

A PEEP AT EUROPE

# A PEEP AT EUROPE

Mrs. C. KUTTAN NAIR.

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## PREFACE

When I joined the tour party organised by Mrs. S. K. Datta in 1935 under the auspices of the International Students' Service, I was realising one of my long-cherished dreams. Apart from satisfying to a certain extent the 'wander lust' inherent in man, the more beneficent results of such tours are only too well known to require enumeration here. The low cost that such organised tours involve, in contrast to the huge sums spent on those undertaken on individual initiative, may however be referred to in this connection as of special value to many in India.

On board the "S. S. Conte Rosso" westward bound, I received a letter from Mr. Devadas Gandhi asking me to be writing to *The Hindustan Times* about our interesting experiences in Europe. In response to this invitation a few articles of mine appeared in that North Indian daily and they were translated by many of the papers in my own province. Some of my friends in the west as well as in my own country strongly insisted on my getting these impressions of Europe

printed in book form on my return to India and that has been greatly responsible for this publication. It is some months since the edition in Malayalam was published, while the publication of this had to be delayed a little, due to certain unexpected difficulties. It is obvious to the reader that the Italo-Abyssinian war, the tragic death of the Queen of Belgium, the change in the Presidentship of Czechoslovakia are events subsequent to the completion of my tour.

In this rather sketchy outline of our tour, I do not pretend to have dealt, in any detail, with conditions political, economic, social and otherwise that obtain in the Europe of today. That is beyond the scope of this small volume and that has not been my object either, especially when illuminating works by able writers of the West and the East, on the same or allied topics, are by no means rare. Besides, our ignorance of the Continental languages and the shortness of our stay in the countries we visited, were handicaps in coming into close contact with the masses who form the back-bone of the population there as elsewhere. This is just an attempt of mine to

put before the reader our experiences in the West, as honestly and dispassionately as possible.

With all its deficiencies, if my "Peep at Europe" proves in any way interesting to the readers I shall consider this small volume as a fruitful effort to serve the public in my own humble way, as also a not unworthy expression of my deep gratitude to Mrs. Datta, whose untiring zeal made the tour the splendid success it was.

*The Authoress.*

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TO  
**KAMALA NEHRU**

**Who has been constantly in my thoughts ever  
since I came into personal contact with her  
on my way to Europe and whose untimely  
death has been deeply mourned  
far and near.**

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## ERRATA

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4	8	" Miss J. T "	"Miss Jethi "
10	6	" groups "	" group "
17	1	" sarees "	" saree "
33	17	" or "	" nor "
84	11	" sceneries "	" scenery "
134	6	" struggling "	" struggling soul "
171	last line	" Tindisi "	" Brindisi "



Mrs. DATTA, LEADER OF THE TOUR PARTY

# A PEEP AT EUROPE

ON BOARD THE S. S. "CONTE ROSSO"

It was my first voyage. I stood on the deck of *S. S. Conte Rosso* and watched the shores of India recede into the far distance. The gong announced the time for lunch and with some difficulty B— and I managed to get through the cosmopolitan crowd into the dining hall. What we had heard of the comforts and conveniences on board Italian ships raised in me great hopes as far as food, the prime necessary of life, was concerned. A splendid array of the choicest vegetable dishes with the delicious luxury of pickles and the far-famed fruits of the sunny South of Europe, rose before my mental vision. But, alas! dreams seldom come true and, not a little disappointed, I had to get up from my table and proceed with my friend back to our cabin.

In no time we lost our way in the maze of corridors, and after meeting in the course of our wanderings with other members of our group in a similar plight, we succeeded at last in reaching our destination.

Our cabin, far from being a haven of rest, proved to be a tiny cell, terribly hot. It was intended to accommodate four. I was to be in the

lower berth with not even the slightest chance of any breeze reaching me either through the port-hole or from the fans fixed too high. Luckily for me, however, my friend who was to sleep in the berth above mine, came to my rescue. By no means thin, it was rather a feat for her to climb up and down. The instinct of self-preservation working simultaneously in both of us, we exchanged places to our mutual satisfaction.

Up in the top berth it was comfortable enough with sufficient breeze and a distinct view of the Arabian Sea as our ship moved steadily on.

Towards evening some in our group were already beginning to feel sea-sick. Our doctor—a very amiable young lady—who was to take care of us was almost the first to fall ill. Though we found the air on the deck really bracing, it was with some reluctance, not unmingled with a certain amount of trepidation arising out of the memory of recent experience, that we once again entered the dining hall in the evening for dinner. The same unhappy fate, however, awaited the four "grass eaters" amongst us, I, of course, being one. The dishes served were few and the little that was given far from relishing, while the looks of sympathy cast on us by the waiters did little to appease our hunger. The gloomy prospect of being starved on board the ship was by no means

welcome and some of us were already beginning to feel depressed and homesick. As I retired to my cabin, I was too listless to listen to the story of a "fiend" that stalked the corridors in the form of a steward peeping into the cabins making faces at and frightening, the girls. With the memory of the fine air on the deck, the exceedingly nice companions in my cabin and the kindness and consideration of our leader, Mrs. Datta, to keep up my drooping spirits, I went to sleep.

The morrow came bringing better luck in its train. I woke up early, in a happier mood, and began to view things in a better light. The food we got was a great improvement on the previous day's and that contributed not a little to put me in a happy frame of mind. I began to take a keen interest in things around me. What struck us all was the courteous behaviour of the Italian stewards who were ever ready to obey our behest with so much good will. Their politeness was one of the things that soon made us feel at home on the steamer.

My cabin mates are very good people with an abundant fund of good humour which makes life with them easy and pleasant. Miss B— from Travancore is a jolly nice person who believes firmly in the maxim 'Laugh and grow fat'. Often she gets well-meant suggestions from her friends,

—and occasionally from our steward !—as to the limits that should be imposed on the quantity of food she consumes. But the sea breeze seems to have whetted her appetite so well that she invariably chooses to ignore our advice. Mrs. S. from Lahore is a delightful conversationalist and perhaps, the busiest in our group. Then there is Miss J. T.— from Sindh, a staunch nationalist and Congressite. She is a brave young woman and we like to call her ‘Sipahi’—warrior. It needed little time for us to get to know and love one another.

But then, the incessant complaints from our neighbours about the strange steward who went about frightening them, did disturb us a bit. These girls were youngsters who had not, till then, stirred far beyond their homes and they seemed to be really upset in spite of our assurances that they were as safe as if they were at home. I was in the cabin lying on my berth reading Lalaji’s “Unhappy India” when something like a scream and the sound of loud voices from the adjacent room, roused me up. I almost threw down my book and jumping down from my bed rushed out. Well, there stood the much-talked-of individual surrounded by my friends, trying to scare him with threats and warnings of a fearful kind. He seemed to have been caught red-handed in

his usual game of making grimaces at members of the "weaker" sex on the boat. I thought it best to join my friends, while the culprit stood listening to us with a calmness that amounted to stoic indifference. When we had finished our out-pourings he turned to the frightened girls, and in his own English, which demanded the summoning up of all our powers of attention to our aid, delivered a short sermon on the necessity of young women developing the indispensable virtue of courage and a better understanding of human nature. Then without any apology or any expression of injured feelings, he solemnly marched out of the room, leaving us thoroughly baffled.

Immediately afterwards, B— and I were just preparing ourselves to go to the deck when we saw the same individual coolly walk into our room only to enquire where we meant to land in Italy. Then without further invitation from us, he immediately started expatiating on the beauties of his motherland, indifferent whether we listened to him or not. A sudden idea struck me.

"Have you seen Mussolini?", I asked turning round.

The effect was magical. The round face with a decided squint in the eye lost its philosophic calmness. It became all animation.

"Yes miss, love him, admire him."

"Are you a Fascist?"

"Yes, miss, all Fascists us."

"Do you like Russia?"

"No, miss. Communist there."

"And Hitler?"

A grunt, very expressive in itself, was the response.

"Why do you admire Mussolini?" I asked him further.

"Why you admire Gandhi?" came the immediate retort. It was now my turn to get enthusiastic.

"Have you seen Gandhi?"

"Yes, miss. Gandhi good man, old man—no teeth front."

I enlightened him as to how the Mahatma lost his teeth. It was not, after all, the work of old age, as the young Italian had thought.

"Good man, miss, good man," he went on repeating while he listened with rapt attention, "Gandhi's Secretary very fond me. Travelled this boat, miss. Always call 'Come Mario.' I go. Secretary, handsome man, miss."

Mario next turned to a vehement denunciation of the religious differences in India. What he lacked in the ability to express himself in English, he more than made up for by violent gestures and



ejaculations, and I had occasionally to step back for the love of my features.

"Some Hindu, some Christians, some Mohamadans—No good India, miss—All quarrelling, quarrelling. I in Bombay, in 1923—Many killed—Italy all Catholics—no trouble."

"Only the Fascists there persecute the Socialists", I gently put in.

Mussolini's young follower winked and scratched his head. "Only little, little, miss," he put in with abated vigour.

"Well, Mario, we have to go now. You must tell us later on, more about your Duce. And we shall talk to you about our Gandhi."

Mario would not go without making a fervent request.

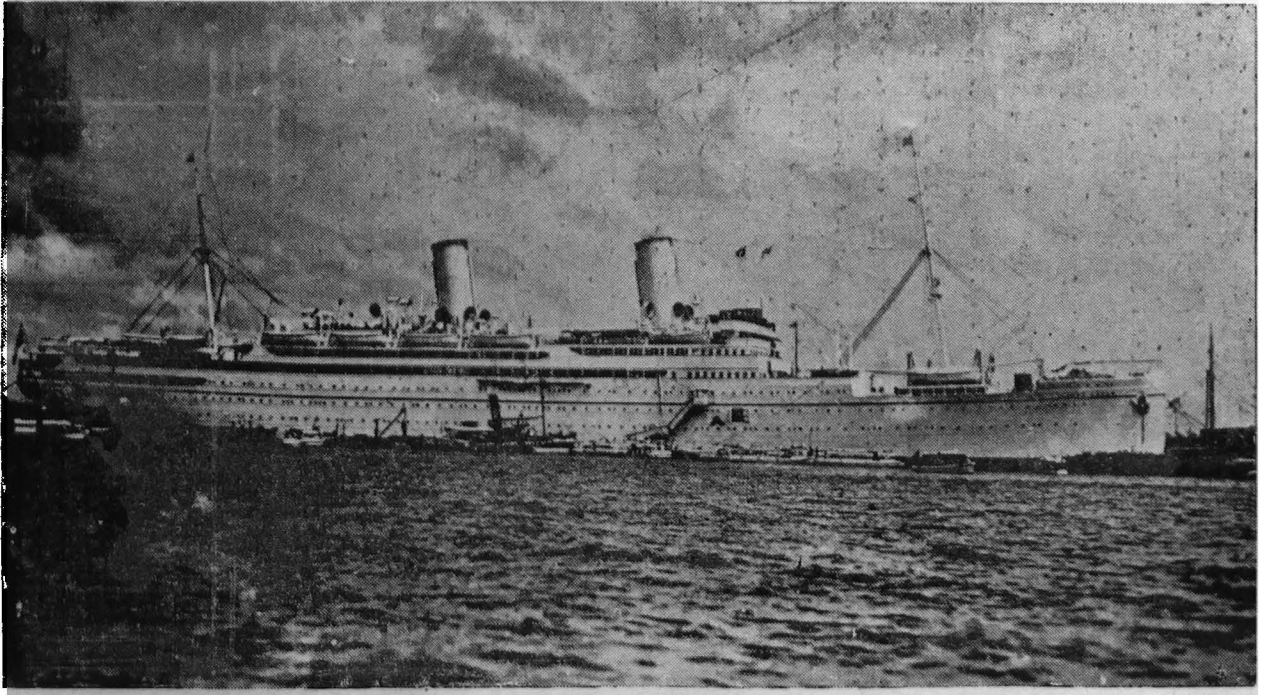
"Please tell that girls, miss, not frighten—I no bad. I same, you same—no fear," and of course we felt rather small in the presence of the chivalrous young Fascist with his exalted notions of the 'sameness' of life.

Mario is now quite a popular figure amongst us. He knows we trust him and even the younger girls treat him as a human being. His hands are full, yet in the midst of heavy work he finds time to assume the role of teacher towards us. There is nothing under the sun which he cannot and will not discuss and our newly acquired proficiency

in Italian, meagre as it is, is entirely due to his untiring efforts. Only occasionally do we come across him sipping a rather suspicious-looking liquid, but then, he is too gentlemanly not to turn round and politely add, "Only rum, miss, very good for malaria."

Besides men and women of other nationalities, we have very many Indians on board our ship. The far better treatment accorded to them on Italian boats than on others, accounts for their greater patronage of them. There are among the European passengers, some who are really interested in India and who would very much like to mingle with the Indians. On the whole there is such a general atmosphere of goodwill as to make one feel quite at home in a short time.

Though we have various means of whiling away time on the ship, we feel most happy when in the night a few of us climb to the upper deck. There with the starry heavens above and the limitless ocean all round, we seem to be in a different world far off from the bustle and excitement below. And at times, when B's sweet, melodious voice singing some beautiful Indian song swells forth, our thoughts irresistibly turn towards our motherland which we are every moment leaving farther and farther behind. Filled with a sweet melancholy and strange



S. S. CONTE ROSSO IN WHICH WE TRAVELLED

sense of peace, we sit there for hours, often in silence, almost oblivious of our surroundings or the passage of time.

As we neared the Red Sea it grew more and more warm. And while we sat on the deck we loved to watch crowds of flying fish flitting in quick procession across the calm watery surface which now lay stretched out smooth as a vast sheet of glass. We passed by Aden without touching at it and as we entered the Red Sea, the lonely rocky coasts of Africa on one side and Arabia on the other, were visible for a time. We were quite excited at the sight of a few boats, homeward bound, that passed us close by, and then we realised for the first time something of the speed at which we were going.

There is one soul on our boat, who has often been in the thoughts of a few of us and that is Mrs. Kamala Nehru on her way to Switzerland, with Dr. Atal, and her daughter Indira. When I went to see her, I expected to see some visible sign of the tremendous struggle that must be going on within that heroic heart. But she looked so bright and cheerful; and all the time she talked, her sweet calm face was wreathed in smiles. She is still having high temperature and cannot move about freely. Indira is always by her side, tenderly and anxiously attending to her needs.

There is indeed something infinitely sweet and touching in the way in which both the mother and daughter cling to each other.....

On Thursday morning we reached the Suez. Many of the passengers including some in our groups, wishing to see the pyramids, left for Cairo, hoping to rejoin us in the night at Port Said. As we proceeded, the canal began to shrink till it became a narrow strip of water just wide enough to hold our ship. The banks, with small but prosperous-looking buildings sheltering in the luxuriant growth of date palms, and with an occasional car or train speeding along, were a novel but welcome sight after a week in the vast deep. It was nearly eight in the night when we reached Port Said. Our ship cast anchor and we immediately went ashore. We walked about the streets, taking care to carry very little money with us, for we had been warned of pick-pockets and also of hawkers. There seemed to be no end of the latter whom we felt to be a real nuisance. It was no easy joke to shake them off and I felt half inclined to admire their patience and persistence. Without anything untoward happening, we returned to the ship to be re-joined immediately after, by our friends who had been to Cairo. I was very eager to know how they were impressed with the Pyramids—those tremendous monuments of

human efforts, with their mighty size, their giddy height, and above all, their awe-inspiring vaults, with many a secret hidden within their bosom. But few seemed to be really impressed with what they saw, and I was sorely disappointed.

Once again we are in the deep blue sea, now on the waters of the Mediterranean. It has begun to get cold and even a little chilly. This morning we passed by Crete, once the home of a mighty civilization. Now as I sit and write I see the beautiful, mountainous coast of Greece. We shall be touching at Brindisi to-morrow, and at Venice the day after. At Venice we get down to start on a tour through the Continent. One loathes to part from what one loves—it is but human. And now, our voyage drawing to an end, we feel rather sad to leave our ship. We have grown to like it so well.

Well, long live *Conte Rosso* with its merry crew!

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## VENICE

Venice at last—Venice the one-time Queen of the Adriatic.....

Entranced we gazed on the scene around us while serpent-like, our gondolas glided down the smooth watery way. Homely dwellings embellished by clinging creepers and lovely flowers, cafes and busy shops, factories and printing houses, and also stately mansions set amidst gorgeous gardens!..... It was almost a fairy land, and perfect stillness prevailed over the waters. It was a fine, cloudless morning. Men and women with smiling faces stood watching us on either side while, from over the bridges boys and girls greeted us. It seemed that Venice, with open arms, was welcoming us from an alien land.

In an hour we reached the hotel where we were to stay for the day. But impatient to see more of the place, we were in no mood to rest after lunch. Up from our balcony we could hear the lusty songs and shouts of Italian youths, as merrily they jostled along the narrow streets.

The moment we stepped out with our guide, a curious crowd collected. Men and women, boys and girls, attracted by our costumes of various hues, gathered round us and even followed us for

some distance. We found the same thing almost everywhere we went.

First we were taken to the Doge's palace close to St. Mark's Clock Tower mounted by a huge clock in which the hours are struck by the bronze figures of two Negroes, one on either side. The palace is an imposing building in marble and wood, built by San Sovino in Moorish style. Twice burnt down, it was re-built in the same old fashion. During the World War, to protect it from aerial attacks it was covered with sand bags—the tremendous nature of which feat, our guide never failed repeatedly to impress upon us. He was a staunch Fascist, past the age of 60, with much of the martial spirit and fire of youth still left in him. During his oration we were plying him with questions, but he sternly refused to be interrupted, as he seemed to know best what we ought to be told.

Up the 'Giant Stairway' we went till we came to the 'Golden Stairway' which was intended for private use at the time of the Doges. We passed on, from hall to hall of increasing splendour. It was all a wonderful display of colours, for on the walls and ceilings were the glorious paintings of famous Italian painters like Titian and Tintoretto. And we stood there, in the heart of Venice, dreaming of the glory that once was hers!



Meanwhile, the enthusiasm of our guide never seemed to wane for a moment. As he led us from chamber to chamber, he would just pause for a while and cast a quick but searching glance at us, to gauge the effect produced by the new vistas of glory opened out before us. Then with a faint smile of ill-concealed triumph he would, in slow measured tones, continue his glowing narration of the immortal line of celebrated artists of his native land. Especially on Tintoretto he was most eloquent, always pronouncing that hallowed name with an energy and pomposity that seemed surprising at his age.

As we passed on, we reached a decorated chamber with a gloomy atmosphere. It turned out to be the place of trial of those bygone days. In one of the walls a panel was pointed out as the door to 'The Bridge of Sighs' leading to the dungeons below. In another wall of the same room was a lion-mouth-like cavity which once served as a repository for anonymous letters against any of the citizens. On the strength of these anybody could be brought in for trial and punished.

Next we came to where the arms of medieval days were kept. There were also the instruments of torture, the sight of which is enough to make many confess even crimes undreamt-of. The

glory of the Doges' palace seemed to fade away more and more as we proceeded until it looked nothing more than an empty dream, when down the dark narrow steps we reached the 'Bridge of Sighs'. Over this were the doomed criminals and political offenders taken after trial, never more to return.

One of the dungeons, our guide pointed out as the one in which the communists once kept him prisoner for 32 days. "But no trouble now, ninety-nine per cent communists finished!" he added with a low chuckle. From this dungeon prisoners were taken out in olden days, to be hanged in public. But down below were the dungeons where prisoners for private execution were kept in those medieval times. These were horribly dark with little chance of communication among their unfortunate denizens. There was one den associated with the name of Byron, for it was there that he sat for hours before he wrote his lines on 'The Bridge of Sighs'. In one of the narrow corridors was the space for the beheading-machine which had severed many a head. At the corner are still the three circular holes through which the blood of the victims ran in to the canal below. It was all so sickening. It was as if one could still smell the stinking blood and hear the groans and sighs of utter despair. What

horrors, too terrible even for the worst criminal, might not those walls have witnessed! How many noble lives taken in the name of law and justice, while many a heart outside pined and withered with vain longings and unheard prayers for their beloved ones! As we emerged into the spacious courtyard, there was once again the Doges' palace with all its outward pomp. But to me it had lost much of its charm.

We next visited St. Mark's Cathedral. It was a marvellous piece of workmanship which meant years of patient labour and extraordinary artistic skill. The mosaics in painted glass with all their colours in their pristine glory, are eternal objects of admiration for lovers of art.

It was getting to be dusk and so, after visiting the glass factory, a place which with its articles of rare beauty and delicacy was really worth seeing, we returned to our hotel. Dinner over, we lost no time in getting out to make our purchases and to have a pleasant stroll.

Venice is a beautiful city built on 137 islands and has more than 2,000 canals and 3,000 streets. It is noted for its leather and glass industries, and the shops, with their articles artistically arranged and with dealers very polite like the rest of the Italians we came across, are most inviting. The people, as in other parts of Europe, are simply

fascinated by the Indian 'sarees' and they, by no means hide their appreciation of it. Very few of them know English, but still they want so much to express their goodwill to us that we are sure to meet with a kind smile or a polite greeting in Italian fashion from most of the passers-by as we go along the streets. In some shops we had to resort to gestures, our few words of French being of little help, and the humour of the situation caused no little merriment to both the parties.

Even with the limited knowledge of English which a few of the Italians possess, there is no end to the questions they put us especially when we enter the shops. But it is evident that they mean well, and they are so courteous that we easily fall into familiar conversation with them. All of them, when asked, professed to be Fascists with much love and admiration for Mussolini. In one of the shops which was under the partnership of two Italian youths who could talk English fairly well, one of them who claimed to be a staunch adherent to the Fascist creed, told me of the possibility of his going to Abyssinia to join the fight there.

"Are you people not tired of killing?" I asked him.

“Well, it is for my State” he said. “Besides, the Abyssinians are so selfish that they won’t allow us to stay there.”

“It is anyhow rather difficult for us to appreciate your point of view. We Indians, are more inclined to sympathise with the ‘selfish’ Abyssinians”, I replied.

He just laughed in good humour.

“Do you like to be killed?” I went on. He was quite young, and really handsome as most Italians are. It seemed a pity that so much youth and beauty should be made fodder for cannon.

“I have no parents or any one else to mourn for me” was the reply. “I must die one day. Then why not now? Further, it is my friend there that has to go immediately and not I.” It seemed his indifference was more assumed than real, when I saw his partner, with whom my friend had been bargaining over a pair of glass bangles, suddenly go to the door and pull down the curtain. Then, coming near he said almost in a whisper, “Madam, I really don’t want to go to Abyssinia. I wish to stay behind—but I have to go”. His face looked sad as he spoke, but he, like many others, was compelled to leave his home.

Early next morning we had to leave for Vienna. It was really an exceedingly fine day with everything around so peaceful and lovely.

We were so wildly gay that some of us began to sing, as our gondolas went softly along betwixt rows of storeyed buildings. The thoroughfare was crowded with people as it was the market day, and we saw soldiers marching down the barracks. We felt so happy and almost one with the people of Venice, that we raised our hands and saluted them in Fascist fashion. Immensely pleased, the crowd cheered and returned the salute.....

It was a pleasant journey in the train. It was all a vast stretch of refreshing green on either side and the country, at least to all outward appearance, seemed to be flourishing under Mussolini's regime. We passed through large tracts of vineyards, and meadows carpeted with pretty little white and yellow blossoms, while the poppies showed their red faces from among the tall green grass. Far away were the Alpine ranges which, as they rose one above the other, seemed to blend into the distant blue.....

After a few hours, it began to grow cold, for we were nearing the mountains. We passed through dark tunnels while the scenery around became more wild and grand. Tiny rivulets from the melted glaciers coursed their way down, some of them forming foaming cascades and waterfalls. Fir trees grew dark and thick while the slopes

were covered with merry multitudes of gay flowers of every size and hue. For miles and miles we rushed through almost endless tracts of wild and varying grandeur, while a superb peace seemed to reign amidst the silent snow-clad peaks.

Now and then, villages with pasture lands and small but busy towns we passed by. Men and women, so strong and sturdy, boys and girls in radiant health briskly cycling along, chubby little faces sweeter than the lovely flowers around—it was as if we were in the midst of eternal, exuberant youth. It was a real joy to meet them, away from the faded faces and painted beauties of the far-off cities.....

It was night when we reached Vienna. As our train neared the station it was not the city as such, nor the prospect of a short but pleasant time there, that was uppermost in my mind. For, from among its many inhabitants one solitary figure loomed large before my mental eye. It was that of one of India's bravest sons gone there in quest of health, with his heart in his far-off native land.

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## VIENNA

Vienna is one of the biggest and cleanest cities one could come across in Europe. There are no slums such as exist in cities like London, and even the quarters of the poor are so clean and tidy. The beautiful shops and gay cafes where the people love to sit enjoying the famous Vienna coffee and pastries and the cheerful temperament of the people who love open air and sports, give it a happy look in spite of the extreme poverty that lurks beneath the surface after the Great War.

There is much in this city that speaks to the credit of the Social Democrats who controlled the Government till the Christian Socialist Party came to power. There are to-day more than one hundred Kindergarten Schools owned by the Vienna Municipality and their present flourishing condition is undoubtedly due to the Socialists who have been almost suppressed under the present regime. We visited one such model institution for the children of workers. It is remarkable from the point of view of architecture and hygiene. It is situated at the outskirts of the city, amidst large garden courtyards, where the children could get the fine breeze from the Vienna



forests. The children are kept there from 7 a. m. to 6 p. m. while their parents are away for work. Bad social and housing conditions not conducive to its healthy growth, entitle a child to be admitted into such public Kindergarten Schools on very low fees or in most cases, free. The children there enjoy a happiness which even the little ones of the rich can never aspire to, in their own homes. Under the loving care of well-trained teachers and under almost ideal conditions, hundreds of these little ones, the rising hope of the future, grow up, developing in themselves a love for play and work, habits of cleanliness, self-confidence, and a spirit of co-operation.

The system followed in these schools is co-educational, though we were told that the Austrians do not approve of it in the higher classes, as is usually the case in most of the Catholic countries. In rural areas where there is a lack of accommodation, the boys and the girls sit together in the same class-room, but in towns they have separate classes, though they may study in the same school. We visited one such elementary school built recently. There is of course compulsory elementary education extending over a period of six years. This school is housed in a very fine building, each class room being fitted with a radio-receiver which enables the Head of the school

to speak to all the classes at the same time from the Office room. As in most of the schools in the West, there was here also a fine gymnasium for the boys as well as for the girls, and we saw the latter enjoying themselves thoroughly there. The girls learn cooking in the most practical way. They have to prepare food for a certain number of guests—the number of dishes, the quantity of the ingredients etc. being decided by themselves. The upper terrace commands a fine view of the city and there, the students most often have their lessons in Geography.

The tenements for labourers built by the Socialists are quite decent-looking, with enough of accommodation and convenience for the inmates who were only too anxious to take us to their rooms. Till the coming of the Catholic Socialist party into power they had to pay only a small sum per month as rent, but now it has been raised to double that amount. The present regime, we were told, is not at all friendly towards the labouring class.

Another institution worthy of mention as owing its existence to the Social Democrats, is the one where the 'unwanted' children and those whose parents are either dead, or gone to jail or too poor to take care of them, are kept till proper

foster-parents are found for them by the Government. Since the incidence of infant mortality is highest during the first year the little ones in this institution during that period are kept in isolation in large, well-ventilated glass chambers inaccessible to the visitors lest they should carry infection of some kind or other with them from outside. Many young ones were playing happily on their cots with dolls, while grown-up boys and girls were being taught according to the Montessori system which is popular in this country. Only one girl, ten years old, was looking sad. When questioned, she told us that her mother had died the previous day and that her father had no work. Still she was longing for her home.

One of the most powerful States in pre-war Europe, Austria is to-day in a very bad plight. The Peace Treaties have reduced her size and population considerably. She has lost her rich mines and her access to the sea, and is now purely an inland state whose land does not permit much of cultivation. Vienna is too big a capital for the present Austria which, as some one remarked, is like a tiny-limbed man with too large a head on his shoulders. With all her neighbours anxious to sell her their exports, but unwilling to take hers in exchange, her industries have suffered tremendously. There is considerable



SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE

poverty and unemployment, especially among the urban population, and it was pathetic to note how the youths there feel when they refer to their loss after the War. Asked about the League of Nations, one of them said; "We have absolutely no faith in it. It exists for the victor nations and not for us". While passing by the Stock Exchange—a very fine building—our guide remarked; "There is nothing to change there; we call it our National Cemetery".

The Austrians are too much occupied with their own problems at home to be worried about what is happening in the East. Yet Gandhiji is admired by many and though the men seem to doubt the efficacy of his creed of Non-violence in the aggressive West, the women appeared to hold a different view about it. "We have been killing and killing, and there seems to be no end of it", one of them said. "We pray that Mr. Gandhi may live long, not only for the sake of India but for the sake of the whole world." And it was evident that she was quite sincere.

Still here, as in other parts of the Continent, there is so much of ignorance about India. A University Professor asked me whether widows in our country, were still being burnt alive. Also Miss Mayo's "Mother India" has been found to be popular all over Europe. Yet the Austrians, who

are by nature courteous and hospitable, are well disposed towards Indians, who are believed to come from a country with a very hoary culture and civilisation. Many Indians do stay in Vienna to study medicine. The city is very famous for its faculty of medicine. Some of the hospitals we visited looked more like places of rest than places of pain.

The Austrians are an artistic race with a passionate love for music. Open air operas are quite common and we attended one in front of the Town Hall that was floodlit. Here as well as in the opera house where we went to see Wagner's "Rhine Gold" performed, we found the place over-crowded, as, we were told, was usually the case because of the intense love of the people for music. The shops which contain beautifully embroidered clothes, fine leather works, and in fact many other things so well designed, speak of their artistic skill. There are fine picture galleries, for instance the one in the palace of Prince Eugene. From the latter, one could get a wonderful panorama of the city itself, while the Alps, with the stronghold of the German Princes who ruled Austria before the Hapsburgs, could be seen in the far distance. Fine paintings by girls of twelve and thirteen, studying in the Art Schools of Vienna, could be seen on

the walls of the kindergarten schools there. The folk dances are really charming and we saw some of them performed by a few Alpine guides while we were being entertained at the Castle Schon Brun—the birth-place of Napoleon's son—a veritable beauty spot of Vienna with lovely gardens, delightful avenues, zig-zag paths that lose themselves in shady woods, and an exceedingly pretty fountain.

Austria today is under a rigid dictatorship with little freedom of speech for the people. The National Socialist Party, which is for union of Austria with Germany, and in which I met ardent worshippers of Hitler, is as little favoured by the present regime as the Socialists. Both these parties though differing widely in their ideals of Government, are united on one point,—viz. the wrecking of the present party in power. The report of the murder of Herr Dolfuss, as it appeared in the Indian papers, had created in me the impression that his death had been felt as a national calamity. But I was surprised to note the absence of the slightest trace of emotion on the faces of our guides when the place of his murder in the Winter Palace was being pointed out to us. And later on, at the Elementary School we visited, when one of the girls sang to us a song on the late Chancellor extolling him as a

martyr, I asked one of our Austrian friends with us, a young Professor, whether he was not moved by it. "Not at all", was the cold reply. "We were glad that he died. The song was composed by some partisan of the present Government, and not by a representative of the people."

It was at the Schon Brun Castle already referred to that I had a clearer idea of how things were going on in Austria in the political field. While we were being entertained with dances and music we were told that a secret agent of the Government was watching the whole proceedings. And any question referring to the present administration was answered with the greatest caution by those who did not happen to be supporters of the present party in power. My attention was specially drawn by my neighbour to one of the Alpine dancers, a youth of about twenty, who looked the very picture of health and vigour. "He is being strictly watched" I was told. "He is a Socialist and we don't know when he will be in jail." A little later, while returning to our hotel accompanied by those who entertained us that evening, I was able to learn a little more of the same youth who fell into conversation with me. Neither a lover of Hitler like the National Socialist nor of the present Government which he vehemently denounced, he said, "My friends are



all in jail and I am being watched. But wait on, our time will come". Yes, they are all confident of their own time coming. Some are even hopeful of a happy turn in their affairs when Italy begins her fight in Abyssinia, in which case they think that the present Government in Austria cannot continue to get the help and attention it now receives from Mussolini.

The Austrians are mostly German-speaking and we had great difficulty with regard to the language. They were anxious to know many things concerning us, but whatever might be their question to us we went on answering "From India, from India." It was first an unpleasant experience to have a gazing crowd wherever we went, to hear the constant clicking of cameras and above all, to have opera glasses turned on us from above, as we walked along the streets. But soon we got used to these things having entered into the humour of the situation.

The people are predominantly Catholic. Here again there appeared to be more of lip service than of actual faith. "We have to be Catholics, as otherwise we won't be able to get any job under the present Government", was what some of the youths told me in Vienna. We saw there many Jews also, some of them refugees from Germany. It was curious to hear a Jewish

girl, an artist turned out of Germany with her father, defending Hitler. "After all he has not been so unjust to us as is believed", she said. "To those of our community who have served Germany during the war, he has granted concessions and privileges, but not to those who have kept aloof and have been, according to him, making money at the expense of the German nation.

Before we left Vienna three of us from our party went to the Bristol Hotel, where Kamala Nehru was staying. She was looking rather tired, though cheerful and smiling as usual. We were told that she was soon to under-go a surgical operation at Berlin, and that the Doctor was quite hopeful about her. We were not there for long, when the door opened, to let in another of the distinguished patriots of India, whom we were eagerly expecting there at the time. It was Sjt. Subhas Chandra Bose, looking some-what pale and weak. He was in Indian costume, and later on, the woman guide whom we had taken with us, asked, referring to him, "Are all your men so handsome?" She could not speak enough of Mrs. Nehru. "I am so glad you took me with you to that sweet, dear young lady. I am so glad" she went on repeating.

Subhasji has still pain in the abdomen, but he hopes to be all right in a few months. He is

**Mrs. KAMALA NEHRU**  
**(in her sick-bed at Vienna)**



**S C. BOSE is seen standing in the centre.**



**Mrs KAMALA NEHRU**

busy with his new book, and also devotes much of his time in counter-acting the gross misrepresentation of India on the Continent. The meetings he addresses are always well attended—so I was told by an Indian friend—and he is held in great respect by those who know him there. It was evident he was longing to be back in his country. With mingled feelings of hope and pain we left them both and returned to our Hotel.....

At Vienna we had gained some really good friends, and they all came to see us off at the station. And our train left, carrying us from this delightful city to the mountainous regions of the Tatras in the Post-war Republic of Czechoslovakia.

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## CZECHOSLOVAKIA

It was night when we arrived at Strbske Pleso in the Tatras, after a drive from the station up the winding paths with thick growing firs on either side. Our hotel was quite a big and decent one, and we soon retired for rest in our large, cosy rooms. At too early a dawn—it was barely four when the sun poured forth his bright light into my room—I woke up to feast my eyes on one of the finest landscapes imaginable.

On one side, down below lay the vast plains dotted here and there with tiny villages, while the hilly ranges rose up far behind. And on the other, so close by, was the calm, peaceful lake Strbske Pleso, its banks strewn with many-coloured flowers nodding their gay heads in the breeze, and hemmed in on three sides by tall mountain ranges with snow-clad summits. Between this smooth stretch of water and our hotel, lay the narrow, but clear-cut pathway leading up to the heart of the mountains.

Our hotel was a fashionable summer resort where we found men and women from Central and Eastern Europe, and as we sat for breakfast in the open, by the side of the lake, we could see groups of sturdy youths, both boys and



**The Party photographed in the Hotel at the Tatras.**

girls, out for a holiday, going and coming along the pathway through the woods. It was rather strange that while the people there, as elsewhere in Europe, loved to bask in the sun, we from India, where we have plenty of sunshine, found it too much for us.

Breakfast over, we prepared to start on a visit to one of the villages down below. We had however to fight our way through clicking cameras and a host of tourists bent on getting our autographs in our own Indian languages.

We had a very pleasant drive, our bus swaying from side to side as it went down the winding pathways amidst the wild, lovely scenery on either side. The village we arrived at was a small one and we were first taken to the church. It had none of the magnificence of St. Marks at Venice, or the austere grandeur of St. Peters at Vienna. But still there was something so powerfully stirring in the music, and in the service that were going on there, that even the most irreligious amongst us felt inclined to stay more amidst the simple, rustic folk gathered there to pour forth their heart and soul with such unswerving faith and devotion.

We next passed by the streets—ininitely cleaner than those in our poverty-stricken villages in India—and entered the house of an apparently

well-to-do family. We could get the smell from the kitchen the moment we got in, for the kitchen was just in front. The adjacent drawing room with its home-made cushions, embroidered clothes and articles of furniture had a close atmosphere due to the windows being kept shut for most part of the time. It was with great pride that the lady of the house showed us the dresses and tapestries made by her, and really they were fine and strong. In fact, the people in this village used mostly home-made things for their daily needs which were comparatively small, and also kept to their national costumes which in the case of women are very picturesque.

Our walk right up to the mountains the next day was one of our most delightful experiences which we could never forget. It was rather hard, going up, and in spite of the low temperature at those summits we were often perspiring. Our path lay through the fir trees that grew thick and tall and we passed by roaring cataracts and small waterfalls, while further up we could pick up the snow that lay scattered about in heaps. Words can scarcely describe our feelings when at last the beautiful lake Propenske, the cynosure of the tourist world, burst upon our view. Bigger than the one by our hotel it looked much more lovely amidst its wilder and more lonely surroundings.



The pathway led to the restaurant where we found the tourists from all parts of Europe.

We however lost no time in getting into the boats that lay moored to the bank and rowed to different parts of the lake. Most of us were handling the oars for the first time and perhaps it was with the same spirit of adventure as animated our ancient mariners that we launched forth our boats. It was fun, not unmingled with occasional fits of panic, that in the beginning we went either round and round without making any progress, or in the wrong direction as we pulled the oars. But soon we found it quite an easy task to take our boats wherever we liked, and we enjoyed throwing balls of snow at our comrades as they passed by. It was so indescribably pleasant as we moved along the watery surface, the cool mountain breeze playing against us and nature, in all its wild and varying glory, lay stretched around in every direction.

With a certain amount of unwillingness, we returned to the restaurant for our lunch which we however enjoyed after our morning's exertions. A few of us then returned soon after to the hotel, while the rest stayed behind for some more time, a member of the party climbing almost to the very summit of the highest range.

Though some of our group did not care much to stay long amid the quiet surroundings in the Tatras it was with great reluctance that a few of us at least left the place. For it is indeed one of those spots where nature makes one feel in tune with the Infinite

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At about half-past-eight in the night we reached Prague and we were taken to The Sokolskydom which looked quite uninteresting and commonplace after our exceedingly pleasant home in the Tatras. I woke up the next day quite refreshed and as I looked out of my window I was very much interested to see groups of women so robust and healthy, taking exercises in physical culture, in the spacious grounds below. I found later on that they belonged to the Sokol organisation with a large membership of both men and women, its aim being to train up and preserve the nation in physical, mental and moral strength. The members learn to fence and wrestle besides undergoing drilling. Not only no difference is being made between the rich and the poor, but this organisation also tries to foster an idea of perfect equality between the sexes. Every few years there is a Sokol display in Prague in which both men and women take part.

Our guide who took us round the city was perhaps of the most desirable type as he could

speaking English very fluently besides possessing a keen sense of humour and a large fund of information. As we were taken up the winding staircase in the town Hall he remarked. "This staircase is symbolic of the intellect of our politicians and statesmen—never straight but crooked and intricate." The city with its very ancient buildings and with quarters, especially like that of the Jews which are far from neat, presents a striking contrast to the exceedingly clean and 'modern' city of Vienna we had left behind. Among the places of interest we visited that day, were a very old Jewish synagogue and the cemetery attached to it. The Charles Bridge over which we passed had a row of the statues of the Madonna and Christ on either side, but there was one of the latter beneath which were writings in Hebrew. This is a unique feature and the story goes that a Jew who spat on the statue of the Saviour, was, as a punishment for this misdeed, made by the Emperor to construct a statue of Jesus with Hebrew inscriptions beneath it.

In the evening we had tea in the extensive Palace Gardens, with Dr. Alice Masaryk, the daughter of the President. Opposite this palatial structure, a few yards away, is the abode of the Carmelite nuns who, we were told, never come out nor admit outsiders within the premises of

their nunnery, and sleep at nights in coffins. We met that evening a small party of men and women, not wholly Czech, who had also been invited to tea with us and they put us very intelligent questions about India. In fact if there is any country in Europe that is decidedly friendly towards ours, it is Czecho Slovakia. "We too have suffered a great deal and so we can very well sympathise with you" is what many a Czech tells an Indian. I must however make special mention of one person, whom I met, there that evening, and who is very much respected among the intellectual circles in Czecho Slovakia. It is Professor Dr. Lesny who had been for some time at Viswa Bharathi with our Poet Dr. Tagore, a few years back. A great scholar of oriental learning, and a true lover of India, he is doing much to bring about a better understanding of our country amongst his own countrymen. It is impossible to know him without learning to love and respect him.

We were really disappointed at not being able to meet President Masaryk who, due to ill-health, was away from Prague at that time. We were however shown the inside of the palace, and the library of the President. The latter was indeed a very fine collection of many great works.



**PROFESSOR Dr. LESNY**



**Children of the Czech village  
we visited.**

We were invited the next day to the Indo-Czecho Slovakian Association opened under the auspices of the Oriental Institute, to promote cultural and economic relations between India and Czecho Slovakia. Professor Lesny is its President and a very enthusiastic President too. We met on this occasion a few Indians, the most prominent among them being Mr. A. C. N. Nambiar of South India who had to leave Germany during the Nazi triumph. It was indeed a very homely, happy gathering.

One of the things in Czecho Slovakia that would impress any outsider is the Masaryk Home in Prague. It is a free home for the poor, the aged, the chronic invalid and the maimed. There the most up-to-date means of medical aid are available. Only the strong ones are supposed to do some useful work like cooking, gardening etc. The whole institution consists of twenty one pavilions, the rooms being large, clean and well-ventilated. Hundreds stay there, some being even above ninety. The children of poor parents are brought up carefully. They have their classes within the building, the backward ones being taught separately. It was indeed a pathetic sight to watch the mentally defective children, the offspring of parents afflicted with venereal diseases, addicted to drink, or with great

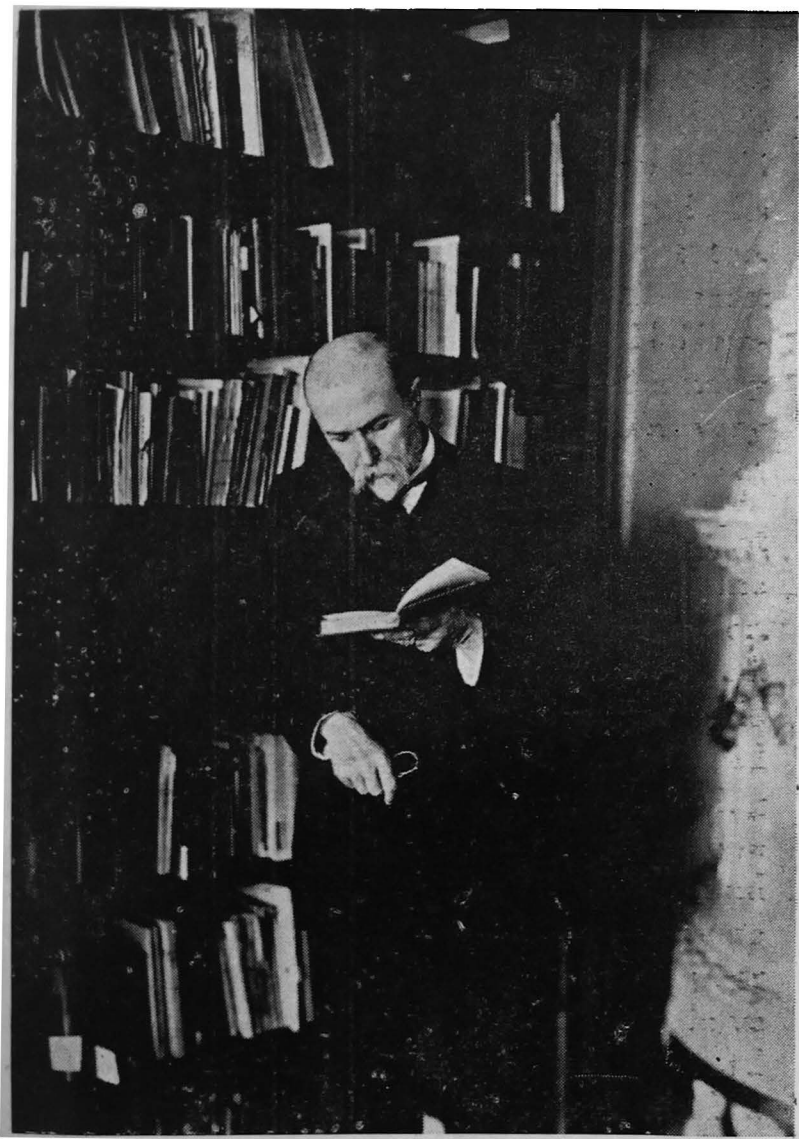
disparity of age. Many of these children were almost idiots unable to speak even one intelligible sentence. We could hardly believe our eyes when, apparently three or four-year old ones were pointed out by the Doctor, as girls and boys of eighteen and twenty-one. Most of them were unconscious and rolling about their beds wailing pathetically. Really it is a great thing that they are all looked after carefully by the state.

While we were leaving the place the inmates who were delighted to meet us followed us to some distance across the spacious, well-laid out grounds. We were indeed touched when the old women there snatched up our hands and went on repeatedly kissing them with all the warmth they were capable of

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To attract a crowd wherever we went with our coloured sarees on, had become quite a common thing by this time. But it was only in Prague that the Policemen had to disperse the crowd that collected when some of us went out shopping.

With a climate that allows agriculture in all parts of the country and with its great mineral wealth, the people are, on the whole, a prospering nation. Bohemia, famous for its beautiful glass works, is the richest in minerals besides being the biggest industrial centre. In many places the



**PRESIDENT MASARYK IN HIS FAMOUS LIBRARY**



home industries are rapidly disappearing because of the factories. The Czechs who form the larger part of the population are not very effusive by nature, but are really warm-hearted and hospitable. Far from aggressive, they are concerned solely with the building up of their State on entirely peaceful lines. But with unfriendly neighbours they feel rather insecure. President Masaryk, of course, is held in great respect and love throughout the whole country.

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## GERMANY

It was with little friendly feeling towards the existing regime there, that I entered Germany. For the German nation as a whole, I always had a warm regard. I had ever admired them for their scientific skill, and loved them for their perfect friendliness towards Indians whose ancient culture they appreciated perhaps more than any other nation. Moreover I had great sympathy for them for the too severe penalty they had to pay for the Great War. Yet the recent terrible events in that country—the stories of the persecution of the Jews, the ruthless suppression of the Communists, the ‘purge’ on the 30th June, in short the merciless weeding out of every individual supposed to be antagonistic to the Nazi Government,—had roused rather hostile feelings in my mind towards the present regime. Of course, I was prepared to leave a margin—a very wide margin indeed—for the false statements and utterly prejudiced propaganda of biased journalists who are, after all, our chief source of information.

We had first to get down at Dresden where we were to have a short stay before proceeding to Berlin. In the train I happened to make the

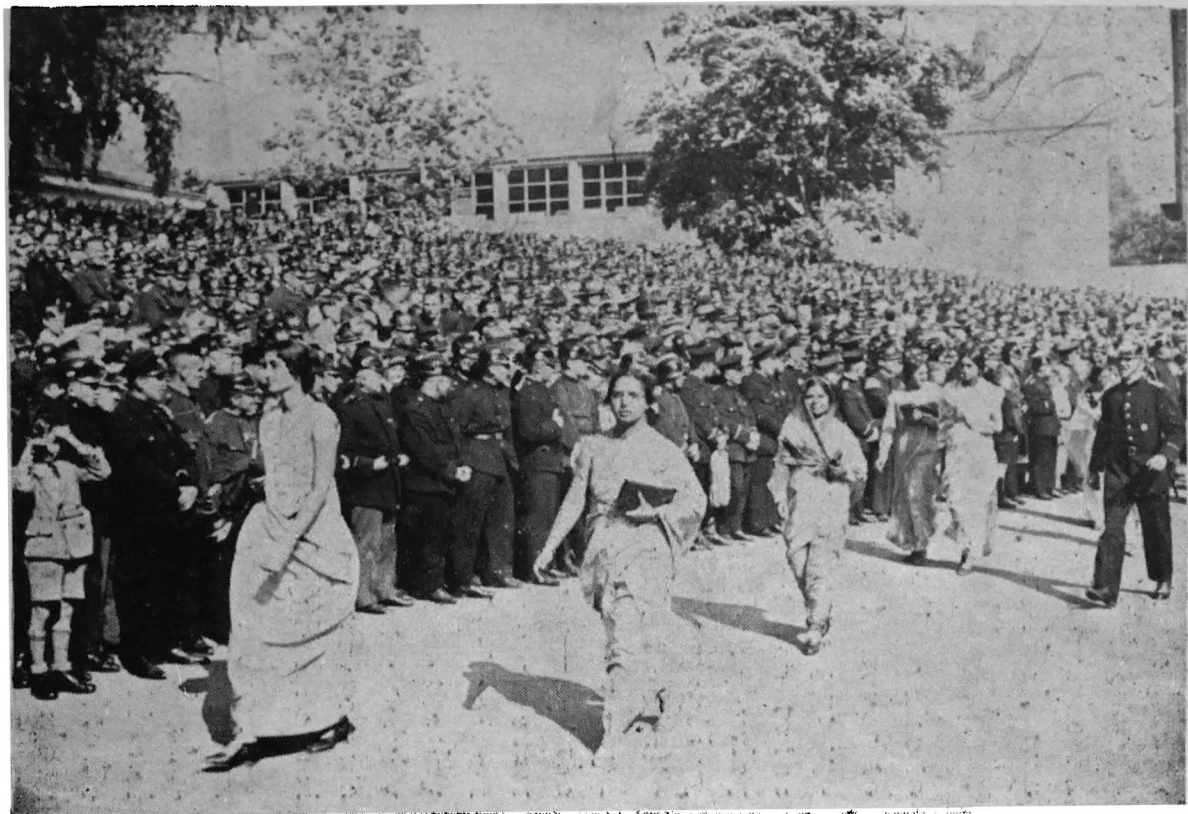
acquaintance of two German Jewish girls. Their tales of the misery which their people had to undergo of late in Germany, were pathetic enough. But the anxious care they took not to be overheard by any who might chance to be a pro-Nazi, was still more pitiable.

At Dresden there were a few Indians also to receive us at the station. We had however to hurry up to the house where we were to put up. After a hasty dinner there, we were taken to the operetta, of which we had heard such glowing accounts even on our way. Personally speaking, I was not very enthusiastic over it until I actually witnessed the performance. I must say—and every one else of our group felt similarly—that the scenic display was marvellous. Even now the last scene with the picture of the sky changing its aspect every moment—starless to begin with, then the tiny points of light slowly peeping out and gradually gaining in size and lustre, while the fleecy clouds floated about—seems to stand vividly before me!

The next morning we went around the place. The city, so clean and pretty, seemed to be throbbing with life, for it was the day of the Exhibition of the fire brigades of Germany. There seemed to be no end to the procession of the brigades along the streets, lined on either side by enthusiastic

spectators. One of the important places of interest we visited that day was the gallery with the famous picture of the Madonna, known as 'Madonna di San Sisto' by Raphael, and other masterpieces by great artists of various nationalities of the West. In the evening we went to the Fire Brigade exhibition. The place was overcrowded when we reached there. But we were honoured by being given room to stand in the front row. From the snaps that appeared later on it would seem that we had a prominent part in the display. First there was a very skilful demonstration by boys under 12, as to how to make all the preliminary preparations before the actual putting out of a fire. Then the building—perhaps specially created for this purpose—was actually set on fire and the fire brigades showed before the huge crowd how to extinguish the fire. On the whole, the display was tremendously interesting.

The next day our party was divided into three groups according to our own choice. One was to visit some of the schools, another the Hygienic Exhibition, and the third the jewellery of the royal families that once ruled Germany. Five of us went to the schools. The first one we visited was an elementary school where boys and girls study. They put us various questions—



**Demonstration by the Fire Brigade at Dresden.  
Some members of our Party are seen in the front.**

What kind of food we ate, whether we lived in big or small houses, whether we painted our faces in different shades of colour, and so on. A few of them gave us their addresses asking us to get them into touch with students in our own provinces in India. We sang to them while both the boys and the girls entertained us with their own national songs. Then the girls gave a demonstration in folk dance and the boys showed us a few of their games now popular amongst them. It seemed to me from the very nature of the games that they had a military purpose behind them. The other school we went to was a secondary one, very big and with the Kindergarten section also. Here too we were put many questions by the pupils, but we had to hurry up since we insisted on attending the Hygienic Exhibition as well, of which we had already heard much.

The Exhibition was indeed one that would give the on-lookers some idea of the great scientific progress achieved by the German nation. The blood circulation, the digestive process, the various internal organs of the human system, the different kinds of diseases in their various stages, the different nerves and their functions were all demonstrated in the most realistic and wonderful manner with the help of electric buttons, lights and other appliances. \* \* \*

Wherever we went, we found the grim face of Hitler looking down on us from one of the walls. Wherever we turned, we heard the same greeting "Hail, Hitler!". Whomsoever we talked to, we found him or her to be a blind adorer of Herr Hitler. I, however, happened to meet also just a few of the discontented sections in Germany. There is bitter hatred towards the Nazis among the working classes which have suffered terribly because of the present regime. The Communists too, it seems, are not remaining idle, though naturally they have to carry on their activities secretly.

I chanced to come across a few who had been in the Concentration Camps where they had been handled very roughly. But when I asked a gentleman, (a staunch Nazi and a highly educated person, who was taking us round,) what was being done in the concentration camps he said "Oh! we just give them the right kind of literature to read and 'gently' try to convert them". He later on gave us pamphlets expounding the present racial theory in Germany. "Was not Christ a Jew?" I asked. He looked almost shocked at my ignorance and gave an emphatic "No"—"Was he a Nordic Aryan?" I next asked him. Well, he deigned not to answer me. No little care is taken in Germany to-day to trace the genealogy of her

citizens. To a man, who wishes to marry a girl, who is proved to have anything other than pure Aryan blood in her veins, the choice is between his profession and his love. Naturally he often sticks to his profession, as otherwise, life there will be rendered unpleasant in various ways.

The condition of women other than Jewish is not, I was told, so bad as has been depicted in papers. Of course Nazi Germany, like Fascist Italy, believes that the rightful place of woman is the kitchen and that her noblest mission in life is to bring forth as many children as possible to fight for the State. Unmarried women can, it seems, enter many of the professions. The same is the case with married women too, when their husbands have no job. Anyhow the women I met seemed to be perfectly satisfied with what they have under the existing regime.

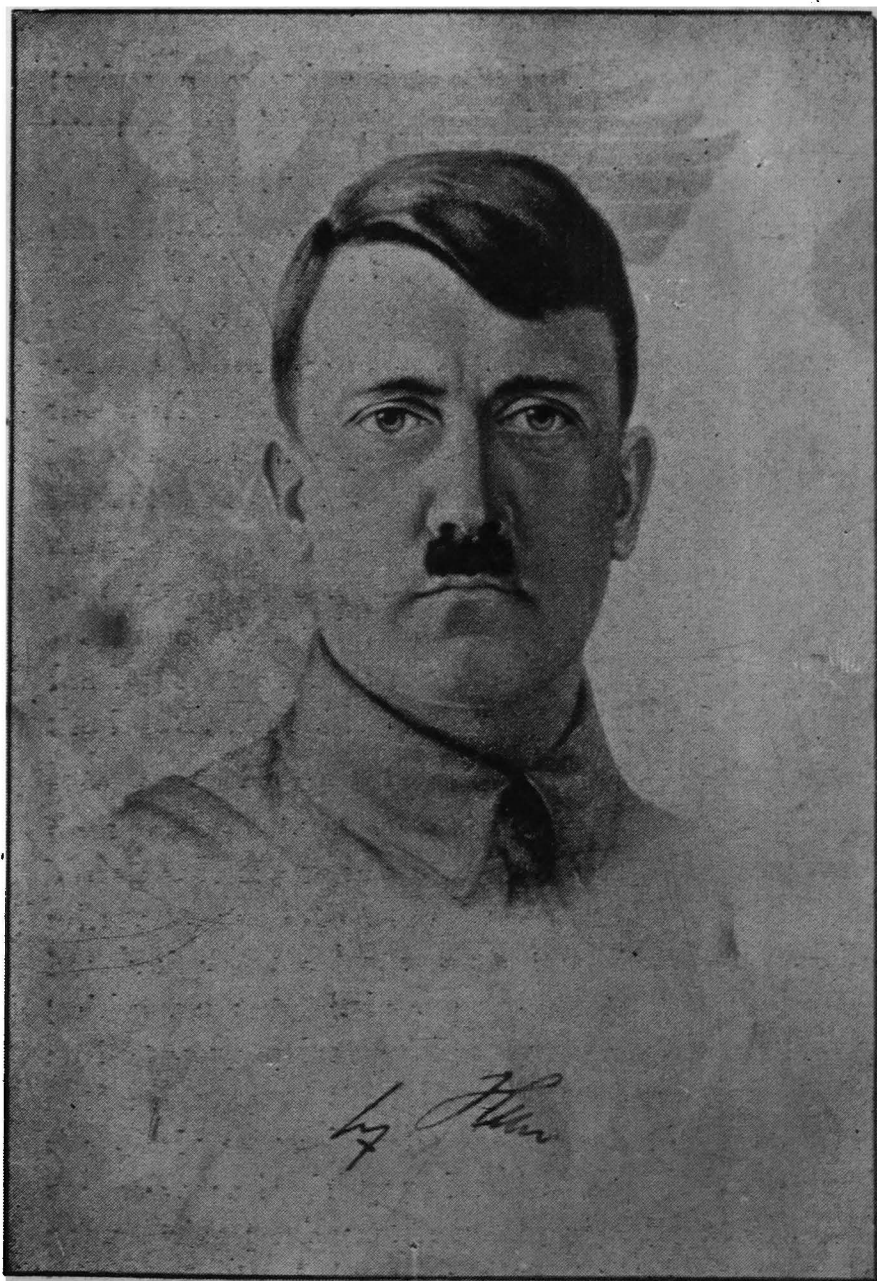
After two days' stay in Dresden we left for Berlin. Through the windows of our train we could see one of the most glorious sunsets we had ever seen. It was only a few hours' journey and it was almost dusk when we reached the station. As we drove through the streets to our hotel we were struck by the cleanliness of the city and the almost marvellous advertisements in coloured lights. Our hotel was a big one and the rooms



spacious and cosy. It was managed by a smart German lady who could talk English fluently.

The maids, however, knew no English and the difficulty that arose out of it was more than compensated for by the fun that it created at the same time. I remember on one occasion, my friend S.— from Delhi at dinner time trying to convey to the maid, by signs and gestures, her need for a hard-boiled egg. When her efforts were of no avail B.— from Lahore succeeded, by clucking like the hen and by further actions, to drive home to the perplexed maid what was actually needed. In the shops too, where the dealers knew no English we had not much difficulty in getting the things we wanted. One member of the group who went to buy kerchiefs was, by sniffing, sneezing, and then wiping the face, able to make herself easily understood. Indeed we had begun to discover our powers of originality and resourcefulness !

Besides being one of the very big cities, Berlin can really boast of being one of the cleanest and most beautiful. As we drove through the streets we saw the high storeyed buildings, the cathedrals, the huge and highly picturesque palace, the opera houses, the spacious parks, innumerable statues and the grand Monument of Victory. The Parliament House which has been



HERR HITLER

almost repaired now, put me in mind of the Reichstag Fire Trial, and the irrepressible Dimitroff and the poor, unfortunate Van der Lube. Our guide of course most vociferously referred more than once, to the atrocious attempt of the incendiaries—in fact he seemed to know even the exact minute when the torch was applied! We went past the house where President Hindenburg used to live and the houses of General Goering and Herr Hitler. Some of us were really eager to meet and talk to the Nazi leader who was, however, away from Berlin at that time.

In the afternoon, we went to the Broadcasting Station where we were greeted by a small group of students with "Good bye, ladies! we are happy to meet you". Mrs. Datta, Mrs. Suri of Lahore and Miss B. Dubash of Bombay broadcast their impressions of the countries they had so far visited and it must have been with intense interest that our people in India would have had listened to them

Apart from the museum in which many of us liked best the collections from Egypt and Babylon there were two other interesting places in Berlin, which we visited. One was a professional school for women where they are taught cooking, laundering, embroidering, fancy work, painting, photography, etc. We found the students

taking a genuine interest in their work. There were about 3,000 girls working there.

The other was the Headquarters of the German Women Workers. This is really a fine institution which is in touch with all the various branches of women's activity in Germany and also with women's organisations in other parts of the world. Here mothercraft is taught in all its important and essential details. We were much interested to see a movie depicting some of the many things that the German women workers do today to help the poor farmers in their homes as well as in their fields. However I could not help feeling that a little more emphasis might be laid on the intellectual side of the women in this country.

It was on a cloudy day that we visited Potsdam which was once the seat of the royal family. There was the palace of King Frederick the Great, where he used to stay when he suffered from headache. It is known as the "Sans Souci"—(without care). It is a one-storeyed building set amidst very quiet and lovely surroundings. There is the library of the King kept almost intact, and the chair on which he breathed his last. The rooms were lavishly painted and gilded, the music room being perhaps the most gorgeous of all. But what we liked best was the apartment where Voltaire, the king's friend, used to stay. It had

none of the magnificent splendour of the other apartments, but very elegantly and artistically decorated with painted creepers and bunches of fruits and flowers, it decidedly appeals to one's aesthetic sense.

Soon after lunch we went to the Cathedral in the neighbourhood where Frederick lies buried. The altar, the pulpit and the royal vault were richly decorated. It was raining when we started on our return journey. We had to come across the lake and as it was too cold on the upper deck of the motor boat we went down to the smoking room. That place soon became crowded with new-comers—men and women, boys and girls, and also a large number of cadets, all youths not more than 21. We found many of them intending to continue their academical studies after their one year of military training. These youths went on singing and shouting, while the other passengers including our guide readily joined them. Only one rather stout lady on the wrong side of 40, went on consuming 'tray-loads' of butter and bread, utterly indifferent to what was going on around her.

We got into the train after the boat stopped. The cadets too did the same and then in spite of their limited knowledge of English—many didn't know even a word—some of them put us many

questions on India, several of which were really intelligent. One youth asked me what I thought of their leader. At my silence he further asked "Is not Herr Hittler our Gandhi?"—which was a still more embarrassing question that had been already put to me by others also, during my few days' stay in Germany. "The methods of both differ", I had to say, "One believes in gun-powder and the other in love and heroic non-violence". "I admire Gandhi and wish to be like him, at least when I grow old", he replied. "I would like very much to get a photo of him". I promised to send him one as soon as I reached my country after the tour. In the meanwhile almost the same topic was being discussed by another Nazi youth close by me with one of my friends in our group. "Gandhi—Hitler same" he argued in broken English "No smoke, no drink". He was, however, more ambitious and venturesome and took down the address of the Mahatma to carry on, what he thinks to be, a serious correspondence on certain matters on which he needs elucidation.

The people of Germany, whenever we came across them, had been exceedingly nice to us. There seems to be still much of the old friendly feeling for Indians and the love of Indian culture that had been one of the special features of this

country. But of late certain things have been occurring under the Nazi Government which make one doubt whether future German generations will have the same friendly attitude towards India. Herr Hitler in his book "My struggles" which is the bible of the so called National Socialists, has made disparaging remarks about India. General Goering, the right-hand man of Herr Hitler, in an interview published in the Press last year, seems to have attacked Mahatma Gandhi openly. Herr Rosenberg who is the head of the National Socialist Culture movement has made disparaging remarks about Indians in his book "Mythos of the 20th Century." His view is that while the Germans are pure Aryans, the Indians are bastards. The racial movement in Germany began originally as an anti-Jewish movement which is gradually developing into an anti-Asiatic movement. They believe that Europeans are superior to the other races in the world, and that among the Europeans the Nordics (and consequently Germans) are the superior race. They, however, make an exception in the case of Japan whose friendship Germany is anxious to cultivate, because of a common enmity towards Russia. And as far as India is concerned, the present exponents of the new racial science think, that while in ancient India there might have been

an Aryan race and an Aryan culture, the Indians of the present day are bastards and that their culture too is bastard. It was only a few months ago that Prof. Tirala, an important exponent of the new racial theory, wrote an article to this effect in the premier newspaper in Germany, the *Volkischer Beobachter* and in the latest issue of the *Technische Hochschule* (Engineering University magazine) there is an article in which the writer says: "About 350 million Indians one cannot say whether they are civilised or not". One doubts whether such an article could have appeared in a pre-Nazi University magazine in Germany.

Even now, as a whole the German nation is friendly towards India and this friendliness is the result of a long tradition of Indo-German friendship based on cultural and other grounds. But the new politics and the new racial theory of Nazi Germany are working in an opposite direction. Their effect may be felt after a few years. Already it is visible in some parts, for it seems the factories that would once have thrown open their doors to Indians have begun to shut them and Indians are sometimes called 'neger' (Negroes) in the streets because of their dark colour.

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## BELGIUM

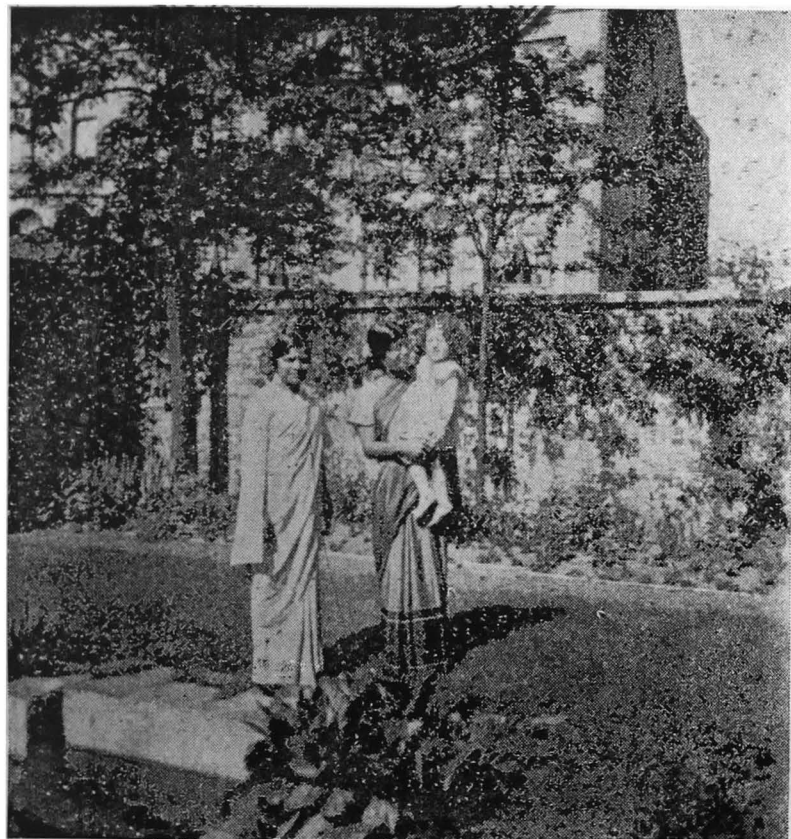
Before leaving for Belgium we were told that for the first time we were to put up in batches of two in private houses. This was to be a new experience by which, of course, a foreigner is likely to know more of the people of a country than by staying in hotels as we have been doing all along. All the same, it was doubtful whether this new arrangement was in the beginning quite welcome, because we could never know beforehand what sort of hostesses we were going to stay with, and whether we, with our entirely different mode of living in the east, would quite fit in with the families that were to receive us.

At the Berlin station, just before boarding the train I received from a friend of mine, disquieting news about Mrs. Nehru who had been operated on the previous day. A larger part of her lungs than was anticipated, was found to have been affected and it was doubtful whether the results of the operation were going to be as favourable as was expected. To many an Indian her health, of late, had been of grave concern and, especially after meeting her on the boat, she had ever been in our thoughts. We could now picture the fragile, girlish figure of that

heroic soul lying in the hospital bearing excruciating pain with heavenly sweetness.

At Cologne, noted for its Eau-de-Cologne, we had to change our train. We reached Brussels towards dusk and there at the station, guides were waiting to take us to our hostesses. S..... from Delhi and myself were paired off and were to put up with Madame Radigues, wife of the Director of Foreign Affairs in Belgium. It was rather a large family we entered. It consisted of the two grown-up daughters of M. Radigues by his first wife who died a few years back, the three children of the present Madame Radigues, her sister, and then of course, the host and the hostess. Luckily for us, most of them could talk English, even the maid having a smattering knowledge of that tongue.

The next morning, before entering the Exhibition grounds the various groups of our party met. We immediately fell to discussing our hostesses, over whose hospitality we all waxed eloquent. We first visited the School of Domestic Science, conducted on an elaborate scale. We then went to the Exhibition which had been got up with so much labour and was to last for six months. Our attention was caught by the multitude of fountains, throwing up sprays of water high up into the air. After lunch in the Y. W. C. A. within the



**The little daughter of our host M. Radigues,  
Miss S.....of Delhi and myself.**

Exhibition grounds we set forth to have a look around. We first visited the section for the midgets. In front of tiny houses we saw human beings about three feet high. We first took them for little boys and girls dressed up for fun and show, in miniature adult costumes. We went to them and asked them their age. "Twenty", "twenty-five", "nineteen", etc. came the answers in loud shouts, not a little to our surprise. We next witnessed a circus performance by some of them. There were feats on the cycle and on horseback and occasional dancing, amidst roars of laughter and loud applause from the audience. We then wandered about from pavilion to pavilion. There were the Paris House, Denmark House, English House and so on, containing exhibits from, and characteristic of, each country. In one quarter was "Old Brussels" where the buildings and the dress of the waiters, musicians, and others were in the old eighteenth century style. That was the place we visited last. And late in the evening we returned to our respective hostesses.

Next day we visited Antwerp, where we first went to the Museum of Fine Arts containing the paintings of Rubens, Van Dyck, Rembrandt and others. We walked along the streets and visited a sixteenth-century Printing House, which was also the typical residence of the Flemings of

those days. Even now the unrest among the Flemings, which was strong before the War, has not died down. They are equal in number to the French Belgians, and the racial difference is partly due to religion and partly to class difference. The Flemings are chiefly the working class, and though both the races are Catholics, these people believe in the old Catholic tradition.

The return journey was very pleasant. We passed through lovely woods of green and copper beeches, through which the rays of the setting sun trickled, while boys and girls cycling along the clear narrow pathways among the trees, added to the beauty of the scene. Much of the area we passed through that day was, it seems, the scene of war-fare during the Great War, but now everything is green and smiling and there is little sign of the havoc done in those days. That evening we were entertained at the Y. W. C. A. There was a variety of folk dances, Russian, Czech, German, Belgian, etc. It was one of the pleasantest evenings we ever spent during our tour.

The next morning we were introduced to Her Majesty the Queen of Belgium at her residence in Brussels. I must confess that not being very much interested in royalties as such, I was not at first very enthusiastic over the reception, though I had heard my host and hostess speak



**Bhaghirathi Amma, a member of our Party photographed with the short people exhibited at the Brussels Exhibition.**



**Queen Astrid of Belgium who died recently as a result of a motor accident.**

highly of her. But once in her presence, I, like the rest of the party, felt irresistibly drawn towards that beautiful, young woman who seemed to radiate love and kindness around her. Everything about her was so simple, sweet and natural, but at the same time so dignified and stately. We were introduced to her by Father Hubleu, President of the A. U. C. A. M. (Association for International Collaboration) and she talked to each one of us in the most friendly, familiar way. I was not surprised to know later on, the secret of her universal popularity. Ever with those in trouble, she had easily won her way to the hearts of the people.

The same day we visited the Ecole Sociale, a social school for women. We were feeling dull and rather sleepy there and in the afternoon we left for Louvain, where we went to the A. U. C. A. M. Among those present to welcome us, were some Chinese students. The library contained books on the East and we were delighted to see magazines like *Sthree Dharma* there. Christina Francaux, who sometime back was at Santiniketan and is also an ardent admirer of Gandhiji, made a short speech of welcome. As she stood up speaking, her face, with its expression of child-like innocence, was aglow with fervent sincerity. It was a rare occasion when in the West we heard

of our country and our great men like Tagore and Gandhiji referred to with intense feeling. And as I sat listening to her, I felt it was the voice of Young India speaking. It was as if a beautiful soul was struggling to express the dreams and aspirations of our rising generation.

We next visited the library established by the contributions of various countries. Among the volumes there were the Mahabharata, the Ramayana and other classical works of India. Another place of interest we visited that day was the great Cancer Institute, which, we were told was one of the best in the world. From there we returned to the A. U. C. A. M. and had dinner there. We thanked profusely Father Hubleu who had done so much to make our stay in Belgium as pleasant as possible. We then came back to Brussels via Malines where we heard the musical concert of the bells of the Cathedral, thirty-eight bells operating to make the music.

We left Brussels the next day and were to halt at Ghent and Bruges before taking ship from Ostend to Dover. Our hosts and hostesses had come to see us off and we were feeling sad to leave them who had been so very kind and considerate to us. We stood craning out our heads, waving and waving to them till we could see them no more. And when we sat down we realised



before long that we had left behind one of our party! It was a short journey to Ghent and as we walked round the old town we wondered why it was called the "Flower Garden of Belgium". We were not a little tired and hungry when we reached the Y. W. C. A. and after stuffing ourselves with cherries and biscuits which we had there in plenty, we lay down to rest on the neat wooden floor and went to sleep out of sheer exhaustion. We got up refreshed, to find that the missing member of our party had rejoined us in the meanwhile. We left immediately for Bruges where we were to stay that night.

When we reached there we found that we were again divided into batches, this time, of four. I with three others, had to go to an ancient monastery which was once in a flourishing condition. It was situated by a lake—called the Lovers' Lake—with beautiful white swans sailing across its smooth surface. We were welcomed at the gate by two nuns who were waiting for our arrival. The elder could speak a little English, while the younger one with a pretty face knew only French. The former whom we immediately fell to addressing as 'Mother', was entrusted by the Mother Superior with the task of taking care of us. Passing through the outer entrance we found ourselves in spacious grounds with tall

trees, the whole place having an air of melancholy peace. To one of the buildings we were taken and we were invited to sit before a humble fare of cherries and biscuits, to which we did ample justice. We were then taken upstairs and shown the cubicles where we were to sleep that night. After the cosy beds and spacious rooms in the various hotels we stayed in, these did not have an inviting look. In the meanwhile B—, one of our batch, unable to find a bathroom, was trying to convey to the Mother, by means of a series of varied actions, her need for a bath. I can't say which was more amusing—the patience and persistence worthy of an ideal teacher, with which she tried to make herself understood or the rapt attention with which the bewildered Mother stood with open mouth watching the performance of her guest, scrubbing hands and face, and simulating diving, washing the hair, etc. At last a gleam of intelligence seemed to dawn on the perplexed face of our hostess and then, with an exultant “Ah! wee, wee”,—(yes, yes) she immediately disappeared. B—immensely relieved and not a little triumphant, expected to be soon led to the bath. But when she saw the Mother appear before long with a basin, no bigger than a finger bowl, she must have felt exactly like the tourist who, while in France, not knowing the

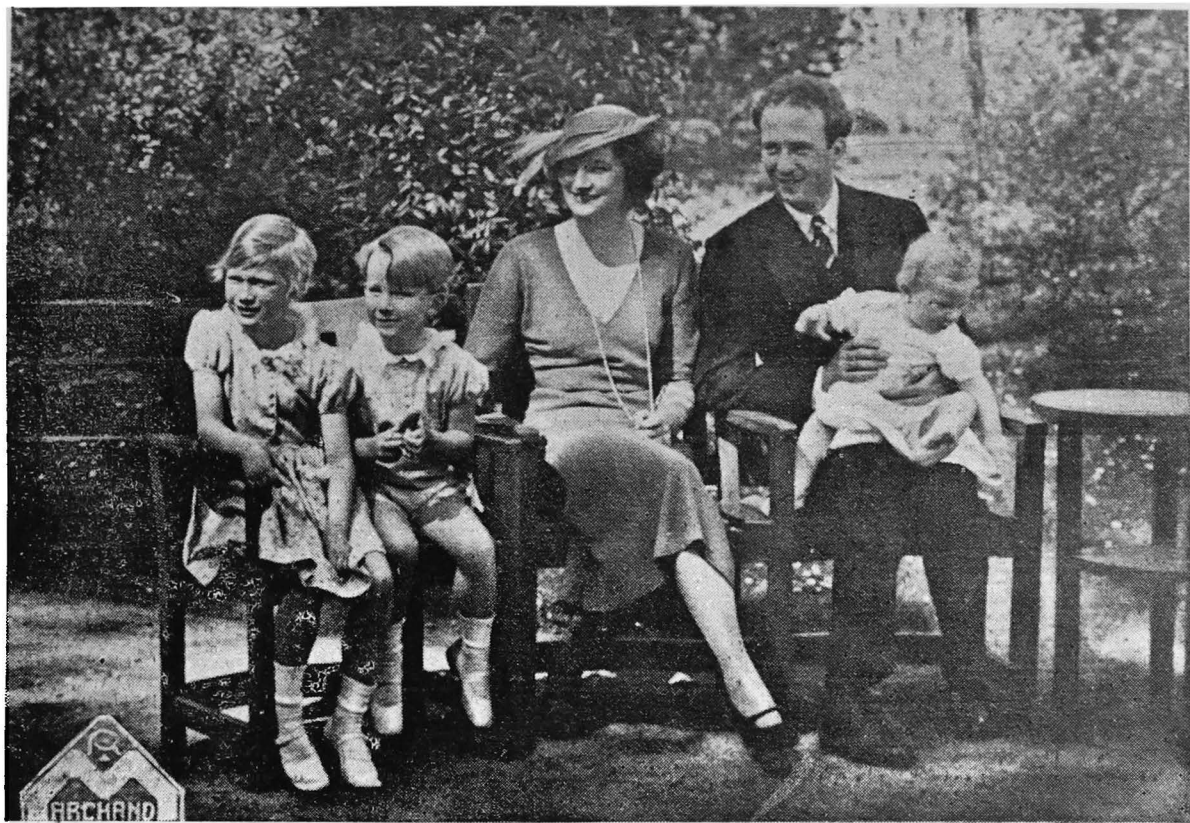
language, tried to convey to the hotel waiter his need for mushrooms, by drawing the figure of one on a piece of paper and had the consolation of seeing that individual return with an open umbrella!

Anyhow B— did have her bath. We had our beds made in the adjacent spacious rooms which were used on special occasions only. There, in spite of the thunder and lightning outside, and the mosquitoes hovering and humming over us, we sank into deep sleep. Early next morning we got up thoroughly refreshed, and after breakfast, went to see the Mother Superior. She knew not a word of English, but there was another nun, a Cambridge graduate, who had come there eager to see us as we belonged to the country where her father was born. She could now be our interpreter, and we lost no time in narrating to her the history of the previous day's bath. We then went round the place. The church to which we saw men and women coming from outside, bore evidence of the once-flourishing condition of the monastery. It was soon time for us to leave that quiet spot, where we enjoyed a peace and repose unknown to us ever since we had left our land. And it was with such sincere expressions of mutual regard and real warmth of feeling, that we left those kindly nuns who had

been so hospitable to us. We rejoined the rest of the party and then had a drive through the town. In some of the streets there were women at their lace work and we loved to watch them with their hands so deftly moving.

By noon we left for Ostend, and the moment we arrived there, some of us lost no time in getting on board the *Princess Astrid*, while the rest went about the port till it was time for the steamer to leave. We had a pleasant time in the boat, the channel being unusually calm. Only it began to grow more and more cold, and by the time we sighted the chalky cliffs of Dover it had begun to rain.

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**The King & Queen of Belgium with their children.**

## LONDON

We could scarcely believe our ears—the porter, the guard, in fact everyone around us was talking in a familiar tongue. All these days on the Continent it was a tremendous feat for us, as already pointed out, to make ourselves understood, by frantic signs and gestures. And now at last we were in Dover. With a feeling of relaxation and also eager expectation to reach London, with which name we were familiar from our early childhood, we got into the train. It was then past 8 p. m. and we rushed past stretches of lovely green on either side clearly discernible in that soft lingering twilight we had heard of so much. It was a short journey to London, near the suburbs of which, the scene on both the sides changed. Monotonous rows of small houses, apparently those of workmen, with tiny patches of green in front, often gay with flowers, came into view. We could see the ugly smoke filling and fouling the air. And the crowded mass of buildings, far from attractive, presented a thorough contrast to the open fields and the refreshing green we had just left behind. At last our train which had slowed down, stopped at the Victoria Station. The sight of an unexpected, but familiar face there, gave me no little pleasure. It was Mrs. Howe

Martyn whom I had met last December at the All-India Women's Conference at Karachi. There was no mistaking her happiness in welcoming us to her country and she got with us into the private char-a-bancs awaiting us. I think we proceeded through a circuitous way to the Y. W. C. A. so that we might see a little more of that big city at night. Only three of the things we passed by that day, could be remembered by me viz. the Trafalgar Square with the Nelson Column, the Buckingham palace and the "Piccadilly Circus."

In the Great Russel Street, at one of the busy centres in London, our bus stopped in front of the Y. W. C. A.,—a large building which we found equipped with all kinds of convenience. We were not a little pleased at the variety of refreshments got ready for us and more so, with the crowd of letters from home awaiting us. We were conducted to our rooms on the upper flats, and above all, we were happy over the prospect of having free baths—a rare privilege and luxury after we left our ship. It may be noted here that we had, on occasions, to pay about a rupee for a single bath.

The next day at 10 a. m. we left for a general char-a-bancs tour of London, to visit the Tower and the Guild Hall in its course. We were passing through the busiest part of the city. There

seemed to be no end to the streets and the 'masses of brick and mortar' on either side and in the highly congested area, some of us began to feel dull and languid. With a bad head-ache and with a weary sense of resignation, I closed my eyes and leaned against my companion who was in no better plight than myself. At last the char-a-bancs stopped and a few yards away we could see the famous Tower of London. Thither, with my drooping spirits revived, I proceeded immediately with my friends. We were there confronted by the famous "Beef-eaters", the Warders of the place, looking medieval in their picturesque costumes. One of them took us round, pointing out the different Towers and narrating the tales of tragic interest associated with them. There was the White Tower built by the Conqueror, which was fortress, palace and prison, all in one. It was pointed out to us as the place of imprisonment of Queen Elizabeth, in her early days, of Sir Walter Raleigh and many other illustrious personages. We were shown the archway of the Traiter's Gate by which State Prisoners like Lady Jane Grey, Anne Boleyn and Sir Thomas More entered and the room in which the two little Princes, Edward and Richard, were foully murdered, as also the site of the scaffold where so many had been beheaded. Next we



entered the gloomy chapel in which most of them lie buried. We were then taken into the room in which the executioner's axe and block, of those ancient days, are preserved. The Crown Jewels were the things we saw last in that place.

We then hurried out for lunch in one of the three Colleges—Bedford, Westfield and University Colleges—according to the groups into which we had been divided. We had not much time to spend there as we were to attend in the afternoon, a performance by Ruth Draper, the famous mono-actress at the Haymarket Theatre. We had been specially told not to miss this rare opportunity and when we arrived at the Theatre we found the hall packed to the full. The curtain was drawn aside and Ruth Draper appeared and was greeted with cheers. It did not take us long to realise that the glowing reports about her as a great adept in her art were by no means an exaggeration. We have seen mono-actors, and very clever ones too, among men, but they seemed to be pigmies by her side. With astonishing quickness she could assume the role of different characters in rapid succession in the same scene. Comic and tragic parts she could act with equal skill throwing the audience at one moment into uproarious laughter and at the next, moving them to tears.

We had that day a rather crowded programme culminating in a conference in the evening for an informal discussion over the India Bill with special reference to the "opportunities of Indian women to serve their country under the new Constitution", the Marquis of Lothian leading the discussion. There were present on the occasion, a few Englishmen and women as well as some of our own countrymen, prominent among them being Professor A. C. Chakravarthi of the Santiniketan. In the course of the discussion we made it clear that we were by no means satisfied with the franchise extended to us and that there was no meaning in the wives of men with educational qualifications not being enfranchised, while the wives of those with military and property qualifications—conservative elements—have been granted the right to vote. The discussion was continued the next day, Professor Chakravarthi taking the place of Lord Lothian who had to leave London the previous night. The proceedings were lively, several of those present having taken keen interest in them. In the afternoon of the second day of the conference we were entertained to tea by Mrs. Howe Martyn and later in the evening, we were at a social gathering in the Friends' House where we felt quite at home in the midst of very agreeable

company. The Friends' Society is a Quakers' Association that is somewhat sympathetically inclined towards India. There we happened to meet several Indians, resident in London.

It was during our stay in London that the National Peace Conference was held at Friends' House. There were two sessions, the subjects discussed being "The Position of Western Powers" and "Peace and the British Empire Racial Policy". We were rather late when we entered the hall which was quite full. For a long time we heard denunciatory speeches against the aggressive policy of Japan. We watched the proceedings with lively interest and a certain amount of amusement when the audience were allowed to put questions. A young woman got up and argued that, after all, Japan was only following the imperialistic aims of the West. Mr. Wedgewood Benn, the former Secretary of State for India, who was present on the platform, had to answer several questions from the audience. A smart-looking young Indian asked him as to who was responsible for the dumping of the Indian markets with Japanese goods. An Englishman got up and pointed out the incompatibility of the terms 'Peace' and 'Empire', while immediately after, another vehemently criticised the policy of Britain in India till he grew almost purple in face and

seemed to choke with emotion. Two South African delegates fiercely denounced the treatment meted out to them by their British masters, amidst loud cries of "shame" from the audience.

For the first time after leaving our country we were entertained by Indian students at their Hostel in the Gower Street. The sight of an Indian face, ever since we landed in Europe, had become so dear to us, and one of the chief reasons why we looked forward to reaching London, was the hope of meeting there many of our countrymen including even a few friends and acquaintances among them. So with considerable enthusiasm we went to Gower Street and there, for the first time since we left our native shores, we were also given Indian food, which we relished not a little. I was immensely pleased to meet there Mrs. Rama Rao, a very accomplished lady, once Professor in the Queen Mary's College in Madras. She accorded us a very hearty welcome in a fine, little speech. The musical performance that followed and the friendly chat that went on around us in our own Indian tongue, made us almost feel that we were back in our own Mother-land. After expressing our heart-felt thanks to Mr. Aimah, the Secretary and the other Countrymen of ours who gave us such a warm welcome, we left the Indian Students' Hostel with a certain amount of reluctance.

We had many more receptions and invitations, among which were the invitation to tea by the High Commissioner at the India House, the reception by Her Royal Highness the Duchess of York and tea at the House of Commons by invitation of Mr. H. Graham White M. P. At the place last mentioned our host took us round, giving us also an opportunity to listen to the interesting and "epoch-making" debate in the House of Lords over the India Bill. The occasion was specially important, because the Marquis of Zetland was then speaking in defence of indirect election, and among the distinguished members present were Lord Halifax and Lord Reading, the ex-viceroy of India.

We had heard so much of the London slums, and I was as much interested in seeing them as in seeing the British Museum, or the famous wax-work show at Madame Tussaud's or the other places of interest. A visit to the St. Pancras Housing Estate gave us an idea of the wretchedness and the squalor that prevail in the slum area. Some of the old buildings had been pulled down and new and far better ones, put up. But still the work in that area was far from complete, and a few of us wanted to enter these houses of misery, not out of idle curiosity but out of a real humanitarian interest, as we are only too familiar with

such conditions in our own poor, unfortunate country. We were however told that we could not go in. Still there was nothing to prevent us from having a glimpse of the interior of one of such buildings through a wide gap in its door close to the street. In the \* "shabby, thread-bare, sick and poor old MOTHER INDIA, standing at the brink of another world and turning blind eyes towards the strange, new flag" one can understand the existence of such filth and wretchedness, but not in an enlightened country like England with its \* "high ideals of constructive service and weal of the common people." And the sweet, little faces we met with in the streets and in front of some of the houses there, looked pathetically out of harmony with their miserable surroundings. \* \* \*

Our excursion to Oxford where we visited some of the schools and colleges, and to Sussex, where we were invited to the fine house of Mrs. Corbett Ashby, set amidst lovely peaceful surroundings, revealed to us the wonderful beauty of the English countryside in perfect contrast to the ugliness of cities like London. Yet in spite of its nerve-racking din and bustle, its miles and miles of unattractive buildings, the endless stream of its traffic that makes life for the pedestrian

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\* \* Miss Mayo's "Mother India".

thoroughly irksome, and that atmosphere of stupendous immensity in which the individual seems to be utterly lost, one begins, as days pass on, to like this huge city. We have wandered about the streets long after the twilight had died away, knowing little of the place, but feeling absolutely safe and secure. The Policeman there, is a friend to whom one can turn for help and guidance, so unlike his compeer in our own country. In spite of the many chances and temptations to go astray, in spite of even the Hyde Park scenes after dusk—scenes worthy of Catherine Mayo's pen—any woman, it seems, may walk about even late at night without fear of being molested or made an unwilling victim.

In spite of our longer stay in England, and more intimate contact with the people there, it is difficult to form a correct estimate of the average Englishman. Of the extreme politeness, the rather cold reserve and aloofness, the sense of humour and the love of justice of the English nation at home, I had heard so much. And as one interested in human beings and as an Indian under the British Empire, I particularly loved to watch and study the Englishmen I came across in England as well as in other European countries I visited. Polite, they undoubtedly are. We had enough proof of it almost every time we went

about in trains and buses in London. But here was lacking that warmth and interest we met with on the continent. There, in spite of the difficulty of language, there was what is known as, the language of the heart, hardly mistakeable. "Fill up the Channel and the Englishman will be cured of his cold reserve, as of many other things," I have read somewhere. Whether the Channel has anything to do with this special trait or not, there is in him that superiority complex as the basis of the trouble. For, undoubtedly the Englishman feels himself supreme under the sun. He has enough of that sense of humour which is a glorified version of that spirit of condescension, the natural outcome of a sincere conviction of his being above all criticism. Where subject nations are not concerned, the average Englishman always has a knowledge of things and a sense of justice. His ignorance about them is so colossal that one is apt to doubt whether it is not feigned, after all. He will put you questions and thereby appear greatly interested in your problems, and when you have exhausted yourself with the narration of hard, honest facts given in all seriousness, you are in the end met with a gentle "But, my dear young lady,.....", which makes you realise at once that you have been only wasting your lungs all



the while. Whether the average Englishman is lacking in intelligence, is a sincere doubt which has risen in my mind after my stay in England.

There are, however, personalities most of whom I have met for the first time in London, for whom I have nothing but the greatest regard. I had wished and hoped to meet Professor Lasky at London before leaving my country. I know some of my Indian friends who had been his students while in England, who look upon this well known writer and friend of India with great respect and admiration. And among the rising generation in my country Prof. Lasky is undoubtedly becoming more and more popular. While at lunch with Mrs. Howe Martyn in London one day, I met Mrs. Lasky who was kind enough to invite me to tea in her house. She struck me even then as one, well informed and keenly intelligent which impression was only further confirmed during the time I spent with her in her home. We sat talking in a room well-supplied with books, when the door opened and a tall figure with a pleasant smiling face entered. It was Prof. Lasky. He gives you the feeling that he is a comrade with whom you can freely exchange your ideas. Two of the things that he said that day, I think worthy of special mention. "To every Indian I would like to say that he should care more for his

country than for his career. It is sickening to see some of your young men leave this place with high degrees and crawl on their stomach for a title or a job." He is an admirer of Jawaharlal Nehru. "I like that young Nehru very much," he said, when my thoughts once again turned to that heroic soul lying in prison, far away from his ailing wife. \* \* \*

There are among the women of Britain, ardent admirers of Gandhiji, of whom one is Miss. Agatha Harrison whom I first met at the Friends of India House, and who later on came to see us at the Y. W. C. A. just before we left London. Keenly interested in the activities of the Indian National Congress, she is one of those who is in perfect sympathy with the national aspirations of our country. \* \* \*

Then there is Dr. Maude Royden, the great preacher of the Ecclestone Square, London. She had been to India for the All-India Women's Conference at Karachi held last December. I had come to know from some of my Indian friends in England, something of that noble life dedicated to the service of others. I was told that whenever her power of moving the audience was referred to by others in appreciative terms, she always said "Gandhiji has spoken from this platform; it is all his inspiration." The following is an extract

from the letter she personally wrote to me and that will give the reader an idea of the high estimation in which she holds the Mahatma. ".....  
..... since I believe that India has that secret for which the world is dying. I begin to think there is not another nation anywhere which could even begin to understand or to accept Mahatma Gandhi's message of love and power. Whatever problems arise, I find his solution to be the right one, and I believe there is no other solution. To me, a Christian, he seems most like Jesus Christ, and it is curious and interesting that he should be one of a people not politically free. India is a vast nation and the Jews a very small one; yet, just as India is governed by Great Britain, so was Palestine governed by Rome. Jesus believed—if I understand him rightly—that it was far more important for his people to fulfil their spiritual message to the world than to create a political revolution, and He knew that, if they had done this, the world would have gained so profoundly that no one would have wished to tyrannise over them. It is a difficult thing for an Englishwoman to say this is true of India, since it would seem like a criticism of those who justly feel and passionately advocate India's right to political freedom. But this world is perishing for lack of faith in spiritual power and when Mahatma Gandhi himself calls

India to this supreme service one's heart is filled with admiration and gratitude."

One more figure rises before me. It is that of a plain young woman with a wooden leg and a bad arm. She is Dorothy Newman, a sincere soul whose friendship I shall value and cherish to the end of my life. I met her first at the Guild House where we were invited once for lunch by Dr. Maude Royden. While we were seated there we saw a woman with a bad leg and a bad arm, enter the room. As she came and sat by my side my attention was drawn by her dress. It was of pure Indian Khadi with the Charka design on it. At once it drew me into conversation with her and she informed me of a Khadi Stall in London. She had with her, a photo of Gandhiji with his autograph which she cherished as a sacred possession. It was touching to see the wonderful devotion with which she spoke of 'Bapu.' Before we parted she cordially invited me to her house for lunch the next Saturday, which I was only too glad to accept.

It was an ordinary middle class home, away from the heart of London, that I entered. The few hours I spent with her were perhaps my happiest in London. Well-read and cultured, with a keen sense of humour, Dorothy is a rebel, a sweet dear friend, who, in spite of her physical

disabilities which at first rouse the sympathy of a stranger, gradually impresses you with her tremendous self-confidence and inspires you with a quiet strength. With one hand she stitches, plays well on the piano, types and does all the cooking. When I entered her neat, little bed-room I saw that the sheets and window-blinds were all of Khadi. Pointing to the latter she said: "That is a portion of the cloth on which Bapu sat when he came to London. I bought this bit for my use." On a small book shelf on the wall, were all the works of Gandhiji including the three bound volumes of 'Young India.' "Isn't he sweet?" she said, pointing to a small pencil sketch of the Mahatma. Moved beyond words, I left the room to meet her father, and Mr. Tapsell who had entertained us at the Guild House. They were just then entering the house.

I would have stayed there much longer if it were only possible; but as a matter of fact, I had to leave that small friendly circle after a few hours' stay in their midst. Just before parting Dorothy told me thus: "When you go back to India give my love to Mahadevo and Mira, and kindly remember me to Bapu." My car was about to start. With folded hands they three gave me the parting salute in Indian fashion. 'Namasthe' was the last word I heard from Dorothy, and I

was whirled away to my place of residence in the heart of the City. \* \* \* \*

One of the great discoveries that I made about modern England is that not only in new social enterprises, in international and humanitarian organisations, but in all branches of art and literature, the women of England exert a dominating influence. As an Indian woman, I must confess that this made me feel specially happy—for this corresponds to what, I believe, is also the case in India to-day, where our women are taking their place side by side with men in every field of activity. The weekly paper of Lady Rhondda called "Time and Tide" which is practically a paper run by brilliant English women,—though distinguished men also are allowed to contribute!—is a case in point. One hears from all sides as to the influence of this paper and of its women directors, on the vital thought movements and activities in modern cultural and political England. Perhaps the most distinguished of its regular writers is the novelist and reviewer Miss. Winifred Holtby,\* whose book reviews and short stories, novels and articles, are all unique in distinction, and incomparable both in technique and creative power. She is a humanist, knows about Africa from personal visit to the country;

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\* Since passed away.

is genuinely and profoundly concerned about the destiny of her brothers and sisters amongst the darker peoples of that country for whom she has love and respect. On India too, whenever she has written something in that paper she has proved her knowledge, as in her book on "Women". She loves and understands our country, which is part of humanity she and her like would like to serve. Her charm of writing and brilliant wit inform all that she writes with distinction. Cicely Hamilton also is a most gifted writer, more politically inclined. Her signed articles are fewer. It is sad that Vera Brittain does not write oftener in it, for her noble book "Testament of Youth" is now so well known to all of us as a most typical and significant product of the modern European mind. Her nobility of thought and power of intellect have aroused us to the new responsibilities of our age. I have referred particularly to "Time and Tide" and its contributors, as it provides a unique example of the place of modern English Women in literature. We also want such journals to be run by our women in India. "Stri-Dharma" is the only one we have in English, but it is yet, due to unavoidable circumstances, limited in its scope though, I need not say, it is a very valuable asset to our country. There are local papers in the different

linguistic areas, of course in the mother tongue of the locality, but they do lack proper intellectual leadership from our women. I must also refer to the writings of Rose Macaulay, specially her "Marginal comments" in the "Spectator." She is of course quite a well known writer, one of those who have inspired the new generation of English writers, as we find mentioned in "The Testament of Youth."

One thing more before I conclude this rambling account of my visit to England. There is perhaps nowhere else that much freedom of speech as there is in England to-day. A visit to the Hyde Park in the evening will convince one of this fact. A dozen or more speakers there would be, a few yards apart from one another, each talking away on any blessed topic under the sun, to a small curious crowd around. One may argue that England can afford the so-called liberty of speech divorced from direct action. All the same, this is almost an enviable state of things to which most of the other countries to-day may vainly aspire for many more years to come.

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## EDINBURGH

On the 9th of July *The Royal Scot* carried us to Edinburgh and dropped us at the Caledonian Station at 6 P. M. There, a crowd of friends was awaiting us and we proceeded to the Carlyle Hostel which was to be our residence during our stay in Scotland. We drove through the Princes' Street, one of the best in Great Britain. Scott's statue was the main object of attraction that we beheld on the way. The hostel was situated in a very quiet spot commanding one of the most lovely sceneries imaginable. It seemed to be a veritable abode of rest after our stay for days in the heart of London. The students were away after the examinations, but we met there two other tour parties of students from America. After dinner we all met in the reception room where we had something of a musical entertainment. Scottish songs were sung to us by an expert woman-musician of that place, with piano accompaniment by a middle-aged University Professor. Then the Americans, and finally our party, sang their own national songs, after which we strolled outside in the flower-fringed lawns in the twilight that lingered till about 11 p. m.

The next morning, being free, we went out in groups of two's and three's for shopping. It

was rather a cloudy day, which only seemed to enhance the atmosphere of romantic charm that pervaded this beautiful city. We walked along the Princes' Street with its many fine shops, entering some of them or having a hasty survey of the articles for sale kept in show-cases in front of the shops. There was a display of colours in tartan fashion. Small pocket editions of the works of Scott and Burns, dresses of dolls, boxes of cardboard or wood, in fact a large variety of articles for sale, bore those stripes of beautiful colours of the Highland costumes we had seen in books. On one side of this street lie the gardens which we entered, and from there, one could see among the flower beds, the statues of eminent persons. From here we could also see the castle which stands on a rocky eminence that slopes down the Holyrood Palace, both the places being intimately connected with Scottish History. The big floral clock in the gardens—the lines and the curves on its face being marked by well-trimmed ferns and flowers of various hues—was really a novel and attractive sight we saw that day.

After lunch at 'Patrick and Thompson,' a big restaurant and general shop where all of us met, our party proceeded to St. George's Girls' School. This is a private institution where the Prefect System was found working well. Among

many other subjects, various kinds of handicrafts, are taught here. We were struck most by the Geography class, with its fine charts and photographs of natural scenery, all prepared by the teacher herself, as also by the Drawing class, where the wealth of paintings and sketches by students bore testimony to artistic skill of no mean order. We next went to the Zoological gardens where one of the most interesting and amusing features was the monkeys who sit at table and take tea in the evening.

We visited next day, the Edinburgh Castle built at the time of Queen Margarete. Among other things there was the War Memorial. The martial annals kept fresh the memory of every soldier fallen on the field of Honour, the tomb of the Unknown Warrior being the most sacred and dear spot in the chapel. In the Castle we saw the tiny bedroom of Mary Queen of Scots, where, we were told, she had given birth to her son James who, it is said, was let down by a rope through the window there for safety. After wandering about the precincts of the Holyrood Palace we visited Moray House Training College. Both boys and girls study there and we watched with considerable interest, a History class. The students, not above 12 or 13, seemed to be full of life and enthusiasm and a few of them gave us

their addresses asking us to write to them occasionally about our country.

The same afternoon we visited the Printing House of the "Scotsman", the leading daily of Scotland. We were conducted from room to room, and almost every detail about the working of the Press was explained to us. During the time we spent in the telegraph department watching messages being received, we were highly interested to find among them news relating to further developments in the Italo-Abyssinian affair which was then but in its early stages.

We had tea in the Stevenson House where we saw the rooms, letters and other possessions of that well-known writer. From there we went to the Botanical Gardens where we strolled within its extensive grounds till late in the evening. We had, by this time, learned to go about alone even in strange, unknown quarters with a self-confidence at times surprising even to our guides. And especially in that charming city, with its cool and fresh air, it was so pleasant and invigorating to wander about, particularly in that twilight which persists even after 10 p. m. We used to walk about at night, when free, for miles without fear of being molested by anyone in any way.

It was with considerable enthusiasm that we went to Scott Country—named after the great

author. We passed through miles and miles of lovely scenery which reminded me so strongly of my own native district of Kerala, known as the 'Kashmir of South India'. On the way we passed by many things reminiscent of Mary Queen of Scots, that unfortunate woman, the victim of the terrible jealousy of one of the most vain-glorious persons the world has ever seen. There we saw the palaces where the queen used to stay and the now big tree, which she had planted with her own hand after her return from France. I found her name glorified as that of a martyr by many in that country.

Passing along, we reached a particular spot which, we were told, was the place where Sir Walter Scott used to pause in the course of his daily ride, to admire the scenery around, and where, dramatically enough, his horse following his master's funeral procession, made an abrupt stop.

First we went to Dryburgh Abbey where the great poet and novelist lies buried. We proceeded next to Melrose Abbey, now partly in ruins, with an atmosphere of sweet sadness pervading the whole place. Even now one can clearly read the inscriptions on the tombstones of the Douglasses. One particular portion was pointed out as the place, beneath which lay the embalmed heart of



**The Parsi Members of our Party.**



**CHRISTINA FRANCO**

Robert Bruce, the Scottish national hero. We then went to Abbotsford, the historic house of Sir Walter Scott, which faces the river. At the gate we met two Highlanders in kilt and cap, with their bagpipes. Scott's romances had filled us with a great fascination for the Highlands and we were not a little pleased to meet the natives of those regions.

Abbotsford, now in the possession of a descendant of Sir Walter Scott, is open to visitors. In one of the halls there we saw the medieval arms and trophies, with which the poet loved to decorate his mansion which cost him a good deal. There was his library with all the volumes kept intact. In his study, the table at which he sat and wrote his novels, his cheque-book and other articles of daily use are still preserved. Among the decorations on the wall, was a fine painting of the severed head of Mary, Queen of Scots, looking wonderfully calm and beautiful in its last, long sleep. Everything there was full of lively interest to us. We were agreeably surprised when we beheld in a quite corner, an idol of our dear old Ganesh, the famous Belly-God of Hindu mythology, in his usual squatting posture! As we passed out, the Highlanders were still there at the gate. In their strange costumes they seemed to be in perfect setting to the surroundings. After

some persuasion from us one of them danced before us to the Highland tune played by his companion on his bagpipe.

The excursion to the Trossachs and the Loch Katrine was the longest we had in Scotland. As we proceeded in our omnibus it grew colder and the scenery, more and more of the highland type. We lunched at a hotel and then proceeded to the Lake. With high rocks on its sides and set amidst quiet surroundings, Loch Katrine lay so beautiful in the bright sunlight. As we sat on the rocky banks by which ran the rather narrow road that lost itself in an avenue of tall, green trees, the heather that grew all around with blossoms white and purple, put me in mind of the middle-aged woman who, on the previous day met us on the streets with a few stalks of this plant, promising to bring us luck if each of us spent a penny for it. She persisted in kissing our hands, and was badly drunk and smelt strongly of liquor. This was the first occasion when most of us came across a tipsy member of our own sex. And a little later I met another in a worse plight, whilst strolling near the restaurant where we had our tea that evening. "Give me money", she demanded imperatively, rolling her eyes wildly and shaking her fist at me. "I have none", I replied indifferently, for to meet and talk to individuals



'thickly perfumed' had become so common with us during the tour. But a vigorous dig in my ribs, however, made me beat a hasty retreat, while the assaulter turned to another close by with her demand.

My tour in the west has undoubtedly revealed to me many new wonders. The first thing that struck me while on the ship itself was the inordinate capacity of man as a wonderful reservoir. I had hardly believed in the tales of Indian Sadhus walking over live coal unhurt. But now the common sight of human beings looking perfectly nonchalant even after the passage down the gullet, of gallons of fiery liquid—a few drops of which administered during the time of illness is enough to create an intolerable burning sensation in weak mortals like myself—has almost dispelled my scepticism about those stories of experiments with fire. As for beer, it is almost as popular in the West as water in our land. We have gaped with wonder, not unmingled with a certain amount of admiration, at the quantity gulped down at one draught even by students—rather an unknown feat in our country!

One of the happiest features of our stay in Edinburgh was that we met many of our countrymen residing there. There is an Indian Association there with a fairly large membership of

students hailing from almost every part of India. The reception that we had at their hands was one of the warmest during our tour. At the Cosmopolitan Club too, where we were heartily welcomed, we saw more of our Indian brothers along with the representatives of other nationalities. From the talks we had with our countrymen there as well as in London, we came to know that colour prejudice is not yet a thing of the past and that it does exist even among the Professors there today! Still worse is the snobbishness of some of the Indian students themselves—with some of whom a few of us had the occasion to come into personal contact—who, the moment they leave their native shores, spare no pains to make the foreigner understand that they have nothing but supreme contempt for everything in their country.

Paris was to be our next destination. We were to reach London by the "Flying Scotsman" at a non-stop run that evening and cross the Channel the very same night. Quite a large number of friends, mostly Indians, had come to see us off. This was the only place where our own countrymen had come to bid us farewell in such large numbers and most of us really wished we had stayed in their midst longer. So dear to us by this time had become everything Indian.

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## PARIS.

We left Waterloo at 10 p. m. on the 15th of July for Southampton, where we arrived at 11-30. The rest of the night was spent in the boat *Kantonia* which took us across the Channel. We had to get up very early in the morning, the rising sun looking like a ball of fire that cast its fiery red on the glassy surface of the sea. After an easy escape from the Customs Officers we took train for Paris. It was the dullest journey we ever had during the tour and I felt little of that enthusiasm which I had anticipated, on reaching the famous city of fashion and international culture.

During our stay in Paris we put up in the American House, Cite Universitaire, situated in a rather quiet spot facing a beautiful and spacious park. Close by were the houses for students from other countries. There were the Swiss, the Greek, the Cuban, the Chinese houses etc., all of the same high standard of living as the one where we stayed—evidently meant only for rich students. We also noticed that in spite of the fairly large number of French Indians studying in Paris, there was no such special house for them to stay.

To the new-comer this city has many places and things of interest. Among these are the tomb

of Napoleon, the Eiffel Tower (the biggest Broadcasting Station in the world), the Cathedral of Notre Dame, the Arch of Triumph, the fine museum with the famous statue of Venus among its vast and varied collections, the Pantheon corresponding to the Westminster Abbey in London, and the monumental statues of Victor Hugo, Rousseau and others. La Conciergerie is another place of profound interest, as the prison house of Marie Antoinette and the scene of trials and bloodshed during the terrible days of the French Revolution. It was just a castle in the very early days and is typically Gothic in style. After the Revolution and the destruction of the Bastille, it had been used till recently as the State Prison and the whole place looks gloomy and sombre. We passed through the big hall across which the doomed ones, after trial during the Revolution, were led out for execution. We were next taken to the room where Marie Antoinette was kept a prisoner. The doorway of this room had, it is said, been deliberately made low to make that proud queen bend down in order to enter it. There still stands the altar at which she received her last communion, while the copy of the letter she wrote to friends outside planning her escape, which fell into the hands of the Revolutionaries, is still, among other things, preserved

there. In a dingy enclosure with iron bars, in a gloomy corridor lies the plain wooden bench on which this miserable woman sat just before she was taken to the guillotine.

In thorough contrast to, and reminiscent of, the glorious days of the Bourbons and the gay court life of the misguided and unfortunate Mary Antoinette, are the many places at Versailles. The palace built for Louis XIV reminds one of the Doges Palace at Venice, though this is on a much larger and grander scale. In its chapel of no little splendour we noticed one curious thing. The pews were arranged in such a way as to have the worshippers face the king and not the altar! On the marble walls, traces of *fleur-de-lis*, the former national emblem of France—the heraldic flower of the lily—are clearly visible. We passed on from chamber to chamber named as the room of Mars, Jupiter, Venus, Mercury etc., with gorgeous paintings on the walls and the ceilings until we reached the Hall of Mirrors. It was here that the Treaty of Versailles was signed, and curiously enough, it was in the same place that years back in 1872 the Prussian King Wilhelm, after the defeat of the French Army, proclaimed the German Empire! The pen and the table used for signing the Treaty are still preserved there. We gained the interesting information

that the high-heeled shoe and the Eau-de-Cologne, indispensable to ladies of fashion, owe their origin to the ingenuity of the vain monarch, Louis XIV who, our guide told us, was too short for a man and was unaccustomed to baths, except an occasional one in alcohol !

Another section of this huge building is associated with Napoleon in his days of power. An entire big hall has its walls decorated with paintings depicting historical events in France, among which is a marvellous painting of Joan of Arc in man's armour, mounted on her white charger, with arms folded behind, and face upturned.

Not far away is the much simpler palace, where Louis occasionally went for a change. Passing through pleasant groves of tall, shady trees we entered the adjacent grounds where Marie Antoinette, influenced by Rousseau's advocacy of "Back to nature," loved to live like a country maid. The same gentle brook, even now alive with beautiful fishes, flows through the grounds, while the air of romance that pervades there is all the more enhanced by the Temple of Eros on the small heart-shaped island in the midst. A tragic quiet and silence reigns in those places, once so alive with men and women, and the mind wanders irresistibly from those scenes

of wasteful splendour to the gloomy Conciergerie associated with the bloody days of the Revolution.

Apart from places of historical interest we were much impressed with the educational institutions including some of the old Universities we visited in this big city. Some of the schools run by the municipality were the best of their kind. The open air school for delicate children, that we saw there, is really a wonderful one. It is situated amidst most healthy surroundings with large spacious grounds, where pear trees loaded with fruits grow in plenty. Children study in the big rooms made of glass so as to have enough of sunlight so essential to their health in those regions, where sunshine is a rare blessing. The walls, made of the same transparent material, can be closed down or opened up, at will. The floor is of rubber and there are no staircases to climb. The geography of the world is taught in the most realistic and interesting way. A huge globe, probably of mortar, representing the earth has all the countries worked out in relief on it and the children are taken up a winding staircase that runs round it, to note and study the position of different continents and countries. This school as well as the exceedingly fine Kindergarten, we visited, is conducted free for the pupils.

Life in Paris is very expensive, all things there being much more costly than in other European countries. There is undoubtedly more of make-up among women, powder and lip-stick being used to a very lavish extent. Intense hatred of the Germans is a marked feature of the French people. We had heard of the extreme politeness and cordiality of the French, but our experience was different. Few cared to enter into conversation with us and therefore, we could not come into intimate contact with the people there. This was due, we were afterwards told, to a lack of sufficient knowledge of English among them and to their dislike of doing things imperfectly. But, what some of the Turkish students there whom we chanced to meet, told us was "You may sit for a whole year at the same table with a Frenchman to eat and still you may remain perfect strangers to each other. Of course they are very nice and polite to their own people, but for foreigners they have little love, at least to begin with."

We met, during our wanderings in the streets, Indians of French India knowing practically no English, but their excellent French was admired even by our French guides. I have heard similar remarks in England, of the English of British Indians who go to that country. Indeed it is an



unconscious tribute paid to the exceptional capacity of Indians to master any foreign tongue, however difficult it may be.

Two of us happened to see a Communist Exhibition held in Paris at the time of our visit. The charts and maps mostly illustrated the progress achieved by Soviet Russia in matters of Education, Industrial Development, Child Welfare and Woman's Freedom. The same evening we two chanced to meet for the first time, Mrs. Lakshmi Bai, the wife of the late Mr. Chempakaraman Pillai of Travancore, who was for several years in Germany. This countrywoman of ours is a very charming person, who could talk very fluently, English, French and German. The Nazi Government has seized all her husband's property on account of his political views and she, we came to know afterwards, is now left with nothing to fall back upon.

There seems to be a fair sprinkling of Turks in Paris. We met some, and from the free talks I had with them one important thing about modern Turkey that struck me, was the growing indifference of it towards religion and conventional morality. Women too there are, as students from Turkey, and it was touching to see their devotion towards Kemal Pasha whom they rightly

look upon as the emancipator of the Turkish womanhood, besides being the saviour of their nation as a whole. Neither in dress nor in manners could the modern Turks be easily distinguished from the most advanced of Westerners today.

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## HOLLAND

At the Brussels station, which we had to pass through on our way to Holland to attend the International Students' Conference there, we were happy to meet a crowd of familiar faces. Most of those who had been our hostesses during our stay there, had come to meet us, having been duly informed of our intended arrival. They had prepared an interesting programme for us and were very much disappointed to learn that we had to leave the place immediately. We however missed the train which we had to catch from another part of the city and our friends, only too happy over the mischance, led us almost in triumph to a restaurant where they had made previous arrangements for us. The tea and the rest we had there, were by no means unwelcome after a fairly long journey in the train which had no dining car attached to it.

We left in the evening for our destination which we reached at about 11 p. m. It was of course an inconvenient hour for our hostesses with whom we had to stay during the few days before our Conference. Miss Samson and myself were taken by a rather elderly lady of stately appearance, to her fine house in Bloemendaal, a

quiet countryside where beautiful flowers grew in plenty. Our host M. Bierns, a big tea merchant who had been to India years ago, and as we later on found out an admirer of Gandhiji, was waiting for us while the other inmates had retired to rest. We were led to a large nice room that had been set apart for us and we soon fell into deep sleep.

Almost horrified to hear the clock strike nine the next morning, we jumped out of our beds and hurriedly went down for breakfast. M. Bierns had already left the house for his work and Madame Bierns and three others sat with us at the table. One of them was the adopted daughter of Mon. and Madame Bierns who had no child of their own. Of the other two, one was a sickly German lady staying with them for a short while, and the other a Russian girl, who, in her childhood had, during the Bolshevik victory, to leave her country with her father for his having been an officer under the Czar. They all seemed equally anxious to entertain us and fell into friendly, familiar conversation while we were served home-made cakes and the cheese for which Holland is so famous, along with excellent raspberries and other fruits gathered fresh from the garden. Madame Bierns told us that her people had been merchants for long. One of the family portraits on the wall was pointed out to us

as that of an ancestor of hers who was a burgo-master in his time.

After breakfast we all set out on a rather long excursion, intending to return by evening. We first proceeded to Haarlem where a big Flower Show was going on. As we travelled we saw neat, little houses before which were rectangular pieces of garden with flowers of one particular variety or other in full bloom. The houses were all in the modern style. The flowers we saw were not grown merely as ornaments to their gardens. The Dutch are hard-headed businessmen and they make money out of them. One curious thing we noted about the place was the net-work of narrow canals which isolate one house from another. These canals, serving as boundaries for property and also as highways of traffic, reminded me so strongly of the same, rather peculiar feature of several places in my native province of Kerala in South India. They also serve as one of the means by which the surplus water from the river is discharged into the sea.

The Flower Show was conducted on a magnificent scale indeed. As we got in and looked around we felt we were in a sea of colours. All kinds of flowers and vegetables available in those regions, had found their way to the place.

Heaps were coming in by boats as we stood there. It was interesting to watch the auction sale going on, after which the flowers were conveyed by air to distant countries.

We next went to see the dykes. As a school girl I had learned to associate Holland with those big walls that keep out the sea and the very name of that country used to summon before my mental vision the picture of a small boy who, through the dark dreary hours of the solitary night, lay awake with his finger against a small, but treacherous, leak in one of the dykes. Our car passed over some of them which are often used as highways. On the surface of these dykes ordinary turf is laid as a sort of protection. The intertwining roots of the trees which are planted on the sloping sides of many of these dykes, help to keep the soil firm. On one side we could see the shining water above the level of land on the other. These dykes serve as good foundations for houses in this country, which with its marshy soil cannot easily provide a solid foundation for buildings.

It grew more and more cold, the chilly wind whistling past us as we rushed along. It being summer, the land was all one stretch of deep green. Over the meadows, fat, big cows were browsing lazily. They contrasted strikingly with the half-famished, miserable ones in our own

country. Wind-mills, of which one can see any number, are one of the special features of Holland and they add to the charm of the landscape. We saw as we passed along, a lake in the process of being converted into land. There is a Dutch proverb which says "God made the sea and we made the shore." In fact much of their land has been reclaimed from the sea and the Dutch are noted for their wonderful engineering skill. These people had to fight for a long time against the forces of nature and this struggle has made them a hardy and persevering nation.

We got down at a village and passed through its streets. The people were in their old and rather strange costumes—the men having very wide trousers and the women, large caps. They all wore big wooden shoes. On one of the dykes by a running rivulet, we had a most hearty lunch, after which we proceeded to Amsterdam. Meanwhile, we had been exchanging ideas. The German lady of our party was no admirer of the Nazi regime. The Russian girl who, with her black eyes and hair, looked more Asiatic than European, had not lost the love for her country which, as an exile, she had left in early girlhood. Our hostess was a very highly cultured woman interested very much in social work. Her dignified bearing and self-confidence were in keeping with

the prominent place which women in that country have occupied in national life. While referring, with admiration, to the sturdy independence of the Dutch, of which one reads in history, I was amused to hear her remark, somewhat sarcastically "yes, we are so independent that it is difficult for two of us to agree on a single point. Indeed I have begun to doubt whether independence is such a blessing as it is supposed to be".

Amsterdam, with its many canals, reminds one of Venice. This city also is built on many islands—only, it has not that romantically picturesque air, which pervades even today the old Italian city. We were astonished to learn that the whole of this big city rests entirely on piles driven into the marshy land beneath.

We reached home in the evening. It was a pleasure to be back in that quiet countryside and wander about the extensive and exceedingly lovely garden of our hostess. M. Bierns took my companion Miss Samson to visit a hospital for epileptics, while my hostess and I went to the Kindergarden School close by. Holland is also noted for its fine educational institutions.

The next day we were to leave for Utrecht. Our friends prepared for us that evening rice and curry, and they insisted on our eating it with our fingers. As they watched this performance they



thought it a difficult feat almost beyond their powers. Would our Western friends realise that the knife and the fork are almost an ordeal for the first few days, to those from the East who are unaccustomed to them! We Easterners, however, make much allowance for the violation of our table manners by foreigners and even view it with good humour, while we run the risk of losing our reputation for good manners if we, all on a sudden, do not thoroughly fall into their way of eating!

Dinner over, both of us accompanied by the Russian girl went out for a stroll. The cool air, the vivid green and the riot of colours that greeted our eyes wherever we looked, were so bracing to our spirits. It was as if there was a surplus amount of energy within us that was struggling for expression. The active temperament of the Westerner is undoubtedly due, to a very large extent, to the climate which has so much to do with the vitality of a nation. Within a month after landing in Italy we had gained appreciably in weight, and even the most sluggish amongst us had begun to get lively and energetic. And above all, there is in the west that spirit of devotion to sports, which is so catching and is so sadly lacking in the East. One cannot remain morose or inactive in the West for long, even if one wants to do so. I

remember how we three that evening rushed almost madly down a slope with trees growing thick on either side, thoroughly indifferent to the passers-by.

The next morning we proceeded to the station to rejoin the rest of the party. Our hostesses saw us off. We got down at Utrecht and were taken to the Women's Club. We had a few hours' rest there before our hosts at that place were to come and take us to their homes. And now having got the programme of the Conference which was to begin two days later, we fell to discussing our own parts there. We were getting up the story of Sakuntala in a series of tableaux for the Stunts Night, and were also intending to give a Gujarati folk dance. Miss Mody of Bombay was our Dancing Mistress and she must have had a very hard time of it with her students, some going out of tune, others taking wrong steps and a few looking pathetically stiff in the back. Anyhow the rehearsal went on under the most minute supervision of our leader till our hostesses came to claim their respective charges.

It was my good fortune to have always had the most desirable sort of private families to stay with. The one difficulty I had, was with regard to the mastering of their names and addresses, and that was more or less a feat in phonetics. My

new hostess was a rather stout lady with a very pleasant face that reflected the kindness of a genuine soul. Her husband was an occultist and during the few days that we stayed with them we were able to realise that theirs was a house open to all.

Nothing so much helps one to know the sentiments of the people of a country as staying with private families, especially when lots of visitors come there. Our discussions were often centered on the question of Colonies. Holland is a comparatively prosperous country with a standard of living by no means low. This is chiefly due to her colonies in the Far East. There is however much discontent now among the colonials. At the International Students' Conference none of them studying in Holland was present except at a Javanese dance when just a handful of them came for that item alone, and that too,—so we were told—after much persuasion from the organisers. It was sickening to hear many of the people I came across, in Holland, speak of their colonies as their eternal possessions. At the International Students' Conference I was rather amused to hear an educated Dutchman, during a friendly chat with me, remark while referring to their colonies, that his generation had to carry on the noble work started by his forefathers, of civilising the

ignorant natives. That is the pretence of all the Imperialist Powers of the West regarding subject nations. And a few days afterwards I was to hear from an Italian gentleman that the conquest of Abyssinia by Italy would mean the immediate ending of slavery there, and later, the deliverance of subject countries like India!

During our stay in Utrecht my host took both of us out on two excursions. One was to Ommen, eighty miles away, of whose beauty I had heard so much while in India. Holland is a flat country with very little of hilly ranges. Yet it looks so beautiful in summer with its forests of lovely beeches and vast stretches of green. And Ommen, where we saw the castle Erde that was once presented to Mr. J. Krishnamurthi, with the adjoining spacious grounds, where the Theosophical Star Camps used to be held, is indeed a beauty spot in Holland. The other excursion was a much shorter one, passing by Woudschoten where our Conference was to be held. Our interest was on this occasion greatly roused when a large, white building in the midst of spacious gardens and courtyards was pointed out as the present residence of the ex-Kaiser of Germany, who had fled to the Netherlands, towards the close of the War, leaving his country to its fate.

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## AT THE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' CONFERENCE.

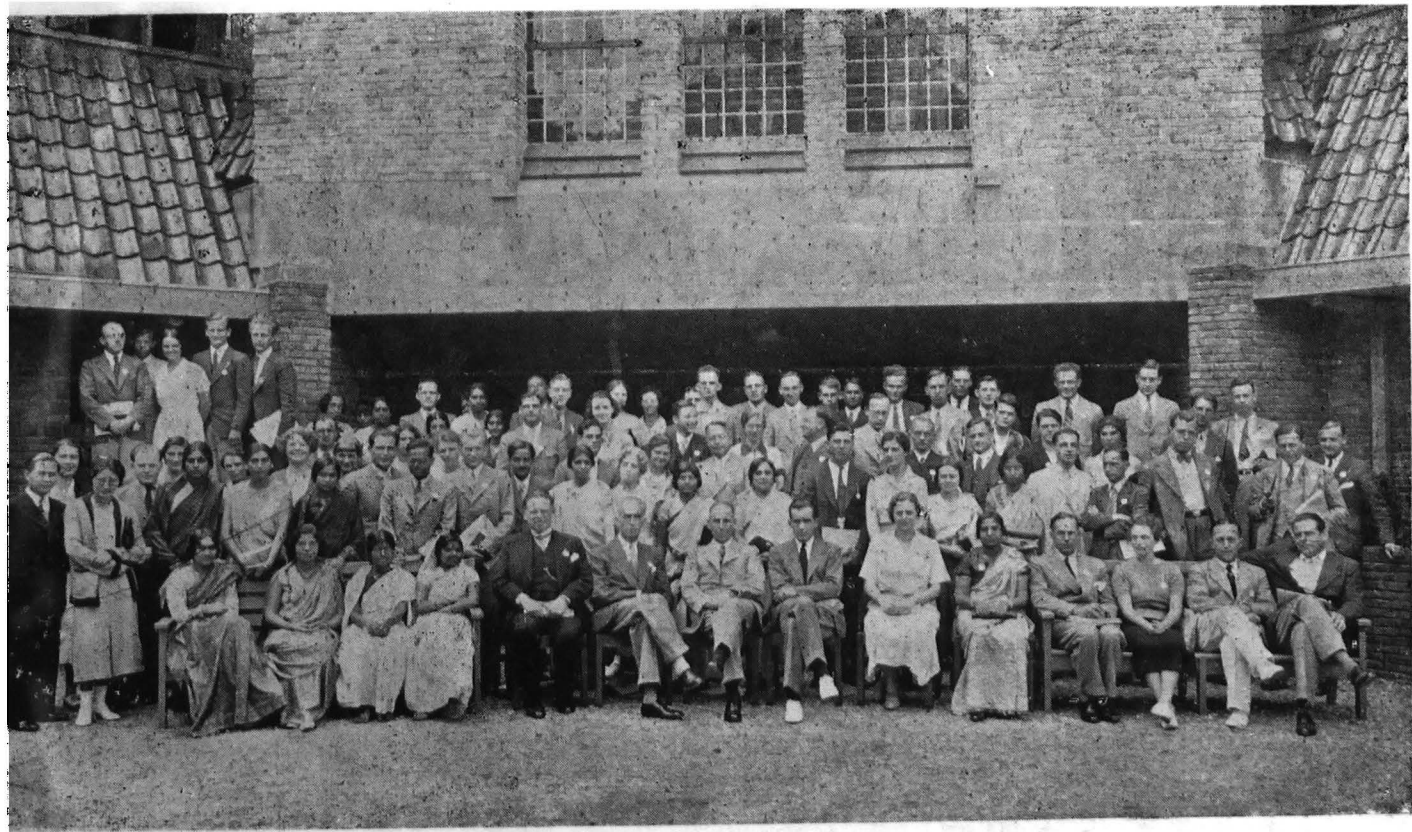
It was the day for the International Students' Conference and we were to leave for Woudschoten, just a few miles away, where it was to be held for a week. In this connection a few words about the I. S. S. will not be out of place before dealing with the Conference held under its auspices.

The International Students' Service was founded immediately after the great war, and it was then known as European Students' Relief of the World's Student Christian Federation. Its immediate object then was to supply food and clothing to the starving students of Eastern and Central Europe, where the disastrous results of the War were visible in all their horrible nakedness. Amidst the chaos and misery that prevailed there, university life had become dislocated and the students, hungry and ragged, were often victims to physical and even mental disorders. The International Students' Service since then saved many from torturing hunger, disease and death. Later on, it not only became the backbone of the student self-help and co-operative movements, but by supporting all efforts to develop institutions of learning, did some real service in the field of culture also. Giving scholarships, finding posts, securing free hospitality or cheap lodging in

families and hostels, collecting gifts of clothing from private individuals for needy students, are only some of the many ways in which the I. S. S. seeks to help poor students. And during the last two years it has rendered substantial aid to the refugee students from Germany. The recent political developments in Europe have made the work of this organisation very difficult. Germany under the present regime has refused to co-operate with the I. S. S., whose valuable friend Herr Beck of that country, was shot dead last year by the Nazis. Yet the I. S. S., with all its limitations and difficulties, is striving hard to carry on its ideals of service.

It was the Eleventh Annual Conference of this organisation that we were going to attend. Our omnibus stopped in front of a three-storeyed modern building constructed by the Dutch Students' Christian Movement in a quiet, charming spot surrounded by pine woods that gave an air of seclusion, so helpful to keep the mind active and vigorous during such functions. There was a motley assembly of delegates from twenty-one countries. Besides our party, there were three other Indians also present, Professor Chakravathy of the Shantiniketan being one of them.

The Conference opened in the night of the 26th of July in a large room with doors and



**At the International Students' Conference.**

windows kept closed to keep out the severe cold from outside. But the smoke from the hearth and the active pipes of our brothers filled the already close air of the room. Dr. Arnold Wolfers, Dean of Pearson College in the Yale University, a tall stately figure, was the Chairman of the Conference. Among the speakers that evening were H. E. the Dutch Minister of Education and Dr. Tatlow, Chairman of the I. S. S. whom we had met at Annandale House in London.

On the ensuing days there were discussions in the evenings on the various vital aspects of education. Four main addresses were delivered, and they were on "The University Today" by Professor R. C. McLean of the University College of South Wales and Monmouthshire; on "Academic Freedom in the U. S. A." by Mr. E. R. Murrow, Asst. Director of the Institute of International Education, New York; on "Student Youth and International Community" by Frank Hardy, former President of the Oxford Union and also M. Ormand Hoog from Paris; and on "The University Youth, faced by Economic and Social Problems" by Professor Sbert of the University of Barcelona. The members took lively interest in the discussions on these subjects which were so ably dealt with by the speakers. Only when prolonged speeches were being made in French or



in German, had we to sit listlessly watching the movements of the jaws of the speakers and, occasionally relieved by the consoling sight of a few of our Western brothers who, despite their knowledge of those languages, sat dozing in a safe nook.

In the daytime four Commissions sat up to discuss the work of the four Departments through which the I. S. S. activities are carried on. These departments are for (1) Cultural Co-operation and International Studies (2) University Research (3) Self-help and Co-operative Organisation and (4) Student relief work. During the proceedings and discussions of these Commissions we from India could not help feeling that the I. S. S. was too much occupied with the problems of the West to worry about the East. There were, of course, occasional vague references to China. And we, to whom our far-off native land had by this time become so dear, as our eyes were being forced open during this tour of ours, occasionally asked ourselves what our place was in that Conference. True, we had been warmly received almost everywhere in the West and more so, in Holland where in the private families in which we stayed, and at Woudschoten, we had enjoyed the greatest hospitality. And none could appreciate it better than we from the country which has been ever

noted for its lavish hospitality, where, when once a guest enters the home, he becomes, in no time, almost a member of the family. But the sad fact remained that "Internationalism" and "Co-operation" could exist only among free nations, and never between masters and slaves. What was, after all, our status amidst those various nationalities represented at the Conference to discuss their problems and arrive at a solution? I very well appreciate the frankness of a delegate, an English girl who told me that her parents would be ill-pleased to learn that she was staying with Indians in the same house during the Conference. Yet like little children, we go on greedily swallowing sugar-coated pills, and ostrich-like we continue burying our heads in the sands of delusion! I am not blaming the I. S. S. which is only an independent non-political organisation that is doing something for the West, in spite of the difficulties it has to cope with. I am just voicing the sentiments of a few of us who had gone there with hearts full, having clearly realised by that time, where our country with its once-mighty civilisation, stands today in the scale of modern values, how it is dying for lack of vital, human necessities. And such amongst us may be excused if we are apt to get discontented with patch-works, impatient of compromises, and distrustful of talks on Peace,

Co-operation and Fellow Feeling. Of course we do not deny that discussions have their own value ; we are hopeful even about the League of Nations.

To go back to the Conference. Apart from serious discussions, there was the lighter side of the programme. On the second night was the Guzerati dance by our group, followed by Indo-nese music and also Javanese dance. The last item performed by the Javanese students in Leyden, is something like the *Kathakali* of Kerala which has, of late, begun to attract wide attention far beyond the borders of that small province in South India.

On the Stunts Night every delegation had to contribute its own item. It is on occasions like these that the "big guns" of Conferences deign to come down from their high pedestals and appear more human. I was not a little surprised to see the Chairman of our Committee appear in a Dutch woman's costume and dance, looking somewhat stiff in the back, but still much more womanly than many of my sex. The story of "Sakuntala" presented by our group in a series of tableaux was well appreciated by the audience. But the contribution by the French delegation was the best of the whole lot. It was a simple item of singing of stanzas composed in honour of several

personalities in the Conference, amid roars of laughter from the audience.

The food which was not much to the taste of the vegetarians amongst us, who must have by that time consumed cartloads of potatoes, and the intense cold made us occasionally long for a change. But when the Conference drew to a close we felt sad to part from that company with whom we had been living together as one big family, and that place of lovely woods, where we had often roamed about like little children during our free hours.

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## SWITZERLAND (I)

Switzerland was the next country on our itinerary. For more reasons than one I was eagerly looking forward to our reaching it. We had heard of it as the "play-ground of Europe,"—this beautiful land of lakes and snow-clad mountain ranges, where tourists flock in great numbers. But more than that, it was the home of M. Romain Rolland, that great savant and philosopher, well-known and so much admired in India, whom I was hoping to see during our stay in Geneva.

On our way from Holland we had, while entering Germany, to "declare" our money. The present Government in Germany is very particular that marks, worth more than five pounds, should not be taken to or from Germany. We got down and there was already a crowd in front of the Customs authorities. It was a tedious business to wait patiently for our turn and some of us, intending to make the best of a bad job, tried to derive some fun out of it. We emptied out our purses on the table when our turn came, and there lay a motley collection of lires and copper coins of almost all the European countries we had visited, besides Indian rupees, half-rupees and annas in a few cases. "Only notes and cheques," shouted the rather bewildered officers, though not without

sufficient good humour. Only one of them, standing a little apart from the rest of his companions, evidently suspecting that we were enjoying ourselves at his expense, left the room growling an angry remark which, because of his scanty knowledge of English, amounted to something so ridiculously funny as to cause more amusement for us.

That night in the train was the most wretched one we had in the whole tour. Sleeping cars were available only for four of us and that too, rather late in the night. We were almost packed like sardines in two small compartments. I, who had managed to get a berth in one of the sleeping cars, retired into it for the night. We were to change at Basle early next morning and I woke up to the knocking at the door by the guard. I was in the topmost berth while two German ladies slept in the two lower ones, and when from the great height where my berth was, I climbed in the dark at the risk of breaking my limbs, I was not a little dismayed to find that the rest of the party had left me behind! The train had not yet reached the Central Station and I did not know where my companions were. A lady by my side who could talk English perfectly well, noting my anxiety from my face, assured me to find them out for me when we got down, and to my great relief, I saw them all a few minutes

later, seated comfortably at tea in the restaurant close to the station, some of them having vaguely begun to wonder what could have happened to me.

We were not to wait long for the Geneva train. All along during our tour in the West, we were struck by the vast contrast between the trains there and those in India, where it is an ordeal to travel in the third class compartment which is so miserable, dirty and over-crowded. But the trains in the West are very clean and comfortable, the Swiss trains being the best of all we have travelled in. Our course lay after a time along the shore of Lake Lemman, whose deep waters lay so beautiful in the bright sunlight.

We put up at Pension Kaufman. It was one of the many hotels with which the country abounds, and the manager was exceptionally polite and obliging. The Swiss, because of the vast number of tourists who visit their country, have taken to hotel-keeping as one of their chief professions. They are very good business men and make money out of catering to the needs of visitors. Life in Switzerland is however very expensive. To remove a slight inkstain caused by the joined carelessness of my room-mate and myself, on the carpet in our room in the hotel, cost us almost five rupees! Poverty, so I was told,

is almost absent here. Yet the people are unostentatious in their mode of living and do not waste much money on frivolous enjoyments. The love of independence of this hardy and enterprising people, who will fight to the last for their own is only too well known.

Geneva is a place noted for its international importance. The International Labour Office and the House of the League of Nations were among the places we visited. At the former we met Miss Hague who, as she told us later on, had been to India during the peasant revolt at Bardoli. At the League House we had the pleasure of meeting Dr. Kulman, Director of International Cultural Co-operation, whose acquaintance we had made during the I. S. Conference in Holland. He too has travelled widely over India and has come into contact with many of our national leaders. Among the two million messages preserved in the League House, there was an interesting letter from an American boy of eleven to the representative from his country at the Dis-armament Conference. The letter reads as follows :—

*My Dear Mrs. Wooley,*

I understand that the Disarmament Conference is not making any progress. I have thought of a good idea if guns and fire-arms are taken away from the people. If they want war let them fight with rotten eggs and tomatoes and, may be, some grape fruits. If they want guns, give them pop-guns. If this is done no body will be hurt. Sincerely yours,

THOMAS KING (Sd). (Aged eleven).



In spite of its being the Head-quarters of many International Organisations, Switzerland is very conservative as, perhaps, absolute democracies tend to be. It must be remembered that one of the countries that strongly opposed the entry of Soviet Russia into the League of Nations was Switzerland. Still, the strongest single party in Parliament is, I was told, the Social Democratic party. There are also new political movements under Fascist and Nazi influences. It is in this country which at the same time is democratic, conservative and neutral in foreign affairs, that political refugees from other countries have so often taken shelter. We can see in Geneva today the Landolt Hotel, where Lenin after his flight from Russia had so often sat and planned the future of his country. One can meet here students from different countries studying in various faculties, for Switzerland is noted for the courses of study its Universities offer in many branches of science, especially in Medicine, Surgery, Engineering and the Natural Sciences. Its Civil Code, which is considered a model, has been adopted by Turkey *in toto*. We found here even Negro girls from America studying music, for the Swiss are an artistic race with a real taste for music.

At Geneva we were entertained at many social gatherings. We had a very delightful

evening at the house of Dr. Kotschnig, Director of the High Commission for Refugees from Germany. We had met him at the I. S. Conference. Here also, the Y. W. C. A. whose several branches had entertained us in many of the places we had visited, gave us a hearty welcome. The women of the different nationalities of the West present on that occasion, loved to hear us talk on the various sides of Indian life.

Apart from these, our stay in Geneva afforded us ample opportunities for enjoying the beauties of nature in its various aspects. The blue waters of the lake which meets one's gaze often when one walks through the city are one of its attractions. And from the big bridge, one can have the beautiful sight of the blue Rhone and the gray Arve mingling their waters and flowing along, while the Alps rise in the distant background.

The excursion to Mont Blanc took us beyond the Swiss borders into France. It was a dull, cold morning and by the time we saw the big mountain ranges looming large, it had begun to rain. We arrived at Chamonix at 10-15 a. m., and went slowly up the mountain railway. The valleys that lay below and the steepy sides covered with shrubs and trees, bearing fruits and flowers, presented one of the finest of scenery that reminded

me strongly of an excursion through the Western Ghats in South India. By the time we reached the end of the railway line, the scene around us had completely changed. The parapet wall at the back of the rest-house before which the train stopped looked down from a great height on a valley of glaciers that wound its way amidst snow-clad peaks looking so awe-inspiring in the gloomy day. Men, who appeared to us from above, like crawling insects were scattered about on the glaciers which they were trying to cross. Most of our party also climbed down the narrow descent hoping to cross that pass of treacherous snow, which showed, here and there, the greenish blue waters. In the meanwhile, Jerr Dubash and myself remained behind, content to watch from above the heroic attempts of our friends. The stoutest in the group was the first to slip and fall, to be immediately followed by a tall, thin member of the party, who all the while was exhorting the rest to take care. This mishap appeared to throw cold water on their spirits while, because of the intense cold out-side, we two went inside the rest house.

There was a party of six or seven there, seated around a rectangular table. When I looked for the lunch which I had kept inside, I found it had disappeared. With awakened interest I

turned my eyes to the group in front of me. They were big-sized, coarse-looking men and women, vigorously attacking the huge loaves of bread that looked like stumps of wood, consuming heaps of meat and drinking profusely. The more I looked at them, the more repelling they seemed to me, and I had my own doubts as to how my lunch disappeared. As I told Jerr about my suspicion she drew instinctively towards me, for we had with us five or six purses belonging to our friends who had gone down to the glaciers. A vision of deadly knives being held close to our throats must have arisen before her as, with her overcoat, she covered up the money bags on our laps and sat close to me firmly clasping my hands. At last our party returned and with no serious mishap we got into the train and left the place.

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## SWITZERLAND (II)

### *My pilgrimage to Villeneuve.*

It was during our stay in Geneva that I received the message for which I had been so eagerly waiting. It was from M. Romain Rolland to whom I had written that before my return to India, I would very much like to meet him. I had come to know and admire him years back through some of his great works. He had kindly replied that, though his health had become worse, after his recent visit to Russia, I could see him at his residence in Villeneuve. But to my great disappointment I received the letter only after the time fixed for the interview had passed away. It was late in the evening, and to go to him then was out of the question, since the journey would take two hours by the mail train and even more across Lake Lemman, at the further end of which his house stood. We had also to leave Geneva in a few days. Bitterly regretting the loss of a golden opportunity, I went to the phone to try my luck once again.

It was Madame Rolland that answered. M. Rolland was too weak to walk to the phone, but he sent me the assurance that I could see him on whichever day I liked.

On a bright day by noon, I started for Villa Olga. As I was a thorough stranger to the place and was unable to speak any of the languages prevalent there, Mr. Raghunatha Rao of Trivandrum, now in the International Labour Office, was kind enough to see me off at the station. Meanwhile, my companions had gone for a cruise in Lake Petit. As the train started, doubts and fears rose in my mind. Though I was assured at the station that it was my train, the information I chanced to get from a copy of the railway guide was misleading. Again, being the mail train, would it stop at the small station Villeneuve? Or, would I have to change at Lausanne? There were only a few people in my compartment and they were perfect strangers to me. Just then the ticket collector entered and I turned to him to clear my doubts. But I found that he could not speak English, and therefore would be of little help to me. A respectable looking gentleman who had only a few minutes back entered the train and seated himself opposite to me, politely asked me in English what I wanted. When I told him my fears he assured me to my great relief, that the train would stop at Villeneuve.

I soon fell into friendly conversation with my new acquaintance. He was a University Professor, and as a Theosophist he was specially interested

in India. As in Holland, in Switzerland too there are many Theosophists.

Our train which was rushing past green vineyards had now begun its race along the shores of Lake Lemman which, with the Alps in the distance and enveloped in a thin mist, lay like a beautiful dream.

A few stations after Lausanne my friend got down, and an old man who had just entered occupied the same seat opposite to me. He could talk enough English and took much delight in pointing out to me places of interest on the way. We passed by Vevey where Nestle's Food and Chocolate are manufactured. We rushed past the Chateau of Chillon, celebrated by poet Byron in his poem *The Prisoner of Chillon* and mournfully associated with the name of Bonnivard the "Prisoner" who lay there for many weary years. At last the train reached Villeneuve, and bidding good-bye to my fellow-traveller I got down.

I had reached there much earlier than the time fixed for the interview. I was not quite sure whether it would be convenient for M. Romain Rolland to receive me then and I did not know which way I should take to reach Villa Olga. But suddenly some-body addressed me by name, and

turning round, I saw a grey-haired lady by my side. "My brother received a phone message from some one a short while ago that you will be coming much earlier than anticipated," said Mademoiselle Rolland, while I inwardly thanked my friend the Professor, who had done me this act of kindness. "The servants are gone to the mountains while my sister-in-law can't leave my brother who is not well. He has sent me here so that you may not lose your way."

Villa Olga was quite close by, but it was very easy for a stranger to lose the way. Mlle. Rolland had to go to some of her friends who were to leave Villeneuve soon that day. So, assuring her that I would follow her directions carefully and would not miss my way, I took leave of her and proceeded to Villa Olga alone.

The sun was shining brightly. Unfortunately for me, I had put on a deep-coloured Carnatic silk saree which, in the bright sunlight, made me conspicuous even from a great distance. Also, Indian women are an exceedingly rare sight in those parts. I was soon the object of everybody's curious attention. The bus conductors and passengers went on turning round and staring at me till I was out of sight. Women and children came and took their stand at the gates by the road-side. Such attention had become part of our experience.



during our tour ; but that day it might be because I was all alone and also because I had begun to suspect that I had lost my way, I felt far from relishing it.

I was now walking by the side of Lake Lemman. In its deep, blue waters which sparkled in the rays of the shining sun, crowds of holiday makers were enjoying themselves. Those whom I met on the way being themselves strangers to the place, could not show me the right path. At last a woman, a native of that place guessing just from the names 'Villa Olga' and 'Romaine Rolland' what I wanted, pointed out to me the right direction. I had to retrace my steps, and then I went along a narrow curve on the road, which I found branching into two. After some hesitation, I chose the one to the right. It led to an open space where stood two or three houses. In front of one were playing two little boys the younger of whom ran inside, frightened at seeing me. On the top of a far bigger house close by, a number of men were at work. With the help of half a dozen words in French, which I had managed to pick up during the tour, I made them understand whom I wanted to see. Though unable to talk a word of English they were nevertheless anxious to help me. So, by means of signs they showed me which way I should go.

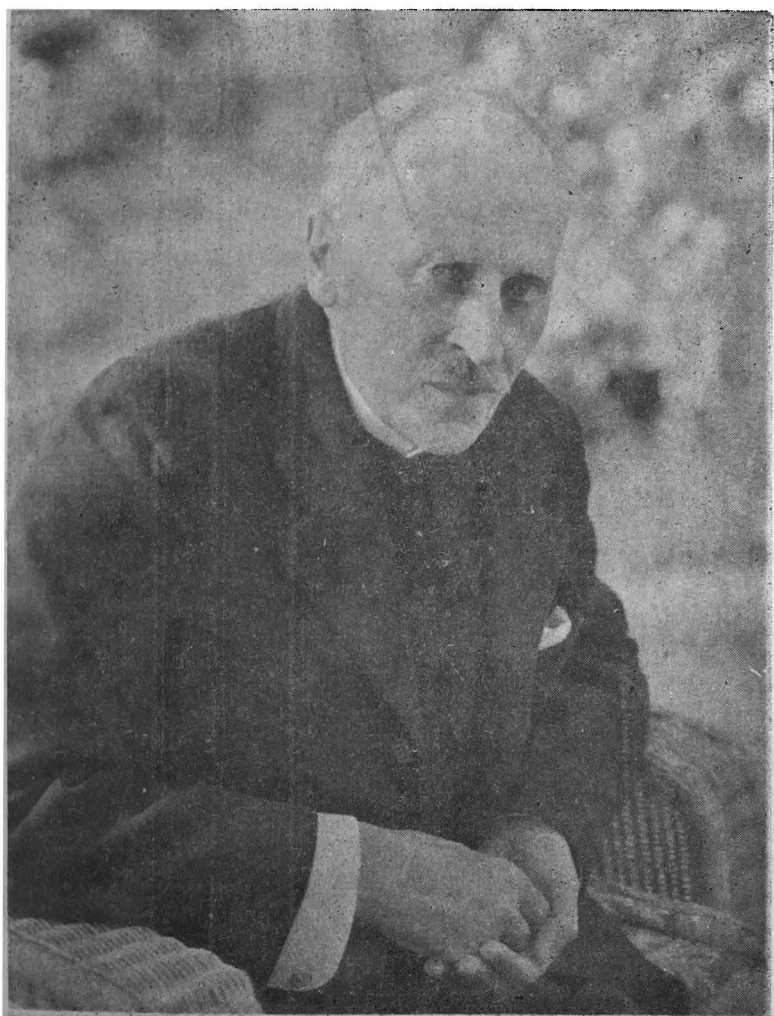
I was once again on the road which ran straight on. I had been trudging along in the hot sun of that sultry noon, and was therefore, perspiring profusely. The shady trees that grew on either side, and the cool breeze that came rustling through the leaves were indeed so delightful and soothing. I had proceeded only a few yards when I chanced to turn my eyes towards a garden further away on my right side. Close to the house which was in the midst of the garden and away from the roadside, I could see the figures of a man and a woman standing there and looking in the direction from which I came. I knew I had almost reached my destination and hurried on.

It took just a minute or two to reach the gate. In the meanwhile, what memories and thoughts flashed through my mind! Why had I undertaken that journey? Was it just mere curiosity to see a great thinker and writer? Or was it to seek illumination from him on any serious problem of life?—It was just the pilgrimage of a humble soul filled with gratitude. That scene which occurred four years back seemed to rise up again before my eyes with all the vividness of reality. A small child on its death-bed—in the mute heart of the mother, helplessly watching close by, only the cry of despair could be heard, while the shadows of death fast encircled the dear little form.

“Where are your gods and goddesses now? What consolation do the sacred texts offer? Of what avail are prayers which are but cries in the wilderness?”—A noble work, of sublime thoughts, that chanced to come into my hands then had sustained me during that critical period. Time flew quickly. Another similar scene was enacted in my life. Years have gone by and my longing to see the aged writer, so much admired in India, grew more and more intense.

Now, while I was about to realise my long-cherished desire, a great fear had begun to work within me. How would he, when I was actually in his presence, impress me? Realities often fall short of one's idealised expectations. Would it prove the same here also? \* \* \*

I had by this time almost reached the garden. Madame Rolland, a young Russian with a lively face, greeted me at the gate, and we walked through the garden towards the house. M. Rolland who could not speak English, welcomed me just by a warm grasp of the hand and then we all entered the sitting room. M. Rolland was even then suffering from asthma, his usual complaint. His thin, wan face, looked older than it appears in the pictures. But the eyes were bright and seemed aglow with fire, especially while he was thinking.



à M<sup>rs</sup>. K. Nair  
en souvenir de sa visite à Villeneuve  
7 avr 1935 Romain Rolland

M. ROMAIN ROLLAND

Though rather tired and hungry I was in no mood to do justice to the fruits that were placed before me. Without ceremony we entered into conversation, Madame Rolland acting as interpreter. From personal matters we passed on to topics of general interest. M. Rolland is a great admirer of Soviet Russia, which, he believes, is the only country that is now coming up rapidly. He was eager to know whether the sacred memory of Swami Vivekananda and of Sri Ramakrishna is being cherished in India to-day. "India" he said, "has contributed so much spiritually to the world and a free India can do much more in the future." He was happy to hear of the coming up of the Socialist Party within the ranks of the Indian National Congress. "In this room where we sit now, great men from your country have sat," he remarked during the course of the conversation. "Gandhiji offered his prayers here when he visited me. Tagore too had been here."

Thus nearly an hour passed. I didn't care exactly what I spoke, or how I expressed myself before him. I never felt the restraint, nor thought of those formalities of etiquette, often demanded in the presence of "big men". I never bothered myself as to what impression I produced on my host. I felt as if I was just thinking aloud and I let myself go.

It was time for me to take leave. I got up and walked up to him to bid good-bye. As I stood by his side I, a non-believer in the eyes of many and a scoffer of the ordinary run of priesthood, felt humble and reverent as never before in my life. And I asked him—I, just a struggling on the thorny path of life—to bless me. “May you have peace!” he said softly, clasping my hands within his.

Without another word I immediately left the room. M. Rolland, with his wife, followed me out to the front door. In the court yard, with folded hands I bade them farewell in Indian fashion, and walked on through the garden towards the gate. A few yards away I turned round once again to have a last look at Villa Olga. Not a soul was to be seen. Behind it rose the Alps and in front lay the blue waters of Lake Lemman. Every thing was quiet except for the twittering of birds from the trees. I turned round and hurried on to the station.●

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## GENERAL

Now that our tour is drawing to an end, I intend taking stock of my experiences in Europe and to make a general survey of conditions there. As one who has spent barely three months in the West I cannot claim finality for many of my inferences and statements. Nevertheless impressions we cannot help forming of individuals as of nations, short though be our time with them. I have, however, tried to be an impartial observer of the things I have come across and I shall gladly welcome corrections from those who are better informed.

The shadow of war seems to brood over the face of Europe today. Almost every country is arming herself to the teeth, though the people appear not to have forgotten the horrors of the late war. Except for a few small circles here and there, that believe in pacifism, nations as a whole are getting more intensely nationalistic and militaristic. There is little friendly feeling between one country and another, each living in fear and suspicion of the other. Bitter is the hatred of France for Germany, little loved by Belgians too, who have not forgotten the atrocities committed in their country during the Great War. Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany are avowed enemies of

Soviet Russia, whose entry into the League of Nations was opposed by Switzerland and Holland, the former of which is the seat of International organisations. The National Socialist section in Austria, kept repressed along with the Social Democratic Party by the present regime, looks up to Hitler and hopes for an 'Anschluss' of their country with Germany. The Catholic Socialist Party in power in Austria today, has the support of Mussolini, who, in spite of his professions of friendly feeling for Nazi Germany, will be far from pleased to have an amalgamation of both these countries which would mean a German Empire extending to the borders of Italy. And Czechoslovakia, a really non-aggressive State, has still reasons to dread Austria and Germany on one side, while she is not quite certain of the attitude of Poland on the other. As for Great Britain, while she is supposed to be admired for her foreign policy in the west, there seems to be little real warmth of feeling for her on the Continent. This may be partly due to jealousy of a powerful nation, though "the cold reserve and proud aloofness" of Englishmen were often attributed as the sole reason.

Now the air is thick with the rumour of the Italo-Abyssinian war, and as it directly concerns a powerful western nation, Europe cannot but be



interested in it. We too in the east cannot afford to be indifferent as this is going to be one more case of the ruthless exploitation of the coloured race; for behind the tall talk of ending slavery in Abyssinia, true to the glorious tradition of the freedom-loving Whites, behind the many other reasons set forth to justify the antagonistic attitude of Mussolini towards this African State is the same old story of the lust for wealth, because Abyssinia is a country rich in mineral and oil resources which Europe needs today. The issues of the War in case it breaks out, are fraught with grave consequences in any event. If Italy wins it means the aggravation of the bitterness of the coloured nations towards the white race, whereas the defeat of Mussolini, besides entailing a loss of prestige to the west, may mean a serious blow to capitalism which is stalking Europe under the garb of Nazism and Fascism.

Whether the League is prepared to stand up for the oppressed in this matter and thereby justify its existence; whether by a bold, firm stand against the aggressor nation, it is anxious to regain something of its prestige which it appears to have considerably lost by its attitude towards the Sino-Japanese question, is yet to be seen. And as for the Church, with the lip service, that is being paid to religion today, with the absence of that stern

idealism that made a Huss or a Thomas More willingly accept death in preference to a life of compromise, it may be too much for it to raise its voice of protest against the Duce.

Before I deal with education in the West, and the position of women there for which I intend to devote a separate chapter, I should like to make a few general remarks on the people as a whole. The powers of organisation of the occidentals are only too well known. Even the abominable practice of "tipping" (practically non-existent in Soviet Russia alone) which serves to keep down the wages of servants, besides being disgusting to an outsider, has been perfectly organised into a system which none dare break without serious discomfiture to himself or herself. Nature, far from bounteous as in the tropical East, shows here her hard, stern face for most part of the year, and this has contributed not a little to the hard-headed practicalism of the Westerner. A sense of humour and a spirit of sportsmanship, so essential to human happiness, are characteristic of him while it is almost pathetically absent in my own country. Perhaps the physical condition of individuals has much to do with these traits. The physique of even a Western woman of today who is so strong and sturdy, must be the envy of even the menfolk of the East enervated by its

torrid climate. Not only the cold, bracing climate of the European countries which urges one to lead a vigorous, active life, but also the much more healthy food that they take there, without those spices indispensable in the East, as well as the absence of the grinding poverty which afflicts the Indian masses, and makes them easy victims to infectious diseases, account for the greater vitality and robust health of the Westerner. Though poor in physique, yet there is one thing about Indians that our Western friends envy, and that is our teeth. "How do you manage to preserve them so well?" many have asked us. Excessive smoking and too much eating of sweets and meat, unaccompanied by the rinsing of the mouth with water, as is usually done in India when anything is eaten, account for this early decay of teeth so common among Westerners. The Indian woman is proverbial for her heavy ornaments. But I can state that most of the inhabitants of Western countries, men and women, rich and poor, we have met, especially in central and eastern Europe, carried about them much more gold than any of our party did. For, many of them, when they opened their mouths, made us feel that we were face to face with what appeared to be veritable mines of gold!

Any Easterner who visits Europe will be

struck with the colossal ignorance that exists there about his country. Of every country we have gone to in Europe, we knew far more than many of the highly-educated persons there know of ours. We were mistaken for Arabs, Zulus, Maharanees from India, dancing girls, and even exhibits for the Brussels Exhibition from some far off region! Curiously enough, India to the minds of many a Westerner, is "a glowing mass of fire," where people eat heaps of rice, where untouchability is rampant, where child marriage is a universal curse and where widows are burnt alive. Some were surprised how most of our party were not very dark coming as we did from a country which they believed, to be uniformly and intensely hot through-out, while many appeared astonished beyond words that the married ones amongst us could stir beyond their homes without their husbands. In this connection I may refer to the question of a scotchman to two of us as to how our husbands allowed us to travel so far without them, and also to the ready retort of my friend to the effect that Indian men trust their wives. Out came his apology, "I am a bit drunk, Ladies" and he made his exit. Gandhiji's name is of course familiar to even the poorest worker in the west. He is considered to be a great man, whatever be the opinion among the occidentals with regard to his creed of non-violence. But many of them

have been led to understand that his popularity has very much waned of late, their source of information being newspapers. A year back he was represented in one of the German papers even as a Bolshevist, the Nazi Government being not friendly towards Indians. And what little might have been left to our country by way of reputation has been filched by Miss. Mayo's 'Mother India' which has been very popular in Western countries.

Now just a word on education in general in the West. A few days after our landing in Europe a countryman of mine who had been in Germany for long, told me that by the time we finished our tour we would be filled with a feeling of depression almost akin to despair. I soon realised how correct he was. For the more we travelled and the more we came into contact with the excellent educational institutions in Western countries, the more we found our minds turning constantly and irresistibly to our own country which is today nothing more than a museum for the dead things of the West. The appalling illiteracy of India, the increasing number of the educated unemployed whose disinterested culture does not in any way help them to have an intelligent conception of the world in which they live, the deteriorating health, the thorough absence of

national consciousness and sense of responsibility among the student population, are only too well known. The young ones in our country are yet to know the blessings of the Kindergarten, and when once they enter the elementary schools they are under the care of poorly paid teachers with very low qualifications during those early impressionable years, when they have to be handled with the greatest care.

Every European country we visited, we found interested in the task of wiping away illiteracy and giving a system of education which would make the children strong and self-conscious citizens of a nation, intensely patriotic and prepared to fight to the last for their own. Each child is taught to be proud of his country, his literature, his ancestors. He is trained from his early childhood to think of himself as part of a great nation for which he has to live. Thus he grows up with a feeling of responsibility and a sense of true discipline from his early days. He learns the languages and literature of other countries, but never at the expense of a knowledge of his own mother tongue. I remember, in this connection, what I used to feel as a school girl. Apart from the fact that like the rest I attached little value to my own mother tongue through which alone contact with the masses is possible,

I distinctly remember how every defeat of my countrymen as depicted in our Indian History books used to make me feel exceedingly happy. If for example, I had then read, that Suraj Dowlah was victorious at the battle of Plassey I would have been much grieved. I do not know whether the books or my teachers who were after all the products of the same system of education I had received, were responsible for this. But somehow my fore-fathers were to me then either a gang of unscrupulous villains or a contemptible set of weaklings that undoubtedly deserved to be wiped off immediately from the face of the earth. This strange mentality is typical of the average Indian student, and in most cases, it persists throughout life. And today far worse than the colour prejudice that still exists in many of the British Universities, is the deplorable attitude of some of the Indian students themselves who, the moment they land on western soil are anxious to show a thorough contempt for everything Indian. This snobbishness, or inferiority complex, whatever it be, is bound to persist amongst us so long as our literature, traditions, art and above all, our nation builders—our great men and women—are made to appear as of trivial value in the eyes of our children.

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## THE POSITION OF WOMEN

*(East and West)*

I have been asked by some of my countrymen now in the West, when they put me many other questions concerning western countries, what I think of the status of women and of the free mingling of the sexes there as compared with the same in my own country. This question was put to me by some of my western friends too, and so this chapter is intended, both for those in India and in Europe.

Judging by the externals, the western woman, by her freedom of movement in society, her increasing love of out-door life and sports, her competition with men in nearly all walks of life, her strenuous efforts to prove herself his equal in almost every respect, may still be a marvel to many of my sisters, especially those of Purdha-ridden communities of India. And in European countries, barring Soviet Russia, where women hold a unique position as comrades, the women of England and Czechoslovakia enjoy greater freedom than women do anywhere else in the West. Since reference has already been made to the position of British women in the chapter on England, I intend saying just a few words on the



condition of women in Czechoslovakia to-day. This country has a very dominant position as a land with a progressive outlook on the question of women's movement. This is to a great extent, due to the strong opinion held, and the vigorous stand made, by the important leaders there headed by President Masaryk. His reference to his wife who is a real companion to him, is one of the most beautiful portions of the book on him by the Czech writer Cupek. So also is the wife of the foreign minister Dr. Benes to her husband. Women here are found in all positions, some very conspicuous personalities standing out by real capacity and merit. Czechoslovakia has senators, members of parliament, writers, journalists, doctors, and teachers who are women, who are to be found in all professions except the army. There are several papers edited by women—a very well known one being the weekly "Cin." The Sokol movement, the leading physical culture association, is open to both men and women. The most important of the social clubs are also mixed ones, which even in England, they are not.

I strongly feel that something of that free mingling of the sexes in the West, which to an average Indian mind is today fraught with serious dangers, has to be introduced into our country too, where the tendency in several parts

is to keep man and woman in separate water-tight compartments, which can only lead to an unhealthy sex-consciousness, if not sex obsession, on either side. This segregation of the sexes which did not exist in ancient India is today greatly responsible for the apparent lack of respectful behaviour on the part of many of our youths especially in non-co-educational institutions towards women outside home. One can realise the ridiculously pathetic attitude towards sex on the part of some of the heads of these institutions when it is told that in one of them in South India the boys were made to act the famous Indian drama "Sakuntalam" without the heroine Sakuntala appearing on the stage, for fear that even the semblance of a female form in the midst of the unsophisticated Adams, may excite them! Brought up in such a cloistered atmosphere, it is no wonder that our innocent brothers, when we enter the premises of their institutions in response to invitations to attend some function there, often greet us with hisses, hootings and cat-calls. In the Ramakrishna Mission Schools some of which I have visited in the south, that traditional respect for womanhood in India is being fostered. The boys of the Theosophical schools too in our country are found to behave very politely towards girls and women. One hears the same thing of

the poet Tagore's educational institution at Santiniketan, where boys and girls mingle freely. I do not know much about the other national institutions in the country, but special mention must be made of Gandhiji's Ashrams, which are of interest as places where men and women work together in an atmosphere of healthy freedom. But at the end of this chapter I shall deal in greater detail, with the contribution of this great national leader of ours towards the emancipation of Indian womanhood.

Yet in spite of the apparently great measure of freedom among the women of the West they have still much more to achieve, and that has to be after a very hard struggle. In countries like Germany, Italy, Poland, Austria and Hungary the tendency is now to push women back to their homes. We have also to remember that whatever the women of the West have obtained by way of rights, has been got through their own heroic efforts in the teeth of stern opposition from their men, while we in India are fighting with the active support of most of our great men, to recover what we once had and later on lost. That France, the seat of international culture, or democratic Switzerland, should still have its women unenfranchised, would be a matter of great surprise to our sisters in India. For, when the South-borough

Committee appointed by the British Government to consider the question of the franchise in India, decided not to give votes to Indian women there was strong protest from various quarters from both men and women. And when finally the matter was left to the various provinces concerned, Madras immediately threw open its legislature to its women and this was followed by the Bombay and the other legislatures.

Women with progressive views in the West have told me that there is still that lack of inherent respect and feeling of camaraderie on the part of their men towards them in spite of their extreme polite behaviour in public. Soviet Russia which a few of these had visited is said to be the only place where real camaraderie between the sexes exists to-day. In spite of the prejudice of most of the European countries against Russia it is perhaps the only place where sex exploitation in any form is almost absent. Theatres in France for example where women appear naked on the gorgeously fitted stages, are to the modern Russian mind a detestable kind of sex exploitation.

In ancient India there was no purdah and no child marriage, and the girls had full freedom to choose their husbands when they attained maidenhood. Married women could divorce their husbands under certain conditions. Women had

property rights and were given a certain amount of education especially in the fine arts. Gargi and Maitreyi were women philosophers highly respected by learned men. Leelavathi was a great mathematician. Later on from behind the purdah Indian women wrote fine works without the need to seek shelter behind a masculine name as a Mary Evans had to. Even in the later centuries when women had considerably lost their position, there had been women administrators like Sultan Raziya, Chand Bibi, Rani Lakshmi Bai, Ahalya Bai, and others, and some of them, have died on the battle field fighting bravely against the aggressor.

Due to the clash of various cultures in our country as a result of successive invasions, each culture tried to preserve what it considered to be the best in it, and this gave rise to a series of rigid customs which unable to adapt themselves to the needs of changing times, have become definite barriers to the progress of society. Child marriage, the purdah etc., thus came into existence. Later on, after British rule was established, the government when administering Hindu Laws consulted not the enlightened section among men, but the most orthodox pundits and that gave rise to a system of law by which the Hindu woman has to-day no property rights, and has other

disabilities which hamper her progress. The purdah and child marriage prevail chiefly among the higher castes among the Hindus, while the low caste women who form a large section, have much more freedom. They move with their men with a sense of equality seldom to be found among the higher classes.

In spite of the evils of the purdah, child marriage etc. woman at home occupies a place that is seldom hers in any other country. She gets a devotion from her sons and daughters, almost unparalleled anywhere else in the world and she has an important part in all ceremonial functions. This is all due to the very high place given to women in the Hindu religion, and religion is still a vital influence with the masses in our country. "Where women are honoured there the Gods are pleased" say the Indian scriptures. The symbolic representation of God among Indians as "Ardha-Nareeswara" (half man and half woman) will give an idea of the lofty conception of ancient India about womanhood. Something of that traditional respect for woman still lingers in our country, and that is why, in spite of the many social disabilities that she suffers from to-day, she has a dominant place at home.

Among the women of South India there is much more freedom than there is in the north.

There is comparatively very little of purdah, and child marriage is common only among the Brahmins. Co-educational institutions—High Schools and Colleges—are not rare in this part of India. In Travancore and Cochin the staff in some of the mixed Colleges contains lady members also.

In this connection I must say a few words about the Nair women of Kerala, to which community I myself belong. The province of Kerala—the land of Keras or coconut palms—comprising British Malabar, and the enlightened Native States of Travancore and Cochin that stand foremost in the whole of India in education, lies in the south-west of India. It has a dominant population of Nairs who were warriors by profession in older days. From time immemorial, the matriarchal system has been prevalent among this Hindu community, according to which the inheritance of property is through woman. The thrones of Cochin and Travancore are inherited in this way, the eldest son of the dead ruler's sister becoming the next Maharaja. There is no child marriage, no purdah among women. They can easily get a divorce and marry again and the mother has the right to keep the children with her. A married girl has the same old rights in her maternal home where she can always stay without going to her mother-in-law. Even the child of an unmarried

mother has the same rights in her family as any other member and thus it never becomes an outcaste and a burden on society. It is doubtful whether, barring perhaps Soviet Russia, which is more oriental than occidental, our sisters in the west have even to-day after so much of hard fight, the same amount of real freedom as the Nair women of Kerala.

The Women's Movement in India, though still young, is advancing by rapid strides. The All-India Women's Conference, the Women's Indian Association and the National Council of Indian Women are the three most important bodies that have a network of branches all over India. In their active work to remove the social and the legal disabilities of women they have the full support of many of our men. But progress is rather slow as legislation for removal of such social evils has not the vigorous support of the Government which seems anxious to placate the orthodox section. Even the Sarada Bill against child marriage, introduced by the Social reformer Mr. Harbilas Sarada and passed after considerable difficulty, is being openly flouted by the orthodox elements in our country, as the penalty imposed for its breach is far too mild.

While the Women's Movement has more or less been confined to the cities, the awakening of



Indian womanhood as a whole has been achieved by the Indian National Congress under the leadership of Gandhiji during the last few years. At his call thousands and thousands of women left their homes and threw themselves heart and soul into the national struggle. Women from behind the purdah came out and willingly subjected themselves to 'lathi' charges and the severe trials of prison life. Expectant mothers of high social status and position suffered the pangs of child birth behind the prison bars. Educated women stood in the sun and rain, picketing liquor and foreign cloth shops, bearing insults and humiliations of every kind. Women, rich and poor, educated and uneducated from cities and villages, then came forward in large numbers and their sacrifices and heroism will ever remain the glory of Indian womanhood and the Indian nation as a whole. Above all, it has created a sense of real 'camaraderie' with their men with whom they fought side by side in a common cause.

Gandhiji's Ashrams too are places where in spite of the strict discipline there, men and women freely move and work together. We find here members of both sexes belonging to different castes and creeds, of varying social status and with varying educational qualifications. It is the very place where self-reliant individuals are

made and where both men and women work together as equals and comrades. Thus through his Ashrams, and through the movement which has led to a great mass awakening in India for the first time the Mahatma has contributed not a little to the breaking of the prison bonds of many a sister in our country. Besides him the Congress has vigorous champions of the woman's cause in India, among whom I may make special mention of Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru who, to-day is the idol of the Indian youth. In this connection I may also refer to the fact that the Indian National Congress which is the most representative body in our country, had as its Presidents for the grand annual sessions two women—Dr. Annie Besant and Mrs. Sarojini Naidu.

We are only too conscious that we have still farther to go before we can break the fetters that bind Indian womanhood. There is so much prejudice to be fought against among orthodox men and still worse among orthodox women themselves. But yet we reasonably hope that our struggle may not be so hard as that of our sisters in the west whose heroic efforts in their uphill task will be an inspiration to us.

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## " THE FICSA "

*(Federation of Indian and Ceylonese  
Students' Association).*

Before I proceed with the narration of the tour proper, I feel that mention has to be made of the 'Ficsa' or Federation of Indian and Ceylonese Students' Association, the work and objectives of which were explained to me by Prof. Chakravarthi at the I. S. Conference in Holland. There had been annual conferences of this organisation, one in Vienna another in London and two in Rome. The 'Ficsa' tries to bring together the scattered community of Indian students and scholars living in Europe and to help them feel their common unity of purpose, to keep them in touch with each other, and more than anything else, to enable them to express, through the medium of a strong Indian association any disabilities or grievances that Indians might encounter during their studies in Europe. Prof. Chakravarthi, who has been re-elected the President of this Federation this year, has already done much to bring it to the notice of prominent intellectuals and International Institutions in Europe. Such a Federation of course must keep itself out of European politics, for the students, as guests of particular nations,

cannot possibly interfere with their internal Governmental machinery. Occasions however may arise when, as humanitarians, Indian students may have to protest against, or at least publicly dissociate themselves from some flagrant breach of moral principles and ideals of civilization, which may be committed by a ruthlessly powerful state. While we were at the conference, the threatening danger in Abyssinia seemed to be fast creating such an issue for the Indian students in Italy. We have also heard rumours that the Race Theory, inhuman and unscientific, has begun to affect the position of Indians in Germany, specially in Bavaria. Prof. Chakravarthi however wants the Federation to keep a cool head on its shoulders, and also its members to preserve an attitude of whole-hearted co-operation till the breaking point is reached. His real desire is to create an Indian Academy in Europe as the head-quarters of the Federation which will not only establish an information bureau, be a centre of social and cultural activities revealing the unique gifts of our civilisation, but also, when funds permit, build up a library of Indian literature. Further, it should also help distinguished scholars and public men visiting Europe, to come immediately in touch with real friends of India there, arrange lectures for them

and even invite them specially to come from India to speak upon problems of vital interest to the cause of India. The membership of the Federation is increasing, and though there is a fair promise of its future success, Prof. Chakravarthi feels keenly the need for arousing public interest in India, for he believes that its real roots must be in our own Indian soil.

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## BACK IN ITALY

Only some of us were to proceed to Milan where we had to halt for three days on our way back to Venice from where we were to take ship back to our Mother-land. It was a sad parting at the Geneva station. One of us was to go to America for her studies, two to London for the same purpose while five more of the party were to stay behind to spend some more days in Great Britain.

It was as hot and sultry as an Indian summer in Milan then and we felt rather tired and sleepy as we went about on our usual course of sight-seeing. It was in front of the famous cathedral there that our bus halted. Over our heads were flying a squadron of aeroplanes which, as they buzzed and whirled in the airy regions above looked like a flock of birds. We entered the place of worship—that huge building of more than a hundred spires, from whose top Mont Blanc could be seen. On the glass windows had been painted in beautiful colours stories from the Bible. All this must have meant years of patient labour, and every detail of work must have been done with so much faith and devotion.

Coming out we proceeded to where the original of the 'Last Supper' by Leonardo da Vinci

is still preserved. This building was once a monastery but was used later on for some time by the soldiers of Napoleon during his campaigns in Italy. The artistic value of this wonderful painting on the wall was not recognised in those days but it was nothing short of vandalism when the French officer caused the whole room to be white-washed and had it used as his stables. Later on the painting was almost recovered with great labour but much damage had been already done to it. The varied expressions of the emotions depicted on the face of the twelve disciples with such masterly skill could not be well made out. In another room close by, on the wall is a painting by a disciple of this master artist, on the same theme, in imitation of the famous work which has been damaged.

As we drove through the streets we halted once again to enter another place of exceeding interest. It was a public cemetery where any one who buys a plot of ground could have himself or his own dear ones buried after death. We found extensive grounds strewn with tombs, most of them being exceedingly beautiful and costly. Many killed in the Great War have been buried there. We passed by numberless statues mostly in fine marble, rising above the graves, each representing something associated with the

persons buried beneath. It might be the figure of a heart-broken mother weeping over the fallen forms of her three sons killed in the late war ; or that of a sweet child just learning to walk but then snatched suddenly away by cruel death ; or those of a devoted couple, one of them a young beautiful woman and the other her husband, a young air pilot killed in a fatal fall from above, and each bound to the other with a love that even death could not kill. The whole place seemed to be an endless maze of mausoleums and statues. At last we entered the crematorium. The burning of dead bodies seems to become more popular in the west and there were the ashes of many dead persons kept in urns with their photos above them. The cremation is done in small chambers where the bodies are placed on iron plates and reduced to ashes by hot gas or by electricity. There was a melancholy air about the whole place as is natural in one associated with death, but with the fine works of art scattered about that extensive ground so neat and beautiful, was free from that oppressive sadness that one usually finds in cemeteries.

During our stay in the city, the heat was almost intolerable and longing for some cool fresh air we used to go out in the nights after dinner for a walk. We had been ever since we



landed in Europe, 'walking zoos' as it were, and especially so in Italy, where we were so much stared at by the curious people there. We felt happy to be in this country once again because there is something about the appearance of the people there, with their dark hair and dark eyes that reminded us so much of our own countrymen. We were however rather surprised at the way in which young boys here behaved towards us then. Instead of the warm welcome we had met with on the continent and more so in Venice where the people seemed to be so glad to meet us, some three months back, the boys in Milan ran behind us hooting us and shouting "Abyssinia, Abyssinia". Grown up men and women also whispered among themselves the name of this African state as they saw us passing by. It was evident that Italy was obsessed with the Abyssinian question, and that even children had been worked up into hatred of that country. Some of the men that passed by would stop and ask us "Chinese? Japanese?" and when we replied "from India" they would pass on with a very polite "bon voyage". The friendliness of Italy towards India could not be mistaken, but if war broke out against Abyssinia and that too for the mere purpose of exploitation, it might lead to a different state of affairs.

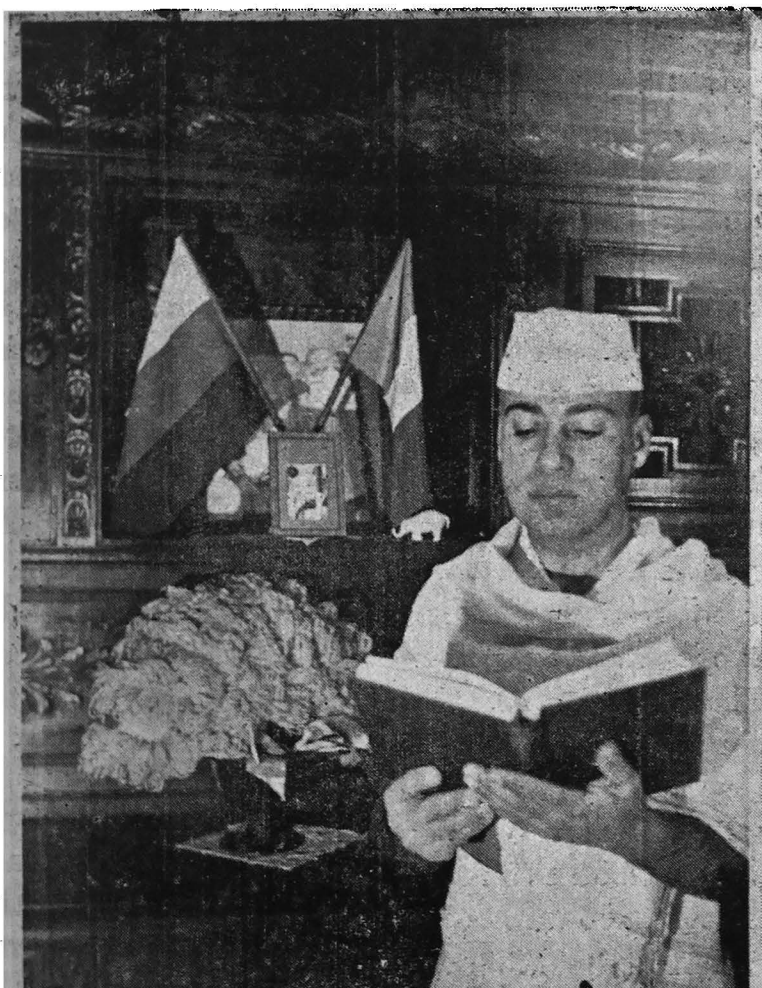
Just the day before we left Milan there came into our hotel, which was the biggest we ever stayed in Europe, a handsome man little over forty and his good-looking wife, with their quite attractive daughter of eighteen or so. They were well known to our leader. They could not talk English and Getano Carbonari—for that was the name of the gentleman—carried on the conversation in French with a few of us who could understand it and with the rest in gestures. Dinner over he spoke a few sentences in Italian, in which the names 'Subhas Chandra Bose' and 'India' alone were intelligible to us. He spoke with much emotion and we could see his eyes filled with tears. The substance of the speech translated for us by our leader is given below.

Distinguished daughters of India and Mrs. Datta,

I have, on previous occasions, had the pleasure and the honour to spend a few hours with some of your compatriots, and all those hours come back to me now.

Distinguished Mrs. Datta, you will be certainly aware of the great sympathy for your country and the spontaneous attachment perhaps through past incarnation, I feel towards it.

I have had the honour to know S. Bose, one of the greatest and most indefatigable workers in



India, India, India: for You!  
Getano Carbonari

GETANO CARBONARI

the obliteration of the serious disabilities that deprive your country, my second country, of definite social serenity.

S. Bose, "the hero of Bengal" and the truest son of India, austere faced, genial, frank, and confident of word, and even tacit when necessary, with his life of privations and sacrifices, is a great diplomat.....

On returning home speak nobly of him, and I request that one should pray for his long life, because he will give it to his beloved country.

Consider, which duties you would rather perform today, that you may fill that high place which justly belongs to you, and to ensure freedom for to-morrow. India! India! India! for you.

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That evening we went to the house of the Carbonaris where we had been invited for tea. In the room in which we were entertained, we saw on the chest of drawers between two national flags of India, a photo of S. Bose, and another of Gandhiji taken when the latter visited England for the Round Table Conference. In the picture album which was shown to us, were cuttings from newspapers of the pictures of all the national leaders of India. It was an exceedingly happy evening for us in the midst of the three kindly souls

to whom it was such a joy to entertain us. The daughter, a student of medicine and an excellent pianist, played a few Italian airs on the instrument. When it was time for us to take leave, the host got up to express once again his intense happiness at being able to welcome us as coming from a country which he had been loving for the last twenty-five years. And I could not help feeling all the while what a different India we would have had today, if most of us loved our country with a fraction of that love which this Italian felt for her. Is it not an irony of fate that patriotism inherent even in a savage has become so foreign to us that we have to draw inspiration for it from an outsider?

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Back again in Venice. Eagerly had we looked forward to this ancient city, which with its dirt and its many enchantments, made us almost feel ourselves back in India. Everything about the place where we had roamed about during our first visit had such a familiar air, and after lunch we immediately went for a stroll through the city. Once again we were in St. Mark's Square and we wandered from shop to shop, making purchases after much higgling on either side. One of the shops I entered had a rather elderly man as its owner. Immediately he saw me he asked

"Madame, since you are an Indian you may know for certain whether there is any chance of war between Italy and Abyssinia breaking out. My son has already been sent to Abyssinia and I am so anxious about him. He has his mother too".

"I know of this war business only as much as you do" I replied, "anyhow your Mussolini wants you all to fight if war breaks out."

"I don't care for Mussolini" he snapped "I care for my son"—and there was an end of the talk on war.

I had already in mind the two Italian youths whom I had met during our first visit to Venice, who spoke to me of their going to Abyssinia. I was eager to know what happened to them, since one of them was very reluctant to leave the country, and the other, so I felt, was just pretending that he liked to fight for his state. But they were not to be seen in their shops and I was told by another shop-keeper, who recognised us as the tourists from India some months back, that those two Italian youths were already in Abyssinia. "I too may have to go soon" he added.

"How do you like the idea?" I asked him. "Madame, when I think of war I feel something here" he said pathetically, passing his hands over

his stomach "it is so terrible to die at this early age. I am only twenty-three" \* \* \*

A few hours of strolling about and we left behind the familiar streets and shops for our ship. And there it was, the CONTE ROSSO, easily distinguishable even from afar from the other vessels as it lay so majestic and graceful on the smooth sea.

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## OUR RETURN VOYAGE

Three more were to leave us at Venice. They were Miss Mitra from the Punjab, Miss Carswell the younger sister of our leader, both of whom had joined us in the middle of our tour, and Mrs. Datta herself. The farewell between the last mentioned and ourselves was really touching. We were only too conscious of what we owed her who had watched over us these months with a sisterly care and solicitude. It was not an easy matter to cater to the needs of twenty women, with their different tastes, whims and fancies, to fix up their programmes, to hunt for those who persisted in never being in time, to collect their baggages labelled and unlabelled—some being miniature general ware shops of Europe—to pick up parasols, slippers, passports, fountain pens and even individuals left behind. The strain of these months had already begun to show itself on her face and she really needed some rest before she could take out another party on a similar tour after a few months. That she is doing a real service to India by organising such tour parties is beyond all doubt. At a minimum cost we had been enabled to come in contact with most of the highly advanced countries of the west, to establish valuable friendships which we



should like to cherish for ever, to have our minds enriched and our outlook broadened. Also we had come to know for the first time in our lives, what our country means to us, what it is to breathe the air of freedom. How eagerly had we looked forward to this tour, one of our dearly cherished dreams! And now with what greater yearning were we going back to our motherland which had become so dear to us, and for whose sorrows and miseries our hearts had learnt to ache.

Miss. Mitra having left earlier, we watched from our ship, Mrs. Datta and her sister slowly disappearing from view. Even through the sadness of that moment we could not help smiling at the younger one who was such a contrast to her sister—the latter so stately in figure giving you the impression of a sedate, serious temperament though not devoid of a keen sense of humour, while the other, though older than most of us, seemed to have still much of the child in her. In her presence it was difficult for one to remain gloomy for long. And now as she walked on along the main street, and the distance between us increased she would occasionally stop to wave farewell to us, either with her hand bag or with her umbrella, drawing with it big circles in the air.

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So once again we were on the broad smooth sea. It was such a joy to feel that we would be back home, sweet home, in a few more days amidst our dear ones. It was a relief to have some real rest after all these days of bustle and excitement and strenuous work, rushing from one country to another, knocking about cities and visiting there the cathedrals, schools, museums, art galleries, theatres and shops; climbing mountains and crossing rivers and lakes, and above all to be free from the bother of packing and unpacking our things every now and then and also changing and re-changing our money in every new country.

There seemed to be a regular horde of Indians and Chinese on board our ship. Among the passengers was one of our countrymen, well-known in the intellectual circles of Europe whom I heard highly spoken of by some of those there, who knew him. It was no less than Sir S. Radhakrishnan, of South India. Having already come to know something of his deep learning through some of his philosophical works, I had a great desire to meet, and talk to him which I was able to do now on board the ship. Simple in appearance and habits, Sir Radhakrishnan impresses you as a man of keen intellect and high ideals. Even a casual conversation with him reveals to you his powers of clear thinking and lucid exposition.\*

At Brindisi, Italian soldiers and workmen bound for Abyssinia got into our ship. There was a large crowd collected at this port, for their women and other relatives had come to see them off, perhaps with very little hopes of meeting them again. While the ship was about to leave, one of the newcomers started singing loud and shouting out "Il Duce" while his comrades told us by means of signs that he was heavily drunk. This reminded me of a young, grey-haired journalist whom I met at a dinner party in Prague, from whom I had come to know how he, like the rest of his comrades used to get intoxicated before he could get himself to face the enemy's gun during the Great War, and how his hair had all turned grey due to the nervous tension of those hectic days. There was not the slightest trace of enthusiasm on the faces of these men who were compelled to go and fight in a far-off desert country for reasons not clear even to themselves. On the other hand most of them were looking gloomy and depressed.

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We were still in the Mediterranean when, one night at about twelve, as I sat talking with one of our party in her cabin, most of the others having gone to the first class for a cinema show, I suddenly realised that our ship had stopped and

something had gone wrong. Somehow the Siren Call denoting danger had escaped our ears, and now we lost no time in rushing out to the upper deck to find what the matter was. There were silent groups of passengers with anxious glances fixed on the deep waters whose surface was being illuminated by the search light from the ship. One of the Italian soldiers had fallen over board, while his friend who saw this stood weeping close by. It was such an anxious moment for all in the ship. Life boats had been lowered and the vigorous search for the missing man already started. After half an hour's futile search, our ship moved on leaving the victim in his watery grave

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We had hardly entered the Red sea when it grew unbearably hot. It was not so bad on our first voyage through it, but now we seemed to be almost in a furnace with no breath of wind and the fans being of very little use in that terrible heat. We had a miserable time of it for about three full days. We had scarcely time to leave our baths, when big beads of perspiration would roll down our faces and backs. The European section in the meanwhile had almost converted itself into a colony of semi-nudists.

At Massowah, the Italians who had boarded at Tindisi, were to land. The deck was that

morning crowded with the rest of the passengers eagerly watching them enter the motor launch that had come to take them away. I was with another of our party watching these poor men with sad feelings, when I was roused by a voice from behind calling "Signorina! Signorina!". Turning round, I found close to us a young handsome Italian. I had never noticed him all these days on the ship. He was trying to look cheerful, while close by was a comrade of his, a thin young chap, whistling and keeping time with his feet to hide the nervousness that was writ large on his face. "Good bye, Signorina" said the first one with a pleasant smile. An utter stranger to us, this youth, so it seemed to me, was just bidding us farewell as of everything else on earth which he felt he might soon have to leave in the prime of his youth. And a strong feeling of pity smote our hearts as we instinctively stretched forth our hands and wished him good-bye.

In the meanwhile, the clicking of the cameras could be heard, for so many of them were at work. The motor launch now full was ready to depart. Now from among the group a tall thin Italian stood up. His body was swaying as he alternately drank from a big bottle and shouted out victory to the Duce, and good luck to the CONTE ROSSO. He was joined in the shout by

the rest as they were borne away swiftly over the smooth waters of the still sea.

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We had indeed a very delightful time the next evening after dinner when all the Indians on board our ship met in the first class lounge. The programme for this occasion was drawn up by Miss. Anusuya Wagle of the Benares Theosophical College, who was returning after a year of study in England and a short visit to Russia. There were speeches, recitation of poems and music, both vocal and instrumental. But what was appreciated most by the audience was the 'Puja dance' by Miss M. Sobasingh, of Delhi, a member of our tour party. She appeared clad in pure white saree bearing in one hand a tray laden with incense and garland for Siva, and as she moved about so lightly and gracefully, with face wrapped in mystic joy while giving her offerings, we felt as if some deep inner cord within us was being struck.

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To our great relief we had entered the Arabian Sea. It had become sufficiently cool but now there was the fear of the monsoon and the consequent sea sickness. I woke up late in the night to find myself almost in danger of falling down from my berth as the ship was

being rocked by the rolling sea. For the next two days the dining hall was half empty. Two of my cabin mates, though not actually ill, felt inclined to be sick at the sight of too much food in the dining room and so they stuck to the cabin like many others for the same reason. The stewards had indeed a very hard time of it, carrying food to them and catering to their special needs. As for my cabin mates, their appetite was far from being seriously affected, and they seemed to eat enough, sending for rice, curry, fish, vegetables, fruits etc. if the steward failed to bring any of these. At last Mario, rather overworked, raised his voice of protest: "Well, miss, you, no ill. Eating well and plenty. I, too much work. Won't bring food."

As we neared our country, the days seemed to grow longer and longer. Every day we would go to the dining room to refer to the big map on the wall, on which the distance traversed by the ship was being marked both morning and evening after it entered the Arabian Sea. However it was the last day on the ship, which was to arrive in Bombay at 4 o'clock in the night. A party of Dutchmen going to the Dutch Indies was singing and dancing as a farewell treat to two or three of their country-men who were to land in Bombay. It must have been nearly two when we retired to our

cabins. The prospect of reaching our motherland in a couple of hours excited us so much that sleep was almost impossible. I must have dozed just for a few minutes when my eyes opened to see through the port hole, lights from the Bombay Harbour. The gangway was to be down only after 6 o' clock, but I left my berth to join my friends who were already up.

So at last we had reached our native land! Who can describe our feelings as we stood there and watched it in the breaking dawn !!

