneously. They then bound up the bleeding corpse, put it on the pony and pro-

ceeded towards the village, little dreaming that in the darkness they were leaving behind them the blood-trail which would so silently accuse them. As they got to the outskirts of the village they whipped up Abdul Karim's pony, causing the corpse to fall to the ground, whereupon they set up a wailing that Abdul had fallen off his pony and killed himself, the servant being sent running to the village for help. But they reckoned without the fact that the very blood of the murdered man cried out for vengeance and justice.

Another form of the eternal triangle, with which is also mixed up a remarkable story of loot, is to be found in the Madura case in which three men were sentenced to death and a woman to life transportation for the murder of the woman's son in order not only that she might profit by the son's inheritance but also that she could carry on a disgraceful intrigue with her son-in-law. Rakiah was a boy of about 18, and the heir to the family property of about £3,000. His father had died about eight years before, and as he was a minor his mother had been managing the estate and also running a money-lending business worth about £1,000 yearly. She had no trouble with the son whilst he was young, but during the past three years he had been endeavouring to prevent not only a squandering of his inheritance but also the improper conduct of his mother who was carrying on an intrigue with the husband of the second of her three daughters. The quarrels became more bitter every week, and when the son decided to take away the family deed-box, she thought that the time had come to make him less troublesome. So, seeking the aid of her lover son-in-law and three other relatives, they hatched a conspiracy to put Rakiah out of the way. A deep-laid scheme was planned by which the unsuspecting youth was led one night to a near-by village on the pretext

of selling him some bulls which he badly wanted. On the way he was given some *ganja* to eat, and whilst he was under the drug's effects, he was strangled by two of the conspirators and surreptitiously buried. For several weeks the schemers were able to hoodwink his friends that he had gone away for a holiday, but when they quarrelled amongst themselves, the secret was soon let out. One of the conspirators had been given a hundred rupees before the murder, but another who was too trusting found that the mother's promise to clear his debts amounting to seven hundred rupees was not fulfilled. It was a case of the woman's cupidity triumphing over her reason—and thus for the paltry sum of £50, which this rich old schemer refused to pay, she became one of the leading accused and was sentenced to life imprisonment.

Lust for Gold

Desire for jewellery which they cannot afford to buy is another frequent cause of men, women, and children committing murder. Mention has already been made of the Nagpur boy of 12 who killed a child of 7 for a few ornaments she had on her. In Vizagapatam also a boy of 15 chopped a little girl of 7 to pieces with a spade in order to steal the small quantity of gold she was wearing in the shape of ornaments. The boy was convicted of the brutal crime, but under the Madras Children's Act it was impossible to sentence him to any greater punishment than three years' detention in a Reformatory School, as in that province it is definitely laid down that notwithstanding anything to the contrary in the law, "no child or young person shall be sentenced to death or transportation for life." So the Sessions Judge was compelled to direct that, although there were no extenuating circumstances and although the youth knew that he was

committing a very serious and brutal crime, he could only be kept in safe custody at the Central Jail whilst the case was reported to the Government for special orders.

In Jalgaon a youth of 20 decoyed a six-year-old girl with the lure of a pretty picture and some sweets, and then literally hammered the child to death with his bare fists in order that he could take the ornaments she was wearing worth a bare £2.

But why continue the sorry tale? Greed for gold and jewels takes its daily toll in India, and few of the crimes committed in its name can be regarded as coming within the category of murders with an "artistic touch."

But the desire for money and wealth is not by any means confined to the sudden disposal of a person wearing jewellery. Murders are even more elaborately arranged when it is hoped to profit by wills, and some of the most ingenious schemes to get rich are those planned by designing people who realize that unless they take matters into their own hands, they will receive nothing by way of inheritance. One typical example of this sort of crime will suffice, although they are as frequent as any other kind of murder.

Govamma was a wealthy widow. She had no children of her own and so she adopted a young man named Venkatesh, for whom she also found a bride named Subbamma. Unfortunately the youth died shortly afterwards, his wife remaining with the old lady as companion. Feeling that she could take no chances, Govamma decided to make her will in which she not only gave large sums to charity and made suitable provision for Subbamma, but left a goodly inheritance to the three brothers of the dead Venkatesh. The will naturally satisfied all those concerned, although one of the three brothers, Subba, decided that he could appreciably add to his own heritage if he married Subbamma. So when the old lady

went for a trip to a neighbouring village, Subba visited Subbamma in her house and after making unsuccessful approaches, adopted the cave-man method. Govamma was informed on her return, and so annoyed was she that, calling the culprit to her, she reprimanded him in such strong language that he was forced to take to heart her announcement that she was going to make a new will in which he would not figure. After that nothing is proved as to what happened, but determined apparently not to suffer by disinheritance, Subba was said by the prosecution to have made up his mind to prevent any alteration of the will by the simple expedient of murdering the old lady before she could make the new will. So, continued the prosecution, he was believed to have worked out a scheme with a few of his friends, who incidentally owed money to Govamma and who were being pressed for payment, by which three assassins could be hired to remove Govamma. Whoever was the organizer, the fact remains that one evening about seven men rushed up to the veranda on which Govamma was seated talking to a neighbour, stabbed her to death, and made their escape, with Subba arriving quite accidentally a few minutes later just in time to express his deep regrets and to have the old lady removed to hospital. Later a story of an alleged plot was revealed by one of the party who had a grudge against the others. So six of them including Subba were sentenced to death and the other to life transportation by the Sessions Judge. They all appealed, however, on the grounds that there was not sufficient evidence to support the approver's story on all material points and that the approver had minimized the part he had played in the murder. The High Court accepted that plea, stating that however strong the suspicion might be against the accused, it was unsafe to convict them on the evidence produced. So they all were acquitted.

Wholesale Murder

With life so cheap, it is only to be expected that in India murder would at times be conducted on a wholesale scale. Hence the papers tell not only of riot cases in which, as in the Mirzapore outbreak, seven men were sentenced to be hanged and twenty-five to life transportation after a trial lasting for twelve months, but also of actual murders carried out on an almost incredible scale.

What better description than wholesale murder could be given to the way in which the whole family of ten was wiped out at Dhubri when the house was set on fire by a man who merely desired to revenge himself on the head of the family for some slight which was later found to be more imaginary than real? Here is another: Harphul, a man in the Hissar district, was put on trial for having committed thirteen murders—an unlucky number for him, as it proved. He had long been a terror in Hissar, and expected that his slightest order would be carried out. One day he made up his mind that he did not like the idea of having a cow-slaughter-house at Tohana. So he issued instructions that it should be moved, despite the fact that about 400 cows were killed there every day and that any removal would put an end to a very useful commercial proposition. But his power was so strong that the butchers decided to talk it over and, if they could not see their way to moving it, either put up some alternative suggestion or offer to subsidize Harphul to keep him quiet. But even whilst the butchers were in conclave, Harphul swooped down upon them in the darkness and, according to the police story, murdered thirteen of the butchers within a few minutes. He then made good his escape, but eight months later was captured in Jaipur State whilst sleeping.

Another very striking example of the practice of wholesale murder is still known as the Madura Murder Mystery, in which a village magistrate's house at Thippampatty was one morning found to contain the dead bodies of the magistrate and the whole family of twelve. The victims, besides the magistrate, were his three sons, two sisters-in-law, four nephews (of whom three were infants), two grand-daughters, and his father-in-law, whilst three others were precariously injured. The only direct light shed on the tragedy at the time was the statement by the mother-in-law, who was one of the injured, that the magistrate had told all of them that a battalion of troops was coming and that they should go to bed early and keep very quiet. They all obeyed implicitly—and twelve of them never woke up. Lengthy investigations by the police later revealed an amazing story, for they came to the conclusion that it was the magistrate who murdered his family and then committed suicide. He had in some way become implicated in another local murder, for he had been searchingly examined by the authorities. Desperate with fear that he might be definitely connected with it, he murdered his whole family, and committed suicide himself to save the disgrace, spreading abroad the rumour on the day before that his enemies were conspiring to kill him and that he expected a mass attack from them. He had even sent a telegram to the District Magistrate informing him of the expected attack, whilst he further sought to lay a false trail by writing a letter to a neighbouring landowner stating that he felt certain that on the morrow there would not even be an heir to his property.

Queer Motives and Methods

The foregoing pages of this chapter have dealt mainly with murders which can be classified under types; the

remainder of the chapter will recount some of the unusual methods and causes of murders in India. Each paragraph will be not only a real life-story but a queer death one, too.

Twisted to Death.—Death by torture as brutal as that of the ancient "inquisition" was the fate of Buddha, a twenty-five-year-old cultivator, who was found dead by his twelve-year-old brother in the middle of the crop he was harvesting near Amritsar. Actuated by revenge for a family slight, a group of villagers followed Buddha to his work in the early morning, and then literally twisted him to death, every joint in his body being out of its socket when the discovery was made. Police and medical investigation proved that the man had been slowly tortured by at least four men before he was put out of his agony by axe-blows on the back and head.

The Wart Clue.—Every man in Vizagapatam district who was unfortunate enough to have a wart on his nose was arrested by the police who were searching for the murderer of Harikrishna Naiko. But every man was released when Naiko's wife admitted that he was not the suspected servant. In the end Mongala Bhumio, whose nose was disfigured by a fresh scar and not a wart, was questioned by the police, and he then admitted that he was the murderer and that, hearing about the clue of the wart, had taken a razor blade and removed what he said had "always been an annoying disfigurement." The full story of a desperate struggle in the jungle then came out, and Mongala was sentenced to death for murder and robbery despite his plea that he only killed the man because "he used filthy language against me."

Murdered for a Song.—Because his song was not appreciated by the audience at a village amateur concert near Lucknow, Sukhpal, a simple ploughman, felt so disgraced at the manner

in which he "got the bird," that he attacked the leader of the unappreciative group with a hatchet, killed him after a struggle in which half the village joined, and then gave himself up to the police, pleading self-defence. In the course of the trial, it was revealed that not only was Sukhpal's song out of tune and lacking in rhythm, but also that it was not fit for the ladies in the audience. But the High Court, in commuting the death sentence to one of transportation, pointed out that, although a simple ploughman, the accused was the possessor of an over-sensitive nature.

Village of Murderers.—After having been bound over as a village to keep the peace several years in succession, the residents of Aulokh, near Gujranwalla, once again turned violent and murdered two of the local "gangsters." For many years there had been two factions in the village ever ready to cut each other's throats, and seldom a year had gone by without a cold-blooded murder being committed, resulting in every man and woman in the village being under security to keep the peace. On the expiry of the latest "peace" period, the trouble broke out again—and all over a bed. There is in this village a wooden cot which is regarded as the property of the whole village community, to be used alternatively according to special arrangement, the bed being said to give special powers to those who sleep on it. One night this cot was removed by the leader of one of the gangs; and next day this leader was found, with his brother, beheaded in the village well. Ten men were named as being responsible for this double murder, but they made themselves scarce, whilst the members of the leaderless gang cheerfully assisted the police in the man-hunt.

Passion for Murder.—Whilst sleeping as usual with his family, Pochai Goala of Dakhin village, near Bankura, suddenly

awoke with what he described as "a passion for murder," whereupon he tried to calm himself with a smoke. This failed; and so he picked up an axe and lopped off the heads of his wife and two children. He then walked to the local policeman and said that his "passion" had subsided.

A Head in Each Hand.—Gobinda Dalapati strode into the police station at Bhhatua, Bengal, carrying a head in each hand, calmly declaring to the officer on duty that he had murdered a man and a woman. After knocking each unconscious, he had cut off their heads, and walked 15 miles to take them to the police. The male head was identified as that of a rich local money-lender, whilst the other was recognized as belonging to a local beauty. It appears that as the money-lender had obtained several decrees against Gobinda and three others, they lured him to the woman's house and murdered them both. All were sentenced to death. Gobinda's excuse was that he did not like the conduct of the money-lender and the woman in the *hūt*.

A Ghastly Error.—Two money-lenders arrived in the village of Tupilla in the Punjab to collect their monthly dues, and were invited by the creditors to stay for the night so that the money could be paid in the morning. Thinking things over, however, the money-lenders thought it wiser not to be too friendly, and so, when the whole village was asleep, slipped out of the village guest-house into the darkness. Shortly afterwards, two villagers arrived home from a long trip, and instead of waking up the inmates of their own houses, decided to sleep in the rest-house until dawn. So they occupied the cots which had been allotted to the two money-lenders in the corner of the room. An hour later shadowy figures stole into the hut, stabbed two sleeping forms, and glided away, believing they had definitely settled an irksome

debt. And in the morning it was found that two of the most heavily indebted villagers had stabbed their own brothers in mistake.

Immortality Through Murder.—Inspired by the Ramayana story of Ravana, the Demon King of Ceylon who achieved immortality by sacrificing his head before the god Mahadev, two Hindu devotees of Lucknow, named Maiku and Sant Bukhsh, tried to repeat the miracle. Having entered into a pact that they would cut off each other's heads, they conceived the idea that the first to lose his head would automatically gain immunity from death and thus be in a position to render a like service to his companion. Maiku, therefore, submitted his head to Sant Bukhsh's chopper in front of Mahadev's image. Three blows—and it was over; whereupon Sant Bukhsh went off to bathe and perform the necessary rites which would purify him for his coming immortality, by submitting in turn to the axe of the supposedly immortal Maiku. But Maiku was dead, and Sant Bukhsh has found that his experiment resulted in seven years' immolation in jail rather than immortality on earth.

La Tosca Again.—Remarkable allegations of a *La Tosca* drama in real life were the result of a murder in a village in Khairpur State (Sind), for which a woman and her husband were arrested. The story runs that the woman, a merchant's wife, was left in a police station whilst her husband, who had been challenged by the police sub-inspector on suspicion of having a kidnapped woman with him, had gone to a neighbouring village to bring back witnesses to identify the woman as his wife. What happened in the police station in his absence has not been revealed, but when he returned with his witnesses the husband found the sub-inspector and a constable lying dead from wounds caused by a police sword which was

in the corner, dripping with blood. What was the mystery of the woman and the sword-thrusts?

Setting People on Fire.—Ram Chandra Patikār was a wealthy man. And he loved his money more than his life. When dacoits raided his house in Backerganj, he put up a stubborn resistance, and when they overpowered him, he still refused to reveal where his money was hidden: and he kept his secret even though they poured oil over his head and set him alight, after otherwise torturing him. Similar barbarous cruelty accompanied the dacoity in the Moradabad district when a man's wife was not only speared but turned into a flaming human torch because she would not say where her husband's money was kept. But she was faithful even unto death. For this crime three men went to the scaffold.

Wedding Tragedies.—A marriage was being celebrated in Kumahan village, Punjab, and while the merrymaking was in progress, a visiting guest from a neighbouring village started drinking toddy in the village *gurdwara*, or Sikh temple. Some of the local people objected, and when the visitor declared that on such a happy occasion he was going to drink toddy in the temple or wherever else he wished to, eight of the villagers set upon him and killed him.

Another example of what toddy does, even at weddings, comes from Calcutta. Kuttiparayan's son had made all arrangements for his sister's wedding. One of the most essential features of the marriage was a toddy-drinking ceremony, and the sum of £1 had been borrowed from a friend on the understanding that the bridegroom would return it after the marriage. When all the relatives and friends of both sides had assembled for the ceremony, the girl's father asked whether the bridegroom had yet paid up the £1. This led to a quarrel in which the friend who had loaned the money

was stabbed to death. A hasty word ; a flash of the dagger ; and another murder. Life is cheap in queer India.

Murder for Rent Collectors.—When Mr. Jawad Husain, a rich landowner, and six of his men visited the village of Bhatwaria to collect rents from his tenants, they were overpowered by the villagers, and battered to death. Apparently they did not see why they should pay rent in these times of depression when there was such a simple way of escape—murder.

She Would Drink His Blood.—When Mal Singh, a homeless cotton-grower who used to live and sleep in his fields near Lahore, abused Attro, a woman neighbour, he little thought that his fiery words would bring about his death, even though at the time of the abuse he heard the woman tell her husband, in the presence of others, that unless she drank the abuser's blood, she would not be satisfied. But at her behest, her husband stealthily went into the cotton field one night and disposed of Mal Singh, whose body was found many days later in an adjoining field.

Murdered for Doing Duty.—Because they had impounded the cattle of four villagers of Ayyalur, two forest guards were strangled with creeper vines. The murderers thought that by using growing vines as their weapons, they would leave no trace of their crime. But they forgot that the Indian jungle is seldom deserted, and that prying eyes and wagging tongues are always waiting to make trouble.

Losing His Head.—When the Customs Superintendent of Rajura in Hyderabad State declined to grant Mohamed Bin Syeed an increase in pay, the latter strolled into his superior's office and shot him dead. Mohamed was sentenced to death which, in the Hyderabad State, is beheading. On ceremonial occasions like annual parades, the executioner and his assistants, dressed in flaming scarlet, and carrying their grim instruments

of death, always bring up the rear of the procession in the march past.

Devil Dance ; Then Murder.—Although devil dances are generally believed to be confined to the northern regions of India, such as Nepal and the Darjeeling district, a recent case in Mangalore proves that even far south these rites are practised. In order to propitiate the gods who were not then favouring the village too satisfactorily, a man named Hegde decided to organize a devil dance in an open field a hundred yards away from the village of Yedapadawn. After going through the ghastly rites in the light of flaming torches, the participants worked themselves up to a great pitch of excitement. Unable to stand it any longer, one of them walked away in the direction of the jungle, saying that he was going to have a sleep. But before he reached the fringe, he was pounced upon and cut to pieces with knives and bill-hooks. Six villagers were arrested, but all acquitted for lack of evidence, although fifty-four witnesses were examined in the trial.

Revenge for Broken Romance.—After fastening the doors of all the neighbours' houses from the outside so that they could not interfere, a notorious convict of Hyderabad, just released from jail, entered the house of a woman against whom he had a grudge and slashed her to death with a sword, which he broke in the fury of his onslaught. The woman had promised to give her young daughter in marriage to the murderer's son, but as he was afterwards found to be one of the leaders of a dangerous gang of dacoits, she changed her mind and married the girl to another man whilst the dacoit was in jail. The neighbours saw the man enter the woman's house, they heard her shrieks, and saw him emerge with hands dripping with blood ; but they could not do anything

until they had all broken down their bolted doors and shutters, by which time the man had escaped into the hills.

Used an Elephant as Murderer.—For instigating his elephant to kill a man with whom he had a dispute, a mahout in southern India was sentenced to eighteen months' hard labour. A string of bullock-carts laden with fuel was passing along the road when the mahout and his elephant were seen coming from the opposite direction. The fuel gatherers halted their bullocks, unyoked them, tied them to trees, and asked the mahout to lead his elephant slowly past in order not to frighten the bullocks. The mahout refused to do this, and when one of the carters spoke harshly to him as he passed, the mahout, according to the carters' story, uttered certain mysterious words. Thereupon the elephant, retracing its steps, seized the man with his trunk and crushed him to death under his feet.

Moral : Don't Grumble.—Dharani, a villager of Jognala, was a sufferer from floods ; but for some unknown reason was not obtaining his share of the financial relief which was being distributed by a charitable organization, although less deserving cases were faring well. The complaint to the chief distributor of the relief fund was duly made, and a promise extracted that the matter would be investigated. Fearing that their relief might be stopped in consequence, a band of villagers raided Dharani's house, assaulted him, drove him out into the open by poking pointed sticks through the mud walls, and then, when he sought refuge in the river, followed him there and drove him under the surface with bamboos. Unable to swim, Dharani was drowned. Thus are grumblers sometimes disposed of in India—when they are inconvenient.

Back to Cave-Man Days.—Suddenly feeling that he would like his divorced wife back again, the son of a wealthy land-

owner of Meerut decided to go and capture her by force. With two servants, he went to her house. When the girl's father would not let her go, a shooting-match ensued, during which the girl, her sister, and their father were killed. The importunate lover was sentenced to death.

Rival Blacksmiths.—Nizam Din was a village blacksmith in the Punjab. He did a thriving business until, annoyed at his independence and high prices, the villagers invited another blacksmith named Mohomed Din to open up a forge in the village. Furious at the loss of business which resulted, Nizam Din called a few of his cronies, and got them to use all possible methods to get the rival to go back whence he came. But Mohomed Din was proof against both threats and cajolery; so Nizam Din decided on more drastic means. One evening he and two friends waited for Mohomed Din as he was returning from a walk. The headless trunk of the unfortunate blacksmith was later found in a well, and his skull thrown carelessly into the jungle. When Nazim Din was sentenced to death, the villagers set about looking for another blacksmith, but decided that they would be content with only one, as they had had enough of professional jealousy.

Thus does murder run the whole gamut of human feelings, and although to people in western lands the motives for murder in India seem so trivial and the methods so brutal, it must be remembered not only that human life has always been one of the cheapest commodities, but also that custom and religious practice are often both incentives to murder rather than protection against it.

CHAPTER VI

CASTE AS A CURSE

IN view of the general idea which people all over the world already have of the unfavourable working of the caste system in India, this chapter might almost appear unnecessary. But there is a growing tendency to believe that its operations now are not merely so strict or so degrading as they were half a century, or even a quarter of a century, ago. As one visitor to India said to the writer after a hurried tour through the country a little while ago: "I did not see anything of the so-called curse of caste. All kinds of creeds and sections of people appeared to be hobnobbing together, eating together, drinking together, and living together, thus providing absolute proof that caste no longer holds the poor people in its inescapable grasp."

Would that it were so! Would that the incidents to be related in this chapter were merely extracts from old records and not stories told in the Indian newspapers of 1931 and 1932.

But the unsavoury fact remains that caste is as strong, as brutal, as bigoted, as dictatorial, and as cruel to-day as it ever has been.

In this chapter it is not only the "untouchable" sweepers and depressed classes, who form about a quarter of the population of British India, who are referred to. It is the huge section which is outside the "high-caste" limit which will be dealt with here. "To a stranger not acquainted with the

usual conditions of life in India, it would seem strange that a majority should seek protection against a minority, but realities tell a different story," said Sir A. P. Patro at a meeting of the East India Association in London in November, 1931. Corroborating such an amazing state of affairs, Sir James Simpson said: "To those who have not lived in Madras, it might seem perfectly absurd and incomprehensible that ninety-seven per cent. of the population should fear three per cent. But these are the facts and they are very difficult to get over." That three per cent. has been all-powerful for centuries. It is all-powerful now. And it threatens to be all-powerful in the future under political conditions which will give it considerably greater influence than it possesses at the moment.

There are still millions of people in India—even British India—who cannot walk along certain roads, who cannot drink from ordinary wells, who cannot have their children educated at ordinary schools, who cannot wear shoes, who cannot carry umbrellas, who cannot use anything but earthenware dishes in their houses, who cannot stay in public rest-houses, who cannot travel in public conveyances, who cannot wear clean clothes, who cannot adorn themselves with jewellery or flowers, and who cannot walk within sixty yards of a temple. And by "cannot" is meant "not permitted"—disobedience incurring any punishment ranging from starvation to murder. Ordinary citizens' privileges and rights, even those enjoyed by the veriest savages in cannibal lands, are denied to millions of people under British rule; amenities which are made possible by the regular taxes contributed to by everyone are banned from a very large number of the taxpayers by a slavish caste system which flourishes only as a result of the British ideal of religious liberty. British rule,

indeed, has produced a caste consciousness and a caste solidarity which have not only upset the economic equilibrium but also destroyed the community life of the Indian village.

And proof that caste is gaining an even greater stranglehold on the people than hitherto is provided by the decisions of the high-caste people in the Ramnad district of South India who, when some of the low-caste folk recently tried to rise from their miserable state and, by the sweat of their brow, earn sufficient money in adjoining districts decently to feed and clothe and house their families, promptly issued local "socio-religious" rules that such improvement must be stopped at all costs. So the men were not permitted to live in the district if they wore any clothes below their knees or above their hips, if the women wore any clothes above the waist, if any protection was used against sun or rain, if any male dared to wear either a coat or shirt, if any female dared to cook food in anything but a home-made mud vessel, if any of the children were given clean clothes to wear, if, in short, any evidence of improved living or decent progress was made visible. And all such restrictions were levied, of course, in the name of religion! Is any stronger evidence needed to show that many high-caste people will never permit the so-called lower classes to rise in the social scale or to exercise the most ordinary rights of citizens?

Men Treated Worse than Animals

Describing the present condition of these people under the tyranny of caste, Indians themselves go so far as to say that the existing system treats human beings "worse than pigs." "But what can you expect?" asks Mr. R. Krishna Pillay, retired Land Revenue Commissioner of Travancore, "when

our temples all over the country, instead of helping culture and spiritual progress, have become strongholds of superstition?" The British Government will not to-day, it is true, tolerate a repetition of the days of Manu when the tongue of a low-caste man was cut out if he dared to voice the Vedas and molten lead poured into his ears if they should happen to hear the Vedas read. Yet other punishments, more refined but equally effective, are levied on any low-caste person who commits a far less culpable "sin" than reading the holy books.

"No nation," says a Punjab political leader, "has ever subdued its aborigines as the Hindu hierarchy has treated its low-caste brethren, whilst as for Manu, the first Hindu law-giver, he was undoubtedly the greatest social criminal of the world, having created an everlasting communal gulf between man and man in India." To this striking denunciation might well be added the words of the Collector of Malabar, who not only described the depressed classes as "the damned of the earth," but declared that "nowhere in the world were the distinctions of caste so stringently insisted upon," revealing an "innate snobbery," whereby each tolerant class keeps up its traditions of intolerance until there is only the unfortunate man "who has nobody but the animals to look down upon."

A recent Indian student of the caste problem has said that whereas caste is not a growth endemic to India, "it is only in India that this institution, having survived through a lapse of thousands of years and having obtained such a hold on the spiritual and economic life of the people, faces the world in such an aggressive form." Orthodox Hindus still insist that the caste system is the very life-principle of what they call "dynamic Hinduism." Yet it is so dynamic that when the

famous Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru was touring in South India in 1931, in between his sojourns in jail, he found that there were places into which even he could not go, such as, for example, the ancient temple of Nagercoil, causing the irate nationalist leader to exclaim that such restrictions were customs which "tarnished the name" of the country, and that if the Congress was expected to be fighting for the freedom of the country, it was fighting for human freedom and all that it meant. Another political leader, Mr. J. M. Sen Gupta, declared at Coimbatore, almost on the very same day, that "Indians should be ashamed of the curse of caste by which the ordinary rights of human beings are forbidden to many millions of our fellow-countrymen. We accuse the Moslems of communalism; but are not we Hindus guilty of a communalism of a more vicious kind, inasmuch as that the curse of caste prevails amongst us everywhere?" Strange though it may seem that such condemnation of the appalling influence of caste is obtainable from the lips of Indians, corroboration of that condemnation continually pours in. Mr. K. T. Bashyam, presiding at the Mysore Youth Conference at the same time as the two political leaders just mentioned were inveighing against their countrymen, said: "Slaves ourselves, we have enslaved others. Women are mere chattels and thousands of our countrymen are worse than cats and dogs."

Do such outspoken declarations as that give any support to the gradually growing idea that caste in India has lost much of its strength and influence? Pundit Mohan Malaviya might, as a spectacular movement, make a lead with what he calls "mass conversion of all Hindus into Brahminism." But beyond that first ceremony at Benares in March 1932, little more has been heard of it. His plan was "to consolidate Hindu

society by increasing its numbers and infusing into it a spirit of homogeneity," as he believed that "the principal cause of the latter day disruption among Hindus is the water-tight compartments into which the community has been divided. The heaven-born Brahmin has always held the monopoly of the revealed religion and rigidly shut out those who were not Brahmins—as well, of course, as the depressed classes and out-castes,—from a participation of the exclusive Hindu rites and ceremonies. This practice," he adds, "induced a feeling of disgust and revolt among non-Brahmins and the untouchables who bore a standing grudge against the high and mighty Brahmins." So the Benares ceremony tried to inaugurate an artificial class of Brahmins, who were actually given the sacred thread to wear, hitherto the inviolable and privileged right of the Brahmin by birth. That movement is, of course, to be regarded as both unique and praiseworthy, but the very fact that it has not been followed in any other part of India, nor by a repetition in Benares, suggests that it stands every chance of dying at birth.

Caste Stronger than Congress.

For a number of years certain reformers, particularly those who have a political axe to grind, have been declaring that it is "the primary and elementary right" of every Hindu to go into any public temple to worship the god in it. But orthodox Hinduism has always held, and still strongly holds, that God did not create all men alike. It also insists that all Hindus can never have equal status and duties. The very structure of Hindu society denies all such equality *ab initio*. Even that powerful organization known as the Indian National Congress has found itself impotent to control either the Brahmin oligarchy or the Hindu masses when it came

to dealing with problems of caste. Some of the political leaders, including Mr. Gandhi, have distributed sacred threads to depressed classes ; but for all their professions of liberalism and nationalism, not one of the Congress leaders has dared support, for example, the movement by which the depressed classes seek to obtain entry into the temples. In fact, one such leader actually told his followers, despite Mr. Gandhi's supposed championing of India's masses, that " temple entry campaigns mean arousing caste and community passions, so that to dignify temple entry into a national issue would be suicidal." Which means, in plain language, that no matter what its political pretensions, the Indian Congress has never even given its support to any movement which will emancipate the millions of depressed classes and give them the right of every other individual in the world to enter into a temple to worship his god. And why? Just because caste is admittedly immeasurably stronger than Congress or Gandhi.

But this chapter is not designed to discuss the ethics of caste from an academic point of view ; nor is it to be merely a theoretical condemnation of one of the most baffling of all of queer India's problems. There is ample evidence available from the daily newspapers to show that the restrictions of caste not only enter into the everyday life of India but actually produce tragedies and dramas of remarkable intensity and variety, revealing that above everything else caste is not merely a series of religious rules and community restrictions, but a terrible force which makes life a misery for many millions and interferes with all attempts of administrations and governments to help the masses improve themselves, their condition, and their status.

Fighting to Worship God

The most common example of caste disputes is that which arises out of the demand for general temple entry, and the determined attitude of both sides has produced serious riots in a dozen places throughout India. Remarkable stories of these up-to-date "crusaders" who are determined to free the non-Brahmin Hindus from the tyranny which makes it impossible even to worship their family deities have come from, for example, Poona, Nasik, and Guruvayoor, usually ending up with the police having to be called in either to quell the disturbance or to remove those depressed class enthusiasts who lie down in the temple precincts and refuse to move or be moved. Threats that the gods will be displeased with the invaders and will pour forth their wrath in no uncertain manner have no effect on those who believe that the gods delight even in the worship of an untouchable.

When the untouchables wanted to enter the Kalaram temple at Nasik during April 1932, the most amazing scenes were witnessed. Large numbers of men and women of the depressed classes came forward to offer *satyagraha*, or passive resistance, and were arrested for deliberately disobeying the police order. Ultimately, after there had been several serious clashes, the temple trustees were forced to close the temple altogether, whilst those men and women who, as reformers, had insisted on trying to enter the temple precincts were sentenced to one month's rigorous imprisonment.

At Guruvayoor also drastic scenes have been witnessed during 1931-32, with the depressed classes keeping ceaseless day and night vigil for weeks in hopes of being able to catch the priests napping and do their worship inside the temple. The situation was temporarily compromised by the temple

authorities admitting that whilst the temple services might not be polluted if the depressed classes merely entered the approaches to the temple, a few structural alterations would have to be made to preserve the sanctity for the Brahmins.

But, strange as it may seem, recourse to law is usually more successful from the Brahmins' point of view than relying on moral and physical force. Numerous cases have been instituted during the past few months in which temple authorities have sought injunctions against non-Brahmins entering temples. At times, however, the non-Brahmins take the initiative, and approach the courts for help in obtaining the right of entry and an injunction against the Brahmins interfering with them. But in most cases, the Brahmins win on the grounds of tradition, custom and privilege. A very lengthy case was decided in 1932 against two non-Brahmins of the village of Varahur after two judges had disagreed on the appeal. The defence was merely that the custom and usage of the temple excluded all but Brahmins from worshipping in it, even though it was admitted by the priests that the non-Brahmins concerned belonged to a section of the community whose members actually performed certain temple duties! This particular case went right through from a village sub-magistrate to the High Court; and the Brahmins won.

Even if certain Hindus are not actually out-castes and belong to the lowest of the four "accepted" castes, there are temples which are not open to any but the highest castes. A case in point is the application of some Vaniars at Nega-patam asking for a declaration that they were entitled to enter a certain temple; and the verdict was "that though there was a presumption that all caste Hindus had a right

to enter this temple for worship, it was refuted in this case by clear evidence of usage to the contrary."

The most apparently trivial matters of caste frequently lead either to rioting or to law cases. Here is one: The trustees of a Vaishnavite temple had a dispute over the painting of caste-marks on the temple door and vessels, and ultimately took the problem to the High Court. So important is caste, in fact, that no expense is too great to satisfy the questionings of the various caste members, and both unapproachability and untouchability have formed problems of legal bickerings. Where, except in queer India, would you find a Brahmin disputing the right of a low-caste man even to approach within sixty yards of an orthodox Hindu? Where else but in queer India would you find the low-caste people endeavouring to obtain the support of the law to enable them to go nearer than the quarter-mile limit to make their offerings to the deities?

When it comes to the interpretation of caste rules and prohibitions, the courts are in strong demand, many of the cases revealing the tyranny of caste. One case, for example, showed that the trustees of a South India temple excommunicated a rich family on an unknown charge. But the judge of Ellore found that the trustees had no such hereditary right as they claimed, whilst their methods of working were "in violation of all principles of natural justice." For having circularized the district about the excommunicated family, the trustees were found guilty of defamation and ordered to pay damages of £200 to the people excommunicated. Had the family not been rich enough to take this case to court, the illegal tyranny would have established a precedent, although it still raises the question as to how many

poor caste-folk have been similarly excommunicated "from the rising sun to the setting sun" in violation of all the principles of natural justice.

The use of the "King's Highway" has always been regarded as one of the inalienable rights of all the King's subjects. But not so in India. Lepers may sit and beg on the roadside; brigands may use the road to escape from the scenes of their evil deeds; murderers may travel along any road to commit their atrocities; thieves may lie in wait behind a wayside tree to rob the unsuspecting traveller; but members of the depressed classes, perfectly normal and respectable citizens, are forbidden even to pass along many public roads owing to caste intolerance. And to show that this restriction is not merely an echo of days when the priestly class held absolute sway, here is a remarkable illustration: The Malabar District Board has just passed a resolution deciding that notice boards are to be erected on a number of public roads throughout its jurisdiction forbidding members of the depressed classes from using such roads in any way. That is India 1932! Caste can close the King's Highway.

Even a postman who walked on the wrong side of the street at Cherote, Calicut, was charged by a local weaver with polluting the temple by allowing his shadow to fall on the temple wall. The deliverer of the King's Mail was apparently taking a short cut,—but caste in India takes precedence before matters which in other parts of the Empire are given pre-eminence.

A riot in Singanalloor, followed by innumerable lawsuits, was due to one section of the community desiring to use a certain street for the sole purpose of allowing their children to go to the local elementary school; another in Tinnevely resulted from a quarrel over whether a certain idol could be

carried in procession through a certain street ; a third in Arupukottah over the same cause found thirteen men in the dock on charges of murder, a sensational fight resulting even after the court had decided that the processionists had every right to use the local street ; a case in Chintamoni, in which some villagers sought the right of using a certain street to proceed to the court of the village magistrate, ended up by the judge declaring that " it seems a contradiction in terms to assert a custom to exclude a particular class of persons from a public highway," although his injunction was followed by a riot in which five were killed.

Yet such decisions of the courts do not demonstrate to the high-caste sections that they must at least recognize the public character of public roads, for when worsted in law they adopt other methods to achieve their purpose. In this latter case, for example, they endeavoured to get the local board, which controlled the sweeping and the lighting of the disputed streets, to hand all such work over to the temple trustees so that they might gain an absolute hold over them. Similarly, caste leaders work with even more success through the village *panchayets*, over which they have almost complete control in many areas.

Murdered by Caste

With a tyranny such as that outlined, it is only natural that human passions sometimes blaze up so furiously as to end in murder. Here are a few examples of the way caste leads to death. A depressed class woman unwittingly approached a high-caste man near Palghat within the prescribed sixty yards. Her husband, hearing of her " sin," went to the house of the offended man with the intention of begging forgiveness, but before he could open his mouth the high-

caste gentleman jumped at him in frenzy and stabbed him to death.

Furious because her mother had been begging and eating at low-caste people's houses, a daughter of about seventeen pushed the old woman into the river after severely beating her. When accused of murdering her mother, the girl said that she was justified in thus removing what was an unjustifiable reproach on the family.

Soda-water bottles, stones and bludgeons were freely used in a fight in Bombay which resulted from objection being taken by one caste to a *sadhu* trespassing for his alms into the preserves of a rival *sadhu* belonging to the objectors' caste. In that fight twenty-one were injured, including six women. That is caste in action.

How Caste Persecutes

Murder and assault are not the only weapons used by the upholders of caste. There are even more potent means of enforcing caste rules than by using physical force.

Because a village school in Baroda State had been thrown open to low-caste Hindus, some of the Hindus in the district poured kerosene into the wells and tanks used by the depressed classes, burned many standing crops and three thousand bundles of hay belonging to depressed class farmers, set fire to the houses of depressed class leaders, and levied complete social boycott against the whole depressed class community, including the beating of the children who dared to go to school. And to show the real nature of a "social boycott" it is worth noting that shopkeepers are fined by the caste leaders if they provide food or any other necessary commodity for the people under sentence; barbers are fined if they attempt to shave them; water-carriers are fined if

they take them water ; the postman is fined if he delivers them letters ; sweepers are fined if they dare remove the ordinary household refuse ; bus drivers are fined if they carry any of the families in their buses ; and the school teacher is fined if he dares conduct school with any of the children present.

A Congress meeting was held in the Theosophical Hall in Tellicherry, but when the caste elders noticed that there were some depressed class people present, they promptly ordered the meeting to be dissolved on the grounds that the Theosophical Hall was within a hundred yards of a high-caste Hindu temple.

At Trichinopoly the high-caste Hindus precipitated a riot because they insisted on the low-caste folk signing a document agreeing to abide by a number of restrictive rules relating to dress, wages, social life, etc. Some of the proposed conditions were : that the children must be sent to herd the cattle and not sent to school ; that the men should not lease land or work on it on the local share system ; that when working as coolies from 7.0 a.m. to 6.0 p.m. their wages should never be more than four annas a day for men and two annas for women ; that they should not have Indian music at their marriages or other celebrations ; that a bridegroom should never follow the usual Indian custom of riding on a horse, and that none of them should ever wear gold. This catalogue of don'ts aroused the ire of the depressed classes, and eleven were injured in the fracas.

Repression of those who seek to better themselves is equally severe. A depressed class man of Salem who was sufficiently educated to be a low-caste teacher, had the temerity to buy cakes in the market at a stall where certain high-caste men were also making purchases. For his sin, the

unfortunate teacher was set upon, beaten, and dragged about by cords before a large crowd, and had not an official passed by, it is probable that he would have been severely injured. In another case a teacher gave offence by wearing a coat and speaking at a teachers' meeting. For that heinous offence his "righteously indignant" fellow-citizens threw him into the river and threatened to burn down his school.

An untouchable sweeper of Kumbakonam lost his job in the municipal area because the Brahmins, returning from their sacred bath in a dirty river, felt that the very presence of an untouchable in the streets in the early morning hours would nullify their ablutions and render them unfit for the day's work.

In Dehu, the birthplace of Tukuram, the least caste-ridden poet of the Hinduism of western India, the sweepers recently had the schools thrown open to them. This so upset the Brahmins of the famous Tukuram Temple that they promptly decided to starve the sweepers into spiritual submission and slavery by issuing orders to every local shopkeeper that a fine of 7s. 6d. would be levied on any man who sold supplies of any kind to such out-castes until they had all signed a pledge that they would not send their children to the schools. And that took place within the very shadow of Poona, the seat of the Bombay Government for most of the year!

For meritorious service a depressed class man of Peddapalli was given a piece of land by the Madras Government. But he was not permitted by the high-caste villagers even to set foot on it, for no low-caste person is permitted by caste to own any sort of immovable property. The sub-collector visited the place on behalf of the Government and warned the inhabitants against molesting their neighbour. The next day a shower of rain fell, and so the man and his family went

to plough his new field. Whereupon the villagers not only obstructed him in his work but badly assaulted the whole family; and when the police sub-inspector and a constable arrived, they too were beaten! Twenty men were accordingly sentenced to various terms of imprisonment ranging from two months to one year, with fines varying from £2 to £15, and in dismissing their appeal, the Sessions Judge said: "The offences are serious, for the evidence discloses not only an intolerable social tyranny directed against the depressed class man, but a flagrant defiance of the orders of public servants entrusted with the duty of keeping the peace, and a disgraceful personal attack upon them."

About two thousand Hindu *bhangis* (scavengers) assembled at Dakor, a most holy Hindu centre, for a conference. Believing that their Hindu brethren would at least give them eating and drinking facilities, they arrived without their pots and pans. But lo, after a day's hard talking, they found to their consternation that not only were cooking utensils for these "untouchables" unavailable, but also that there was no water for them to drink. All the wells and tanks belonged to the "caste" people, except the Gomti tank, around which the municipality had strewn notices urging people not to drink the water as it was "too vile for consumption." But it had to be good enough for the sweepers!

Caste Rules the Village

But, some one might say, the examples given are exceptional. Not a bit of it! A careful study of everyday life in an average Indian village will show that it is caste, and not the Government, which is really in control. Every village has its acknowledged "leaders." And what a leadership it is, too! Synonymous with caste prestige, it is a leadership

which, in every detail of life, has bound the village to itself with a control that is so absolute that "if anyone fails to recognize its existence, he is reminded of it so effectively that he never errs again."

Caste, which dictates the orders and decisions of the village leader, thus permeates the whole village life. Even the children observe it rigidly. Before he takes the first step in life, every child imbibes either caste prejudice or caste discipline. There is no playing together of high-caste and low-caste children; that is, as western people know play. But if a child of high caste orders a lower caste child to pull him round the village in a cart, the out-caste does it without demur, and will go on pulling until he drops rather than disobey the order of the high-caste child. And even when ordinary high-caste children play together, the highest caste of all is always given first turn, and certainly never allowed to lose. Boy or girl, it is not the physically strong who becomes the school tyrant or the village bully; it is the socially high-born who is encouraged to be a bully, under the name of Twice-born, by his or her parents.

So the village carries on, with the few oppressing the many. Even in this year 1932, under the British rule, it is possible "for forty human beings to live on the edge of a village of eight hundred, go through the village daily to free it from its most disagreeable filth, help in its harvest fields, collect food at the doors of the more prosperous homes, even buy a few necessities at the small oilman's shop, regard the village in every way as home, and yet never touch nor be touched by anyone belonging to the village." Two American missionaries have just concluded a five-year sojourn in the middle of a typical Indian village in order to make what they called a social survey. This is their conclusion on the conditions

as they actually existed: "Those who laid down the rules for Hindu society settled beyond all doubt the religious, social, and economic standing of every individual. It is not for any man to choose what he will be. His birth fixes his station. And nothing that he can do will alter the plan. We who are outside the order are amazed at the contentment of all those within it, until we comprehend its strength and all-pervasiveness."

Prohibiting Education

In some provinces, particularly the progressive Madras province, the problem of education of depressed class children is a formidable one. If schools are thrown open to all castes, the high-caste children immediately leave, reducing the daily attendance from about 250 to 30. On the other hand, even though the school is open for them, the depressed class children do not attend either because they will not presume to sit in the same room as the children of their parents' employers, or because they are unable to attend school owing to being employed as cow-herds by the high-caste people who will not release them from a family bargain often made years ahead with the child's wages paid a year in advance. In Madras Presidency there are still nearly two thousand public primary schools which are not open to depressed classes, whilst the caste prejudice is so great in the other schools that the Government have issued a special appeal to all local bodies that they should "on no account yield to the pressure of caste-men and allow the depressed class pupils to be withdrawn from the schools, but should insist on the pupils being retained until the villagers reconcile themselves to the new situation." But caste prejudice is still so strong in rural areas that education for depressed class children is impossible in many places,

as is proved by the fact that the latest Madras Government report is still investigating how "real advance" can be achieved. And even where prejudice has been sufficiently overcome to enable the depressed class children to sit in the same school (although not usually in the same room, but behind a screen or on the step), the feeling against them is often so bitter that the teachers dare not pay as much attention to the low-caste children as they do to the upper-class children. Woe betide a depressed class family if its boy or girl became head of the class in an "open" school!

Some Caste Cameos

Because some untouchables succeeded in approaching to within fifty yards of a Chawghat temple, the whole temple services were suspended pending complete purification.

Because a cook of Midnapore spread abroad the story that another servant had been seen cooking a fowl for his master, the cook was fined £3 10s. for defamation because "as a consequence of the statement the servant had been lowered in the estimation of the men of his society, who had ostracized him."

Various castes and sub-castes of the wandering people of India, such as the snake-charmers, the monkey carriers, and the men with the performing bears, are not permitted by their fellow citizens to travel on the railway. Some may not even get into a bullock-cart, or mount a horse, donkey or mule. If they did, they would promptly be unseated by some passer-by.

At Bavda the elders of the village told the untouchables that it was actual sin for them to think of giving up their old-time practice of eating the leavings of high-caste people.

And here is a little story from the Satara district. The hereditary landlord of the village of Kalambi is a low-caste man, but he lives in a house of his own in a fruit garden. There are two wells in his grounds from which water is taken by people of the village, but the landlord cannot, dare not, use his own wells ! He has therefore to beg the higher-caste people to pour a little water now and then into his pots and pans, and in the dry season he has actually to pay to get water from his own wells. Although repeatedly urged by men with reforming zeal to exercise his right of ownership over the wells, or at least over one of them, he has steadily refused to do so, pleading custom and usage. Perhaps he is wise in his generation ! He certainly lives in peace. If he were to presume to assert his ownership of the wells, his high-caste tenants would probably teach him a sharp lesson and put him in his place as a member of a sub-human species.

Now we proceed to Gujerat, where Mr. Gandhi's influence has held sway so long. In Borsad the untouchables live under pitiful conditions. If she wants water, a depressed class woman has to sit by the well-side waiting for some merciful person to give her water ; and it is a common thing for these women to wait from sunrise to late afternoon before any of the villagers will give them a drop. And even then, the water cannot be poured direct into their pots. A small cistern is built below the slope of the well out of which juts a bamboo pipe. He who would give the untouchable woman a few drops of water must first pour the water into the cistern and let it trickle indirectly into the waiting bucket. And usually it is only the unwanted water remaining in the bucket of the person drawing it from the well which is thrown into the untouchables' cistern, so that it takes two or three hours

for the depressed class woman's vessel to be filled. That is nationalism in action!

Caste as a curse! The foregoing illustrations form just a fragment of what is available to demonstrate that, as a Hindu himself has said, "caste feeling has entered the very blood, bone and marrow of the Hindu." Admittedly in some quarters there are signs of a slight relaxation of the tyrannous hold; but in others the hold is being strengthened. On the one hand there is the Self-Respect Movement which has been started in the Madras Presidency with the main aim of combating "the appalling curse of caste," but on the other hand there is the unassailable fact that the Brahmins are seeing that where new villages are formed the several castes ensure the maintenance of a rigid caste system by building their own separate and exclusive caste sections. And while the Self-Respecters are calling enthusiastic conferences in various parts to consider the best ways of tackling the great evil, the Brahmins are consolidating their position by also holding conferences to "call upon the women and the orthodox Hindus to resist the Government in their attempts to introduce modern ideas of reform into institutions which have religious sanction and tradition to back them."

But not a single Brahmin can logically explain why it is not a sin for an untouchable to touch a Brahmin once a year at the Pushyam festival, although it is pollution of the filthiest kind for that same man to come within a stone's throw of him on any day of the year.

"Our lot is unbearable, even now when the caste Hindus have no power for communal legislation and when the mighty British Government does seem to care a little for us. But what will be our fate in the future when even this shadow-

care of the Government is gone, and we are handed over to the caste Hindus with powers of legislation over us?" Thus recently asked a depressed class leader, Swami Sahajananda.

Well might they ask about the fate that awaits them. The British have certainly made them citizens so far as the law is concerned, certainly given them the theoretical status of free men. But the future? Unless India's noble band of Indian reformers multiplies in numbers during the next five years, unless the band can extend its influences miraculously amongst the masses, then the only picture that one can paint of the future is one in which the depressed classes will be still more oppressed, when by *Swaraj* law they will be made to suffer indignities and degradation unspeakable, when by sheer force of power they will be ruled and cursed by caste.

The I.C.S. has been criticized as India's steel frame; but never was there a more inflexible "steel frame" than that of caste, which supports the whole village structure, and rules with a rod unbendable. The ordinary everyday instances of its working given in this chapter do not reveal a hundredth part of the unfathomable depth of its slavery, for the newspaper stories only skim the surface. Yet even this brief survey shows that caste is a curse which impedes progress, crushes ambition, and kills optimism, assigning inexorably to each individual his position and his duties in the structure of society and of orthodox Hinduism, and thus subjecting whole classes of humanity, through no fault of their own and despite gallant efforts to uplift themselves, to degradation and hereditary disabilities which amount to slavery. The Government may legislate idealistically; the British Parliament may invent and inaugurate all manner of so-called safeguards; but these galling and shameful restrictions will persist until the social sense of the Indian people advances to

a level which will compel the disappearance of these primitive heritages.

And had one-half of the energy, enthusiasm, sacrifice, and money spent by Mr. Gandhi and his Congress associates during the past ten years on seeking political liberty been devoted to striving for the social freedom of at least seventy million oppressed people, India would by this time have been in a position to accept that very political freedom which has been delayed solely because of her amazing backwardness due to her many social evils. But Mr. Gandhi remains a stalwart supporter of the caste system, despite his slashing denunciations of "the inhuman treatment meted out to the depressed classes."

And when the British Government decided to give special constitutional representation to these depressed classes to ensure that at least they have a voice in the legislatures, Mr. Gandhi issued his amazing challenge that he would starve to death as a protest against this deliberate policy of "splitting and vivisectioning Hinduism."

Yes, queer India!

CHAPTER VII

RELIGION AS A BUSINESS

“**A**LL is not well with our temples. We feel that the temples have become houses of corruption, and the gods have deserted them. They are now false to the principles of the religion in whose name they stand and therefore cannot claim allegiance of the righteous man. The gods are reported never to have cared for distinctions of wealth; but what do we find to-day? The poor man is turned out if a really rich patron comes in. Christ scourged the traders and money-lenders out of the temple at Jerusalem. We also need a Christ, who with a whip in his hand will cleanse our temples of the worshippers of Mammon and the other false gods, and once again make them abodes of the ancient gods.”

So wrote a Brahmin editor on October 29, 1931, in the daily newspaper *To-day*, published in Benares, Hinduism's stronghold.

The custodians of the temples and the arbiters of their destiny are the priests and the trustees. To many of them, religion has ceased to count, except in so far as it brings in money. It is they who have turned religion into a business, as in different ages priests have done all over the world. They may talk about the eternal verities, but they will never refuse to take the last anna from a starving family to add to their already large hoard or perhaps enable them to live in luxury and dissipation.

It has been estimated that not less than £8,000,000 a week (ten crores of rupees) is spent in India in the name of religion. That works out to £416,000,000 a year. Taking those figures as a test, although they undoubtedly err on the moderate side, it is clear that religion has been turned into a business—for some one.

In theory there is no objection, of course, to putting religion on what might be called a businesslike basis. Indeed, that is done the world over, in Christian lands as well as others. Moreover, there are admittedly certain branches of the Christian religion which have a businesslike policy which almost savours of profiteering. Hence the very fact that religion in India is connected with money, and profits, and easy jobs is not in itself sufficient to warrant any more criticism than might be given to religions in England or America.

The Cost of Sanctity

But there is something about religion in India, and especially about Hinduism, which often seems more than a desire to make religious payments go as far as they can in providing for religious guidance, religious education, and religious propaganda. In India it is not these "essentials" of religion which attract the people's money; it is all the frills and trappings which make religion so expensive. If the direct cost of religion is at least £1,000,000 a day, the indirect cost is six times that amount. Religious customs, together with the social usage demanded by religion, involve a tremendous drain on the resources of the masses, whilst the sums collected annually by religious mendicants are little short of staggering. The latest estimate of beggars who trade in the name of religion is put at 500,000, and if each averages only one rupee a day in collections of money and food (a

very small average, be it noted), then the daily gifts to religious beggars amount to £37,500, which totals no less than £13,687,500 a year, mainly from people whose life is crushed with debt and who scarcely know what it is to feel comfortably satisfied with food and drink. In other words, religion is responsible not merely for the poverty of millions of the people but also for the perpetuation of many of the conditions which give rise to poverty in general, for, after all, the reckless expenditure indulged in by the poorest of people in matters of weddings and funerals and other ceremonial observances is due solely to the demands of religion through its priests.

The Wealth of Temples

So much for the actual monetary side of the problem. But there is another phase. No religious institutions in the world are so richly endowed with non-perishable wealth as the temples of India. Every temple has its hoard of jewels which during past years, sometimes extending into centuries, have been presented to the deity. In many cases the images are made either of gold or silver, and are gaily hung with precious gems. In some temples the gems are valued at £100,000, whilst in others they are put as low as £100. But add them all together, and the hoarded "frozen" temple wealth of India runs into many millions of pounds. In the olden days of India, one emperor has been known to possess jewels worth nearly £6,000,000; but that king's ransom is not a fraction of the value of the jewels that are now dedicated to the various deities known to Hinduism.

As an indication of the enormous wealth of some of these temples, two instances may be cited. The rich treasure of the Kesariaji Temple in Udaipur State was recently

opened after many years of collection, and it took three days for a large staff of State servants to make a complete inventory of the many articles, "including gold and silver ornaments, jewels and cash valued at about five lakhs of rupees (£37,500)." A still more striking case is that of the Sri Padmanabhaswami Temple in Trivandrum, when the main treasure vault of the temple was opened in the presence of the Dewan and Financial Secretary of the Travancore State. His Highness the Maharajah of Travancore was also present "at the auspicious hour when the operations began." Six huge boxes of treasure and jewels were removed to the palace where a large staff of Government stock-takers was waiting to commence the task of counting. The total value of the treasure has not been divulged, but it is estimated to be in the neighbourhood of £500,000. A second treasure vault of this temple is also to be opened.

It has been suggested that if only the unused wealth of religion in India could be made available, it would more than pay the total debts of all the deities' devotees whose life is a misery through poverty and indebtedness. And that indebtedness of India's rural masses has been estimated to be about one-fifth of the total value of all the villages, including land, houses, live stock, and implements, and necessitating a permanent annual charge of ten per cent. of that value. But the villager is crushed into indifference. His whole life is made up of religious observances, and in many cases it is a case of pay, pay, and pay again. Watch a villager and his family go to a temple. He pays his tribute to his goddess; he pays his fee to the priests; he pays the door-keeper; he pays the men outside who murmur prayers for him as he departs; and he pays the sleepy seller of "sacred flowers" for a few petals of the sanctified blossoms. True,

many of the payments are made in small coins, such as annas and half annas, but when the family consists of a man, wife and two grown-up children, all of whom have to pay, the morning's total is more than enough to keep the whole family in food for the day.

From the outsiders' point of view, this faithfulness of the villagers, even unto poverty and crushing debt, may be misguided, but it is at least understandable when we remember the hold which every feature of religion and superstition has on the masses. But when we consider those who take the offerings so sacrificingly given, the situation is different, and the only conclusion which can be arrived at is that religion in India has reached the stage when Mammon rules, and not Piety.

Entrenched in custom and elaborately safeguarded by tradition, thousands of priests all over the country can even obtain legal sanction for many of their practices, owing to the almost inflexible rule that there shall be no interference in the religious beliefs and operations in India. But even apart from legal tussles over both trivial and important matters of temple control, the business of religion has now reached such a pitch that a growing number of Hindus agree with the denunciation of the Benares Hindu paper that it is time for drastic measures to be adopted. It does not matter, of course, if the rich people are prepared to give liberally to the temples and their ministrants, nor does it matter what becomes of that money—at least, not for the purposes of this book; but it is a very serious thing that so much ready cash should be squeezed out of the half-starved masses at a time when the economic conditions demand that every anna should be available for the ordinary purposes of life. Custom, tradition, superstition—all demand money. Between them

they represent a liquid fortune which could buy out Rockefeller a score of times. No one would ever raise a protest at the money spent on plain religion, shorn of all its trappings and accompaniments, for the very essence of religion is personal sacrifice. But in India it is found that all the concomitants of religion extract from the masses a much greater share of their annual income per head than in any other country in the world. That is to say, that the country where the standard of living is lowest and where the average daily earnings are lowest, is the country which can find the most to give to finance a profiteering religion. Queer India !

Religion is of far greater interest to the masses of India than politics, or any other force. "The permanent attention of the average Indian," says one authority, "still lies in the eternal verities, despite all the temporary pre-occupations with politics." And that is amply proved by the amount of space devoted in the newspapers to matters connected directly or indirectly with religion in all its phases. Just as the crux of the present political problem is religion in the form of the communal question, even so is it the one thing which matters in the villages. There still is apathy in connexion with local self-government and seats on municipalities and local boards, but there is always intense activity when it comes to filling the "honorary" posts of trustees of temples. It would be grossly unfair, of course, to suggest that all religion in India, even in Hindu India, is subordinated to rupees, annas, and pice, for there undoubtedly are many religiously-minded men all over the country who accept trusteeships merely because they believe it their religious duty to carry such responsibilities. But the many instances that arise in which trustees have to be moved, and the numerous court cases which occur

over disputed occupancies, certainly show that it is not always a mere matter of honour and glory and piety.

Even were all the temple trustees as honest as the average man, the very system in India almost forces religion into being a very profitable business. When illiterate people by the millions reverently donate their annas to their favourite shrine, or even go into debt to get money to propitiate (through the priests, of course) an offended deity, and when such offerings are thrown into the common temple purse with no accounts to be rendered to anyone, then religion has surely become little else but a money-making matter. Many temples have their lands and their forests and their other immovable properties with which they were endowed many years ago and from which they get good incomes which are supposed to be checked by the trustees ; but that is only a fraction of their total income, the balance frequently never being brought before any so-called administrative body. Hence the papers often report legal cases in which one set of priests will spend large sums endeavouring to establish their " prescriptive right to collect and guard [and spend ?] the offerings made by the devotees of the gods." And, be it noted, it is generally only the priests and the trustees who squabble among themselves ; the devotees seldom raise objections either as to who receives their offerings or as to how they are disposed of. The priest in the temple is, to them, the chosen of the gods, and no mortal dare question his conduct. Moreover, the givers of the money may be untouchables and depressed classes, unworthy of even entering the shadow of the temple walls ; but their money is not polluted. The hand which gives the offering may be so unholy as to be unfit to touch the hem of the priest's loincloth or the Brahmin's *dhobi*, but the money carried in that hand is always welcome.

And so the priest-ridden religion goes on, believing in the perverted Oriental proverb that it is far more blessed to receive than to give.

A very striking illustration of how this temple trusteeship sometimes works has been published, appropriately enough, in the Calcutta papers as this particular chapter is being written. An appeal was preferred in the Calcutta High Court by four men who had been sentenced to long terms of imprisonment on charges of culpable homicide not amounting to murder in connexion with the death of a woman of a Bengal village following a dispute over the handling of the funds of a village temple.

In the village of Dhope near Baruipore, Bengal, there is a shrine which is daily visited by many people from neighbouring parts of the country who contribute a daily sum of between £25 and £30, which was mainly controlled by a widow and her nephew, who, says the court record, "received the largest share of the income of the shrine." The actual management of the temple and its offerings was in the hands of the nephew and one of the temple ministrants, and who, according to the prosecution story, had frequent quarrels with the widow whom they were trying to oust from the control and ownership. One day the widow was found dead hanging from the ceiling, and although it looked like suicide, three of the neighbours insisted that she had been murdered. After prolonged investigation, the police put up a case against the nephew and three others for causing the woman's death, two eye-witnesses declaring that she was knocked down senseless in a quarrel and then hanged so that it might look like suicide. The defence admitted a dispute over the temple funds, as they declared it was a false case concocted against

them in order that their rivals might gain control over the temple and its income.

Apart from the question of whether the woman was murdered or committed suicide owing to the quarrel over the funds, an interesting light is thrown on the question of religion as a business by the revelation that even a small shrine in an out-of-the-way corner of Bengal receives as much as £30 a day from the offerings of poor peasants.

Mismanaged Funds

So large is the wealth of India's temples that certain provinces have been forced to introduce legislation to control it. Madras, for example, has for five years had a Religious Endowment Department working through a special board, but even under the watchful eye of that department, things are anything but satisfactory. Speaking at a gathering of temple trustees in Ellore, the Inspector of Religious Endowments declared that there was "urgent necessity for concerted action on the part of trustees in improving the management of the temples." The Government of the United Provinces is at the present time considering the report of a special committee which made a complete investigation into the best methods of securing "better administration and supervision" of the large number of public religious and charitable endowments, funds and institutions of the Hindu community. The Bombay Government also have caused a fluttering in religious dovecotes by its proposal to institute legislation "to provide for better management of Hindu religious and charitable trusts."

Some idea of the number of these religious endowments is to be obtained from the announcement that although their survey is not yet complete, the Madras Religious Endow-

ments Board has registered 15,687 temples with incomes ranging from £18 15s. (Rs 250) a year to £112,500 (Rs 15 lakhs), and about 4,500 with incomes less than Rs 250. The Madras Board has hardly got into its stride yet, but already its influence has been felt and it reports "a general improvement." In most cases action against temple trustees has been taken on the Board's initiative, but so intolerable had the position become in 1931 that 352 petitions were received from villagers alleging mismanagement of religious institutions, and requesting the Board to remedy the defects in the administration by the trustees. In order to overcome certain defects in the 1927 Act an amending Bill is now before the Legislative Council.

Perhaps the most illuminating example of how temple funds are dealt with is the case of the Tirupatti Temple, which is probably the most richly endowed in India. In 1900 its income was only £22,500 (3 lakhs of rupees), but it has now an annual income of £127,500 (17 lakhs of rupees) as well as estates worth £5,125,000 (75 lakhs of rupees). A "regular Hindu Kingdom" has now been formed in Tirupatti district and offices opened in various important towns. But, following numerous complaints of maladministration, a special Bill is now before the Madras Legislative Council to transfer the control and management of such a huge endowment to a committee.

In moving the Bill, Mr. M. A. Manikkavelu Nayakar said that "the whole state of affairs has become a complete scandal. The offerings of the large number of pilgrims to the deity are not being properly accounted for. There are large estates whose management is very bad. There is no proper supervision over the supply of articles and provisions to the temple. Even inferior articles are being supplied and there is no check over them." The mover then went on to

say that "as far back as 1901 the District Judge showed how the large amounts of income to the temple were being mis-managed and wasted, whilst in another judgment the High Court stated that the administration was a record of waste and embezzlement. Even the scheme framed by the Privy Council was not working properly."

Mr. M. A. Muthia Chettiar declared that the new Bill was "a very essential piece of social legislation," and pointed out that the memorandum of the Hindu Religious Endowments Board "would fully bear out the complaints of the pilgrims and the amount of mismanagement going on in the administration." He corroborated the complaint that "articles are purchased at abnormal prices without any discrimination," and added that "there are now arrears of land revenue to the extent of six or seven lakhs of rupees."

Mr. A. B. Shetty, in revealing what he called "a scandalous state of affairs," said: "It is not merely *something* wrong but it is *everything* wrong. Misappropriation of funds and waste seem to be the characteristics of this temple, as remarked by several judicial officials. The Mahant's powers seem to be uncontrolled and all-embracing. He can spend the vast income of the temple without let or hindrance. Nobody seems to have the power to scan the budget or to go into the merits of expenditure. No scale of pay is fixed to the establishment, the cost of which comes to about 8 lakhs (£60,000) a year. And as the High Court remarked, what is saved from misappropriation is spent in litigation. The management of the temple estates is stated to be hopeless."

The Bill was referred to a Select Committee on October 30, 1931.¹

¹ Whilst this book was in the press, this Bill was passed in all its stages and has received the assent of H.E. the Governor-General.

This case of the Tirupatti Temple is unique only in the vast income which is declared to be mismanaged, for many other temples have had disciplinary action taken against them, occasionally following the application of villagers or pilgrims. At times such applications result in the Government framing a definite scheme of operation and control; at other times the trustees, the temple treasurer, or other temple officers are deprived of their positions. But the utmost leniency is usually shown. In one recent case, for example, a trustee of a South Arcot temple used for his own purposes a large sum of money which he had drawn from the temple funds to buy land for the temple. After "accepting his explanation," the Temple Committee directed him to "return the money within two months, failing which he was to be deemed to be on suspension." The Courts are, of course, much stricter, and if a trustee fails to carry out a scheme drawn up by the judge, he seldom gets a second chance.

The growing complaints against temple trustees seem to reveal that at last the people in some areas are awakening to the fact that even the cloak of religion does not hide a multitude of sins. They put up with a great deal from the priests, but are not so tolerant of the trustees. Hence frequent complaints are made to Government in some provinces that trustees have not only mismanaged the endowments, but have "kept no accounts of income and expenditure and have mixed up the temple funds with their own."

It is interesting to note that not only is there always great rivalry for the posts of temple trustees, but there is equally keen competition for membership of temple committees. For example, in the recent election for the Kumbakonam Circle Temple Committee there were thirty candidates for twelve seats,—and so eager were some of them to get in that

the election resulted in an inquiry demanded by one of the unsuccessful candidates who insisted that there had been impersonation of voters. And the petitioner sought to prove it by producing photographs which he said he took "because I realized that these people in this picture had gone to the place to tamper with my witness."

Fighting for Offerings

In view of the great wealth attached to many of India's temples, it is only natural that all who believe they have a claim on it, will fight to the bitter end. Three striking instances of this were settled in the early months of 1932, each of which might well be referred to here.

After a legal battle extending over a quarter of a century between two high priests of Hinduism, the Bombay High Court has decided that only one of them is entitled to be known as "Shankaracharya" and to accept the *puja* (or offerings) and income of a certain religious endowment from which the loser in the case is already receiving an income of £600 (Rs 8,000) a year from the property and donations.

In a Poona case, after almost a hundred years of wrangling, the descendant of the famous Nana Fadnavis has just lost a case in which another ancient family has been given the hereditary right "to take all offerings except jewels, cloth, animals, and land" that are made to the wealthy Belbaug Temple, provided that the winner of the case either sits on the temple platform himself "to collect and guard the offerings," or else deposes one of his family to sit there.

The third case deals with the famous Vichoba Temple at Pandharpur, regarded as one of India's very holy spots. The chief entrance is known as the Namdev Gate—in honour of the great thirteenth-century poet after whom most of the

tailor castes are named. This gate has twelve steps, on one of which are stone carvings and brass images of Namdev, giving it the name of "Namdev's stone." A ministrant belonging to the tailoring caste has for centuries had charge of that one step, and of all the offerings that are placed on it. During recent times the higher castes have sought to evict this ministrant, and after a forcible ejection the quarrel was taken to the courts. The tailors have won the first round; but there is little doubt that this fight, like all others which deal with religion and its finances, will run the gamut up to the highest tribunal possible, probably reaching the Privy Council for the last round.

This *cause célèbre* was responsible for the following editorial forecast from the *Times of India* :—

The eternal verities are nearer to the real soul of India than politics and parliaments. When the Congress along with British rule will have become a dim memory of the past, and the Mahatma will have duly become an Avatar in the pantheon, the worshippers at his temple will no doubt quarrel over the right to administer to the quaint idol in loin cloth and spectacles, and untouchable castes will perhaps claim the right to give the god's goat her ritual bath.

Where the Money Goes

Without seeking to strike a balance sheet of the exact income and expenditure of an average temple, this survey must make brief mention of the various ways in which the offerings of the temple are spent. The case of the Tirupatti Temple showed that very frequently a temple invests its wealth in real estate, and almost every large temple in India has some adjoining lands from which it derives an income in either rent or crops, which, added to the offerings of the devotees, goes to pay the expenses of the various ministrants, workers, attendants, and, in many cases, dancing girls dedicated

to the gods, all of whom need providing with the necessities (and sometimes luxuries) of life.

Some temples are provided with electric light out of the funds ; others build and run institutions of various kinds ; still others undertake extension work to improve the buildings ; whilst in many cases *dharamsalas*, or pilgrims' resting-houses, form one of the charges on the income. The pilgrim tax which is collected in many temples is in most cases sanctioned by the Government only on the distinct understanding that it is spent on improving the facilities for the visiting pilgrims in the form of ample accommodation for sleeping, good water supply, adequate sanitary arrangements, and good medical attention. Some temples are models in this respect, but there are some which would rather pile up useful reserves in cash than spend money on pilgrims from whom they feel they should be collecting every anna they can squeeze out of them. This even applies in cases to small municipalities who incorporate the pilgrim tax in the municipal funds and thus build good balances at the expense of the pilgrims.

But in addition to such regular expenses as those mentioned, there are further charges which reveal how easy it is for money to be spent on other than purely religious and charitable things. A particularly interesting case which reveals one phase of this question is that just decided in Trichinopoly when it was definitely laid down by the District Judge that the allowances claimed by sixty villagers " were not emoluments attached to the performance of any religious office, service or duty at the temple," and that the offerings from which they were paid " were not prepared in the first instance for any human beings but were prepared for being offered to the deity ; and it was certainly in accordance with long-

established usage that, after being so offered, they should be distributed firstly to the temple servants, and secondly to such few worshippers as were deemed deserving by the trustees." In this case the free distribution of offerings to families who claimed it as traditional right cost the temple about £150 a year.

During festivals, the temple authorities are bound by tradition to incur certain expenses, not only in the form of gifts to wandering Brahmins but also on the celebration of various ceremonies. If there is any delay in payment of these expenses, trouble is certain to follow, for even those who outwardly announce that they are honoured to perform duties "for the deity" are insistent on receiving their pay for that privilege. In a temple at Tiruvala, for instance, the full piper band went on strike because they had not been given their remuneration, and thus the most important part of the festival's ceremonies was held up pending the meeting of an arbitration board. When the matter was investigated, it was found that although these pipers had an hereditary right of giving whole-time service in the temple for a small honorarium, the trustees had not paid them for some months. Hence the strike at a most critical time.

A great deal of the money given in devotees' offerings goes to adorning the deity. For example, the deity of a temple at Mannargadi has just been presented with a pair of gold shoes set with rubies, valued at £525, whilst large numbers of deities are garlanded with necklaces of diamonds and other precious stones. Many an idol is made of solid gold, and even in these very difficult times it is no uncommon thing for devout agriculturists, almost starving, to melt down the family's gold ornaments and present them to the temple in the hopes of earning the favour of the deity.

Treasure presented to temples frequently proves very useful in times of stress. The Ranganathaswami Temple at Srirangam, for instance, has recently held what might well be called a bargain sale of what the trustees described as "unnecessary gold and silver articles" belonging to the temple and which had been taken there by devotees during the past few years. The first sale brought in about £2,500 in three days, and there are still jewels valued at over £2,000 to be sold. Of the total proceeds, about £750 will be earmarked for the repair of the golden dome, and the balance is being invested in Government bonds—a suggestion to buy land with it having been turned down. The trustees say that they intend having similar sales annually until the economic conditions improve.

Hard Times for Temples

Despite the remarkable manner in which the masses give so freely to the temple funds and to the priests and all the hangers-on, the world shortage of money is gradually having an effect on the income of many temples. Moreover, the untouchables in some districts are actually refusing to make their usual contributions because they are not being permitted to enter the temple precincts. Another expression of declining income is to be found in the vows taken by some religious enthusiasts that instead of making gifts of gold, silver, or coin, they will write the deity's name so many times, and at a temple in Masulipatam huge bundles of manuscripts have recently been piled up containing the name of the deity "Vithal" written millions of times, some people having written it 10,000,000 times as a result of their vows.

To meet the stringency, temple trustees are adopting various methods, mainly in the direction of economy in

spending. No longer will the gods and goddesses of Tangore district be clad in fine raiment and gorgeous silks, for the fiat has gone forth from the Temple Board that henceforward all the idols under their control will be clothed in *khaddar*. Apart from the hereditary jewel-adorned robes, it costs the temple committee over £400 a year to clothe the numerous gods and goddesses who sit in silent state within the dozen or so temples under the committee's jurisdiction; and as there is a decreasing income due to the depression, the deities must now participate in the economy movement and endeavour to look their best in home-spun cloth.

A few temples are adopting still more rigid plans, for whilst so far there has been no concerted effort in any part of the country either to reduce the temple expenditure or to increase the amount of offerings, the priests are still eloquent in urging pilgrims to "give till it hurts." But that economy in a variety of ways is possible is shown by the retrenchment scheme drawn up by the officers of the Pudukottah State for immediate operation. Under this scheme the number of hours for worship in each State temple will be limited and fixed, in order that the priests might minister in more than one temple, thus reducing the number of temple servants. Another saving will be effected among the worshippers by limiting the quantity of food cooked in the temple area to the amount actually required as offerings to the deities, which will, it is estimated, not merely save waste but also be ample for distribution amongst the decreased number of temple ministrants who live on these gifts of food. Articles required for temple worship will now be supplied direct from the State stores instead of being purchased, as in the past, by the temple priests from a cash allotment traditionally fixed. Festivals will be held in the temples only as the condition of

each temple fund permits, and no expense beyond the limit of that fund will be permitted unless the local residents agree to defray all such additional expense. Moreover, if the villagers are in any way indifferent to the holding of the ordinary local festivals, the State will probably cancel such fixtures, whilst a further order declares that if there is any lack of interest in the annual procession of the deity, such procession must be abandoned rather than that large sums of money should be spent for the benefit or pleasure of only a few religiously-inclined villagers, or merely for the profit of the temple priests and ministrants. Yet another retrenchment agreed upon by this State is for the complete cessation of the *devadasi* service, by which girls dedicated to the temples have hitherto lived on the proceeds of the temple. The resultant unemployment, however, is to be met by the payment of compensation. This economy campaign further plans that "the extravagant temple committees" shall be replaced wherever possible by public-spirited citizens who shall act as managers. Finally, the large number of religious rest-houses all over the State are being investigated, and as the giving of free food to all who may ask for it is regarded as "encouraging idleness," that additional expense will be abolished except in cases of urgent need.

If such retrenchment could be adopted all over India, the resultant improvement in the material prosperity of the masses would be of far greater extent and celerity than would result from the putting into immediate operation of all the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Agriculture, the Royal Commission on Labour, and the various Banking Inquiry Committees.

The facts outlined in the foregoing pages of this chapter do not by any means establish as strong a case as could be

made out if the survey had not been confined to what the newspapers have contained on the subject during the past twelve months. Analyses of the various investigating reports of provincial committees, of the many memoranda dealing with cases of mismanagement, and of the annual reports of the Religious Endowment Boards would provide still more remarkable revelations ; but even without exploring farther afield than our self-prescribed limits, sufficient proof has been given to show that religion is one of the greatest and most profitable businesses in India.

The Pilgrim Problem

But there is one phase of this problem which must be dealt with briefly in closing. The huge economic loss to India which results from the mammoth pilgrimages which take place every year to various holy places is almost beyond compute. There are daily at least 100,000 people either on their way to or returning from a visit to Benares, to mention just one of the hundreds of religious magnets ; but there are thousands of shrines and tombs and other sacred spots which have their periodic festivals visited by crowds of pilgrims numbering up to 100,000. In many cases the trip from the home village takes two or three months, as the majority of the pilgrims walk, or at the best, go by bullock-cart. And as these festivals are held at all times of the year, the amount of time lost by a predominantly agricultural population runs into many millions of days a year. Nor is time the only economic loss. A pilgrimage to some holy shrine is often the life-aim of a villager and his family, and if he has not been able to save sufficient money for the trip he will gladly borrow it, even though it means mortgaging a goodly part of the future income of his sons and grandsons.

Comparatively large donations are made to the temple on arrival, as well as alms to the huge crowd of religious beggars and *sadhus* who flock around every place of pilgrimage.

Then there are also vows to be fulfilled, and as an illustration of what it costs in India to keep one's promise to gods, a recent story might be repeated. A certain educated man and his family visited a temple in South India. On the way back, the man's thermos flask broke, whereupon his wife said that she felt that the incident was a direct message from the gods that she had not fulfilled her vow that, if a son were born to her daughter, she would give the child's weight in coins to the temple priests. So the child was fetched, the village doctor having estimated, in the absence of scales, that he would weigh about 600 silver rupees. When they got back to the temple, the scales of the priest showed the child to weigh 920 silver rupees, and when the father expressed surprise, the priest admitted that perhaps the child should have weighed only 600 rupees, but that the extra 320 rupees was revealed by the goddess as penal interest for not fulfilling the vow two days earlier. And the man paid up willingly!

Thus do many priests wax rich, and it is not surprising that they will even go on strike, as they did at one temple, when the trustees wanted to take away their collecting box from the entrance so that the pilgrims should make all their offerings to the deity alone. And the priests won.

But not always does the profit from religion go to the temples and the priests, for in a few cases certain business-minded pilgrims are able to make a handsome income from their less fortunate neighbours who cannot make such trips. It is no uncommon thing, of course, for pilgrims to take water from the sacred Ganges to sell to the inhabitants of

their village, and unscrupulous travellers are not beyond filling a large number of bottles with dirty water from a well or stream not very far from the village and palming that off as "Ganges water carried at great inconvenience anything up to 500 miles." And even in Calcutta a goodly profit is sometimes made (one of the writer's own messengers earned the equivalent of three months' wages) by selling some of the famous sweetmeat made at the Jagannath Temple at Puri by the cooks who prepare the daily food-offering for the god. This sweetmeat is on sale in the temple courtyard, and he who cares to invest a small sum in the purchase of four or five pounds of it can find a ready sale for it at a huge profit amongst the masses of Calcutta, who feel sanctified and purified by the mere eating of a morsel of this food from the gods.

In conclusion, it might be added that even Government sometimes benefits by this business side of religion, even though the priests and temple organizations usually succeed in paying no income tax. One very recent instance is that in which a religious disciple settled down for a few weeks at Jhajha on one of the Government railways. His fame quickly spread, and soon the local railway traffic was so great as to necessitate keeping special trains in readiness, particularly at the week-ends. But when the receipts had been raised by about £2,000 above normal, the *sadhu* decided to move, and not all the offers of the station-master to make him comfortable could coax him into making a prolonged stay. But it is safe to say that the *sadhu* made considerably more than the railway. For in India religion is a business.

CHAPTER VIII

THE UNDERWORLD AND ITS INHABITANTS

THE primitive and isolated conditions in which the majority of India's masses live, accompanied by the remarkable credulity and superstition which has already been outlined, naturally produce possibilities of crime which are unequalled in any other country in the world. There is no form of western crime which is unknown in India ; but there are many others which are unique. Crime peculiar prevails, crime made possible by every sort of atmosphere and human characteristic. With a population composed of races more diverse in every way than those which inhabit Europe, and with many compelled to exist in a state of civilization which keeps alive their old-time predatory and primitive and disorderly tendencies, the work before the Indian police includes, as an official writer has picturesquely put it, "tasks which might well seem characteristic of widely separated epochs in the history of human development."

Nor is such varied crime merely sporadic or individualistic. Far from it. Every species of crime is thoroughly organized. Whole tribes and clans of hereditary criminals live a life of perpetual wandering. Most of the individual criminals have a long family history behind them. Leaders of every kind supervise the plans. Every square mile of country has an underworld, the denizens of which are every whit as subtle, imaginative, experienced, and unscrupulous as the criminal

gangs of London or Paris or Chicago. At times, of course, the methods in India are more crude and less technical than those in western lands ; but often they are more successful and more difficult of detection.

The caste evil dominates crime even as it does ordinary life in India. Special forms of crime are committed only by men and women who are regarded as belonging to that particular crime-caste. Colleges of crime are definitely organized and well attended ; and seldom will a member of one class of professional criminality poach on the preserves of another. New castes are being formed every year, and while the hereditary crimes still continue to exercise the attention of the police, there have now been added far more subtle and sophisticated problems resultant from the increase in technical and literary knowledge and the improved facilities of communication. Crime has become more national ; gangs have branches and affiliations in all provinces; even international activities have to be met and countered. It is true that the swell cracksman of Europe and America has not yet turned his attention to the untold wealth in precious stones and gold in India's temples and palaces, but there is arising in India a specially-trained class of criminal who might yet beat the western expert at his own game. And all the time the hereditary counterfeiter, the professional poisoner, the astute drug smuggler, the cold-hearted white slave trafficker, the trained forger, and the ingenious swindler occupy the attention of the police in India just as much as do the ordinary burglar, the dexterous pickpocket, the petty trickster, and the casual embezzler. Amazing in its simplicity, incredible in its audacity, crime in India well fits into a book dealing with the queer side of things in a queer country.

Gangsters by Thousands

Apart from its tricksters, its charlatans, its sorcerers, its counterfeiters, and its murderers, India is essentially the Land of the Gangster. Long before America knew her Al Capones and Jack Diamonds, India had her Thugs, her brigands, her wandering tribes of holy raiders. And to-day there are more people annually "put on the spot" and "taken for a ride" in India than there are in America. Ranging over the whole country, India's gangsters play merry havoc, for armed robbery, or dacoity as it is known in India, is still prevalent to an extent which is unbelievable, necessitating year after year, even in the year 1932, the formation of special police forces to keep it in check. As an official chronicler of the Government of India has had to admit: "Any day in practically every part of India the police are faced with the possibility of having to conduct operations against well-armed and desperate men to whom human life is of no account, and for the past few years extensive operations of a semi-military character have been carried on against numerous gangs of dacoits."

Terrorizing the villagers by atrocities so horrible that none can be found to give evidence against them, armed to the teeth with terrible weapons, protected by a spy system of the most intricate character, strengthened by the reputation of being heroes of a hundred fights and murders, and always ready to slip away to their strongholds in inaccessible places, these dacoits reveal a side of Indian life which is little known and seldom described; yet it is a fact that every day in some part of India sees war to the bitter end between gangs of these desperadoes and the police.

Nor should it be imagined that the suppression of half a dozen important gangs reduces the stranglehold which this

form of gangsterism has on the country. During the past three years, for example, dacoity has increased rather than decreased, due partly to the attention of the police having been centred on political strife, partly to the atmosphere of general lawlessness produced by the Congress activities, partly to the decision of revolutionaries and terrorists to finance and arm themselves by means of violent robbery, and partly to the economic and unemployment distress which, particularly in Bengal and the Punjab, has driven even educated young men to adopt dacoity as a comparatively easy means of saving themselves and their families from starvation.

The rural and social conditions of India, moreover, make the gangster's life reasonably safe. The Indian countryside is a chain of lonely hamlets, unconnected by roads, with policemen only every ten miles, with wealth hoarded or buried by those who know nothing of banks, with a host of people ever ready to take to violent crime either for revenge, for easy money, or for adventure, and with an abundance of natural hiding-places for the gunmen. Once a gangster, the new recruit will stick at nothing. If a fat old merchant will not reveal where he keeps his money, then wads of wool are soaked in oil before being wrapped around his podgy fists or trembling knees. A match is struck—and within a few seconds the secret of the buried treasure is revealed. If a family hints at putting up a struggle, then all are butchered where they stand,—as many as eighteen members, men and women and children, have been murdered in that way without compunction. And even when special police forces are campaigning against them, it sometimes takes three years to capture the leader and disband the gang. No Robin Hoods are they as a rule, even though some of them seek to keep in with the villagers by pretending only to loot the houses

of rich men. Naturally they go where the most profit is to be found, but in the records of one gang with nearly two hundred raids to its credit, there were instances of dacoities committed for a few rupees, a couple of gold ornaments, or a little food, such cases being frequently "experimental" dacoities either to initiate a new member or to try out the courage of a doubtful one. Big dacoities are planned months ahead with great cunning and much reconnoitring,—then down swoop anything from half a dozen to three score of desperadoes, ready for the utmost savagery. An hour of loot and murder. An hour of primitive bestiality. Then the smouldering village, with its moaning survivors and its kid-napped women, stands as a terroristic warning to other villages that any information given to the police will mean for them an even worse fate. Next day the leader divides the loot. As a rule his word is law; any dispute generally resulting in direct action. Then the gang disperse to their favourite haunts, some to the jungle, some to the towns—to await the next call of their leader. It is in the dispersal, however, that the gang's danger lies. A false move on the way, an attempt to sell some stolen jewels, a braggart's boasting in the grog-shop, or a secret let drop in the arms of a bazaar Delilah—any one of these might be just the clue the police are looking for. Then the Indian papers, not always alert for a sensational or dramatic story, prosaically recount the bare details of "yet another dacoity," with its sentences of several years' imprisonment for the chief gangsters. But seldom is the romantic or heroic side told, for dacoity is so frequent in India that even the most astounding stories are not regarded as "spot news."

For sheer bravado, some of India's gangsters take the laurel wreath.

There was the Fyzabad gang of 64 who, instead of concealing themselves before and after a dacoity, paraded up and down the villages and announced their methods. Yet it took four years to lay them by the heels.

Scenes reminiscent of pre-British India were witnessed at Gudda in Bengal only a few days before this chapter was written, when the inhabitants were awakened at midnight by a band of armed dacoits who marched through the village with band playing, drums beating, torches flaring, sporadic shooting and wild dancing as a prelude to raiding the house of the richest man in the place. They met a stubborn resistance, however, from two brave watchmen who, aided by stone throwers on the housetops, finally drove off the raiders.

In the heart of Bombay a band of dacoits marched down a main street in khaki uniforms, complete with heavy boots, puttees, belts, and axes, like a company of troops. They then raided three selected shops.

Even more audacious was the plan by which another gang walked into a village dressed as policemen and insisted that they should be allowed to search the houses on suspicion of terrorists being in hiding. The search was well and truly made—and all the valuable property was carried off.

Then there is the famous Kalu Pharari of Nasik, who on arrest recently gave evidence to show that he had participated in more than eighty dacoities without once having been caught. His arrest was due to a police officer in disguise actually planning a dacoity with him—and when Kalu arrived at the house he found it full of policemen.

Of the great Malanji, who worked the Lahore district, it was said, "The Punjab is under British rule by day and Malanji's rule by night." Scarcely a village had not tasted

his inhuman methods; hardly a villager in the Punjab did not know of this man with a star and crescent tattooed on his forehead. As an indication of his methods, one of his followers said that he took revenge on informers by sitting on their chests and slowly sawing off their arms and legs. He was finally trapped and sentenced to death.

Seven days' encounter in the jungles of middle Sind ultimately found two hardened dacoits, guilty of thirty-five known gang cases, taking refuge in a deserted tomb, and the most drastic means of attack were necessary before they surrendered. Only when oil was poured into the tomb from outside with a threat that the edifice would be set on fire did the two men meekly crawl out.

A gang of twenty-seven brigands whose speciality was the raiding of wayside railway stations and villages in the Ahmedabad district was recently finally rounded up, and found to have "beaten up" seven stations in two years and succeeded in taking loot valued at over a lakh of rupees (£7,500).

In Bengal, where the percentage of convictions to true dacoity charges heard in court is only 8.4 per cent., resistance to the gangs was offered in only 44 out of 1,103 cases, and although there were few really spectacular cases, many of the raids were accompanied by such brutalities as torture for the purpose of revealing wealth, outraging of women, kidnapping of children, and deliberate damage as revenge.

It took many months to lay brigand Banwari by the heels, but when he was actually caught by the Punjab police his twenty-year career as a brigand was ended by his being sentenced to death four times, with imprisonment for other dacoities totalling twenty-six years. Banwari was not merely the "bogy" of the villagers but such a terror to his own followers that none of the various gangs he controlled dare

betray him. Five accomplices also paid the extreme penalty and fourteen others were given heavy terms of jail.

So serious were the depredations of a gang in the Rohtak district that in referring to the "terrible epidemic," the Governor had to point out that "it has been found necessary to employ in this district a special staff of police and magistracy over and above the ordinary district establishment." And in outlining the appalling apathy which accompanied their depredations, the Governor said: "Though it was realized that these gangs were a menace to the peace of the district and that their continued activity meant the greatest peril to person and property, nevertheless neither those on whom is laid by statute the duty of co-operating with the authorities in giving information of crime and in helping to arrest its perpetrators, nor the general public on whom also rests a definite responsibility hallowed by the tradition of years, did their part. There was a clear and regrettable dereliction of duty."

Gangs of *tbugs*, or murderous ruffians, are still at work around Delhi, and over a dozen murders have recently taken place in quick succession. A special police staff was deputed in 1931 to track down the gang, whereupon the men went into retirement, but now have burst out again when the police investigations quietened down.

Brigandage a Safe Crime

In Bihar and Orissa (to mention but one province) the dacoits use modern fire-arms and motor-cars provided them by men of means who keep in the background but who see in dacoity a most profitable profession to finance. Of these gangsters, the Chief Justice of the Province made a statement in a recent judgment which would appear as almost incredible in the year 1932. Yet this is what he said: "The public

has for some time been suffering increasingly and*acutely from these marauders, and it has become notorious that the judicial process as it is at present carried out is insufficient to offer protection. Two points arise upon that. One is as to whether it may not be the duty of the State to take measures of an active kind other than the purely judicial process for dealing with these marauders and for defending people against them. The second is the nature of the sentences which are, or ought to be, imposed by judicial authorities with a view to stamp out this class of crime. It is obvious that a person who takes up a career of dacoity has a very great chance of escape. First of all, the chances are very much against his being caught at all. If he is caught, the chances are that the police on examining the evidence of identification before them may not feel justified in sending him up for trial. When he comes before the committing magistrate, he further examines the evidence carefully and will possibly not feel that the evidence is strong enough to commit him for trial. Then before the Sessions Judge, owing to the care which is properly exercised—I do not suggest any relaxation of the care which is exercised in criticizing the evidence of identification—he has another excellent chance of escape, and after that comes the High Court when his chances of escape are again improved. The result is that a person who contemplates taking up dacoity, and who weighs the risks from the point of view of a prudent man, comes to the conclusion that the chances are very much in his favour. At present I am only concerned with the sentences which should be inflicted in order to constitute a deterrent against the choice of that career, and we think it should be the duty of the Sessions Judge, in dealing with these cases of gross and cruel robbery with violence against citizens pro-

ceeding* on their lawful duties, to consider the advisability of sentencing the accused, where they are entirely satisfied of the identification and the guilt of the accused, not to long sentences of imprisonment but to short sharp sentences of imprisonment coupled with a heavy sentence of whipping, and it is our intention in future in these cases which come before us to deal with them on these lines. The risks will then become apparent to those who take up this career. I have become aware that in the case of dacoity the general practice is, for the villagers, unfortunately owing to lack of courage on their part, to retire a short distance from the village and leave them a free hand. The dacoits rob the house with impunity, and we know it for a fact in the vast majority of cases, the women folk are deliberately ravished so that it may be deterrent against their male relatives giving information to the police, and we are determined that this class of crime, if we can manage it, is going to be stamped out."

Thus are brigands spreading increasing terror throughout the countryside, despite the earnest, and frequently very valiant, efforts of the police to curb them. The odds in every case are against the police, and with their activities so occupied by political agitation, which in itself has given a great fillip to the activities of the criminal, there does not seem much hope of the reign of the gangster being cut short.

Facts about Smuggling

Without going into the question of the ethics of drug-taking, or even discussing the very much-misinterpreted attitude of the Government of India towards opium-production in India, a few facts must be related about the part played by drug-smugglers in the activities of the underworld. During the past few years India has joined in the great international

smuggling ring, and in some cases has become the centre of gangs which conduct organizations reaching out to almost every part of the world. In many cases, of course, the methods employed are the same as in western lands, based on the principle that any form of deception is permissible in order to defeat those who are endeavouring to put a stop to traffic in drugs.

With opium on sale all over the country, even though in regulated quantities, there is not a great deal of opium smuggling except to places outside the country; but with cocaine there is an ever-growing activity. Manufactured in Austria, Japan, and America, it finds its way into India through Calcutta, where it is handled by gangs which have been described as "the terror of the Excise Department," as they have a network spread all over the country to assist them in distributing the drug. They employ very highly-paid carriers who act as their confidential agents, and who are outwardly well-to-do men travelling first-class on the railways and steamers and using expensive motor-cars. If caught, then the families of these carriers are well looked after from the funds of the organization. Every conceivable ingenuity is used to convey the drug from agent to agent, women being used as frequently as men. Delhi, Lahore, and Calcutta all have their cocaine kings, at times working in competition but always ready to join forces to outwit the police when the chase becomes desperate. One illustration of the elaborate nature of these organizations will be sufficient to show the problem with which the authorities are faced.

When sixty-one smugglers were charged at a Calcutta Police Court at the end of 1931, a story was told of the most amazing ramifications stretching from India to Japan. Regular gangster methods were employed, even to the murder of a

man who betrayed them, whilst when the place was raided, the police found an electrified staircase awaiting them which defied entrance to the smugglers' den in the very heart of Calcutta. Untiring work in deciphering cryptic telegrams and following up stray scraps of information slowly revealed that an amazing traffic was being carried on by Indians, Eurasians, Europeans, Japanese, Peshwaris, and Chinese, who "worked" every corner of India, as well as Singapore, Japan and China. The drug was unloaded by being thrown into the river in airtight tins just outside Calcutta, signs of its unloading being given from the vessel through the medium of white umbrellas and the waving of certain cooking utensils. The cocaine was carried in ocean-going vessels by removing the inner lining of the double iron plates of the ship and keeping it stored in the side.

The head of this mammoth organization was outwardly a small wayside fruit-seller in Calcutta, and it was whilst sitting at his stall that he received all his spies and gave his orders. This particular gang was affiliated to another which worked in Delhi, with some members common to both. The Delhi gang had women decoys, secret godowns, a code language, and a very clever system of espionage. A European played a very prominent part in the work until, for some unknown reason, he gave the whole game away whilst serving a sentence in jail. Had he not thus turned approver, it is doubtful if the gang would ever have been broken up, because as a general rule the scores of its minor members worked in absolute ignorance of each other's identity. Thus a bogus military officer complete with helmet, sword, and uniform would not know that the coolie who carried his bag was an agent of the same cocaine king, nor would a seaman of an ocean liner know that a fireman on the same boat was a

brother in crime. As for profits, they are huge, for a tin of 25 ounces which costs £25 in Austria or America will fetch anything up to £350 when sold to the wholesale dealers in northern India, who in their turn retail it at a hundred per cent. profit.

Charas (or hashish), bhang, and ganja are other drugs which attract in varying degrees the attention of smugglers, although as they are mainly Indian grown, the organizations which run them are not nearly so elaborate. Charas mainly comes from Yarkand, and thanks to its unpleasant odour it is not easy to smuggle through the ordinary trade routes. Nevertheless a large army of men, women and boys are engaged on the job, the purdah system of the women affording splendid opportunities. At times it is floated across the rivers in inflated goat-skins or hollowed-out trunks, whilst the usual ingenious methods of tins with false bottoms, heels of slippers, cavities in fruits and vegetables, hollowed bamboos in cane furniture, and even in the inner tubes of travelling motor-cars are all adopted with varying success. Yet what a traffic in lives! As a popular Indian drug addict's song runs, when translated, "O God, what is this that Thou hast made from the hemp drug? The first pipe is nothing; the second brings satisfaction; the third makes you a great man; the fourth turns you into a Raja; beloved ganja, I will never forsake you." And the fifth sends him right off his head!

But drugs are not the only profitable commodity handled by Indian smugglers. On the border of the French and British territory in South India, for example, silver smuggling is the great pastime, and an idea of the determination of this class of criminal is shown by the recent incident in which a gang of sixty overpowered the customs party after a desperate struggle.

Silver-smuggling, however, is not nearly so remunerative as revolver-dumping, a comparatively new industry which has sprung into being in Bengal of late months and which has behind it unlimited resources for bribery and purchase. Prices for ordinary revolvers range up to £30, whilst a weapon by a famous maker will fetch as much as £50. There is good reason to suspect that the funds for much of this illicit arms traffic are obtained from dacoities and from Bolshevik sources outside of India, backed and aided by certain local men of means. The docks of Calcutta are the happy hunting-ground of these smugglers, for there are a thousand ways in which arms can percolate through. Says one report: "Smugglers have agents and informers far exceeding in number those of the police. And police informers carry their lives in their hands, for once identified by those against whom they operate, speedy steps are taken for their permanent removal. And the police must prosecute their inquiries among many thousands of ship and dock workers with unremitting vigilance." All Indian ports are used by these men, but mostly as part of the one great organization which has not even scrupled to land arms in bulk through the medium of a mystery ship which was recently seen off the Sandheads not so very far from Calcutta.

Poisoning as a Profession

A unique form of professional crookdom is to be found in the small gang of poisoners who travel the country looking for suitable victims to drug and rob. This is a most popular method of getting money, and more often than not fails to find its way into police reports. The victim seldom suffers any ill-effects other than a bad headache and the loss of his property, and as the crime is frequently perpetrated in trains,

at pilgrim festivals, and in temples, few will go to the trouble to call in the aid of the police. The drug usually used is called *dhatura*, which is a very common Indian plant yielding a substance which renders the swallower temporarily insensible, although sometimes it proves fatal.

Where the operation is carried out in a railway carriage, the poisoner will get chatty with a likely-looking victim, offer to share a drink (drugged) with him, and then quickly make off at the next station. One man recently drugged the whole of his six fellow-passengers in this way. A more common method, however, is to follow in the track of pilgrims, and rob them either before they reach their destination or just after they get there. Yet another method is for the poisoner to pretend he is a *sadhu* and put up at a temple or Brahmin's house, declaring that he is a holy Brahmin on tour. He will then offer, as a special favour, to cook the food for the priests and the deities, and whilst doing so will mix his poison so subtly that the food is eaten without suspicion. Then when all the inmates are drugged into insensibility, the poisoner will ransack the temple of all the jewels and offerings, or, if it is a Brahmin's house, of all his valuables. Less ambitious fakirs tour the villages in gangs, mulcting the people of even small sums. The very spirit of village comradeship, coupled with the reverence and homage paid to so-called holy men, makes the poisoning scheme an easy one to work, for few villagers or pilgrims will ever refuse a drink or potion supposed to be from the gods.

Whilst talking one day to one of these poisoners on trial, the writer was given the following recipe for what the man called "a most powerful and guaranteed drink": 1 part yellow *dhatura*, 1 part black *dhatura*, 1 part ganja, 4 parts bhang, $\frac{1}{2}$ part opium, $\frac{1}{2}$ part charas, 1 part sankhia: powder

the ingredients and mix in water to a paste and then boil lightly with the lid of the vessel made airtight with wet flour ; the deposit on the lid should be used in small quantities to cause insensibility for two hours. If all goes well, there will be no vomiting or any outward signs of poisoning.

Opium, arsenic, and aconite are also used at times by these wandering poison gangs, particularly if they are committing a murder for some one who has paid them well.

Kidnapping Gangs

Little need be said of the working of white slave traffickers in India, for their methods and success are much the same as in other parts of the world, although it might perhaps be mentioned that there is a simplicity and an ease about some of India's kidnappers which almost passes belief. In no other part of the British Empire, surely, could children be picked up out of the streets of large towns, popped into handcarts with faked shelves and wired compartments, and then pushed through the streets until the handcart contains half a dozen girls, all so frightened that not one will cry out for help in the midst of crowded traffic. That is how the houses of shame are kept supplied in India, and the younger the girls are, the bigger price they will fetch. In Calcutta, for example, among the 30,000 registered prostitutes there are known to be no fewer than 2,000 children below the age of thirteen all in regular use, and many of them below ten. Other cities have the same evil record, with places like Peshawar and Lahore telling an even more appalling tale of traffic in human souls, babes of five and six being freely used.

Boys also are kidnapped in hundreds for immoral purposes in the Punjab and Sind, and although the details are too

indicate to be outlined here, it is necessary to mention that traffic in boys has reached such an extent that in some provinces investigations have revealed "the horrible situation that among the chief seducers of our school-children are many of our school-teachers and scout-masters and even some of the least suspected of the inspecting staff." It is not so long ago that the Bihar Government held an official inquiry into the question of unnatural vice in its schools, and there is now evidence that "it is on the increase all over India." And that that is not mere exaggeration is proved by the fact that Mr. Gandhi has more than once declared in his *Young India* : "A public discussion on this very difficult and delicate subject has become necessary."

Counterfeiters by Birth

"Counterfeiting of coins has come down to us as a valuable heritage from our ancestors," said an approver in an all-India gang case recently heard at Allahabad, with 500 prosecution witnesses. Most of this gang of fifty-four were goldsmiths of a town in the Jullundar district, and evidence was produced that when an assistant trial clerk in the Allahabad High Court lost Rs 10,000 (£750) at the Calcutta races, one of the gang sympathized with him and told him that if he undertook to distribute their counterfeit coins all over India, his losses could be recouped in a very short time. This gang, or clan, has been operating since 1902, and during the past two years 21,786 and 21,284 base coins from their mint had been detected in the United Provinces Banks and treasuries. A conference of police and C.I.D. officers from half a dozen provinces met to work out a method of campaign, and a large number of special men were put on to the job. The result was that within six months the gang was rounded up.

This gang was working on a huge scale, and its mint contained coin-making machines from Germany.

In Calcutta a gang of coiners was unearthed which was just ready to flood Tibet with a fortune in faked Tibetan coins.

In Travancore a bank-note factory was found in a rarely-used temple, whilst the complete factory had been working so satisfactorily that five thousand ten-rupee notes all bundled ready for circulation were found side by side with large numbers of others almost ready.

A still more remarkable method of a man who worked alone was that in which he toured the larger villages boasting that he could make genuine notes for the peasants whilst they waited. He applied silver nitrate solution to a piece of black paper, pressed a genuine ten-rupee note on it, and obtained a very faint photograph by exposing it to the sun. Then after washing with cyanide of potassium, he took as his reward half the value of the note, saying that the new one would become clearer and usable as the days rolled by. His income was about £10 a week.

Coin-counterfeiting on a smaller scale is carried on by wandering tribes of Marwari Maghris and Bhats, and one small group of three men, four women, and two children were found distributing false two-anna pieces made in the jungle out of a clay-mould and odd scraps of metal melted down. In Bijapur a Brahmin school-teacher and a local silversmith made money for a time from scrap silver and tin, after experimenting for several weeks. Their coins, however, were offered but not taken in the local bazaar—and the game was soon up. On the other hand, *sadhus* make quite a good living acting as distributors for regular counterfeiters, for who would doubt the credentials or the honesty of one of these

travelling holy men? Other useful distributors are itinerant sweetmeat sellers and clothing hawkers, whilst gangs professing to be beggars are sometimes found changing four-anna pieces which they have moulded themselves out of tin, lead, and copper.

Crime Peculiar

Temples are not sacrosanct so far as burglars are concerned; indeed, they form a most tempting prey for the gangster. It is not so very long ago that the famous Bhawani Temple at Pratapgarh near Poona was rifled of its jewels worth £10,000, of which only about £3,000 were recovered hidden in the adjoining jungle. Likewise at a festival near Tanjore jewels worth £3,500 were taken out of the safe in the temple. Seldom are the priests of the temple alert or armed, and even if the jewels are not available, there is always a good haul to be made from the offerings.

Bands of conjurers are not unknown to spend their days earning small sums by their magic—and their nights earning larger sums by their burglaries. And when brought into court they will prove their honesty by performing strange tricks in the dock, such as the man who amazed the magistrate by piercing his stomach with a knife, running half a dozen skewers through his arm, and decorating his chest with 120 safety-pins.

Other well-known thieves are those who specialize in certain objects, ignoring any other things lying handy, no matter how valuable. Bombay knows a man who stole clocks, Lucknow has a man who purloins lamp shades, whilst Lahore has two thieves who collect pipes and beds respectively.

A very paying and growing trade is the theft of knowledge in the form of advanced information of university examination

papers. In the north of India the leakage, due to professional thieves, grew so great that university examinations have had to be re-held, and in some cases it has not even yet been revealed how the questions were mysteriously ascertained. On one occasion a single sheet was extracted from a sealed railway parcel, whilst in another case certain students were able to buy copies of a test paper within a few hours of the examiner completing his drawing up of the questions. In yet another case the secret was revealed when one of the professors admitted that he was one of the gang's accomplices.

An ochre-robed *sadhu*, with face muffled to the very eyes, was loitering around one of India's large cities, pretending to be dumb. He visited a wealthy merchant and in writing demanded 1,000 tons of rice, butter, grass and fuel "to feed the poor peasants," threatening the total destruction of the city by fire if his order was not complied with. His collections were quite satisfactory—until the police heard of the stunt. And then he got twelve months' hard labour.

Lotteries are, of course, easy money in India, despite the fact that they are illegal. But the large number of small Indian States which have no law against sweepstakes provide a splendid head-quarters for any gang of professional lottery organizers, who get as much as £5,000 each time from these activities.

India also knows its professional bogus informers, who at times manage to make a fair but precarious living by confidentially confiding to over-zealous young police officials that as notorious jail-birds they are the confidants of the denizens of the underworld and can give "splendid information" of past and future crimes.

A small gang who certainly deserve some reward for their ingenuity worked the motor-bus service on roads where there

had been frequent accidents. The plan was simple: Proclaiming that he had special powers to stop motors in motion and thus prevent what would otherwise be sure accidents, a member of this gang would visit motor-bus stands and ingratiate himself with an owner of several buses. He would then be employed as "mascot" at a good fee—which would be considerably increased at the end of each trip by collections from passengers "in gratitude for saving their lives." If the hundred-to-one chance came off and an accident did occur, then the mascot would slip away to fresh bus routes.

One small but enterprising group of tricksters started a bogus "Globe University," inviting applications for various degrees on a graded scale of fees, including B.Litt. for £20 and D.Ph. for £40. Degrees without examinations quickly proved popular, and this gang made a modest fortune before the police got on to their track.

Money-lenders also come within the purview of the police, and one superintendent recently appealed to the general public to furnish him with "instances of high-handedness." And well he might, for one of the most difficult problems still to be tackled in India is that of the money-lender who, taking advantage of an illiterate cultivator or servant who badly wants money for seed or for weddings, makes him sign the most remarkable legal documents stating perhaps that he has borrowed three or four times as much as was actually loaned, at rates of interest amounting to 250 per cent. annually. A very striking example which recently came to light is how a loan of Rs 15 (22s. 6d.) rose through compound interest of Rs 9.6 (14s.) *per month* to Rs 72,767 (£5,457 10s.) before the money-lender took the debtor to court. In this case, the sheer immensity of the sum made the man fight the demand, so

the creditor revised the claim to Rs 300 (£22 10s.) "after making necessary relinquishments." But here again he was too grasping, for the Tangail Munsiff's Court awarded him his original Rs 15 at 2 per cent. per month simple interest, totalling about £4 7s. 6d.

In order to obtain a remission of his life sentence, Ghulam Mahomed murdered a fellow convict in the Lahore Central Jail and then offered his services to help the authorities find a clue. All went well until some one suggested searching Ghulam's cell, where a blood-stained razor and a piece of the murdered man's nose was found. It then transpired that the murderer had told the deceased that by mesmerism he could arrange for his escape from jail, whereupon the deceased agreed to lie down and have his hands tied, promising also not to cry out or remonstrate in any way as to the methods employed by the mesmerist. Ghulam's life sentence was cut short, but not in the way he planned.

How the Police Work

Without giving away any secrets as to methods, a few words should be written about the Indian Police and their ways. Since the finger-print system was originally pioneered and established in India, it is only natural that some remarkable instances of its use in everyday life should come to notice every year. It is interesting, but comparatively easy, to get the village barber to identify a victim by the corns on his left foot, as was the case recently concluded in Meerut after a two-year man-hunt by the police, but it was not so easy to trace two well-known Sholapur dacoits by the skin of two decomposed joints from fingers severed in a fight several weeks before. Again, a minute search of the walls of a well down which an unidentified body had been thrown produced

a small fragment of skin which was later proved to belong to a member of a gang in which there had been a quarrel, ultimately providing sufficient evidence for the police to trace and convict the murderer.

Hampered though they are by a clumsy legal system imported from the West and utterly unsuited to Oriental conditions and people, the police in India work wonders. They may be faced with shifts and expedients and tricks which would amaze the ordinary person, but their great knowledge of India's people and customs often enables both European and Indian policemen to carry out investigations which would baffle Scotland Yard. Hosts of informers, spies, and watchers, many of them belonging to elusive castes, are kept in the background—otherwise they would be dead men. As "shadows" certain Indian castes excel, and many a citizen is followed night and day for months without having the slightest suspicion that he is being watched. Spies and informers are equally as clever, but the palm for artistry probably goes to the trackers. Of comparatively little use in towns, where trams and cars and railway trains conspire against them, these members of gypsy clans will follow the trail day after day with a skill that would force a Sioux Indian to exclaim aloud in wonder. The police willingly admit that the tribal trackers employed in India are the world's best detectives when it comes to trailing "unseen" footprints, as many a criminal knows to his cost. They are of special use in dealing with cattle-thieving, which is still one of India's greatest professions, inasmuch as it is so easy and so profitable, despite the many special police sections which have been formed to counter it. Yet, as long as the agriculturist prefers to pay ransom to the thief rather than seek the aid of the police, little can be done to stop it, whilst

it surely is not to be surprised at that an auxiliary profession to that of the cattle thief is the middleman who acts as negotiator between the thief and his victim to decide upon the amount of the ransom, or *bbunga*, as it is called. Yet to the well-established *bbunga* markets these trackers go, frequently tracking both man and beast with incredible cleverness.

Thieves' footsteps are also trailed at times to the Thieves' Bazaar which is to be found in every town, where many things are sold which are not to be purchased anywhere else. Here again the "third person" is the essential factor, and although the Thieves' Bazaar in Indian towns varies little in methods and principles from that in any western town, it certainly excels it in sheer impudence and brazen audacity. If ever the Indian underworld could be said to be concentrated, it is in these bazaars, for not only are they the focus of all possible rascality, but they have agents ranging from the proverbial China to Peru. Many of them are actually run by elaborate syndicates, and any servant of an unsuspecting resident may be a devoted and successful member of the organization, whilst that pleasant-faced business magnate with whom we do daily business might well be a director of one of these Amalgamated Companies of Roguery, Unlimited. To this criminal rival of any of the world's best Universal Providers travels the district's stolen property, and although the police may know where to look for the lost goods, it is not very often that they can place their hands on the actual culprit who took them. At times, of course, some over-bold syndicate goes too far; at other times, the eyes and ears of the police spies pick up useful information. But open roguery such as that practised in India's Thieves' Bazaars is more difficult to control and to detect than the elaborate schemings

THE UNDERWORLD AND ITS INHABITANTS
of the other professional criminals who keep India's police
so busy.

This tale of the battle of wits between the inhabitants of a nation-wide underworld and an over-worked police force could be extended without limit. In this chapter only the "surface" facts have been presented, those which daily appear in the Press. Were the confidential records of the police to be presented, were the behind-the-scenes workings of that great drama to be revealed, the story would perhaps be more spectacular but it would not be more interesting. Temptation to give the reader a glimpse of these "inside" activities has been very strong, but it has been overcome in order that the aim of the book might be retained, namely, to present the India of 1932 as told by its contemporary historians, the journalists.

Expressed in terms of police personnel, the latest figures show that whereas the cost per policeman in England is about £330 10s. annually, that of the policeman in India (including the British staff) ranges from £48 in Bengal to £35 in the United Provinces, Bombay being £38 and the Punjab £37. Imagine a huge country like India being policed by a staff which, including pay, uniform, arms, housing, travelling, and overhead expenses, works out at an average of 16s. 4d. weekly per man.

Here is a thought to conclude with: The cost of police protection and detection in India is only elevenpence a year per head of population. Amazingly small? Yes, admittedly so; but typical of queer India.

INDEX

- Abala *Asbram*, of Calcutta, scandal of, 82-3, 88-92
- Advertisements, as flat-traps, 39-40, 76-7
- Alexander the Great, buried treasure of, 69
- Ambala, traffic in women at, 100
- Animal sacrifice, control of, in Travancore and Cochin, 159
- Animals, cruelty to, 153, 156-64
- "Arya Anath Ashrams," of Lahore, 94
- Asbram*, as marriage-mart, 82-3, 88-93
- Bahawalpur, story of concealed treasure in, 69
- Bally Bridge, Calcutta, superstition and, 32
- Banita *ashram*, exposure of, 93
- Bankura, Suttee Temple at, 148-50
- Banwari, notorious dacoit, 249-50
- Baroda, marriage laws reform in, 122-3
- Bashyam, Mr. K. T., on caste, 202
- Beggars, religious gifts to, 222-3
- Beggars' Syndicate, 154-6
- Bengal, murders in, 132; dacoity in, 249
- Bhats, as coiners, 260
- Bhavnagar, child marriages in, 117-118
- Bhawani Temple (Pratapgarh), burglary at, 261
- Bihar and Orissa, witchcraft murders in, 7; murders in, 132; animal cruelty in, 158; dacoity in, 250
- Black Magic, 2, 6, 16-20, 27
- Bombay, kidnapping in, 32; murders in, 132; proposed legislation on religious endowments, 229; dacoit demonstration at, 248
- Bose, Sir Jagadish, 4
- Brides, sale of, 82 *et seq.*
- Calcutta, *ashram* as marriage-market in, 82-3, 88-92; working of Sarda Act in, 112; drug smuggling in, 253-4; revolver traffic in, 256; coining in, 260
- Calcutta University, forged degrees of, 100
- Caste, influence on court evidence of, 167; as a curse, 198 *et seq.*; in Law Courts, 207, 208-9; and murder, 209-10; persecution by, 210-15; influence on future politics of, 219-20; and organized crime, 244
- Cattle-thieves, 265-6
- Charas (*bhang*), traffic in, 255
- "Charitable Bank of India," 75-6
- Chettiar, Mr. M. A. Muthia, on temple funds, 231

INDEX

- Child marriages, 82 *et seq.*
 Child Marriage Restraint Act. *See*
 Sarda Act
 Children, immunity from criminal
 liability of, 171; as witnesses,
 171-2
 Cholera, superstition and, 40, 41,
 42, 45
 Cholera goddess, 3, 40
 Cocaine, smuggling of, 253-4
 Cochin, polygamy and, 124; ani-
 mal sacrifice forbidden in, 159
 Coiners, in Calcutta, 260
 Confidence tricks, 39, 48 *et seq.*, 71-
 75, 77
 Conjurers, as burglars, 261
 Cow-who-spoke, as deity, 4, 5, 48
 Crime, organized, 243 *et seq.*
 Cripple factories, 154-6
 Cucumber, as substitute for animal
 sacrifice, 159

 Dacoits, and "wheat oracle," 4
 Dacoity, prevalence of, 245 *et seq.*
 Delhi, dacoity round, 250; drug
 traffic at, 254
 Depressed classes, caste and, 198 *et*
 seq.; and temple gifts, 237
 Devil dances, 195
 Dhatura, use of, by drug bandits,
 257
 Dowry, marriage and, 86-7; at-
 tempt to limit, 126
 Drug traffic, 252 *et seq.*

 Education, of depressed classes,
 difficulties of, 215
 Endowments, religious, legislation
 on, 229-30
 Evidence, unreliability of, in crimi-
 nal courts, 167

 Evil spirit, possession by, 38; and
 disease, 40, 42; as excuse for
 murder, 176
 Examination papers, theft and sale
 of advance copies of, 261-2

 Finger-print system, Indian police
 as pioneers of, 167, 264
 Forged bank-notes, factory for, at
 Travancore, 260
 Fortune-tellers, 78 *et seq.*
 Fyzabad gang of dacoits, 248

 Gandhi Ashram Orphanage, bogus
 appeal for, 70
 Gandhi, Mr., 11, 111, 217; misuse
 of name of, 70-1; and caste,
 204, 220
 Ganges, sale by pilgrims of water
 from, 241-2
 Ganja, traffic in, 255
 Ghosts, 35-6
 "Globe University," sale of bogus
 degrees by, 263
 Gudda, dacoit demonstration at,
 248
 Gujerat, "untouchables" pitiable
 condition at, 217
 Gupta, Mr. J. M. Sen, on caste,
 202
 Guruvayoor, temple scenes at,
 205-6

 Highway, caste restrictions on,
 208-9
 Hindu Widows' Remarriage Bill,
 129
 Human sacrifices, 20 *et seq.*, 131, 132
 Hyderabad, witchcraft and black
 magic in, 27; village swindle in,
 77-8

INDEX

- Idols, made of gold, 236
- Indian National Congress, failure of in caste problems, 203-4
- Infant Marriage Prevention Act, of Baroda, 123
- Jackson, Mr. Justice G. H. B., Appeal for Madras S.P.C.A. by, 159-60, 162
- Jagannath, temple of, 3, 23; sale of sweetmeat from, 242
- Jawaharlal Nehru, Pundit, as victim of caste restriction, 202
- Kalaram Temple, scenes at, 205
- Kali, the Destroyer, 3, 37, 40, 130, 132, 140
- Kalu Pharari, dacoit, arrest of, 248
- Kesariaji Temple (Udaipur), wealth of, 223-4
- Kbaddar* for temple deities, 238
- Kidnapping, in Bombay, 32; in Orissa, 132
- Lahore, bogus Widows' Homes in, 93-4
- Land frauds, 75
- Leper, superstitious rites with corpse of, 37
- Local Government, apathy to, 226
- Lotteries, 262
- Madras, working of Sarda Act in, 110, 115, 117; Self-Respect League in, 127-8, 218; murder in, 132, 133; S.P.C.A. in, 159-160, 162; difficulties of education of depressed class children in, 215; Religious Endowment Board of, 229, 230
- Madras Children's Act, 184
- Madura Murder Mystery, 188
- Magicians, spurious, 56-63
- Malabar District Board, debars depressed classes from use of roads, 208
- Malanji, dacoit terrorist, 248-9
- Mangalore, devil dance in, 195
- Mannargadi, sumptuous gift to temple at, 236
- Marriage, auction methods of, 82 *et seq.*; faked, 94-100; child-, 109 *et seq.*
- Marriage customs, reform of, 126-7
- Marwari Maghris, as coiners, 260
- Medical hall, a fraudulent, 76
- Metals, transmutation of, 73-4
- Mohan Malaviya, Pundit, on caste, 202-3
- Money-lenders, tricks of, 263-4
- Mosquitoes, superstition and, 44-5
- Murder, rifeness of, 130 *et seq.*, 165 *et seq.*; by caste, 209-10
- Mysore, sorcery at, 33-5; child-marriage legislation of, 123
- Namdev Gate (Vithoba Temple), law case concerning, 233-4
- "Namdev's Stone," law case concerning, 234
- Nayakar, Mr. M. A. Manikkavelu, on temple funds, 230
- Negapatam, Vaniars claim to enter temple at, 206
- Non-Brahmins, and temple entry, 206
- North-West Frontier Province, murder in, 169
- Old Men's Marriage Prevention Bill, of Baroda, 123
- Opium, sale of, 252-3

INDEX

- Pandharpur, cholera precautions with pilgrims at, 41
- Pathans, and kidnapping scares, 32
- Patro, Sir A. P., on caste, 198-9
- Perjury, rife-ness of, 168-9, 170
- Pilgrim rest-houses, charge on temple income, 235
- Pilgrim Tax, 235
- Pilgrimages, economic loss of, 240
- Pilgrims and cholera precautions, 41; and Ganges water, 241
- Pillay, Mr. R. Krishna, on superstition of Hinduism, 200-1
- Pinjrapoles*, refuges for sick animals, as centres of cruelty, 163-4
- Poisoning, as a profession, 256 *et seq.*
- Police, Indian, proficiency of, 166-167, 264; cost of, 267
- Politics, influence of superstition on, 45-7, 52; influence of caste on future, 219-20
- Poltergeists, 44
- Polygamy, 124
- Poona Bridge, riots at building of, 31
- Pudukottah, temple economies in, 238-9
- Punjab, kidnapping of women in, 101; murders in, 132, 133
- Quack medicines, advertisement lure of, 39, 40
- Ranganathaswami Temple (Srirangam), sale of treasures of, 237
- Religion, business aspect of, 221 *et seq.*
- Religious Endowment Board, of Madras, 229-30
- Revolver dumping, 256
- Riots, as outcome of superstition, 31
- Rohtak, dacoity in, 250
- Rupee note frauds, 78
- Sangli, reputed buried treasure in, 69
- Sarda Act, the, failure of, 109 *et seq.*
- Self-Respect League, 127-8, 218
- Shetty, Mr. A. B., on temple funds, 231
- Shiva, rites of, 130
- Silver smuggling, 255
- Simla, traffic in women at, 100
- Simpson, Sir James, on caste, 199
- Sitala, as Goddess of Smallpox, 40-41
- Slaughter-houses, horrors of, 159, 161-2
- Smallpox, superstition and, 40, 41
- Smuggling, 252-6
- Snake-bite, spurious cures for, 65-66
- Snakes, superstition and, 45
- Sorcerers, 26, 27; at Mysore, 33-5
- S.P.C.A., work in India of, 157 *et seq.*
- Sri Padmanabhaswami Temple (Trivandrum), wealth of, 224
- Suicide, 28; prevalence of, 151-3
- Sukkur Barrage, superstition and, 32
- Superstition, universality of, 1 *et seq.*; and politics, 45-7, 52
- Suttee*, modern instances of, 142-51
- Swami Sahajananda, on caste, 218-219
- Tagore, Rabindranath, 1, 45
- Taraknath, Goddess, 39
- Tari, the Earth-goddess, human sacrifices to, 132

INDEX

- Temple entry, "untouchables" claim to, 205 *et seq.*
 Temples, wealth of, 223-6; burglaries at, 261
 Ten-rupee marriage, 125
 Thieves, specialized, 261
 Thieves' Bazaar, 266
 Thugs, 165, 245, 250
 Tirupatti Temple, administration of funds of, 230, 231, 234
 Transportation, as alternative to capital sentence, 170, 171
 Travancore, slaughter-house legislation in, 159; bank-note factory at, 260
 Travancore, Maharajah of, 224
 Treasure, concealed, 67-9; of temples, 223-6
 Trustees, Temple, position of, 226-229
 Tukuram Temple, caste persecution by Brahmins of, 212
 United Provinces, and religious endowments, 229
 "Untouchables," caste and, 198 *et seq.*
 Vaniars, claim of, to enter temple at Negapatam, 206
 Village, caste in the, 213-15
 Vithoba Temple (Pandharpur), law case concerning, 233-4
 Vizagapatam, Sarda Act Vigilance Committee in, 112, 116
 "Wheat oracle" of dacoits, 4
 Widows, and re-marriage, 128
 Widows' Homes, bogus, 93-4
 Witchcraft, 4 *et seq.*