

THE DURBAR IN LAHORE

FROM THE DIARY OF A RUSSIAN

By H. P. BLAVATSKY

[It was in November, 1880, that H. P. Blavatsky and Col. Henry S. Olcott went to Lahore to organize a local Branch of The Theosophical Society and discuss various metaphysical subjects with several distinguished scholars. The Viceregal Durbâr held by the Marquis of Ripon fell on November 15th, and was described by H.P.B. in her inimitable style, for the benefit of the Russian reading public, in the pages of the *Russkiy Vestnik* (Russian Messenger). The original Russian text was published in Volumes 153-54 of this periodical, in the issues for May, June and July, 1881.

Col. Olcott himself gives a brief description of these festivities in the Second Series of his *Old Diary Leaves*, pp. 259-65. It is of course most likely that he never actually read the Russian version, due to the fact of not being versed in the Russian language, unless H.P.B. translated for him passages from her story.

As far as is known, "The Durbâr in Lahore" has never been translated into any language until now. The present English translation is based on a rough MSS. translation made many years ago by Miss Inga Sjöstedt. It has been compared word for word with the original Russian text, worked over by the present writer, and thoroughly gone over and polished up by Mrs. Irene R. Ponsonby, whose scholarly knowledge of the English language has been for many years of inestimable value in the final proof-reading and editing of the volumes of H.P.B.'s *Collected Writings*, now in process of publication.

Every effort has been made to preserve in this translation, as much as possible, the flowing style of H.P.B.'s Russian original, her witticisms, and the many characteristic expressions with which her writings abound. Even to students thoroughly familiar with H.P.B.'s literary output, the present story will be entirely new.—BORIS DE ZIRKOFF]

I

Through the hills of Simla to Kalka and Umballa.—The sanitariums of India and the tea-plantation of an Indian *Cinnamomum*.—The Pinjor gardens of the Mahârâjâ of Patiâla.—Chariots of torture.—Kalka and the happy scorpion family.—Amritsar and its cosmopolitan populace.

Having received, while in Simla, something between an invitation and a gracious permission of the authorities to attend the viceregal *durbâr*¹ which was to take place from the 9th to the 16th of November, 1880, we decided to leave for Lahore ahead of time.

Since the *durbâr* of 1864, held by Lord (in those days merely Sir) John Lawrence, well known in political circles for his "artistic policy of inaction," as the Tories ironically called it, a policy to which the new viceroy, the Marquis of Ripon, has been strictly enjoined to adhere—there had been no *durbâr* in Lahore. The forthcoming *durbâr*—arranged for the official presentation to the Viceroy of the rulers of Pañjâb, the râjâs and nawâbs² who since 1849 had not yet become accustomed to British domination and were often forgetful of it, and of the Mahârâjâ of Kashmîr who was constantly suspected of Russian intrigues—promised to be magnificent. Besides, we wanted to attend the annual festival of Divâlî in Amritsar, that ancient stronghold of the Sikhs. . .

The festival of *Divâlî*, literally translated, could be looked upon as the festival of "All Saints," *la Toussaint*, or more properly "all gods," as *deva* means a divinity and not merely a saint. It is the most solemn festival in the country.

Enormous sums of money collected by the Brâhmaṇas for a whole year are spent on the night of the Divâlî, while the

¹ A *durbâr* is a royal *levée*, a ceremonial and public reception. Besides the Viceroy, only a limited number of the ruling princes of India have the right to hold public *durbars*.

² Written *nawâb* but pronounced *nauab*, a word changed in Europe for some reason into nabab.

municipalities allot lakhs¹ of rupees for the solemnities. Every town, village and hamlet, every road even, is illuminated by myriads of fire-pots, torches, and multi-colored lanterns in honor of the 333 million national gods . . . But Amritsar, which is the centre of Sikhism,² far surpasses all other Indian towns with its magnificent illuminations and its costly fire-works, but mainly with the marvels of its Golden Temple, blazing with lights and casting its reflection in the surrounding lake as in a polished mirror. On that night, from all parts of the country, the once formidable potentates of India, great and small, assemble under the guardianship of their British nurses, the political Residents. The Europeans, in the meantime, crowd the hotels, and having appropriated the best places for viewing the illuminations, magnanimously permit the native princes to stand behind their seats! It is true that the Sikhs are strict monotheists, but since 1489 (the year when they renounced polytheism) they do not seem to have had time to decide which of the 333 million gods in the Hindu Pantheon is the one and only God proclaimed by Nānak;³ therefore they have continued in the meantime to venerate all the gods equally. Prudence is never out of season.

Having decided on our way to Lahore to accept the cordial invitation of our friends and allies, the Āryas,⁴ to stay

¹ A lakh is equal to one-hundred-thousand.

² *Amrista*, or *Amritsar*, is a fortified town in Pañjāb, one-and-a-half hours' drive from Lahore, the capital of Ranjit-Singh, famous in history as the "Lion of Pañjāb". From an insignificant hamlet, Amritsar became a flourishing and wealthy city, thanks to its Golden Temple on the lake of *Immortality*, erected in 1581 by Rām-Dās, the fourth Sikh *Guru* (spiritual teacher), a temple which attracts hundreds of thousands of pilgrims. Here the best shawls in India are woven and sold, successfully vying in this respect with Kashmīr, and a brisk trade is here also carried on with Bokhara in finest goats' hair.

³ Nānak was the founder of Sikhism.

⁴ The Āryas are followers of the religious reformer Swāmi Dayānanda Sarasvatī, a rival of the famous Chunder Sen, the prophet of Bengal. Both have covered India with *Samājas* (fraternal communities).

with them in Amritsar, we chose the 21st of October as the day of our departure from Simla, after sending our things off in good time down into the valley, on the backs of the common Indian beast of burden—the coolie. The poverty prevailing among the people may be imagined from the prices asked by the coolies for the transport of heavy trunks and baggage from Simla to Kalka, *i.e.*, 114 miles round trip. Who would believe in Russia that we hired twelve men, two for each heavy trunk, for ten rupees! Where in the world could one find a laborer so poor that he would be willing to carry on foot, over one steep grade after another, a trunk weighing several poods¹ for 57 miles, to receive only two shillings on his return.

And so, after impartially dividing our sincere regrets upon parting between our kind English friends and the marvellous freshness of the forest of deodars² and firs, we prepared to set off, in the early morning of October 21st.

The use of carriages is forbidden in Simla on account of the narrow and exceedingly winding roads, or rather lanes, along the brink of innumerable hills where there are frequent landslides. The Viceroy alone has the right to drive in a tiny open carriage with a pair of small ponies; all other mortals have to be content with riding on horse-back or being carried in palanquins. Even elderly, portly matrons pay their calls or go to balls on horse-back or in litters. Therefore, although the post-stage stands over 2,000 feet below the villas occupied by the English colony, scattered like eagles' aeries over the cliffs, some of us were forced to set out on foot and some in *jampans*. I cannot bid goodbye to Simla without some unkind thoughts on the *jampan*, invented most likely by the Inquisitors, and I feel I must describe it. It is a detestable kind of

¹ [1 pood equals 40 lbs.—*Translator.*]

² A *deodar* is a Himâlayan cedar.

palanquin, something between a *chaise-longue* and a narrow canvas cradle, with four wooden paws suspended from two thick poles, which make the whole thing look like a frog hanging upside down by its legs. Having loaded this Anglo-Chinese invention on their shoulders, with the passenger inside it condemned to torture, from four to six hale and muscular *Pahâris* (a tribe of mountaineers) begin to trot unevenly, shaking their burden like a sack of flour. The victim, once squeezed into his seat and tightly swaddled in the canvas of the frog-cradle, becomes literally helpless for the duration of the trip. The *Pahâris*, apart from their own mountain dialect—unknown to the rest of the world—understand nothing; whether one shouts at them or not, makes no difference. Constantly transferring the shafts of the litter from one shoulder to the other, they shake the litter in the process and toss it in every direction, swinging it about, and every moment risk hurling the living burden into the yawning abysses on either side of the steep, narrow footpath. To complete this aesthetic pleasure, probably in the hopes of an additional baksheesh (they receive but 2 annas, or 3 pence, daily per man), the bearers, or “jampanees” as they are here called, begin to groan, moan, and later even to bellow . . . If their groaning is not nipped in the bud, the whole forest will soon begin to moan in response. The English do not argue with them, but lashing their bare backs with a whip, control them as though they were actual horses. In my position of a humble Russian visitor, however, there was nothing for me except to remain silent and endure.

After being spilled out of the infernal cradle onto the dusty courtyard of the post-stage, I shook out my clothes and joined a party of friends who were also leaving Simla that morning. Here another, equally infernal machine, invented for mountain excursions, awaited us. The post road from

Simla to Kalka (57 miles) is so narrow and twisted, and the descent is so steep, that until three years ago there was no means of travelling along the old road except on horseback or on elephants, but now a new road has been made, a wider if not a better one. There, winding its way among camels and elephants that are going the other way, the so-called *tonga* moves along with the speed of lightning. It is a two-wheeled carriage in which two people sit with their backs towards the horses, their chins propped on their knees, while a third, the driver, hangs by the horses' tails. In such a nutshell there is, of course, no room for baggage; and therefore the latter, as already said, is sent down into the valley in advance.

Because of the constant crumbling of the cliffs as the result of cutting the road through, and the peculiar nature of the rock which is being constantly reduced to the finest powder, the road is so dusty that a pair of green convex goggles closely fitting the eyes, and a double veil, are hardly sufficient to prevent permanent blindness after a few hours of driving. When we ascended the Simla heights six weeks earlier, we prudently chose "the old road," in preference to the new or so-called "Tibetan high road," and were fully recompensed for the three extra days of travel. Now, however, we were in a hurry and had no other alternative but to ride instead in a covered wagon drawn by oxen. . .

There were 13 of us and room for only 12 passengers in the six tongas, and the "devil's dozen" lived up to its name. After somehow placing the others, we squeezed three lean Englishmen into the sixth tonga. The tallest of them all fell to my lot, and his legs constantly stuck out of the back of the vehicle, however hard he tried to tie them into knots. Finally we moved off, and began to rush downhill with breathless speed . . . With the very first jolt I sank down into the deepest recesses of the interior and did not creep out until we

reached our destination, meanwhile cursing the tonga all the way.

Farewell, dear, evergreen Simla! . . . Wondrous spot, corner of Paradise, as though fallen from heaven into the Himâlayan groves; thou cool Eden, soaring over the scorching heat of the valleys of Hindustan, farewell! . . . Long will it be before I shall again see thy tall pines, firs and cedars on whose tufted summits rest the wind-driven clouds and whose feet are wrapped in a veritable forest of giant rhododendrons. . . . Over there, in the distance, we catch a glimpse of a massive mountain covered with this gigantic shrubbery. Bathed in the warm rays of the morning sun, the bright crimson clusters are aflame as if birds of Paradise were clinging to them. Between them one can see the white "Peterhof,"¹ the viceregal residence, while beyond the mountain is a long range of snow-covered colossi, one of the intermediate ranges of the ascending Himâlayan foothills . . . For the last time, the cool, familiar fragrance of the firs and cummin-trees reaches us . . . A few more curves, and we find ourselves in an impenetrable cloud of dust. It falls like a heavy, stifling curtain between us and Simla. . .

The English are excessively proud of their "Tibetan" road, imagining, perhaps, that it will actually lead them to Tibet some day, and call it a masterpiece of engineering. Filled with rapture at the sight of the little granite bridges spanning the mountain torrents of their *sanitariums*² which dot various hills, they assure us that nothing can compare with the mathematical accuracy of the contour of the road which winds like a dusty ribbon through the green hills. One

¹ [H.P.B. uses here metaphorically the name of one of the Imperial Palaces of Russia, in the vicinity of St. Petersburg.—*Translator.*]

² By *sanitariums* are here meant military settlements for hospitals for which the healthiest mountain districts are chosen. Simla is considered to be the best sanitarium in India.

of these bridges, by the way, has already crumbled under the weight of some dignitary travelling to Simla, resulting in the death of the innocent coachman (fate left the dignitary unscathed). My travelling companion bored me with his constant exclamations of rapture, and grew very angry with me, when, tempted, I confess, more by the unbearable jolting than by innate candor, I told him from the depths of the recess in which I was wedged, that, frankly, his "Tibetan" road was not fit to sole the shoe¹ of our "Georgian Military High Road" in the Caucasus.

Over a stretch of 57 miles we changed our horses nine times. At every station these tattered jades, after starting a fight with the camels, bucked and threatened to break their hind legs on our backs, while I repeatedly and unavoidably fell back into my recess, and so it went on until the following station was reached! The distance from Simla to Kalka is only 12 miles as the crow flies, but along the road which twists in every direction and winds round every hill like the ribbon on a Tyrolean hat, it is, as already stated, 57 miles. One can imagine how many turnings the tonga makes, and the precautions that are necessary at such speed to avoid collision at every new bend with a string of camels or a herd of elephants. To avoid such a catastrophe the drivers blow their horns every few minutes. This cacophony is mournfully repeated by the neighboring echoes, and one barely dies away before a new one is sounded, on hearing which the camels and elephants get out of the way. The movement of the tonga was so rapid and the seat so near the ground that after one heavy jolt my companion, enveloped in a cloud of dust, suddenly, as if by enchantment, disappeared from my sight and found himself sitting in the middle of the road under the trunk of a passing elephant. According to his own words,

¹ [Russian proverb.—*Translator.*]

he did not realize that he was in this unexpected position, until the tonga which had dropped him was about a mile away. The clever elephant picked him up with its trunk and tossed him behind its ear, so as not to crush him. Having reclaimed the poor Briton, I wanted to ask whether he likewise included the tonga among the essential proofs of his country's greatness in general, and of the superiority of its products over those of other countries in particular. But the lamentable look on his soiled countenance and the sight of his torn coat changed my wrath to pity, and, like a Good Samaritan, I offered him my handkerchief to wipe his face.

After passing with the speed of a locomotive, Kiari Ghat, a large castle on a cliff, resembling the feudal ruins on the Rhine, of which there are many here, we continued to descend the steep road winding round the mountain. Some fifteen times or so the ancient castle vanished from sight, only to reappear. Then came the famous castle of the Mahârâjâ of Patiâla, the mountain retreat of a dynasty many centuries old, the latest representative of which is today a seven year old child; then Solon came into view, a sanitarium now crowded with the unfortunate victims of Beaconsfield's policy. Mutilated on the "scientific frontier" of Afghanistan, they are now digesting the lesson received, on the calmer territory of the Râjâ of Baghat, in whose domain the English barracks and hospitals are built. These charming guests constitute a far from agreeable addition to the populace of His Serene Highness . . . But the unfortunate prince remains silent and consoles himself by growing tea, like Cincinnatus of old, who, by the way, did not grow tea but cabbages, or something of the sort. In Solon, to the sound of trumpets, we were thrown out and onto the veranda of a *dâk-bungalow*, or, in plain language, a post house, where we instantly proceeded to lunch according to the invariable Anglo-Indian routine: ribs of mutton made of some kind of rubber, and dry rice mixed

with an equal quantity of earth, accompanied by a murderous *curry*¹. Hastily caulking the fissures in our stomachs made by the jolting, we squeezed into our tongas and careered away. Another change of horses, more camels, bucking, and clouds of dust . . . After jolting for four hours we reached Dharampur on the slope of Kasauli. . . . Here firs and spruces grew more and more scarce, the majestic cedars also disappeared and were replaced by endless cacti, dark-leafed mangoes, wide-spreading pîpals, and finally by palm-trees. Tropical vegetation comes into its own, and at Kalka entirely supplants that of the North.

The little town of Kalka, 2,400 feet above sea level and therefore 6,000 feet below Simla, consists of a score of houses, a telegraph station and two hotels. In former years, before the English occupied Pañjâb, it was a village outside the estate of the Mahârâjâ of Patiâla, an estate famous for its wonderful park. The Pinjor gardens, surrounded by the Siwâlik heights, are even now visited by many tourists. Laid out during the reign of Emperor Akbar by one of his nawâb-rulers, these gardens, which constitute an entire park, are said to be the most wonderful spot in Northern India, not excepting even the gardens of Shâlimâr in Lahore where Ranjit-Singh held durbârs during his reign and where these are still held in honour of the Viceroys.

To my great delight, we were given a large four wheeled *dâk-gharri* (post-carriage) instead of the tonga next morning. The road to Umballa, where we finally reached the railroad, slopes gently and is wide and smooth, except for a few fordings over turbulent, dangerous torrents, which, however, dry up in autumn. The post-carriage is a square, painted box on four

¹ *Curry* is a sauce made of every possible kind of spice, the most important being red pepper; the natives swallow it by the spoonful, while a European could not even taste it without choking.

wheels and without seats. The traveller's bedding is spread on the floor of such a box and, if none is available, he is forced to remain on the dirty boards. The jolts of this cart are no worse than our *telega*,¹ but in addition to the particular charms of our carriage, we found in it a nest of scorpions: the worthy mother, two dozen little ones sitting on the back of the father, the daughter-in-law, and other members of the family. I almost sat down on them. The coachman, a *Jain*, begged me not to inflict cruel death upon them. You see, several of his children had died that year, and for all he knew they might all have transmigrated into this interesting family . . . Proportionate to their native mountains, the scorpions were from one-and-a-half to two inches in length, and we had to wait until the pious *Jain* had carefully raked them on to a palm leaf and carried them to the edge of the forest . . . On arriving at Umballa, a bare 38 miles from Kalka, we almost fainted from the noon heat; it was 86 degrees in the shade at the end of October!

Umballa is the capital of a part of British territory taken by the English under some pretence from the country known as Sirhind, which belongs to the rulers of Patiâla. It is a large, fortified town with a fortress on its northeastern side and a camp situated at the base of the fort. Sheltering ourselves from the sweltering heat in a dark room, we did not see anything; besides, there was nothing to see. In the evening we took our seats in the train and woke up in Amritsar next morning.

The entire platform was crowded with Âryas and Sikhs who had come to meet their "American brothers" with appropriate *namasté*.² There were some two hundred people

¹ [Russian village cart.—*Translator*.]

² *Namasté* is a Sanskrit greeting introduced by contemporary reformers in place of the usual Moslem "salaam".

present. A strange and picturesque sight was a guard of honor which would have aroused the envy of many a German princeling. It was an unarmed guard, it is true, but decked out in such fantastic, rich and unique costumes that many an artist would have been utterly fascinated. What splendid fellows are these valiant Sikhs! They are giants who appear even taller by wearing immense snow-white turbans (like a mass of snow fallen from the Himâlayas) which cover their long, luxuriant hair and brown faces—the latter, however, considerably paler than those of Central and especially Southern India. Here you will not see nude nature covered with an inch of dirty calico, instead of a fig leaf, even on the poorest coolie. The Pañjâbîs wear white skin-tight trousers, not unlike *trikot*; the wealthy wear expensive embroidered muslin shirts over the trousers, and the poor wear plain calico shirts. The former are distinguished by their coats of cashmere and glazed brocade, stitched with gold and multicolored silks, and often lined with expensive furs. But all of them, both rich and poor, are crowned with vast turbans of diversified types, some having as much as a hundred yards of muslin on their heads!

At the railway platform we found a handsome carriage awaiting us, and thus, followed by the variegated band, under the cross-fire of sarcastic glances thrown by English acquaintances from Simla, we started for the suburban house prepared for our reception, owned by Mulraj-Singh, the president of the local Ârya-Samâja and a very wealthy Sikh.

The house was a spacious and beautiful villa standing in the midst of a large, shady garden, and furnished entirely in European style with all the modern comforts. Having barely had time to change our clothes and wash up after the journey, and before even a bite of food, we were made then and there to hold an unexpected durbâr of our own. During that one morning, and before five o'clock in the afternoon, we made

the acquaintance of a larger number of nationalities, races, sects, and various religious bodies, than during the last year-and-a-half spent in Southern and Central India. Pañjâbîs, Hindus from Benares, Sikhs, Jats, Râjputs, Paṭhâns, Gurkhas, Kashmîrîs, came and went in great numbers. Folding their hands on their chests and then touching their foreheads, they bowed and quietly sat down in a semi-circle on the rug, in front of our two chairs. Each one of these colorful, living garlands fixed its reverentially curious glance upon us, and in profound silence awaited the first question . . . After it had been propounded (regarding the school of philosophy or sect to which each one belonged), a general conversation about metaphysical subjects immediately followed. They listened with curiosity to our often perplexed criticisms of their incredibly strange, and always most unexpected paradoxical deductions. More often than not, we had to acknowledge ourselves beaten and had to retreat.

The passion for mystical introspection and metaphysical day-dreaming is the most pronounced trait of the Hindus, from the Himâlayas to Cape Comorin. Whatever he may do, to whatever class of society he may belong, as soon as the Hindu finds a moment of leisure, he squats down and becomes absorbed in dreaming, or rather, meditation, and should he find company near at hand, he will start a metaphysical discussion. But let not the reader think that this piety rests on dogmas, or arises from any of the established sects and schools. Both of these serve the dreamers merely as a canvas upon which each of them embroiders the most fantastic patterns throughout his entire life. Gradually unwinding from the unknown depths of his cogitative faculties a thin web of personal deduction concerning the most difficult, insoluble world-problems, he so enmeshes himself finally in that self-spun network that, unable to free himself, he merely buzzes in it like a captured fly. He almost always has a

guru, a spiritual teacher chosen from among other flies like himself and equally entangled in self-made webs, but older and more learned. The former will worship the latter until his death, and after death will render him the last honors; according to all the rules of his caste, he will burn the teacher's body, bury the ashes somewhere in his garden, and morning and evening will converse with his *guru*, at first mentally and under the influence of mystical emotion, and later aloud, expounding his new system. The neighbors will gather around him, squat on their haunches, and listen. Then, little by little, they will join his school, and in the evenings will abandon themselves to religious ecstasy together. This passion for theological argument has brought forth and continues to breed innumerable sects, schools, and religious brotherhoods, especially the latter. Protestant missionaries, especially American, help to a certain extent in promoting these conditions. Spending most of their time in town squares and bazaars, these zealous but far from educated enlighteners of heathendom never lose an opportunity of starting a polemic, but rarely meet with success. Under the cross-fire of questions concerning the chronology of the world, the Creation, the relation between Deity and man, and especially the future and the essential nature of man's soul, and being in no position to fight an audience heavily nourished on metaphysical wisdom, the missionaries gradually begin to lose patience and finally resort to abuse of the local gods and threats of hell-fire. As a result, complaints are sometimes lodged in the courts, but usually there follows a new impulse to unite against the common enemy, the *padri*, and as a result a new heathen brotherhood is formed. . .

(To be continued)

THE DURBAR IN LAHORE

FROM THE DIARY OF A RUSSIAN

By H. P. BLAVATSKY

(Continued from p. 302)

II

Sikhism and the prince-gurus.—Our visit to the Golden Temple.—The miraculous fountain.—We become “immortals”.

ON the day of our arrival our durbâr lasted until five o'clock in the afternoon. The huge trees in the shady garden did not allow the fierce rays of the October sun to disturb us unduly, but, on the other hand, great flocks of brilliantly plumaged parrots flew fearlessly in and out of the open doors of the veranda, and deafened us with the harshness of their far from metaphysical bird-cries. Finally the last file of mystics retired; and while the parrots began to hide themselves in the shady foliage of the mango trees, we started for the Golden Temple on the Lake of Immortality.

The name *Amritsar* is derived from the Sanskrit words: *a*—particle of negation; *mṛita*—death; and *saras*—fountain; in their combined form meaning “the fountain of immortality”. This name was not originally given to the town, but to the *talao*, or lake, from the crystal waters of which, as if for ever admiring its own reflection, rises the Golden Temple, built in 1581 by Râm-Dâs, the fourth *guru* or teacher-prince of the Sikhs. Beginning with Nânak, the founder of Sikhism,

the Sikhs had ten such prince-gurus (Râja-gurus). This sect, founded in the XVIth century by the teacher with the help of half-a-dozen disciple-apostles, grew strong and spread widely. In the XIXth century the English found it scattered from Delhi to Peshâwar, and from the sandy deserts of Sind to the Karakorum mountains, far beyond Kashmîr. The history of the Sikh empire, about which so little was known in Europe that its fall in 1849 barely arrested the attention of the press, is most interesting and may be briefly outlined in a few words: tireless fighting with the then mighty Moguls of India, fighting not for life but for death, where there were ten Mussalmans against every Sikh. This continued, with a few intervals, until the first half of the present century, when the English pacified both Mogul and Sikh by preparing an equal fate for both—that of becoming British vassals. The successor of the founder of Sikhism was a certain Angad, whose teachings, which record the words of Nânak, form the opening section of the *Âdi Granth* (the sacred scripture of the Sikhs); his disciple, Amar-Dâs, inherited the spiritual throne after him. He was the first who dared to stand up to the authority of the lawgivers, and sternly denounce the inhuman custom of “suttee”—the self-immolation of widows on the funeral pyres of their husbands, and ordered the following inscription to be traced as a warning over the entrance to the *Ghâts* (the site where the corpses were burnt): “The true suttee (one who commits self-immolation) is she who is devoured not by the flames of the pyre, but by the calm, yet enduring sorrow for the dead, the consolation for which and the refuge against which should be sought in the Lord God alone.” Râm-Dâs, the builder of the Golden Temple, succeeded him. The town itself was known 400 years ago under the name of Chak. When Râm-Dâs formed the lake and surrounded it with numerous small temples, he named it Râmdâspur. He appointed his son Arjan as his successor.

As a philosopher the latter was a great favorite with the Emperor Akbar, but in 1577 a certain Chandu Khân, one of the sardârs and a subject of the Caliph, in envy slandered him. Then Arjan was suspected of treason and put in prison, where he died, in 1606, if we are to believe the Moguls. The Sikhs, however, have a different story to tell. According to their tradition the prince-teacher, on being permitted to bathe in the stream which ran across the prison-yard, suddenly vanished from the sight of his two guardians and found himself in heaven. His son and heir, Har Govind, whom his father's death left a boy of eleven, swore vengeance on the Moguls for the death of his father, and kept his word. He began by killing with his own hand Chandu Shâh, who had delivered Arjan to his enemies, and then fled beyond the Himâlayas, into the desert, there to learn the *mahâ-vidyâ* (great science, magic). He returned in a few years as a young man and declared war on all Mussalmans, compelling his faithful Sikhs¹ to take an oath that, having once drawn their sword, they would not sheath it again until its sharp blade had sent at least three Moguls into the next world. He killed many a son of the Prophet with his own hands. According to the author of the *Dabistân*, his sword was enchanted. With it he killed Payenda Khân, splitting him in half, and when one of the latter's bodyguard threw himself like a madman upon the warrior-guru and struck him with all his might with his drawn sword, Govind skillfully warded off the blow and cold-bloodedly remarked to his assailant: "Not in that manner, but so the sword is used," and with those words killed him. This exploit led Muhsin-Fânî, the author of the *Dabistân* and a personal friend of Govind, to draw the following curious deduction: "This utterance," he says, "clearly shows that the great Govind-guru did not kill Moslems in wrath, but solely with the idea of

¹ The word *Sikh* means *disciple*.

teaching them how to use their weapons, for the first duty of every guru (teacher) is to instruct.”¹ This defence is a rather curious one. . . .

The Sikhs believe that the soul of the founder of their faith, Nânak, enters the body of every crowned guru and controls him until death. Govind signed all documents thus: “Nânak, on earth Govind,” as witnessed by his correspondence with the author of the *Dabistân* and his letters to the Mogul emperors. Govind died in 1645 and his cremation ceremony was accompanied by wild exhibitions of fanaticism. Several Râjputs, converted to Sikhism, threw themselves into the fire after the body, and many others would have followed their example if it had not been for guru Har-Râi, Govind’s successor, who put an end to this self-destruction. Har-Kishan, the eighth prince-teacher, died in his youth. The ninth, Tegh-Bahâdur, killed so many Moslems that the Emperor Aurangzîb finally dispatched a whole army against him. He was captured by cunning and was beheaded in Delhi. His son, the fifteen-year-old Govind-Singh, the last of the prince-teachers, was the most remarkable of them all. Burning with the desire to avenge the ignominious death of his father, he resolved to reform the Sikhs completely and make real Spartans of them. In the midst of the mighty Mogul reign, he took it into his head to destroy them to the last man. Surrounded by general demoralization, fanaticism and religious superstition, he swore to direct the minds of his Sikhs to one religious idea—monotheism, and to one goal—the founding of a great Sikh empire.

He believed that he was inspired not by Nânak but by the One God himself. “My incorporeal soul,” he says in his *Sacred Biography*,² “reposes in passive felicity, immersed in

¹ *Dabistân*, II, p. 275.

² Each of the ten *prince-teachers* of the Sikhs wrote a more or less extensive book, full of religious teachings, precepts and sermons. It is

uninterrupted contemplation of the One, while the messenger of the Lord, the immortal spirit of Nānak, communicates to you (disciples) the words and commandments which have been traced before him in letters of fire by the finger of Him who is the Light of the World.” “In vain,” he says further, “have Deities (incarnations of Divinity) descended on earth from the beginning of the world in order to instruct mankind regarding the unity of God. . . Men perceive God but through defiled vessels in the shape of His creatures—men. Thus, forgetting Íswara (the Lord), the Hindus worship Śiva, Brahmā and Vishṇu and Mohammed, in instructing his sons about Allah, meanwhile taught them to utter his own horrid name along, in their prayers to the Supreme,” etc. But he, Govind, was now sent to re-establish the truth. “Though a messenger of God,” he adds, “yet I am no more than an ordinary mortal slave of the Supreme, and woe to him who dares to deify me, a worm of the earth! . . . He will burn for all eternity in the fire of suffering. . . It is impossible to find God in scriptures and ceremonies alone; He lives in the heart of man, and may be known only through resignation and the sincerity of inner prayer.”

New laws promulgated by him were unanimously recognized by the Sikhs, and today constitute the dogmas of this sect, though these have but little in common with the teachings of Nānak. The doctrine of meekness gradually changed into the deification of their country as a community of Sikhs, “God’s chosen,” and into a religion known by the name of *Khālsa*, literally meaning “the soil of the redeemed or liberated from sin”. *Jihād*, the holy war of the Mohammedans, is a mere display of fireworks compared with the conflagration brought about among the Sikhs by the word *Khālsa* alone. In

these ten books which make up their Sacred Scripture, known as the *Ādi-Granth*. The book of Govind-Singh is called *Vichitra-Nāṭaka*—“The Miraculous Tale”.

the name of Khâlsa every living human being in the land of the "immortals," from the greatest to the smallest, from women to infants, rises against the enemy, and were the Sikhs more numerous, those who sought to obstruct them would end badly! The laws or dogmas promulgated by Govind are as follows: God is Spirit, but though his Spirit is universal, he descends upon earth only to overshadow the Sikhs, and his presence is nowhere manifest save in the Khâlsa. However, notwithstanding God's absence, "all the nations should strive for unity," *i.e.*, become converted to Sikhism—"all except the Mohammedans, who should be systematically and constantly destroyed, even to the desecration of the tombs of their ancestors and saints." The inferior castes should be considered equal to the higher, "for we are all equal before Nature". "The triple thread of the Brâhmaṇas must be torn asunder, and the Sikhs must realize that the redemption of the soul is possible only through the Khâlsa, while the *pâhul*, (*i.e.*, initiation into the mysteries of Sikhism) can be given by the followers of Govind-guru alone."

The Lake of Immortality and the temple are open to Hindus of all castes and sects. Only the waters of "The Lake of Immortality" give promise of eternal life. All Sikhs must call themselves singhs (lions). All must be sanctified by water¹, wear their hair long, worship nothing but God and his *Âdi-Granth*, never part with their weapons, always fight the Moslems, and dedicate their life and energies to the use of their weapons, etc., etc. A Sikh who follows the above-mentioned edicts is a *sachchâ pādshâ*, "a veritable king".

Having conquered all the obstacles of superstition and caste, founded the Khâlsa and humbled the Brâhmaṇas and Mohammedans, Govind-Singh set out to fight and destroy the Moguls. Śivâjî, a Mârâthâ hero who put an end to the

¹ At the initiation or conversion of a future Sikh, five already initiated adepts sprinkle him with water from the lake.

Timûr dynasty and the supremacy of the Mogul Empire, found in him a friend and ally. Together they repeatedly defeated the ill-fated sons of the Prophet, annihilating them by the thousand. But even Govind had to meet his fate. In 1708, at Nânder, on the shores of the Godâvarî, the hand of a murderer smote him while he lay asleep in his tent. Then a miracle occurred. In answer to the questions of the despondent Sikhs as to who would henceforth lead them on the road to salvation, Govind-Singh rose with a mortal wound in his breast and spoke the following words: "Be humble, and place your trust in God: into His hands I surrender the Khâlsa. He who would see me and speak to me, let him seek me in the *Âdi-Granth* of Nânak. I am your guru, and will for ever remain with you in the Khâlsa. Be firm and remain true to your duty; wherever there are five Sikhs gathered together, there will I be with them!" And he fell down dead. After lying dead for a few hours, he revived and was taken to the Lake of Immortality, where he continued to live for several months longer. There, in spite of a crowd of guardians or *akâlîs*, he was again killed during the night in his tower.

Govind's teaching split the Sikhs into two sects. The first calls itself *Kalasi*, and is composed of orthodox followers of Nânak. Its members do not kill animals, eat no meat, avoid alcoholic beverages, and do not smoke; they consider it a sin to shed the blood of any creature whatsoever; they pray all day and confess their sins to each other every evening before sunset. The other sect, the *Singhs*, disciples of Govind-guru, are fearless warriors, the dread of the Afghâns. Among their number are the *akâlîs* or *nihunchis*, i.e., "God's warriors" and "immortals". It is their duty to guard night and day the temple, where their Mahâ-guru or *great teacher* constantly dwells—alas, but a nominal one at present! There are 600 of these *akâlîs*, and they are known among the people as the "sipâhîs of the temple". To encounter one

of them as an enemy is a rather dangerous thing, as these *immortals* are always heavily armed, often carrying a sword under each arm, two sharp sabres in their belt, a matchlock on their back, and several daggers. Under the English rule they are no more allowed to walk the streets thus armed, but at the same time they have been allowed to retain the most terrible and dangerous weapon, which at first sight remains unnoticed; otherwise there would have been a rebellion. This weapon consists of a steel belt and a circular quoit, sharp and with teeth like a saw (on the inner side), which is twined like a cork-screw about the blue turban of a "God's warrior". They fling this quoit, which is from six to eight inches in diameter, extremely sharp and twisted like a lathe, with frightful dexterity at their enemy. There are still English people living who have witnessed how, with terrible shouting and cries of "Wâh guru jî kâ Khâlsa! *Wâh guru jî kî Fateh!*" (Hail to the Guru's Khâlsa! Hail to the Guru's Victory!) they threw such a quoit at the enemy and instantly cut off his head, and sometimes both legs of horses and even of war-elephants!¹ Ranjit-Singh, the one-eyed old lion and last but one of the Mahârâjâs of Pañjâb, held their courage in high esteem. His "immortals" did miracles of daring and once, during an encounter with the Afghâns, these 600 valiant men decapitated 2,000 of their hereditary foes. Nowadays they have become more subdued, but sigh for the old martial days and often send deputations to the English, asking them to lead them against the hateful Kâbulians. Why the Government did not take advantage of their offer during the last war in Kâbul, remains incomprehensible . . . Perchance they were simply afraid to awaken in the Sikhs their slumbering audacity of old. . . .

¹ Among other books see *The History of the Sikhs* by Capt. Cunningham. The author lived among them for many years.

Now, of course, everything has changed. The plains of Attok and Peshâwar are no longer the refuge of the rhinoceros which the Mogul emperors were so fond of hunting, and which the Sikhs hunted in their turn. The valleys of Upper India, where the Brâhmaṇas and Kshattriyas (warriors) had by degrees developed such an original civilization, that land which had always succeeded in repelling the attacks of all kinds of peoples, from Sikhs to Persians, from Moguls to Afghâns, since the days of Darius Alexander and until the epoch of Bâbur and Dost Muhammad—this land fell at last! . . . There where the rhinoceros once grazed, the rumbling of the trains is now heard! . . .

The Sikhs are still young and vigorous enthusiasts. Not one of them, except for children and some few women, has ever been converted to Mohammedanism, Brahmanism, or even Christianity, notwithstanding all the efforts of the missionaries. For the sake of the Khâlsa they will do anything and everything. . . . But even their laws have begun to give way under the influence of Western education. They still feel hatred for "the sons of the false prophet," yet some of them embark on commercial enterprises with their former irreconcilable enemies, and have also acquired the habit of drunkenness from their new rulers. However, they are more proud than ever of being called *Sikhs*. They continue to wash away their sins in the Lake of Immortality at the break of dawn, and worship the *Âdi-Granth* as assiduously as before. Their esteem for Nânak is so great that even now they almost deify a certain Bâbâ Khein-Singh, just because he is the 16th direct descendant of the founder of Sikhism. This disgusting *Bâbâ* (father) leads a parasitical existence in Râwalpindi surrounded by the veneration of thousands who bring him, as voluntary offerings, over two lakhs of rupees (200 thousand) per year. Contrary to the custom and even the law of the Sikhs, this holy man has,

besides his wife, a whole harem; as for the offerings of his zealous but far from rational worshippers, he spends them in the company of English functionaries, residents and collectors, on crazy festivities, hunting and drunken orgies.

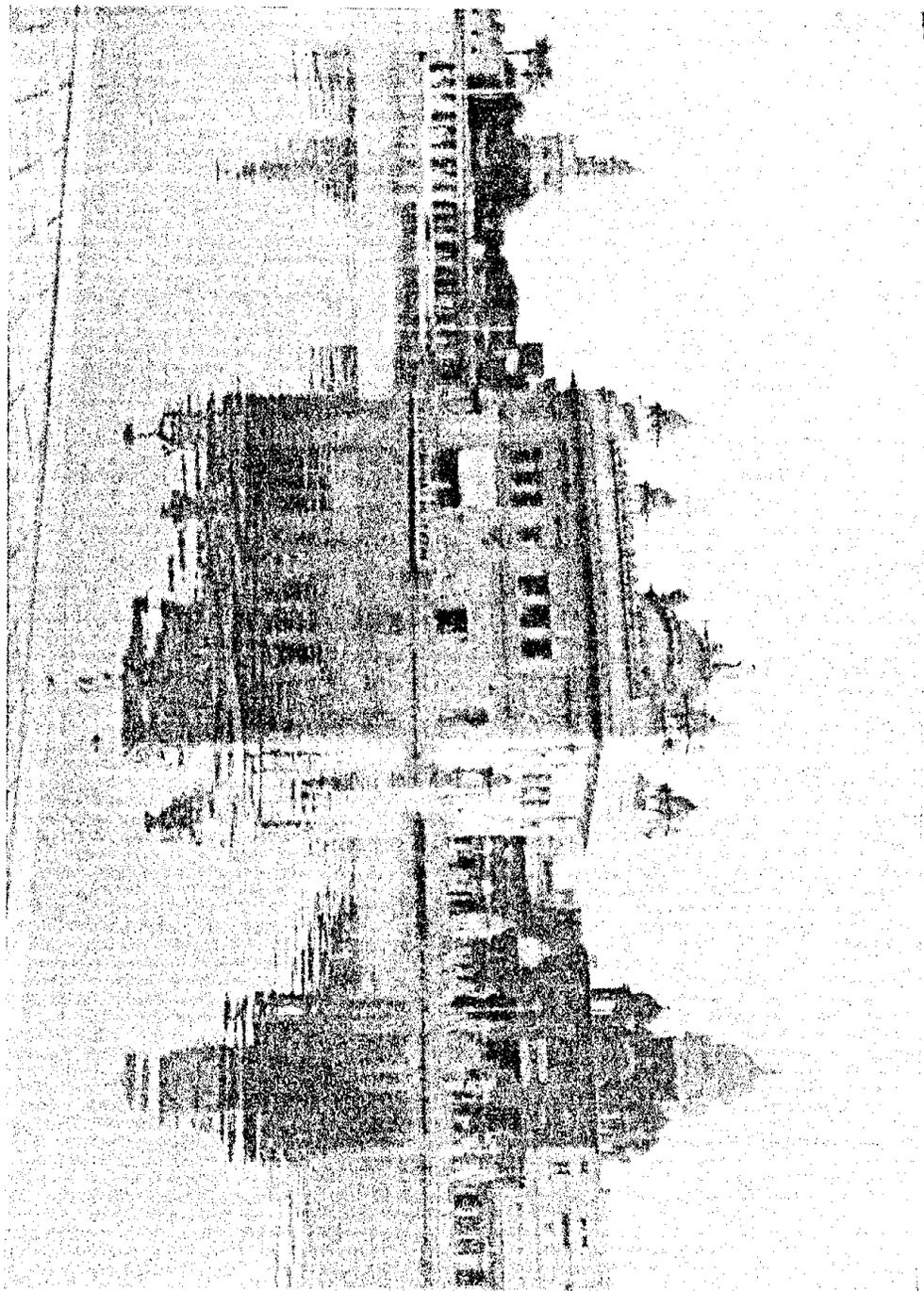
Hardly had we arrived in the Temple-yard, when we were met in the square by our old friend and acquaintance, the akâlî Râm-Dâs, whom we had already met in Bâgh, and who, like myself, had barely escaped falling a victim to the miasmas in the cave of that name.¹ He was exceedingly pleased at meeting us, and then and there, from joy and as a token of his power shook his fist at a Moslem who chanced to pass by. This "God's warrior" appeared even more huge in his official turban. He immediately offered to accompany us and show us all the sections of the temple, including the most secret recesses. When we entered the vast court, paved with multi-colored marble, the sun was already setting, and the Golden Temple, bathed in its warm rays, shone like a magic vision from another world . . .

In this first court we were made to take off our shoes, which were replaced by some kind of felt slippers. Then, after descending a few steps, we tread on the marble quay, shining and slippery as glass, and before our eyes lay the lake in all its grandeur and loveliness, with the Golden Temple in its midst.

The lake is a square reservoir covering 150 paces in each direction, and is filled with water, pure as mountain crystal. On each side of the square marble quay surrounding the lake

¹ See "From the Caves and Jungles of Hindustan" in the *Moskovskiya Vedomosti*, 1879-80.

[At the time when H. P. B. was writing "The Durbâr in Lahore" only a few of the Chapters of her "Caves and Jungles" had been published in the *Moscow Herald*. The Series was interrupted and resumed in the *Russian Messenger*, where it was republished from the beginning all over again, and continued with new instalments. This, however, did not take place until 1883.—*Translator*.]



THE GOLDEN TEMPLE AT AMRITSAR

are snow-white marble stairs, leading to the edge of the water. White palaces of the same pure polished marble surround this immense quadrangle. Each of these palaces was built by one of the numerous Sikh rājās and placed at the disposal of the Mahā-guru and his "Immortals," who permit all kinds of pilgrims to live in them in spite of these palaces being the property of the Sikhs. These dwellings, with their overhanging, ornamentally designed balconies, porticos and terraces, add much to the beauty and poetry of the "sacred square". The square, shutting out the noise of the city, provides a most delightful retreat in the evenings. Between the lake and the palaces grow wonderful, shady trees. Each of these was planted by one of the Sikh-benefactors—famous for their liberality—bears his name, and is surrounded by large marble terraces for the benefit of resting pilgrims. Under almost every tree are buried the ashes of its donor. One of the trees was planted by Govind-Guru himself and is the object of special reverence and care among the priests.

Having walked half way down the quay and nearly falling several times in my awkward felt slippers, we entered another court, still more vast, at one end of which rose a high, open, three-storied building, while at the other stood an arched gateway, from which a long marble bridge, with a beautifully carved railing, led to the Golden Temple which stood in the very centre of the lake. The first building is the *bunga* or palace of the akālī, all the three verandas of which were at that time crowded with "Immortals". The *bunga* is built in Asiatic style. From it, on whichever floor they may be, "God's warriors" can watch over the Temple where, like a living idol, their Mahā-Guru sits whole nights and days long. Here, on the second floor, is the cell of Govind-Guru, with his armour hanging on the wall, and the murmuring fountain which miraculously sprang from the marble floor on

the night of his murder. This is, in fact, the fountain of "immortality". According to the Sikh legend the Moslems and especially the Kâbulians cast a spell over "God's warriors" that night, so that all the akâlîs, instead of watching in turn over their already wounded guru, fell into a deep sleep. Then the Kâbulians approached stealthily and this time slew *pour de bon* the holy warrior, who had dispatched so many of their brethren to the infernal regions with his own hands. The miracle of resurrection was not repeated: *non bis in idem*. On waking from their enchanted sleep the poor "Immortals" (who in those days, by the way, were still simple mortals) found their spiritual leader with his throat cut, while at his head a fountain of pure, cool water spouted to the very ceiling, and beside it an inscription said: "Every one of my faithful Sikhs (disciples) who drinks this water in my name will become immortal, successfully escaping all transmigrations and receiving full absolution for his sins."

After staring at this inscription on the wall of the cell—it is written in the *gurmukhî* dialect—we asked, quite naturally, for a drink from this miraculous fountain, and immediately felt ourselves to be immortal. . .

To our amazement not a penny was expected from us for our acquired immortality, and our old friend, the akâlî, was even hurt when we hinted at a contribution, and answered that they did not accept payment from their "brethren". After that we inspected other parts of the bunga. There was a magnificent show-case in which the swords of all the guru-warriors and their other weapons were exhibited. On the upper floor stands a richly decorated altar, where the *Granthas* are placed under lock and key every night. Each of them is kept in a specially prepared room and guarded by an akâlî. The *Granthas* are cradled until dawn on a thick bed of roses and other flowers. On a platform in front of the bunga stands a marble dais—the acme of beauty and

good taste; on it is a font in which the Sikhs wash their sins away to the accompaniment of sacred songs and instrumental music played all day long. The courtyard was crowded with worshippers of all sects and nationalities. To this day the Sikhs hold every denomination in equal esteem and allow members of all sects, with the exception of Mohammedans, to pray in the Golden Temple. Therefore, at the divâlî of Amritsar, pilgrims of the most heterogeneous sects flock. Here you may see a worshipper of Vishṇu beating his forehead against the Temple-steps, as well as a stern Śaiva who would behold in the dome-like Temple the emblem of his Śiva; a Vedântin as well as a Buddhist; a polytheistic Gurkha and even the devil-worshipping Jâṭs. . .

Having passed across the bridge with its open-work railings, which at that moment were thronged with solid rows of fakirs clad in their own skin, with *sannyâsins* in orange-yellow dress and wearing chignons, and with *Kûkas*¹ carrying a tower of white muslin on their heads, like the tower of Suharev in Moscow, and arrayed in narrow skirts, we finally reached the Golden-headed pagoda. Like Venus risen from the sea-foam seemed to us this beauty of India, which has no rivals but the Mohammedan Tâj-Mahal in Âgra and the Moti-Masjid (Pearl Mosque) in Delhi. Two-thirds of its walls are of pure, excellently polished white marble, brightly gilded beneath the terraces, from each corner of which rises a high tower, colored like an Easter egg. On three sides the temple is surrounded by the deep lake, and on its fourth side there is a bridge which leads to the bunga of the akâlî. The water is almost level with the second step beneath each of the three doors of the portico. From these steps the Sikhs dive, like frogs, all day long into the lake, and after diving lie down on the wet upper

¹ The Kûkas are a secret political sect of Sikhs, highly inimical to the English.

step and dry in the sunshine, awaiting immortality. With touching hospitality we were urged to plunge into the lake, just as we were, and then to dry ourselves in the same manner. However, thinking ourselves immortal enough after having drunk of the waters of the fountain, we declined.

The temple is not large, but its interior decoration is extremely dainty, and, most important of all, it is kept very clean—a condition which is unusual in India. Having entered through the main portal we found ourselves face to face with the high-priest of the Sikhs. This venerable old man with a snow-white beard was reclining on luxurious pillows under an enormous blue velvet baldaquin, embroidered with gold, and to all appearances was assiduously reading the *Âdi-Granth*. I say to all appearances, for, on coming nearer, we observed a pair of closed eyes above a pair of spectacles which had slid down to the end of a hooked nose, and heard loud snoring, audible even through the drone of numerous voices muttering prayers around him. The Mahâ-guru slept the sleep of the righteous, and so soundly that he did not wake up even when our friend, the akâlî, began to fumble respectfully between his crossed knees and to select for us several of the most beautiful roses from the heap of flowers scattered beneath him. We were informed that this was no sleep but the bliss of *samâdhi*, *i. e.*, that the Mahâ-guru was plunged in that particular religio-lethargical state during which the highest soul of man (*Âtman*) separates itself from the body and wanders away into the universal spaces, there to perform its spiritual duties, while the perishable body is left on earth under the guardianship of the “animal soul” (*jîvâtman*). Apparently the “animal” host made haste to avail himself of his temporary rights, for upon our appearance he asserted his presence very forcefully. After a thunderous snore the ancient man stuck his nose into the *Âdi-Granth* for the last time, suddenly opened his eyes, hazy with sleep, and opening his toothless mouth, began to stare

at us in amazement, as though awaiting an explanation. The latter was forthcoming: our obliging akâlî introduced us immediately as "brothers from Pâtâla".¹ Owing to its dual meaning this designation of America, common everywhere in India, has given rise many a time to all kinds of *quid pro quo*. The fair sex of India especially, not often qualified for honorary membership in the Geographical Society, inquired with much curiosity as to whether we resembled the green monsters with red eyes and many-tailed spinal column, as the *râkshasas* (demons) from Pâtâla are represented in their temples, and upon seeing us refused to believe that we were not "Ingresi," or Englishmen.

The ancient pontiff, after staring at us for a while, gave us permission to ascend the Eastern towers from which there is a magnificent view over the city. However, he immediately recalled us, in order to ask us some very extraordinary questions. One of them was, whether there were many Moslems in our Pâtâla, and whether Americans are enjoined by their religion to track them down and kill them like so many rabid jackals—or whether the English forbid even the Pâtâlians to touch them, as they do in Pañjâb. On learning that there were no Moslems in America and that the English have no authority there, the great guru was greatly amazed, and expressed the joyful hope that perchance the reason why there were no Moslems in the United States was that, with the exception of a handful of them who took refuge from the Sikhs in Hindustân and Kâbul, under the protection of the English, all of them were long since roasting in "Infernal Pâtâla," *i.e.*, in hell. He then said that he could not understand why people living in a country of such blessings, where there were neither Moslems nor *Ingresi*, would leave it in order to settle in a place which swarmed with both. After exchanging a few

¹ *Pâtâla* is a name by which America is known. Translated, it means "the infernal land". Among the masses *Pâtâla* also means "hell".

more remarks as profound as this last, we parted, well satisfied with each other.

The garden of the Golden Temple is very beautiful. There, nightingales sing all day long! Kashmîr abounds in nightingales as well as in roses, and the former often migrate to the forests of Pañjâb. The singing of the nightingale in the garden of the guru is a sure indication that this bird has become the abode of the soul of one of the singers or pipers of the Temple, and whenever the ex-singer proclaims his presence near a tree, food and water from the "lake of Immortality" are always provided for him. From the garden we went to the "Black Town".

(To be continued)

Religion consisteth not in mere words;
He who looketh on all men as equal is religious.
Religion consisteth not in wandering to tombs or places of
cremation, or sitting in attitudes of contemplation;
Religion consisteth not in wandering in foreign countries, or
in bathing at places of pilgrimage.
Abide pure amid the impurities of the world; thus shalt thou
find the way of religion.

NANAK

THE DURBAR IN LAHORE

By H. P. BLAVATSKY

(Continued from p. 374 of September issue)

The bazaar at Amritsar and the lamentations of its inhabitants.—The opinion of the English about their own rulership.—The Black City and the Cantonments.—The illuminations of Divâli.—92 Kûkas discharged from a cannon.

THE bazaar at Amritsar presents an exceedingly lively spectacle: each shop comprises in itself a factory, a storehouse and a place where sales are carried on. They are exposed to the eyes of visitors from the street, and as you walk slowly through the narrow street you may get a correct conception of the intricate process of the production of the wonderful shawls sold here. You can get them here for a few pennies, but when sent to Europe, they become costly items. A naked Hindu sits on the extremity of his spinal column and combs wool. The wave-like strands of wool shine in the sun like flowing, glittering silk. . . . In a tiny shop next door another Hindu dyes the wool in the brightest and most wonderful colors. Behind this shop is a third, where, seated in front of a loom of the most primitive kind, a master-weaver weaves with all the twenty digits of his hands and feet. It is well worth seeing how shawls, muslins and silks of the most delicate colors are here embroidered with gold, on a dusty street covered with rubbish and slops, often

between two small food-shops where unleavened bread-fritters are fried in coconut oil all day long, and swarms of flies obscure the light . . . And never is there a single spot on the weaving! . . . One single spot would completely ruin the poor workman!

The bazaar is overflowing here with wares from Middle Asia and cheap imitation products from Manchester. The latter city is trying with all its might to kill the local craftsmen with its own imitations, which are cheap beyond the possibility of competition. Indeed, who will buy richly carved idols of real ivory which Benvenuto Cellini would not have been ashamed to claim as his own work, and for which the district of Darśanî-Darvâza in Amritsar is so famed, when Manchester floods the bazaar with idols made of ordinary bone, crudely carved by a machine and ten times as cheap? Little by little ancient handicraft is disappearing, and will soon vanish altogether. All these costly cobweb-muslins from Dacca, these wonderful filigreed ornaments from Delhi, these mosaics in gold and marble and the black enamel-work of Morâdâbâd, the amazing *repoussé* on copper from Benares, etc., etc., will become a mere legend. The Manchester machine will soon have destroyed even the memory of all these products of the patient Hindu, whose genius is willing to manifest itself for a few pennies a day, and from whom the British huckster's greed takes even these wretched pennies! Those 20 millions of the Afghân fiasco have to be paid, don't you see! And if it does not come from taxes, the last buffalo, the last cow—nourisher of a whole family—will be sold; and if these cannot be obtained—then there is the jail!

“But is it possible,” I asked one of the *malcontents*, “that you regret the time when you were under the despotic yoke of the Moslems? Now you are rapidly being educated, and the lives of your families are not endangered, etc., etc.”

The answer is always the same: "We realize the great blessings of education, and various other benefits of civilization, but what is the use of all this improvement when there is nothing to eat? True, we were killed and beaten and persecuted in the times of the Moslem dynasties, still we were not starved to death, one by one. The money which the sons of the Prophet extorted from the Hindus remained in the country, and there was always a hope that sooner or later it would return to the pockets of its original owners. But now! . . . Now the last drops of juice are being squeezed out and absorbed forever by the fogs of Great Britain. Our Golconda diamonds have become glass; our sacred idols are displayed in the British Museum; and our countless treasures repose in the vaults of the Bank of England. Our famous Koh-i-Nor (mountain of radiance)—a diamond without its equal, which was removed by force and with bloodshed from the conquered Shâh-Shujâ by Ranjit-Singh, now sparkles on the crown of the Empress of India. And many, many a family jewel, once stolen by Hastings and Co. from the forefathers of the ruling princes, must now be redeemed for enormous sums from itinerant English jewelers! . . .

From my desk I take *The History of the Annexation of Puñjâb to the British Possession in 1849*, written by an Englishman, and read the following:

"Thus the country was saved This wretched population, consisting of many millions, which had been worn out with centuries of confusion and strife, of constant bloodshed, despotism, and a total moral as well as material collapse, finally drew a breath of freedom. . . . Taken under the benign protection of the British Crown, it has since known the meaning of life and daily blesses all the benefits of civilization and the very just though firm government of the great Empress of India. . . ."

It seems that K. N. Leontieff is right: a certain degree of slyness is essential in politics,¹ and the English must therefore be right.

We were to remain in Amritsar until the day of the Divâli. On November 2nd, about six o'clock in the evening, we started to walk through the Cantonment towards the town and the temple which was the centre of the illuminations. With the exception of Bombay and Calcutta the towns in India are, of course, unlike any other towns in the world. Districts or sections inhabited by the English are not even considered to be part of the town, but are known as *Cantonments*, in contradistinction to the Black Town, or that part where live their despised ex-owners, the "sons of the soil". As to the towns of the latter, they are the usual Asiatic towns, neither more nor less, and except for their outstanding imperishable monuments of antiquity are all built after the same pattern. Doorless and windowless mud huts nestle beside dwellings painted in all the colors of the rainbow and with pretensions to the name of palaces; crooked hovels supported on chicken legs press against each other, tumble over each other, climb over neighboring walls and roofs as though preparing for an assault, and butting into the solid wall of some honest-to-goodness house, cling to it, and look down over the narrow street above the tops of the lower houses, as if boasting to the passers-by of the tatters which eternally decorate their roofs. These streets, where two carriages can rarely pass each other, are usually framed with two rows of little shops where everything is sold, from conscience to idols of British manufacture, from real Venetian lace, lying under a heap of onions and bananas, to the works of Annie Besant which treat of the mysteries of present-day physiology and

¹ See the *Russkiy Vestnik* for March, 1879, "My Recollections of Thracia."

are banned in England. On the other hand, the so-called *Cantonments* in towns like Allâhâbâd, Cawnpore, Amritsar, Lahore and others are not like towns at all. . . . They are merely suburban divisions of Indian towns, built, for the most part, after the Mutiny. Some 30 years ago there was a jungle or forest around almost every town, where fakirs and saintly people found salvation after renouncing the world. After growing alarmed during the suppression of the mutiny, the English chased them away, cleaned out the thickets, and through them laid out broad, interminable avenues, selecting the intermediate groves for their residences. One can drive for hours on end along wonderful smooth avenues shaded with centuries-old trees, and not see a single house. At some distance, here and there, you glimpse double white posts with the names of those who live several hundred yards beyond them. To reach any one of these you have to pass through the gateless entrances, and only then a white bungalow surrounded with verandas will emerge from the shelter of the shady, moss-covered trees. Concealed from the scorching, deadly rays of the fierce sun, these villas, although but a few steps away, are hardly noticeable because of their canopies of densely entwining branches. They laugh at both heat and sunshine from their shelter of gigantic lianas and other creepers. . . . Here the sun is powerless and can merely wink its fiery eye through the green netting of thick foliage. In India it is not the heat but the rays of the sun which, even during the cold season, often quite suddenly kill a foreigner.

The sun had all but sunk behind the horizon when we started out from our suburban bungalow, even though we had to drive three miles along the avenues of the Cantonment. Though the heat even in November is unbearable during the day, nothing can compare with the magic of October and November evenings in India. . . . The air was permeated with the aroma of plants, and myriads of colorful moths and

gnats danced about in rainbow-tinted clouds, in the fading rays of the day. On either side of the avenues were small lakes and canals, on the black mirror of which the floating chalices of lotus-flowers spread like a pale rose carpet, attracting whole swarms of fireflies and other luminous insects. . . . But hardly had their phosphorescent sparks begun to gleam in the quickly gathering twilight, than other fires beside the road began to be kindled—the lights of the forthcoming illuminations of the *divâlî*. The natives consider this day their new year. The dark silhouettes of the “sacred torch-bearers” had already begun to appear among the trees, and their groups grew more dense and numerous with every moment. Quietly, running on their bare feet without a sound, they appeared and disappeared like forest-sprites at night, flitting about beneath the shrubs, in the foliage of the lower branches, and atop house-roofs. And wherever a dark hand appeared extending a staff within which burned the sacred “*kuśa*” grass dipped in coconut-oil, either a fire-pot was lighted like a tiny point of fire, or a Chinese lantern flashed brightly, or a torch was lit. . . . Within ten minutes the entire town with its surroundings was blazing as though it were day. . . . We knew that at that moment the whole of India, subjugated but still with faith in her gods, was being illuminated from one end to the other. . . .

How can I find words to describe the marvellous, magical spectacle of the Golden Temple illuminated from base to dome, or that of the sacred garden of the Sikhs! Even the English were in rapture this year and their most critical newspapers declared that “for many, many years nothing comparable to the illumination in Amritsar in 1880 has been witnessed in India.” The Viceroy was expected, but he arrived only a few days later, and an additional illumination was prepared for him. The gathering of the crowds was so immense that we were forced to leave our carriage and wend

our way through the streets of the bazaar among camels and elephants. Everything down to the last hovel was submerged in a sea of fire, and there were many Sikh fanatics who had thrust flaming torches into their turbans, and were forcing their way through the throng like so many wandering lighthouses. . . . When we reached the large square from which there is a descent to the lake, we found the whole left side of the stand occupied by the chairs of the English, behind which the rājās and sardārs thronged reverently. We did not go there but went straight into the court of the temple where Rām-Dās awaited us, and he led us to the roof of the palace belonging to the Mahārājā of Farīdkot, who had sent orders from Simla to have comfortable seats prepared for us there. Indeed, even the Viceroy himself could not have found a better place than ours. We did not mind the natives and therefore had the opportunity of enjoying this rare and unusual spectacle better than any other European. The latter merely saw the illuminated temple and part of the lake, while from our roof we had a view not only over the temple and the bunga of the akālī, but also over the entire sacred garden with its four quays, on which swarmed thousands upon thousands of pilgrims, descending from the walls of the palaces to the very edge of the water in a dense mass of multi-colored turbans and embroidered costumes; that evening they transformed the garden into a colorful meadow. It was a sight of amazing grandeur, something strikingly enchanting! The marble bridge was filled with "God's warriors," and it had been promised us that we would also see something of the secret ceremonies of the Kûkas.

It may be observed, and with justice, that foreigners have seen better illuminations and fireworks than these. I will not deny that. I have seen similar ones in Versailles, London and other cities, but in different circumstances. Of

course, the lakes and ponds at Versailles which reflect millions of lights, present no less magical a sight, but in comparing the surrounding crowds of Frenchmen in their short-tailed coats and top hats which are suggestive of joints in a stove-pipe perched on their heads, with this colorful and waving sea of turbans and festive costumes loaded with gold; in comparing the chestnut and lime trees (without in the least belittling the native beauty of the North) with the palm-trees and giant vegetation of India, and finally the cloudy Northern sky of the Occident with this deep blue Southern sky which delights the eye, my enthusiasm becomes more understandable.

Before us, almost at our feet, and seemingly at one and the same time, scenes from the greatest European theatres seemed to unfold, with their "Africans," "Aidas," "Kings of Lahore" and the *tutti quanti* of various ballets portraying Oriental life. The most gorgeous decorations under the sun ever seen by Europeans were displayed before us. The lovely temple in the midst of the lake, whose beauty fascinates even in daylight, evoking enthusiastic tribute from the tourists, was now ten times more enchanting. From the high roof of our palace all this was like a fantastic dream difficult to realize, and enveloped one in a strange and ardent feeling. From this height not only the illuminated buildings and palaces lay before us, like scenes from the Arabian nights, but also the outlying hills and meadows. As if emerging from the darkness surrounding the fiery centre of the quadrangle, far away before us stretched the endless panorama, rolling away across the roofs of the palaces bordering the lake, into the distance, beyond the horizon, on the moving sea of forest-clad hills and plains, where at last, having gradually passed through a whole gamut of warm colors, from bronze-orange and golden shades, to pale-purple mist, it suddenly vanished in the bluish haze of the distance. Directly before us, gleaming like a fire-bird, stood

the temple in the lake, the dark mirror of the latter reflecting and multiplying to infinity, the unbroken glowing garlands that faithfully outlined the designs on the temple, its bas-relief, its inscriptions and arabesques, as well as the intricate carving of the railings on the marble bridge. Flowers, dragons, birds—the smallest decorations in carving and painting which stood out in blazing outlines against the dark background of the buildings, were repeated down to the very depths of the lake, untouched by any ripples. Thousands of people above the water, and thousands reflected in its surface. . . . They thronged on the shores of the lake, spreading like a rich, variegated rug to the utmost boundaries of the steps which led to the water, some of them half-immersed in water, and all speechless and motionless. Quietly and in silence they merely raised their swarthy arms towards the “Golden Temple,” and simultaneously dipping them into the limpid depths of the lake, devoutly besprinkled themselves with the holy water which gave to each of them promise of eternal life in Moksha.

Suddenly, like a fiery and hissing serpent, the first rocket rose in the air; then a second, then a third, and so to the tenth, until the entire heavenly artillery booming and bursting descended like a rain of stars upon the crowd. This evoked exuberant cries of rapture. For a full hour all that pyrotechnical art ever produced in the shape of rockets, Catherine wheels, Roman candles and apotheoses, with the addition of native heraldic designs, monograms and sacred Indian emblems, crackled, rattled and rumbled about us until we were well-nigh deafened. The crowd exulted; especially when a mass of miniature balloons with Bengal lights in them were released from the turret of the temple, and it seemed impossible to distinguish them from the myriads of blazing stars in the sky. . . . Thousands of superstitious people, many of whom had never witnessed a display of fireworks

before, prostrated themselves on the ground upon the appearance of these, in the firm belief that this was a miracle performed by their Govind-Guru or perhaps even by Nānak himself. Some of them even picked up the fallen rockets, half-consumed by the fire, from the ground, in order to preserve them as sacred objects. But soon, little by little, the rockets began to appear in diminishing number. The reports and explosions grew less until, finally, all was quiet. The apotheosis of the preceding year, in which the Moslems had been depicted in a hell of fire-works, massacred on earth by the Sikhs and even pursued by them to the infernal regions, had been prohibited this year by the government because of complaints from offended Moslems, much to the Akālī's sorrow. This time there was ample reason to fear their indignation. Instead of the apotheosis some kind of wonderful wheel with devils revolving on it appeared on the turret of Govind, as the fireworks ceased. The luminous square alone remained visible.

The crowd of Europeans, sitting on the platform by the city clock-tower, dispersed. The upper platform also became abandoned; we alone remained on the roof, hovering above the great crowd in the sacred square. After the festivities, the solemn ceremony of the Kûkas was to follow, and our akālī promised us that we should see them wandering around the lake while they repeated their mysterious annual vows, unknown to others . . .

I have already mentioned this political sect whose adherents fan the flames of an inextinguishable vengeance directed against their conquerors, under the guise of religious rites.¹

Several years ago a traitor offered the English, for a good price, to join the sect of the Kûkas, and on learning their secrets,

¹ See "From the Caves and Jungles of Hindustan."

to betray them to the government. He did not succeed in his enterprise because he was overtaken by *sudden death*. As for the Kûkas, they became even more cautious, and this excessive caution proved fatal to many among them. Their leader and high-priest, Râm-Dâs Singh, intending to prove to the authorities that their sect consisted in reality of true and faithful subjects and not of traitors, partly, perhaps, because some unruly Kûkas threatened to upset matters, sent a message to the collector of a little town near Umballa, warning him that certain Kûkas in his district had mutinied and were threatening a riot. Unhesitatingly and without even obtaining permission from the higher powers, the collector ordered every Kûka who could be found to be seized and brought before him, whether he was guilty or not. Having seized 92 of them, and without even submitting them to trial, he ordered them to be tied to the guns, which were then fired, with the result that they were all shot within a few hours.

This is no rumour but a historical event in India which happened only a few years ago and is familiar to all. There was a great scandal. The English became seriously frightened. In order to pacify the people they discharged the collector, seemingly deprived him of his office and even made him appear before a court of law. . . . According to their claim (which was, of course, upheld by the Anglo-Indian press), at the trial they discovered some evidence which greatly compromised Râm-Dâs Singh, and they took advantage of this fortunate discovery: by order of the administration he was sent to Rangoon for life-imprisonment. While they could not remove all blame from the collector, they succeeded in arousing the sympathies of the English public to such an extent that the latter outdid itself in subscribing large sums for the benefit of "the unfortunate functionary who was made to suffer for his loyalty"; and in a short time he was given a good post somewhere in Yarkand, in Kashgar, where he was sent as something of a permanent

envoy.¹ The only one who suffered was Mr. Cowen, the collector's assistant, who was forced to play the part of scapegoat and carry the sins of British Israel into the desert of exile. Strangely enough, Râm-Dâs Singh, although still under the supervision of the police, is alive in Rangoon. But although the English removed him by force from the Kûkas, they did not, unfortunately, stamp out Kûkism. This sect, like the many-headed hydra, has now a countless number of heads in place of the one that was lost, and numbers several leaders in every town in Pañjâb. No one knows, however, who their high-priest is. The incident of the 92 Kûkas who were shot was included by the Anglo-Indian government in the series of those many "unpleasant but unavoidable juridical mistakes" in India about which, incidentally, it concerns itself very little.

A great disappointment awaited us, however. That night, when most of the crowd had dispersed, the Kûkas commenced their mysterious walk around the lake, but more than that we did not see. At the head of the procession walked a tall, grey-bearded Sikh wearing a long white skirt and turban, and behind him came several hundred Kûkas. The procession advanced slowly and solemnly. Holding a bronze vase of a strange shape in his left hand, the old man sprinkled with his right hand some kind of red liquid on the lake, while chanting some verses in a strange dialect, and at the end of each couplet the chorus joined in. The procession soon vanished into one of the beach-palaces. Distantly, and in broken fragments, we heard their slow, melancholy chanting from the interior. The programme had evidently been

¹ The name of this collector, Sir Douglas Forsyth, is well known in India as well as in Europe. Not long ago he was in Yarkand and travelled on the Chinese borders; he has recently published, with his own commentaries, additions and preface, a translation by E. Delmar Morgan of Colonel Przhevalsky's book *From Kulja, across the Tian-Shan to Lob-Nor*, which includes maps and plans.

changed, and our akâlî could not or would not say anything further. One by one the lights went out around us, and soon only the bright stars remained above our heads. A fresh wind came up, and it became quite cold on the high roof. Finally we went home.

In spite of all our attempts and inquiries we could not find out anything more about these interesting Kûkas. Who and what are they? We knew that they were Sikhs and Hindus, but there are apparently Moslems among them who have renounced their faith. And what is the origin of their name, the etymology of which no one could explain to us? In the mountains, west of Kashmîr and up to the river Indus, there is a small tribe of that name. But these Kûkas are seemingly either Chinese or Tibetan Moslem-Shiites, and the Anglo-Indian Government knows even less about them than about the Kûkas in Pañjâb, except the fact that even the Kashmîris (not to mention their neighboring tribes, such as the Bambas, Gûjars and others) stand in great fear of their knowledge of *black magic* and see in them dangerous magicians and sorcerers. What then would the Kûkas in Pañjâb, that sect which was suspected of political treachery and which only appeared some few years ago, have in common with them?

As we passed under the windows of the house where the Kûkas had retired to complete their mysterious ceremonies, we heard their singing again, this time loud and sharp, resounding through the deep silence of the nocturnal air, like some invisible threat. For some unknown reason I was reminded of the scene and chorus from *The Huguenots*: "la bénédiction des poignards".

(To be continued)

THE DURBAR IN LAHORE

BY H. P. BLAVATSKY

(Continued from p. 20)

III

A necessary digression.—Anglo-Indians, the English and England.—Who is to blame?—The rights of gardeners, British and Hindu.—A chorus of mutual complaints.—The differing result of taking an oath on “the cow’s tail” or on the *Bhagavad-Gîtâ*.—By what are the English guided?—The Coolie.—The Anglo-Indian *en déshabillé*.—The lack of patriotism in the Hindu.

UPON reaching this chapter, I find myself forced to break the continuity of my story for the sake of a brief explanation. To many a Russian India seems like the end of the earth, and, if I do not outline more clearly the mutual relations between conqueror and vanquished, and give a sketch of the country itself, much of the story of what I saw and heard at the wonderful Durbâr in Lahore will remain both obscure and inexplicable. . . .

Without claiming the slightest infallibility of opinion, especially where politics are concerned, I offer the following pages as mere personal observations, superficial, but on the whole truthful; that I can guarantee. Having listened to numerous discussions on India, as I had to in Simla, on the one hand, and to as many restrained complaints from the natives, on the other, and forming furthermore my conclusions without any prejudice whatsoever, on the events as they took place before my very eyes, I believe that my two years’ continuous residence in the country places me in a position to judge of it fairly accurately. Being but imperfectly initiated

into the secret mysteries of the Calcutta cabinet, and still less interested in them, I nevertheless believe that something pure white cannot appear jet black to me, or *vice versa*; all the more so since it becomes obvious to any foreigner that the character of the relationship between rulers and subjects is very far from being normal. In the two preceding chapters, as in my earlier letters about India, and especially in my articles: "From the Caves and Jungles of Hindostan" which were published in the *Moscow Chronicle*, I have often referred to this amazing and entirely unjustified relationship; one of utter contempt and arrogance on the part of the English, and on the part of the natives sometimes disgusting servility and cowardice.

Every time I express my honest opinion about the injustice and cruelty of the English towards the natives, when conversation turns to their mutual relationship, the former assure me that I am mistaken, since I know nothing about their subtle politics, and the latter, in answer to my pacificatory expressions and words of consolation, attempt to convince me that there is no single Englishman in India who wishes them well. Soon I came to the following conclusion: both sides exaggerate, the one its great virtues and merit, and the other its seemingly undeserved fate. The former, inspired, probably, by the wise proverb that "dogs go mad from over-eating,"¹ seem to undergo a complete change, as it were, on their arrival in India from England. The latter, we will grant, have not individually deserved such a cruel fate, but India, as a whole, is carrying the heavy burden of her age-old sins: by her own past she has herself fashioned the misfortunes of the present, and her present position was inevitable.

More remarkable still is the fact that absolutely nothing is known in England of the activities of the English in India

¹ [Russian proverb.—*Translator.*]

or the true state of the natives under the English yoke. How true this is may be inferred from the following: an educated Hindu goes to Europe, after having partially renounced his superstitious prejudices concerning both his country and his caste; he travels first class, no longer dressed as a *sans-culotte* but almost in European style; he wipes his nose with a handkerchief and not with the fork of Adam; his manners, like those of all natives, are quiet, even refined; even his education is by no means inferior and is sometimes considerably superior to that of most of his English travelling companions. In spite of this, his journey is divided into two phases: the first extends as far as Aden, and the second from Aden to London. From India to Aden, that is to the mid-point of his trip, the English will shrink from him; they will look upon him as a despicable creature belonging to a "lower race"; in other words they will ignore his presence, and he will rarely have the courage to assert his right of sitting with them at the common table. But beyond Aden, and before the steamer has lost sight of the shore, everything and everybody changes as if by the wielding of a magic wand! . . . The Hindu is drawn into conversation. He is not avoided any longer; and if it should happen that some Indian official is on the ship on home-leave, even he will probably discuss politics with him, while the official's wife will condescend to draw his attention to the weather. The same happens on the return journey. From England to Aden will be a paradise. But the steamer will barely have rounded the burning mounds of Arabia and reached Bab el Mandeb, when the stage-setting is again altered: the free British subject becomes the abject English slave of whom the people in England have no conception! . . .

This is no fiction but a fact confirmed every week. Who, then, is to blame for this? Is it England with its laws and institutions which guarantee equality for all, or is it the English,

namely, the English in India—quite a different thing? . . . Of course we must blame the Anglo-Indians. They alone, during the last twenty years, have built up these prejudices, which feed their arrogance and conceit. In India, where everybody makes obeisance to them in serf-like fashion, these two vices are encouraged, in proportion to their climate-infected livers; in England none of them would dare to admit the sheer Asiatic despotism and contempt with which they treat the Hindus, and not only in England but even here everyone of them, at any such hint, denies it and tries to refute any direct accusation. Peter blames Paul, but will never confess to sin himself.

“Are you not ashamed to treat the poor Hindus like that . . . as though they were dumb animals?” I asked a most amiable and kindly Briton in whose brother’s house I was staying at that time.

The amiable Briton opened wide his blue eyes, and his pink face assumed an expression of astonishment.

“Treat them how? Do I treat them badly?”

“You do not exactly decorate them with medals, do you? When opportunity affords, you treat them as a Castilian driver treats an obstinate mule! . . .”

“You must be mistaken. I cannot speak for others. There are, naturally, people in our colony (that is, the English) who are, perhaps, a bit too rough on the natives. But personally I am not one of them; you are really not being fair, you know! . . .”

“Well, what about yesterday, when that old *Rao Bahâdur*¹ came to your study, and having entered in his stockings remained humbly standing at the door? . . . You not only did not ask him to be seated, but did not let him come within ten steps of you.”

¹ A high native title of nobility.

"My dear friend! You reason like a woman!" exclaimed my friend. "The old man's visit was an official one, and I have no right to depart for his sake from the wise policy of our administrators, which is to treat the natives with cold reserve. Otherwise they would have no respect for us. This is a policy of estrangement."

"It probably coincides with a policy of approach which is by no means ambiguous. Did you not, in my presence, push your gardener, who was peacefully occupied with his work in the flower-bed, merely because he happened to stand in your way when we walked along the path?"

"That was unintentional," said my friend a little abashed: "It is sometimes difficult to distinguish their dark skins from the earth."

"Is that so? Well, tell me then, this dark-complexioned gardener of yours, is he or is he not a British subject?"

"W . . . Well, of course he is!" admitted my companion somewhat unwillingly, sensing possible treachery in my unexpected question.

"And he shares equal rights with an English gardener, for instance?"

"Yes . . . but what are you driving at? I don't understand."

"Oh, nothing in particular, only the curiosity of a foreigner and a woman. I like to draw deductions from comparisons . . . But what is your opinion? If you were to give an English gardener an undeserved, or, even a deserved slap in the face, would you not risk a return blow? . . . Your gardener would have the law on his side, and you, as instigator, would be fined. Well, supposing the Hindu in his turn, as a British subject, reciprocated similarly?"

My friend fairly jumped.

"I . . . I would have beaten him to death! A Hindu may be a British subject, but he is *not English!* . . ."

This exclamation contains a whole tome of admission. It places a seal, as it were, on the sentence pronounced on an entire nation and its present, if not its future destiny.

Everyone knows that England is a great and powerful nation; everyone knows also that England as a nation cannot help wishing India, as one of its best colonies, at least material success, if not ethical growth, if only to uphold the proverb that "No one sets fire to his own harvest." And in this material respect England does indeed all she can do to help India, without sparing either labor or money. True, this labor is rewarded from India's treasury. But the fact that England acts selfishly in this regard cannot alter the fact that she is preparing a magnificent future for India, if only the child can survive this period of stern education; a future in fact such as would have been unthinkable for this stagnant country during either the Mogul dynasties or its periods of autonomy, as prejudice and age-old customs have always hampered its progress. Much sorrow and suffering has the great Bhârata experienced in her time, but this suffering has but the better prepared her for the complete renaissance that awaits her. Only twenty years ago the Hindu would have chosen a thousand deaths rather than accept a glass of water offered him by a European or in the latter's house, and not only a European, but a Moslem, a Parsee, or a Hindu belonging to a different caste. To take liquid medicine prepared in a public drug-store—medicine compounded with water, was considered a mortal sin; to sit beside a compatriot of another caste was equal to being expelled from one's own, and that meant everlasting dishonor. Ice and soda-water were looked upon with disgust, but nowadays medicine as well as ice and soda-water, and especially a net-work of railways, have accomplished their purpose. Under the influence of civilization, even though it has been forced upon the nation, those age-old prejudices that ruined India and made

her such an easy prey to the first adventurers who desired to possess her, are beginning gradually to melt, like a frozen puddle beneath a sunbeam.

Without a doubt the English have conferred and continue to confer inestimable benefits on India; but, I repeat, for her future, but by no means for her present. Their boast is that even if they had given her nothing but their protection against Moslem invasion, and their help for the complete suppression of civil dissensions, they would still have done more for India than any other power, including the Hindus themselves, from the time of the first Mohammedan invasion. Possibly England has done even more than that. But then the present Anglo-Indian government is acting like a step-mother, who ill-treats her step-sons and starves them secretly behind her husband's back, even though it strictly carries out in all other respects the programme submitted by the Home Government. Unfortunately for India, England is very distant, and the Anglo-Indian government is always at India's throat with a whip in its hand. Naturally enough the natives cannot be content with this and are perpetually complaining. . . . However, although most of their complaints are justified, they are themselves at fault in many things. Instead of gaining profit for the future from the lessons of the past, they act like ostriches, hiding their heads in the sand and giving way to bitterness in the present.

If the English were to treat the natives humanely, their power would appear less despotic; the Indians would not tremble before them as they do, and that power would become more firmly rooted than is evident at present on Indian soil, through the love and gratitude of the people. Quiet and gentle, the majority of the natives are ready to lick any caressing hand, and to show gratitude for every bone thrown to them. If the English were less ferociously contemptuous towards the Hindus, and more kindly to the people,

their prestige would possibly diminish, but their safety in the conquered country would become more firmly established in the future. But it is precisely this they do not wish or cannot understand. They seem completely to forget what every child knows, that their prestige is a sparkling soap-bubble, entirely dependent on external events beyond their control. Their power in India is well established, even with the present caste-system, merely because the natives have a superstitious idea about their invincibility, and find in it no trace of an Achilles' heel; and also because, according to the teachings of Kṛishṇa, they dare not go against "the inevitable". Being fatalists, they believe that they are living in the *Kali-Yuga*, "the black age," and cannot expect anything favorable as long as this age lasts on earth. In these two superstitions, as if in two impregnable fortresses, lie concealed the power and safety of the English. But let the British army be badly beaten somewhere, and the soap-bubble will burst, and the superstition will vanish from the minds of the Hindus, like the visions in a nightmare at the moment of waking.

In India, wherever two Englishmen meet, complaints about the "fiendish ingratitude of the *black devils*" are soon heard and wherever two natives encounter each other, complaints about the "dark intentions of the *white oppressors*" will pour forth. . . . Taken together, these complaints produce the same effect on the listener as the duet of "the two blind men" in the operetta bearing that title. In deceiving England concerning India, unconsciously it may be, these oppressors deceive themselves. They treat the natives like slaves or chained dogs; and the slave takes refuge in a slave's only weapons—lies and cunning; and the dog will sink its teeth into its master's neck if it ever breaks loose from the chain. Under this destructive influence all the noble virtues of this people, sentiments of honor, of duty to one's neighbor, of gratitude, all these die out, and are superceded by either

negative qualities, complete apathy, or the lowest forms of vice. Thirty years ago you could go to the nearest money-changer (who is likewise a banker), sitting on the street in his hut, and safely leave your entire capital with him, without even taking a receipt; you could then go away, and returning in a year or two, lay your claim before him. And at your first word the banker-money-changer would return the money, even though it were a million.¹ In those blessed days a Hindu's word was sacred, and he was expelled from his caste for the least dishonest action. . . . Until the upheaval of 1857, receipts were practically unknown in India: one witness was sufficient for any kind of transaction. And now?

Now mercenary witnesses have multiplied not by hundreds but by thousands. A Hindu will outcheat ten gypsies. In the good old days, in allowing the native to hold a cow's tail in his hand and take his oath on it, the judge could guarantee with his life that the Hindu would never bear false witness on the sacred tail; nowadays, according to the new juridical procedure, they are all, without exception, forced to give their oath on the *Bhagavad Gîtâ* (a scripture about Kṛishṇa), even when the witness does not believe in Kṛishṇa but worships Śiva or Viṣṇu. "The cow's tail," don't you see "shocked too greatly the inborn aesthetic sentiments of the British"—is the English explanation of this juridical change. But was it not from an overdone intent to reward India in an artistic and aesthetic manner that she was shamed in an economic and moral sense?

Judge for yourselves. Having, for instance, embellished the country with gorgeous public buildings, mostly

¹ This was told me with regret by several Anglo-Indians who had lived in the country all their lives, and by Mr. H.—— among others, a wealthy Englishman who for forty years had held some of the most important administrative positions in the country.

prison-castles and barracks, they permitted a memorial such as the two-thousand-year-old Sârnâth, erected before the time of Alexander of Macedonia, to decay and fall apart as it pleased. Having directed their constructive energies towards the building of universities, town halls, clubs, Masonic lodges (in European style), and having driven the natives out from these, except the first-named, they compensated the latter by giving them complete control over all the public-houses which they, the English, had built with the purpose of selling the adulterated alcohol of their own country, including that intoxicant known as Scotch whisky. They forced all India to dress in the products of Manchester and thus brought ruin to all the cotton and other weaving industries of the country; they forced the Hindus to worship gods manufactured in Birmingham, and to cut with Sheffield steel; they even taught them gluttony—to eat, after they had filled themselves with whisky, damaged preserves that rot here in one week; consequently, they die by the hundreds from cholera. What room is there here for aesthetics?

A Hindu rightly told me that the European civilization, for which the natives are not ready and which they cannot appreciate, has the same influence on their country as a luxurious but poisonous manchineel-tree transplanted into a blossoming garden: it kills all the other plants with its deadly exhalations. "Can this possibly be revenge?" this young student asked with perplexity, "revenge for our last mutiny? Neither India in general nor we, the people of this generation, are guilty of this crime! . . . Why, then, should this be? . . ."

May the Simla dignitaries forgive me for my involuntary suspicion—but there is a grain of truth in the remark of this poor student. Louis Jacolliot noticed this long ago! "The English were frightened as never before. They will never forgive India for this," he says in one of his books. This revenge has, of course, long ago become unconscious, but the

British are vindictive by habit. To imagine these people, unquestionably intelligent in their politics, as consciously doing all they can to ruin and perhaps even lose India, "the most precious pearl in the crown of the Empress," would indeed be too stupid! And yet, this is exactly what they are doing, and I have often heard this stated in friendly conversation with Englishmen who had lived many years in India, who knew the country and its inhabitants as well as their own five fingers, and who had declined to work in a government office on account of their complete disgust with the new system. . . .

In spite of all efforts and amelioration, training-farms and skilled technicians, the fate of two-thirds of the farming population does not improve, but deteriorates with every day. The majority of these unfortunates have to be content with one meal a day, and what a meal! The most wretched beggar in Russia would turn away from such food; the watch-dog of a miserly Jew is fed better; a handful of half-rotten groats (rice is too expensive) or a small bunch of withered vegetables in water—such is the daily food of the coolie!

Poor, miserable Indian coolie! Is there a creature in the world more patient and more wretched than he? He rises before dawn and lies down to rest on damp mother-earth late at night, working sixteen hours a day in exchange for four annas,¹ and sometimes for kicks. . . . As to a God, he has none, because there is no time for one, and besides, he cannot borrow God from anywhere or anyone. The Brâhmaņas repulse the poor wretch like an unclean pariah and strictly forbid him knowledge of the *Vedas*, or prayers from the *Vedas*. Even the *padres* have ceased enticing him to embrace Christianity, with a silver rupee clenched in the same fist which offers him the cross. The coolie accepts the coin, and no

¹ 10 cents.

sooner has the *padre* sprinkled him with holy water than he goes and buys cow-dung¹ with the acquired sum, besmears himself from head to foot with the sacred product, and thereupon assumes the role of an idol for other coolies, who pray to him. . . .

The attitude of the English as regards the natives of the better and more highly educated class, coldly-contemptuous and crushing as it is, is in this instance a much more serious thing, all the more so since the cultured natives are not used to this, and it did not exist at the time of the East India Company.

Listen to what *The Statesman*, the most frank of the London journals, says about the feelings of the Hindus towards their rulers:

It is not India's financial status that causes us the greatest uneasiness, [says this paper] but the state to which the bulk of the population has been brought through our administration and through our unquestionably despicable conduct with regard to the native rulers. We are detested alike by the classes which were powerful and influential before our time, and by the students of our own educational institutions in India, the schools and colleges; we are detested because we egotistically deprive them completely of all honorable or profitable position in the management of their own country; we are detested by the masses for all the indescribable suffering and for that fearful poverty into which our rule has plunged them; finally we are detested by the native princes for the tyranny and oppression the Simla Foreign Office has practised upon them.

These words were reprinted in all the native newspapers and journals without comment.

Was it like this at the time of the East India Company which was banished from the country because of the last Mutiny? No, of course not! With all its egotism, extortions, avidity and unfairness, the defunct Company knew how to get on with the natives. It did not constantly force them to feel the superiority of its origin. The natives themselves

¹ Manure is expensive here and is sold by weight.

recognized the excellence of the armed equipment and the moral stamina of the English, and at that time respected them, while now they only fear and detest them. In those days, when a journey to India meant a round-the-world trip, adventurers who sought a fortune across the seas became the real Anglo-Indians. Many of them, having lived there without a break for thirty or forty years, or even from birth to death—not in proud isolation as is now the case, but after many years spent in the daily company with the natives—became at last so used to their manner of living and even their thinking, that they understood the needs of India and sympathized with these no less than the Hindus themselves. In those happy days they not only did not despise the natives and flaunt their white skins, but even frequently legally married the native women. They too quarrelled with the rājās, and with the lawful land-owners whose property they appropriated in the name of England, but they got on well with the people and maintained friendly relations with them. Then, suddenly, came an unforeseen disaster. The thunderbolt of 1857 struck the country and changed everything. With the death-throes of Delhi came the end of the famous Company also. The bold adventurers, who were “gentlemen” nevertheless, and who until that time had controlled the destinies of the Indian people, vanished in the whirlwind that uprooted both the Mogul empire and the final independence of hundreds of rājās. India was handed over to the Crown, and in place of the bold adventurers new people were sent out and reforms were inaugurated. . . .

I do not know whether England gained by the change; it would be out of place to go into this question now, but if the unanimous testimony of the natives as well as the admission of many Englishmen are to be credited, India lost a great deal. What did it matter to the Hindus that the unscrupulous activities of such adventurers as Warren Hastings

and company became henceforth impossible in India? For people with such original opinions built up through the ages, as the Hindus and, generally speaking all Asiatics have, regarding any voluntary mutual agreement, an administrator in the Oriental style such as Hastings, who was ready to look with favor on any kind of offering, ranging from an entire province down to "Borzoi pups," in the style of Gogol,¹ was far more acceptable than an administrator of the Beaconsfieldian drawing-room lap-dog variety. It was possible to come to an agreement and to enter into personal relationships with the former, and, while losing on one hand, to win on the other; but the latter, appearing like some kind of unapproachable luminary, bureaucrat and formalist, looks on the native as vermin which must not be touched even with gloved hands, but only ruled over, with its tail firmly crushed under one's heel.

As a result of the Mutiny and with the new order brought into the country, the Hindu without a doubt became more civilized. Together with the above mentioned charming European aesthetics, he learnt much that he had not known in the days of the Company, as for instance that Themis may be just as blind in civilized as in uncivilized countries, yet, to make up for this, she must also remain incorruptible; but he gained this knowledge theoretically only, without, of course, having any faith in the principle itself, and in practice often trusting to the reverse. From his masters he learned the refined ideas on civic virtue in general, and the honor of a gentleman in particular, while he himself, under the constant pounding of the heavy waves of English contempt, lost even the last conception of his own honor, as well as all feeling of self-respect.

¹ [Nikolay Vassilyevich Gogol (1809-52), Russian novelist, playwright and humorist.—*Translator.*]

It follows, then, that the British government, with the best of intentions, is ruining India. As far as I can see, this is a situation that cannot be remedied though England should correct all the mistakes of the last twenty years, especially those of the administration of Disraeli. But even so, she is incapable of either remedying the damaged morality of the country or of changing the nature of the English, who have cut a deep rut for themselves as a result of their contempt for everything native, and who have on their own side dug such strong albeit artificial dikes that they will never in a thousand years reach an understanding with the Indians. The waters of the Thames will sooner merge with the waters of the Ganges than will the Englishman in India look upon the Hindu as his equal, though the latter were a hundred times a Mahârâjâ and his family descended from the days of Adam. The English feel a positively insurmountable aversion for the Hindus. As I pointed out above, this is a psycho-physiological and not a political question. Apart from a few old Anglo-Indians who lived through the Mutiny, the officials who are sent from England, even if they enter the country without any particularly strong prejudice, are immediately infected by the atmosphere around them and forcefully drawn into it, and cannot oppose the public opinion which is expressed by the entire English colony. "To live among wolves one must howl with them"—this proverb applies to the English more than to any other European community. In its midst it is dangerous even to sneeze in an un-English way; its members will immediately exchange glances with the usual smile which is a mixture of almonds and vinegar, and will become more august, more gracious in their manner towards the sneezing individual, and nod their heads as if to say: "Poor foreigner! He is not yet familiar with the elegant conventions of our society!" It is only the enormous salary, unthinkable in

another colony, and the profits derived from Indian service that attract the functionary. He resides here only with the hope of returning home; he counts the time by three-year periods, from one home-leave to another; he makes for himself a little artificial English world in this country, and all that exists beyond the boundaries of this world evokes in him an inexpressible squeamishness and disgust. . . .

Having described the English and the characteristics they have developed here, let us look at the natives and see how far they have deserved their harsh fate. Let me here express a thought which may seem paradoxical, though it is supported by irrefutable facts. The Hindus lack and are incapable of having that sentiment which we Europeans qualify as patriotism, namely, love for one's country in the abstract sense of the word. They have no warm attachment for the established institutions of their native country, such as an all-inclusive sentiment, which sometimes electrifies a whole nation and makes it rise as one man to the glorification or the defence of country. They have no responsiveness to its joys and sorrows, its renown or its dishonor. . . . The reason they lack this sentiment is quite understandably simple, and indeed an obvious and generally well-known fact. Except for the parental house or hut where he first chanced to see the light of day, the Hindu, generally speaking, has no other home. There is more to this than that: the native, as a result of the sacred laws prescribed to him by his religion, often considers his closest neighbors, across the fence of his parents' garden, not as compatriots but as foreigners of an entirely different race, if these neighbors belong to some other caste than his own. This is readily confirmed by the fact that, for instance, in speaking of a Hindu living, let us say, on the opposite side of the field, the first Hindu will refer to him as a *bellati* (foreigner)—a term of contempt not limited to Europeans only. Thus the native, unfamiliar with the sentiment of patriotism, in case of invasion

or civil dissension, apart from the personal courage which drives him to defend his hearth and family to the last drop of his blood, showed and still shows little interest either in the fate of India in an integral sense, or for that of his neighbor, if the latter is of some other caste than his own, or even some other special division or sub-division of the caste to which he himself belongs.

Geographically the country is divided into hundreds of tribes and nationalities; nominally—into two races, Âryans and Semites or Hindus and Moguls, in other words the two main religions, the Mohammedan and the Brahmanical. These sects are involved in an age-old irreconcilable feud and only the presence of the British troops restrains the fanaticism of the two races who would otherwise cut each other's throats at any one of their respective religious festivals—and of such festivals there are several dozen a year both for the Moguls and for the Hindus, especially the latter. Moreover, even the Mohammedans in India are divided into a large number of mutually antagonistic sects that are unknown to the orthodox believer in Turkey and Europe. As for the Hindus, it is useless even to speak about them: nominally they are (some two hundred million) of the "Brahmanical faith" and worship according to the sacred *Laws of Manu* and the *Vedas*. But for that matter even fishes who prey upon each other live in the same water. Look at the night sky with its thousands of stars when there is no moon, if you would have a conception of the castes, sub-castes, the divisions and sub-divisions of the Brahmanical faith. They themselves say that their sacred "*Vedas* are the universal, shoreless ocean from the bitter-salt waters of which flow forth thousands of fountain-heads of the purest water." Think of it in this way: the waters of the *Veda*-ocean are too salty for the average stomach; thus, in order to make them palatable, cunning *hydrologists* appeared in the guise of Brâhmaṇas and busied

themselves in filtering these waters, each one interpreting the ancient scriptures in his own way. After some centuries the result was as follows:

The Hindus nominally divide their race into four castes: (1) Brâhmaņas, or sons of the god Brahmâ; (2) Kshattriyas or warriors; (3) Vaiśyas or merchants, and (4) Śûdras or artisans, the lowest class. But each of these castes is divided into sub-castes (ranging from five to thirteen) which, in their turn, split up into innumerable fragments. In other words, each caste is a scale of notes descending from the highest to the lowest, but instead of seven, it contains "seventy times seven" notes. Thus, for example, in the two main divisions into which fall the Brâhmaņas of the highest aristocracy, the "pañcha-drâviḍas" and the "pañcha-gauḍas" (the former being the Southern and the latter the Northern inhabitants of India), we observe that the two sub-castes may neither intermarry nor eat together, *if there be even one drop of water in the food*; but both these sub-castes are Brâhmaņas and they may eat any other kind of food in each other's company. A Gujarâtî Brâhmaņa will accept water from the hands or from the house of a Marâṭha Brâhmaņa, but will not touch the rice prepared by the latter. A *Deśastha* Brâhmaņa is permitted to speak to a *Karhade* Brâhmaņa from a distance, but if accidentally he should cross the latter's shadow or touch him, he will become heavily polluted!

The question is: with such a system, can India not only be a nursery for patriotism, as some writers imagine her, but in addition bring forth her own patriots in time? There are about 200 million Hindus professing the same faith, but since Christianity does not prevent a similar and even greater number of Europeans from fighting and hating each other, so likewise is it in India. The country has Marâṭha Hindus and Pañjâb Hindus, Bengâlîs and Dravidians, Gujarâtîs and Râjputs, Kashmîrîs and Nepâlîs, etc.; yet they are all Hindus.

Nevertheless to assume from this that the Râjput considers Dekkan and Bengal part of his country, and that should occasion arise he would undertake their defence, is as foolish a hope as that an inhabitant of Moscow should burn with the desire to avenge the English who may have been beaten by the Zulus, or that he would look upon Spain as a part of his country just because it lies in Europe! . . .

The English allow the world to believe that they, with a comparatively small army, curbed the rebels in 1857, conquered and reduced to ashes the Mogul dynasty in Delhi, and at long last, chained the Indian rājās to the heels of Great Britain, as prisoner-kings were chained to the chariots of their conquerors in ancient times. . . . But do they not boast of these great deeds simply because the story of the Mutiny has never been told by anyone except themselves? Since they cannot erase this bloody page from the annals of the conquest of India they elaborate it in their own way. Were the facts to be presented in their true colors, however, it would become evident that they would never have subdued the rebels if the Pañjâbîs, and especially the Sikhs, had not helped them. No one would be foolish enough to doubt either their individual courage or the superiority of their martial genius, their weapons and all else, over those of the Asiatic peoples; but "force breaks a straw"¹ and even if during the Mutiny they threw heart and soul into the military contest, the Pañjâbîs, on the other hand, together with some other tribes who remained faithful to England, were the powerful hand which crushed, one by one, the heads of this many-headed hydra which was preparing to make a meal of the absent-minded Britons. And without exception they would have been swallowed up in the Mutiny but for "our faithful Pañjâbîs," as the English express it in their rare moments of fair-mindedness towards the natives. And yet, Hindu rose against Hindu,

¹ [Russian proverb.—*Translator.*]

brother against brother, not because of devotion to, or special love for the English, but in the first place, simply to satisfy the Sikhs' personal vengeance against the Hindus of Central India whose armies and many tribes helped their common enemy to conquer Lahore and Pañjâb in 1845-1849; and also because of their age-old hatred for the Moguls.

Those who assume the English conquered India are mistaken. They merely came and took it, little by little, appropriating province after province, territory after territory. . . . They met with opposition from the rājās and fought the independent rulers; but the people always remained unconcerned and indifferent spectators of the fighting.

Apart from the above-mentioned complete lack of patriotism in the Hindus, this indifference can also be explained by the following, little-known fact: with the exception of the Mogul and some essentially Indian dynasties, the now existing Pleiades of Mahārājās and rājās were not, in past times, either kings or even independent rulers of their territories. Being without exception members of the Kshatriya (warrior) caste, they were merely the armed protectors of the people who lived within a certain area in this or that Indian territory, and as they received by common consent a certain tribute in the form of produce and money, they agreed to defend the area in case of aggression by its neighbors, and generally to safeguard its interests while ruling it, and settling its grievances according to the *Laws of Manu*. These laws were known throughout India and were, as they still are, held sacred and consequently immutable. The whole of Hindostan therefore, in spite of its variety of castes and religious sects, including its hundreds of individual rājs,¹ followed the same laws, the sacred text of which forms an insurmountable obstacle to any kind of reform. With the

¹ The title "rājā" is derived from the word *rāj*—a kingdom or state. Some of the latter consist of only a few hundred acres.

passing of the ages the code of the *Laws of Manu* became a dead letter; the country was covered with slime, like a pool of stagnant water, and was overcome by a senile sleep, awakening only spasmodically here and there, whenever occurred some momentary trouble, occasioned by one of its enemies. But not once, from the first to the present page of her history did India rise as a whole and shake off its centuries-old mustiness; not once did any of her sons voice their pain when the invading enemy crippled some other son. . . . The English came and offered to substitute their protection for that of the rājās. Among the nations of Hindostan, one thought it over, another pondered upon it, and each in turn, seeing that the newcomers were besting their former protectors and were thus the stronger of the two, seeing that the English offered them a similar or an even more reliable protection, and realizing that the tribute demanded did not at first seem too high, began to yield without opposition, one after another. . . . They were not asked to give up either the *Laws of Manu* or the beliefs of their forefathers, and so without any loss to themselves, as they believed, they obtained conditions that were far more favorable. Why should they be concerned individually about what happened to the other collectively? Who among the Hindus, apart from the Brâhmaṇas, cares whether the country be under the rule of one *bellati* or another! . . .

(*To be continued*)

THE DURBAR IN LAHORE

BY H. P. BLAVATSKY

(Continued from p. 101)

IV

The city of lepers.—The impotent rage of the newspapers against Theosophists.—Lahore in expectation of the Viceroy.—Lahore under the Moslems.—Of its antiquity and its builders.—The mausoleum of Ranjit-Singh, his four wives and seven female slaves.—The story of his favorite wife, the Râñi Chanda, and of her death in Kensington.—The son of “the old lion of Pañjâb”.—The Cannon Talisman.—The camp of the Mahârâjâs.—The silver phaeton of the Râjâ of Jînd.—The rivalry of the two Nawâbs.

IN our haste to reach Lahore in time for the Durbâr we refused the pleasure of enjoying the spectacle of 9,000 lepers or “white Hindus,” as they are here called, who comprise the population of the little town of Tarn-Târan, seventeen miles south of Amritsar. The Tarn-Târanians are an exception among the inhabitants of other towns on British territory; they are denied the honor of seeing Englishmen among the officials of the city council. As you can see, the superior white race does not fancy the prospect of becoming whiter still. . . . As a consequence, Tarn-Târan presents an anomaly which has not been seen in India for a long time: white inhabitants are ruled by black authorities. . . . To this place are sent as settlers the lepers from all over Pañjâb, while Hindus and “half-castes” or Eurasians who are exempt from the disease govern the town.

In Lahore, a great number of English people from all parts of India had gathered for the solemn reception of the

new Viceroy. All the hotels and bungalows were crowded with visitors, and it was only due to the organizing ability of our own native Theosophists that we were spared the inconvenience of having to camp in a tent in the middle of a field. When they heard that we would be in Lahore during the durbâr, eighteen native Theosophical lodges sent their delegates to receive us, and unexpectedly we found ourselves at the head of a small army. This greatly displeased the enemies of our Society, who, even before our arrival, honored us by devoting several editorials in their paper, the *Civil and Military Gazette*, to the choicest abuse directed against our Society in general and its Founders in particular. This paper, in the heat of its powerless indignation, expressed itself in the following way: "Having fooled all Simla, the Theosophists, like the ill-famed Tamerlane, are now threatening to invade Lahore." As for the *Indian Herald* of Allâhâbâd, for a whole month it merely gnashed its teeth; comparing us to Parnell and his "robber band of Irishmen," the paper erupted into abuse, threatening the Government with every kind of horror if it did not "free itself from the pernicious propaganda of Russo-American Theosophism, which has already lured so many English officials in India".

That Theosophists are peaceful philosophers whose love for knowledge does not extend beyond the boundaries of purely abstract questions is a fact known to every Anglo-Indian. They know that the libraries of our numerous Branches, while abounding in Sanskrit and Pâli manuscripts, do not possess a single treatise on political economy, not to mention other political subjects. In spite of this, the police continued to watch us.

Finally, thanks to patronage, we succeeded in justifying our presence in the native land of Nânâ-Sâhib. . . The Calcutta sages came to know us better, and became entirely convinced that we were not on intimate terms either with

General Kaufmann or with the Afghâns. Once convinced that we were far more interested in solving the enigmatic problem of why the Brâhmaṇas conceived the original idea of picturing the earth-globe as supported on the trunk of an elephant, which in its turn stood on the back of a tortoise, the latter being suspended in aerial space—rather than in prosaic questions dealing with the presence of the sons of Albion in India—the English, in the words of a fortune-teller, “were finally calmed by their own anxiety”.

We arrived in Lahore on November 6th, and the Viceroy was not expected before the 9th. Consequently, we employed the three days in scouting for objects of antiquity, with which the capital of Pañjâb abounds no less than other Indian towns. Lahore is one of the most ancient and famous towns of northern Hindostân, but it is also the hottest. This spot is the real furnace of Hindostân. It stands on the left bank of the river Râvi, 31° north latitude. In spite of the vicinity of the Himâlayan range, during seven months of the year, due to the dry climate and proximity of the desert of Sind, European skins crack and split open. . . . But towards November the heat abates; the nights and the mornings grow cool, and by December the river is even covered in places with ice. During this time of the year, the natives who at 40° Celsius in the shade dart about like bathing tadpoles, are overcome with lethargy, seem barely able to move, and begin to freeze like flies. It proved so now. While we simply did not know how to escape the November sun, our travelling companions and cicerones—various types of Singhs, wrapped themselves inside the carriages in furs and shawls, while our coachmen and runners shivered under the quilts which the populace use in place of shawls. . . .

In days of old Lahore was many times its present size, and its history is involved with the history of every Moham-medan dynasty in Northern India. In former times the

greatness of this capital was the theme of both bards and prose chroniclers of the country; but now the town is no more than a mile long and three miles in circumference. I am, of course, speaking of "The Black Town," since the "cantonment" of the squeamish Britons spreads over a vast area. Its gardens and boulevards squeeze the town like a boa-constrictor in its strangling coils, surrounding it from all sides. Probably that it might be easier for the white "cantonment" to observe the behavior of its black foster-child over the heads of the gods depicted on the ancient city-wall, the wall, which was 30 feet high, was lowered to 15 feet—so as to improve ventilation, if our guide is to be believed. Whatever the reason, the old wall has been sadly mutilated. . . .

There is a gate in the wall and on the north side a citadel now converted to a railway station. The deep moat that once surrounded the city wall has now been filled in, and magnificent gardens have been laid out over it.

The origin of Lahore is lost in the darkness of the hoariest antiquity. Contemporary English historians who definitely suffer from a kind of antiquophobia, wherever the antiquities of India are concerned, were extremely pleased when they could find no mention of Lahore in the accounts of Greek historians contemporary with Alexander of Macedonia. But as the historians of the great conqueror's campaigns were mere historians who described the itinerary of Philip's son, and not the general geography of Hindostân, this fact proves nothing. At the same time we find in the chronicles of Jâlandhar—a town 80 miles from Lahore, to which the Râjputs emigrated from Multân 1400 years before our era—there is mention of a visit paid in the fifth century B.C. by the King of Lah-Âvar to his brother-in-law, the King of "the twelve Mahals" or Jâlandhar, which consisted of 12 fortresses. Judging merely by the obvious etymology of the name which the

Sanskritists have analyzed and proved, Lah-Âvar is Lahore. Local tradition ascribes the founding of Lahore and Kashûr (a little ruined town near the former) to Loh and Kuśa, the two sons of King Râma who, as the hero of the *Râmâyana*, has been deified by the Hindus. Loh built the fortress and named it after himself: Lah-Âvar, *i.e.*, "the fortress of Loh".

The native *pundits* (scholars) have proved that Lahore is contemporary with the oldest towns founded in Western India by the Râjputs. One thing is certain: in the VIIth century of the Christian era, the Moslems found Lahore a prosperous and flourishing town, as their historians show. In 1241 it was captured and laid waste by the wild hordes of Jenghis-Khân, then won back, and later again taken from the Râjputs in 1397 by Tîmûr, "the scourge of the world"; in 1436 it was taken in a siege by Bahlol-Khân-Lodî, one of the Afghân chieftains; as for the Afghân dynasty, it was brought to an end by the Emperor Bâbur in 1524, when he founded the Mogul Empire. Until 1767 each of the succeeding Emperors: Humâyûm, Akbar, Jahângîr, Shâh-Jahân and Aurangzîb, vied with his predecessors in an effort to beautify Lahore and make his name immortal by building magnificent mosques, monuments and fortresses.

In Lahore, however, these examples of Eastern architecture have been considerably damaged. At the end of the last century, during the prolonged struggle with the Mohammedans, which ended with the capture of the town by Ranjit-Singh, both armies left irreparable traces of their savage fanaticism. As evidence of the mutual contempt they demonstrated during their alternate victories, while one army slaughtered sacred cows in the precincts of the Sikh temples—thus forever polluting the pagodas and ponds—the other killed pigs and with their blood besmeared the walls of the mosques and flooded the tombs of orthodox believers. As a result of this, both the temples and mosques

were badly damaged during the necessary reconstruction and process of "purification". But there are still some among them worth visiting, such, for instance, as the mosque of Wazîr Khân at the gates of Delhi, built on the remains of some Ghaznavid saint in 1634; the Soneri-Masjid or *Golden Mosque*, erected in 1753 by Bakhwiri Khanum, Queen of Lahore, who reigned after her husband's death;¹ the quadrangle at the entrance of Jami'-Masjid, where Aurangzîb in 1674 built wide steps of costly, variegated paving-stones, known in Kâbul as *abri*; finally there is the wonderful garden of Hazuri-Bâgh, wherein stands the mausoleum of Ranjit-Singh, who almost converted the Jami'-Masjid, the most magnificent mosque in Lahore, into a warehouse.

The mausoleum of the great Pañjâb king is a blend of Indian and Saracen styles, and is a most curious, although modern building. In the centre of the sarcophagus rises a marble platform, in the middle of which a lotus of natural size is seen; in its heart lie the ashes of the Old Lion, and this lotus is surrounded by eleven other smaller lotuses which, like the first, serve as burial urns and contain the ashes of the dead. In four of the sacred flowers are the ashes of four *satis*, four of the wives of the Mahârâjâ who voluntarily allowed themselves to be cremated alive, and in the remaining urns are the ashes of seven beautiful female slaves, young girls from the *zenânâ* (harem) who were condemned to be burned on the pyre for the sake of etiquette, and as a last honor shown to the King of Lahore. Let us hope that their burning was likewise voluntary, but history is silent on this point. As a matter of fact, the venerable old Sikh who accompanied us, and who was a great admirer of ancient custom, assured us that he was an eye-witness of the ceremony

¹ [This seems to be an error. The Soneri-Masjid of Lahore was built by a certain Bhikâri-Khân, a favorite of Morad Begam, the widow of Mir Mannu, who was the Viceroy of Lahore and Multan.—*Translator*.]

in 1839. He told us that Ranjit-Singh was so deeply mourned, that, had it not been against the law they would have all, to the last man, followed their beloved King and thrown themselves onto the pyre. "As for the female slaves," added the old man, "they jumped like gazelles onto the funeral couch, sat down at the feet of the royal corpse after their mistresses, and while one of them played the *vînâ*,¹ the others sang peans of joy about reunion in *Moksha*, until the smoke of the fast-spreading fire silenced their voices forever, and the flames changed their young bodies to ashes! . . ."

But not all the wives of the Old Lion followed their husband to

The valley of silence eternal,
Where sighs and weeping are not

The chief wife, adored by Ranjit-Singh, *Râñî* (queen) Jindan, renounced the bliss of the *suttee* through her love for her son, and remained in this vale of tears to fight for him and defend his filial right to the throne. Sadly did this woman, famous in the contemporary history of England's conquests, end her days. The son she loved so well was the first to enter into an agreement with her enemies against her, driven by cowardice and greed to betray his mother and his country. He still thrives, has grown fat, and while spending the greater part of the year on his estate in England, Elveden Hall,² with his intimate friends, Earl de Grey (the son of the Viceroy, the Marquis of Ripon), the Lords Huntingfeild, D'Acre, Leicester and Hartington, indulges his passion for hunting and maintains the appearance of a regular English country squire. As for the *Râñî*, she lived and suffered for many years in lonely exile in an obscure corner of Kensington, where she spent her remaining days, until the final liberation

¹ A kind of guitar.

² Dhuleep Singh formerly lived in Scotland.

of death, secluded in her room with the faithful old woman servant who followed her from India.

This slight, weak woman, only twelve years her son's senior, reared in luxury, passionately loved by the Old Lion of Pañjâb who caused England so much trouble, became on the death of her Mahârâjâ a heroine whose courage dimmed all the heroic exploits of the Sikhs. Alone and surrounded by treachery she risked all for the sake of her son. Having induced a large following in Pañjâb to revolt against the projects of the East India Company, she placed herself at the head of her army and, it is said, fought no worse than the bravest among her Sikhs. The superstitious Pañjâbîs are still firmly convinced that the Mahârâjâ-Sâhib himself fought in that feeble body. Taken prisoner by the English, she was sent to Fort Chunâr, a formidable fortress 41 miles from Benares. But before a year had elapsed, she escaped. Alone and without aid she fled to Nepâl, the Belgium of India, where she was safe from her enemies. But while the Râñî Jindan languished in the fortress, her son, Dhuleep Singh, had already been converted to Christianity, and was then sent to Scotland with his family. His mother did not know of his perfidy to the faith of his fathers and to his country, and continued to grieve over their separation. The Company's agents, taking advantage of her mother-love, convinced her that if she would go to a certain small town on the border of Nepâl, she would see her beloved son, and thus having caught the poor woman in the trap they had prepared, they seized her and deported her to England. Only then for the first time did she hear of Mahârâjâ Dhuleep Singh's conversion (in her opinion a terrible perversion) to Christianity, "the faith of the destroyers of her people and her country," she said. She almost died of grief. Later the devoted mother often expressed her profound sorrow in bitter regret that she had not voluntarily offered her body to burn on her husband's funeral pyre. "I ignored

the sacred custom," she said, "and renounced the bliss of becoming a *sati*,¹ and the gods have punished me for it." She died in Kensington (London), refusing to live or to eat with her son, and even to touch him or her grandchildren. . . .

The facade of the wall of the Akbar fortress is extremely interesting. It extends almost 500 feet from east to west and is entirely covered with mosaic ornaments and designs in some kind of unusually bright-colored tiles or enamel. The designs depict warriors, horses, elephants, symbolic pictures of all the signs of the Zodiac, and even of angels who, according to Persian mythology, are the guardians of each month and day of the year; this is ample proof that this work was not that of Moslems, who consider the portrayal of human figures a great sin, but rather that of settlers from Persia long before Mohammed's time.

In the Anarkali, a building opposite the central museum, we made the acquaintance of the cannon called *Zamzama*, and famed in Sikh history. Cast in India in 1716, this great giant was taken from Ahmad-Shâh before his flight to Kâbul. In 1802 it fell into the hands of Ranjit-Singh, but, previously had been held captive by the powerful Amritsar *Bhangîs* (somewhat similar to feudal barons), who had given it the name of *Bhangîân-vâli-Top*, which means the cap (and also the mountain) of the Bhangîs, and had looked upon it as the talisman of the Sikh Empire, because each time the Moham-medans used the gun against the Sikhs, the latter invariably triumphed over their hereditary foes.

What interested us more than any other antiquities were the living, preserved images of the days of old—the princes and rājās of India. . . . Anyone who has attended the courts of these petty rulers—allowed to play at rulership only as freely

¹ Widows who cremate themselves are known as *sati*, while the burning itself is called *suttee*.

as the cord by which their political residents hold them in check will allow—and who has become acquainted with their customs and habits, has seen India as it probably was as far back as 3,000 years ago. In this country, which gives the impression of having become congealed—and where any innovations were introduced by the Mohammedan element rather than the European—everything is strange and unusual. Especially so here, in Pañjâb and in the minor States near the Himâlayas, nothing and no one has as yet become anglicized.

A vast and desolate area, a veritable oasis, was allotted to the potentates who came to pay homage to the new representative of sovereign power. There all the greater as well as the lesser rājās and nawâbs were encamped, with their viziers, divâns, hordes of body-guards, court officials, astrologers, magicians, horses, elephants and a whole swarm of parasites. In some instances, the native body-guards were temporarily sent away and their places taken by a European guard of honor.

The camps were laid out with mathematical precision. Each was separated from its neighbor by a high partition of ornately embroidered canvas or costly rugs, and each had its own streets, a special entrance and a gate guarded by sentinels. The royal tent was always deep within the court, directly opposite the main triumphal entrance—a monument of embroidered materials and colorful Chinese lanterns—and facing the facade of each Durbâr-tent¹ was a lawn, often with fountains that had been temporarily put up, with rows of lantern-posts, and, O ye gods of the Brâhmaṇas! with rows of gas-burners! . . . On the left were the camps of the rājās of the highest rank, those of Kashmîr, Patiâla, Bahâwalpur, Nâbha, Jînd, Ahlûwâlîâ, Mandî, Mâler-Kotla, and other

¹ The chief rājās are privileged to hold their own durbârs in their camps, apart from the main vice-regal durbâr.

Mahârâjâs. On the right were the enclosed camps of the secondary râjâs, those of Kalsia, Dujâna, Farîdkot, and others. All these are rulers whose territories are within Pañjâb and Kashmîr. Neither the Râjput princes nor the râjâs from Southern or Central India attend the durbâr of the Northern provinces. A few Afghân leaders and Moslem princes were politely refused permission to come to the durbâr, to be presented to the Viceroy. . . .

Behind the camps were endless rows of stables under the open sky. Whole droves of horses, elephants and camels were herded together between the widely scattered tents of the soldiers and attendants. This resembled a European camp only from a distance. Were you to draw near, you would be amazed at the strange, unfamiliar forms, the bright colors and gilding, the rich Eastern costumes of the retinue and body-guards, the outspread carpets, the flags and streamers, the fantastically decorated horses and elephants, the cheetahs¹ in embroidered velvet caparisons and caps with muzzles, the falcons in their hoods, fastened to chains of gold, the mountain hunting dogs of every imaginable breed, their collars pierced with terrifying foot-long spikes, and the thousand and one fanciful playthings with which the râjâs and despots of India surround themselves today, as they did in the days of Alexander of Macedonia. . . .

Here is the camp of His Highness, the Mahârâjâ Ranbir-Singh Bahâdur, Grand Commander of the glorious Order of the Star of India, Fellow of the Indian Empire, councillor to the Empress of India, honorary general of the Imperial army, head of Jammû, but nevertheless a suspect and under the observation of the entire Anglo-Indian police force of the Kashmîr ruler! . . . He brought with him 35 sardârs and

¹ A cheetah is a kind of leopard, trained to hunt boars and wild goats. They are kept for hunting, like hounds.

as many troops as he was allowed to bring. The court of the camp is crowded with soldiers. Some are dressed in glistening breast-plates, in coats of mail and iron armour, in helmets with long, waving plumes, and in crimson velvet breeches; others—the infantry—wear crimson tunics, narrow breeches of blue and silver, white boots with brass-caps and a little four-armed god at the end of their pointed ends. The camp is divided down the centre by a wide road with lamp-posts on each side, behind which extend long rows of tents, red, blue, green—all the colors of the rainbow, with half a battery of artillery on either side of them. Near the centre of the street is a large square surrounded with *kanâts* of bright red cloth, the lower walls of which are decorated with stripes of a golden-yellow material covered with black embroidered designs in Kashmîr fashion. We arrive at this square through a kind of portico—a huge *shâmiânâ* made of the same material, and before us, in the centre of the square, rises the Mahârâjâ's own durbâr tent—a magnificent sample of a moving palace. The tent is made of bright red velvet with stripes, stitched with gold, and gives the appearance of a two-storied Chinese pagoda with its roof bent at the edges. The walls are lined with chocolate-colored cloth, filled in with embroidered designs, like a Kashmîr shawl. The columns supporting the tent from within are of silver, and are decorated with candelabras and costly lamps, and on the walls hang Persian-style framed mirrors. Under the canopy there is an entrance-hall where the earth is covered with costly rugs, one of them of the thickest velvet imaginable, crimson in color and interwoven with emblems in black silk and gold. The interior is a large central room covered with the rarest white rugs on which are scattered heaps of cushions the like of which were not seen even at the Paris exhibition. In the room, in the space reserved for the throne under the canopy, are two circular easy chairs decorated with very rare and rather excessive inlays of pure gold,

in those most fantastic designs for which "the happy vale" of Kashmîr is so famous. The cushions in the seats are of gold-colored leather, and so densely embroidered with gold that it is hard to detect the leather under the embroidery. Two stools of a similar type stand in front of the throne chairs, and on either side stand chairs of pure silver with gilt decorations. Behind these is a second row of armchairs of pure silver only, but all with equally magnificent embroidered seats; and behind these stand rows of chairs covered with the superb *nicosh* embroidery so famous in Kashmîr. During the local durbâr, the Mahârâjâ himself, and with him the Viceroy, will occupy these thrones. The gilded easy chairs in the front row will be enhanced by various English functionaries, and behind them, on the chairs of mere silver, their vassal râjâs and reigning sardârs will sit humbly with their legs crossed, while the small fry will sit in the other chairs.

Next to the camp of the lord of Kashmîr is the camp of the seven-year-old Mahârâjâ of Patiâla. For the edification of the Russian public I will mention the string of names and titles which distinguish this youthful prince. "His Highness, the Mahârâjâ Rajindar Singh, Mohindar Bahâdur, Farzand-i-Khâs, Daulat-i-Inglishiâ, Mansûr-ul-Zamân, Amîr-ul-Umrâ, Mahârâjâdhirâj Râjeshar, Râjgan, Lord of Patiâla." Despite his tender age, the little potentate is renowned for his remarkable magnanimity. He has but recently donated—"on his own incentive," the papers assure us, and without the slightest hint from his Resident, 50,000 rupees for a "patriotic fund". This fund is to aid the wounded of the last Afghânistân campaign. And although less than a shilling per pound sterling will go to the natives in the English armed forces, the subscription is, however, mainly drawn from the people of India; perhaps the English donate nothing because they prefer to receive rather than dispense the capital earned in India.

The camp of this generous baby is very beautiful and original, for instead of a yard, a lovely garden, leased from someone, leads to his pavilion. His tents are scarlet with black and white stripes, while the durbâr pavilion is built like an enormous double cupola. The prince is accompanied by fifty elephants and a battery of artillery whose guns are all, with the exception of one, blocked. In the distance stretch the camps of the Mahârâjâs of Nâbha and Jînd. . . .

Between the two last there exists a rivalry dating from the days of the first durbârs held by the Viceroys of India, a rivalry which this year found expression in a most unexpected way. This consists in a competition as to which of them will outdo the other in display of luxury and originality of royal whimsey. Up to the present, the palm of supremacy has repeatedly gone to the Mahârâjâ of Nâbha. But this year His Highness was unpleasantly surprised by his rival. The Râjâ of Jînd made an appearance among the people of Lahore, and the crowds were left gaping until the end of the durbâr. . . . The phaeton he had secretly ordered proved to be of pure silver! This carriage, of an unusual and elegant shape, amazed all with its enormous size. Nine thoroughbred horses, three abreast, strapped with silver harness, pulled it, with a postillion astride each wheeler. At the rear, two fantastic chasseurs occupied the back seat, also of silver, and behind them, on the silver foot-boards swayed bare-legged and bare-footed *chuprâssis* in gold-embroidered blue coats with long silver fly-flaps, on the ends of which were attached white *yak-tails*, with which the native attendants ward off flies and mosquitos from their *sâhibs*.

The Mahârâjâ himself, smiling self-sufficiently and reclining on blue velvet cushions embroidered with golden leaves, looked triumphantly about him. The effect was remarkable! . . . Ladies on horseback stopped on the Mall ¹

¹ The Mall is the *Bois de Boulogne* of Lahore.

and exclaimed with surprise. Tilburys filled with English people willy-nilly had to give way to the strange, huge carriage, which finally stopped near the orchestra, as if inviting admiration at close range. All the screws, nails and springs, all the metal parts of the phaeton were coated with thick layers of gold; so were even the axles and the outer casing of the wheels, while the actual spokes were made of pure silver! Since the Râjâ of Jînd has neither an army, nor batteries, nor fortresses, but only an incalculable sum of money and one gun with the strange habit of killing only those who are firing it, the English are very fond of old Jînd.

On beholding the carriage and the effect it produced, the Mahârâjâ of Nâbha nearly died of shock. The enormous clusters of flawless emeralds that hung from his white satin turban in front of his nose shook with emotion for a solid hour; his grey beard shook likewise. . . . Upon returning home, he gave immediate orders for a cable to be sent to London to inquire how much a carriage of pure gold with silver nails and springs would cost. The answer he received plunged him in disconsolate grief. He would have had to sell his metropolis in order to indulge his vindictive fancy!

The other camps were all, more or less, copies of the two already described. Some of the râjâs for one reason or another found it necessary to construct various ingenious apparatuses for gymnastics and polo in their court-yards, in honor of the English *sâhibs* who might visit them, with the secret hope, perhaps, that God being merciful, the *sâhibs* might break their necks.¹

¹ The English in India are enormously keen on all kinds of gymnastic exercises and games in which skill and courage are required. Polo is a game on horseback with a wooden ball, a sort of obstacle-race, with various numbers of riders on each side. It has been taken over by them from the Kashmîris; from eight to twelve Englishmen are killed annually in this dangerous game, either thrown or crushed by the frequently falling horses.

We lingered in the canvas city until evening and were stared at by the natives with a curiosity equal to, if not greater than, our own. Finally the cacophony of the many-voiced "tattoos," simultaneously sounded by the native trumpeters, forced us to hurry back to our carriages. In a moment, the Indian twilight, as if with a transparent veil, enveloped camp and fortress and the vast fields that surrounded them. Hardly were we seated than hundreds of campfires twinkled about us, little golden-red flames sparkled around, and at the entrance of every camp resounded the heavy step of British patrols who every night made their rounds and guarded the native sentries in the "Camp of Independent Mahârâjâs".

(To be continued)

To think freely is a very difficult thing, especially as the Society gets older and older. It is easier to go along a trodden path than to cut out a new way through the boundless forest of truth. We must make it easy for our members to express a new thought. The mind has—as you must know from your thinking—a very strong tendency to repeat itself, to make a difference which, when you analyze it, is only a difference of words, not a difference of thought. I consider that the life of the Theosophical Society depends very very largely on the encouragement that we give to thought which is new, however repugnant it may happen to be to some idea that we already hold, that we may cherish as being very noble.

ANNIE BESANT

THE DURBAR IN LAHORE

By H. P. BLAVATSKY

(Continued from p. 163)

V

The British Nimrod and "the striped ones".—What occurs at the durbârs.—Awaiting the arrival of the Marquis.—The elephants and their rājās.—The princes and their political tutors.—The triumphal arrival of the Viceroy.—The address of the municipality.—A view of the procession from the old tower.—The strange behavior of the Mahârâjâ of Kashmîr.—The threefold procession of elephants.—What the native press thinks of the durbârs.

THE Viceroy was tiger-hunting in the "jungles" of Kadir Doon near Mazra and in the Hill States ¹ of the thirty-seven petty kings of the Himâlayan slopes, and consequently arrived in Lahore a day late.

Excelled only by his son, the Earl de Grey, the Marquis of Ripon is considered the best shot in England. A keen hunter, he hastened, according to the papers, to distinguish himself before his successor's arrival in India, and left behind a terrible memory for the "striped ones." During the first day's hunt he himself shot two tigers on the spot, and crippled a third which an elephant then finished off with his trunk.

The ceremony of presentation takes place in the durbâr tent. In the centre of the stage, the Viceroy sits waiting in immobility on the throne, dressed in a blue uniform

¹ The dominions of the independent rājās and their dependent sardârs which are scattered over the entire slope of the Himâlayan foothills, on this side of India, and which are under the protectorate of England, are called the Hill States.

embroidered with gold and with a three-cornered hat on his left knee. . . . A Resident, taking the arm of an "independent" one, to whom he has been appointed, leads him up the steps to the entrance of the tent where they both stop. There the rājâ makes a bow, raising both hands to his forehead. He is then led nearer to the sacred personage who represents Great Britain, and again the rājâ bends low before the immovable form, who, then, covers his head with the three-cornered hat. Only when the one being presented servilely offers on a cloth his *nazar*,¹ which consists of a handful of gold *mohurs*,² is the Viceroy obliged to show some sign of life. With a slight bow to the rājâ, he touches the proffered gold with the tips of his fingers, and withdrawing his hand immediately from the *nazar*, assumes an expression of disgust and loathing for the contemptible metal. It is said that the acting of Lord Lytton was magnificent in this respect!

This part of the ceremony with its mimicry was adopted at the beginning of this century as practical instruction in ethics for the "venal Asiatics". The *nazar*, which is simply a bribe to the powers that be, came to India from Persia with the Moslems, and, as a custom, has existed, of course, since immemorial ages. This allegorical pantomime was instituted so as not to destroy the custom, and at the same time to divest it of its offensive or rather revealing character. It is designated by the term *touched and remitted*. To the honorable Marquis who receives an annual income of 80,000 pounds sterling, not including the additional enormous salary of 300,000 rupees a year, plus travelling expenses, the *nazar* of shining *mohurs* could not have been, we believe, a great temptation!

At last, tearing himself away with an effort from *durbârs*, *nazars*, rājâs who trembled before him, and chiefly

¹ A *nazar* is an offering to the authorities, a sign of submission.

² A *mohur* is a gold coin, valued at 32 shillings.

from his beloved tigers, the Marquis of Ripon directed his steps towards Lahore. From the morning of November 10th everything in and around the town was in a turmoil. At day-break policemen and special postmen mounted on camels conveyed to the visitors the police regulations for this highly solemn day. In view of the great number of elephants chosen for the viceregal procession, private carriages were permitted to use only side-lanes. Those who wished to be on the platform of the railway station for the arrival of his Vice-Majesty and the presentation of the Mahârâjâs, had to appear with a ticket at 2 p.m. sharp, although the viceregal train was not expected before five o'clock. Accepting this order grumblingly at first, we became later very grateful to the authorities; three hours were barely sufficient to assimilate this unusually fantastic picture!

Arriving at exactly two o'clock at the barrier across the road that led to the spacious station-yard built outside the town, we found the entire huge platform and the tract of empty land behind it already crowded with people. Cavalry regiments with their artillery, consisting exclusively of Europeans, framed the whole horizon in a horse-shoe formation; before them stood the infantry in a single file, and in front of this human wall strutted sparse battalions of soldiers from the troops of the independent râjâs. Enclosed in this space of about half-a-mile in diameter, were packed rows of elephants with towers, palanquins, and the riding-horses of the Mahârâjâs, as well as a restless sea of picturesque representatives of various nationalities.

Leaving the carriage at the barrier, we had to pick our way between the elephants, step by step and not without some danger to our dresses; and, what was even more dangerous, between the legs of horses and camels. The elephant is a wise and careful creature. He will never step on a living thing, not even an insect, if he notices it in time; raising his fleshy,

wrinkled foot in the air, he will thoughtfully thrust his trunk into the ground and calmly wait until it has crawled away from under his foot, and only then, with a snort, will he regain his precarious balance. But the camel is a stupid creature of dirty habits. It was so on this occasion; while the elephants, breathing heavily, ponderously moved aside for us, the ungodly camels spat on our company. The native mystics are fully convinced that the souls of the Brâhmanas, who consider it a great sin to deprive even a bug of its life, dwell in the elephants, while only the low souls of Mohammedans transmigrate into the camels. . . .

It was not easy to make our way through the crowd. Fortunately, Mrs. U., the wife of a captain of Hussars whose regiment was taking part in the ceremonial, and one of the most influential railway officials of the native paradise, were among our number.

Having reached the main entrance with the greatest effort, we were first thrust by our railway official into the cashier's cubicle while he himself went to the upper platform to prepare a place for us on the bridge suspended above the trains. From this position the public, several feet above the platform, could see all that happened below without mixing with the native princes and without being in the way of the ushers and the authorities. In the meanwhile, we had ample time to enjoy a view of the constantly arriving rājās, as we sat at the little window which looked down on the entrance, and naturally did not fail to take in this rare spectacle.

Before us was an enormous yard filled with variously bedecked "royal" elephants. Covered with caparisons of gold brocade embroidered with pearls and precious stones that reached to the ground; with rings of gold, studded with emeralds, in their flapping ears, and on the extremities of their trunks; with bunches of superb magnolias and ostrich plumes on their heads and at the base of their tails, these

huge animals appeared to us, innocent Occidentals, the most original and wonderful spectacle in the world! . . . Behind one female elephant of astounding size trotted her calf, carrying on his back a long ladder of pure silver, by means of which his master, the rājâ, climbed, to occupy the howdah on its gigantic mother's back. There were so many elephants in the yard that it was impossible properly to observe even half their number. Some of the howdahs were sheltered from the sun by red velvet curtains richly embroidered with gold, while the elephants themselves literally disappeared under saddle-cloths made of similar velvet with gold-embroidered flowers. Each of the caparisons cost in India, where handicraft costs almost nothing, from 5,000 to 10,000 rupees! The dignified, intelligent faces of many of the elephants were embellished with geometrical figures, lines and stars, intermixed with astrological symbols, as protection from the evil eye. Almost all of them had costly anklets of gold, silver and precious stones on their large feet, and on the ends of their tusks golden balls as large as apples. Others had their foreheads down to the eyes, as well as their rumps, covered with a gold net studded with jewels. The elephant of the Mahârājâ of Kashmîr had some 250,000 rupees worth of gems hung on him! His collar, made of pure gold, covered the whole chest of the elephant with innumerable coins; it was several feet in circumference, and surrounded its massive neck with rings the size of a Moscow cracknel;¹ His *mahout* (driver), sitting like a human wart between the animal's ears, rapped his head with a sharp cane of pure gold which was set with turquoises and large pearls. On each elephant there was either a tower or an open seat shaped like the two-seated back of a phaeton. The *howdah* on the viceregal elephant,

¹ A Russian bun or biscuit, hollow in the middle and circular in shape.

the largest of all the durbâr elephants, was made of pure silver with decorations of gold, and cost the treasury 25,000 rupees. . . .

As for the ill-bred "ships of the desert," their number was far smaller than that of the elephants, but even these hump-backed creatures were not less resplendently adorned. One of them had both humps covered with silk- and pearl-embroidered brocade; on the freakish muzzle was displayed a bridle with notches of gold, while on the crown of its head rested a gold coronet. The Mahârâjâ of Patiâla owned an entire artillery regiment on camels. The riders as well as the animals were dressed in red and yellow uniforms and caparisons. It is said that this regiment is one of the most useful and courageous. In front of each gunner is a long rifle attached to the frontal knob of the saddle on a pivot, which may be turned in any direction. According to an eye-witness, the bombardier sitting between the two humps, loads and fires from this rifle with an amazing rapidity and with great risk of shooting his camel through the head.

"These docile animals," says an officer who saw them in action, "move at a regular trot, one behind the other, their necks stretched forward, like a flock of stupid geese pursued by a boy. But at the first word softly spoken by his rider, the camel stops as if rooted to the spot, and having heard the whistle of a bullet and a shot two inches above his head, again continues at full speed, advancing at the rate of fifteen miles an hour."

No less bedecked than their elephants and camels were the Mahârâjâs and Nawâbs themselves, whom I can never forgive their habit of piercing the most precious emeralds as though they were mere beads, and of mounting their almost priceless rubies in silver! To the entrance covered with red material, arrived every few moments gilded victorias, carriages, phaetons and coaches which would have seemed the

height of bad taste in London or Paris, but which in India harmonize perfectly with everything else. In each vehicle sat two people: a rājâ on the left side, and an English officer in uniform on the right. There goes the thin, pale-greenish figure of the Nawâb of Bahâwalpur, in pince-nez, a purple velvet coat, silk stockings and slippers like a dancing-girl. The Nawâb is a member of the "reform" party, which means that he indulges in wine and brandy, and, as he does not wish to appear in his bare feet, wears women's pink stockings and shoes.¹ A "political officer" appointed to look after him is leading him by the arm. Behind them comes another couple; the enormous rājâ of Kapûrthala, with blackened eyebrows and lashes painted with *kājal*,² drags the tiny Colonel W. as on a tow-rope. Behind them, the rājâ of Mandî, with the sign of Vishnu on his forehead, with ankle-rings up to his knees, and with a diadem of diamonds sparkling brightly in the sunlight on his turban, is walking morosely beside his supervisor. Here are the rājâs of Chamba and Suket arriving in their carriages, one after the other; also the Sardâr of Kalsia and the Nawâbs of Malerkotla, Logarh and Dujâna, blazing with all the colors of the rainbow and resembling walking jewelry exhibits. All these effeminate petty kings spread around them the stupefying odor of musk, rose oil and amber. . . . From a distance it is easy to mistake their variegated figures, as they mount the staircase each paired with a British officer, for ladies at a fancy-dress ball, executing a stately polonaise with their partners.

¹ When appearing before English people, the natives must be either barefooted, leaving their slippers at the threshold, or else wear stockings and shoes.

² Antimony. In India there are many people, mostly men, who embellish their eyes with antimony which, it is said, greatly preserves the eyesight.

Having left the cashier's cubicle and mounted the platform, we found ourselves as in a box at the theatre, overlooking the stage. The scene before us grew more and more lively and interesting. . . . Directly below us was the Mahârâjâ of Kashmîr, who had arrived with his eighteen subordinate Sardârs: they presented a dense mass of precious gems! . . . The *panache* of pearls and diamonds on his turban, some two feet in height, almost touched the parapet of the bridge on which we stood, while his white satin garments sparkled with jewelry. Beside him, looking at him askance, stood the aged Mahârâjâ of Nâbha. He stood—decked in his favorite emerald-clusters, which framed his face like the green wreath of a forest water-sprite—leaning haughtily on a costly sword, which, alas, was all but doomed to remain in its rusty scabbard for ever!

Having arrived in his silver carriage, no less, the "Old Jînd," regretting, perhaps, that he could not drive it up onto the platform, and thus reopen the wound in the heart of his rival, now contented himself by loading his person with ten times as many emeralds as were suspended from the head of the ruler of Nâbha. Beyond, between the legs of some sort of dignitary in uniform and three-cornered hat, there stirred a tiny creature in a brocade sheath covered with diamonds. . . . Many of the secondary râjâs approached the shining mite and bowed humbly before him, being almost forced to kneel down for this purpose, while the British dignitaries, patronizingly "how-do-you-doing" as they passed, nodded to the precious little bundle and extended two fingers to shake hands. This was the Mahârâjâ of Patiâla, a seven-year-old child whom nobody would have thought to be more than five, even though His Highness had been married for three years.

However, this fact does not explain why the little Mahârâjâ of Patiâla has an "heir presumptive" already designated for him!

All the Mahârâjâs, Sardârs and Nawâbs present at the durbâr seemed to have such grave countenances! In spite of all the outward splendor, the luxuriant setting and the solemn nature of the gathering, the attitude of this numerous company of natives whose names have all been entered in the *Golden Book*,¹ resembled far more that of the bearers of a corpse at a wealthy funeral than the gathering of India's highest nobility in order joyfully to greet the new Viceroy. Having arrived two hours before the train was due, alone and without their customary retinue and attendants (who were in all likelihood not allowed on the narrow platform for fear of overcrowding), all these princes walked and stood about like condemned shades from Dante's *Inferno*. They could not even sit down and rest, as there was no single chair in sight, and they were probably not permitted to sit, according to custom, on the extreme end of their spinal column. Gloomy are the faces of the stern Sikhs; the eyes of the Moslem princes, cunning and full of hidden slyness and hate, move somehow fearfully from side to side; the foreheads of the Hindu princes, embellished with sectarian emblems, are contracted in frowns, most of all the brow of the Mahârâjâ of the "happy valley of Kashmîr". Even the crowds of Englishmen, tightly fitted into their uniforms, look twice as pompous as usual, and with proudly lifted heads walk with a measured step along the platform, while awaiting the arrival of the train. Everybody is silent; only a scarcely audible whisper comes occasionally from the group of English urban authorities, who are standing apart from the others without paying the slightest attention to the dynastic representatives, among whom there are many whose descent goes further back than Xerxes. Never have I seen at a distance of two paces such a crowd, numbering

¹ All the most illustrious names of the Mahârâjâs, râjâs, and Brâhmaṇas of the country are entered in the *Golden Book*.

almost three hundred people, and witnessed such a silence; it was as though they had all been struck deaf and dumb. A lonely figure, thin as a stick, small and hunched, wearing an old, threadbare frock-coat and a white garter in place of a necktie, and in a top hat, once upon a time black, but now reddish and battered, walked with mincing steps along the platform, swiftly moving from one group to another, and entering into conversation with all the Mahârâjâs. This unprepossessing figure turned out to be none other than His Eminence, the Bishop of Lahore. Having failed, during his long career, to convert a single Hindu to Christianity, he was said to have taken a vow to build a cathedral in Lahore with the money contributed by heathen Mahârâjâs only. To the present day, although the vow is several years old, only the foundations and two walls have been built for the future cathedral; but to make up for it, His Eminence had succeeded in making himself a nuisance to the unfortunate râjâs.

Hark, a whistle! . . . One, a second, a third, then a clanging on the platform, and everything is momentarily silenced. The British authorities straighten up; the râjâs and nawâbs are transformed into pillars of salt! Hissing and whistling, the train approaches steadily, slows down and finally stops. The Governor-General of Lahore and the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces, General F. P. Haines, stand at attention before the viceregal carriage and are the first to greet the Marquis of Ripon as he steps out. We wait for the sally of a welcoming hurrah! . . . We are answered solely by the panting of the subsiding locomotive, subdued talk, and the muffled droning of exchanged words. . . . Backs are bent, the tails of gold-embroidered uniforms rise up, hands in white gloves move during mutual handclasps—and nothing more! It is difficult to distinguish the Viceroy from the others. He is a rather corpulent, short man of about fifty, with a long beard

turning grey; his face is red and good-natured, but, to use a passport expression, "there are no special identification marks". When you look carefully, however, you see before you a real gentleman with calm, gentle and very dignified manners. . . . As a matter of fact, we liked him even better in Simla, where he wore a plain grey coat, than in Lahore in all his regalia, and three-cornered hat, his chest covered with orders and diamond stars. . . .

The honorable Lord had hardly shaken half a dozen hands when the president of the Lahore municipal committee came forward to deliver an address. This was printed on white satin in letters of gold and reposed in a beautiful silver casket, the work of Lucknow artists.¹ I will quote but one paragraph of this speech which was read aloud in the firm and artificially emotional voice of officialdom.

"We lack words to congratulate ourselves that, in the first year of your Lordship's appointment, it should be our happy privilege to receive Your Excellency in the capital of Pañjâb under an augury so joyful to us. We speak of your mission, which is to be the first to welcome and inspect those brave soldiers who so nobly and heroically defended the honor of their Empress and their country in the last Afghânistân campaign. Permit us then, honorable Lord, to convey to Your Excellency our heartfelt congratulations on the exceptionally brilliant success which so constantly followed our valiant British troops on the field of battle in Kâbul, Sherpur, and other places, and also for our success in placing the Emir of Abdur-Rahmân on the throne of Afghânistân by peaceful means and under the lofty protection of Britain. . . ."

This was signed by seven Europeans, 12 Singhs, pandits and various *bahâdurs*, and by nine Mohammedan Khâns, sheikhs and nawâbs, all members of the municipality of the city of Lahore.

¹ Lucknow and Delhi are famed for their gold and silver workmanship.

The flowery eloquence of these good wishes and expressions of rapture was received with a deep and reverent silence. . . . Two or three of the heroes of this brilliant Afghân campaign made a croaking sound but did not say anything. . . .

Having shaken hands with all the Englishmen who were presented to him, the Viceroy began also to press the palms of the Mahârâjâs who were brought before him, and who had hitherto filled the role of a background. At the same time he was given the royal salute, first by the European guard-of-honor and then by the artillery-battery of the railway.¹

One of the first to be presented was the little fellow of Patiâla, whose hand, just recently taken out of his mouth, was graciously shaken by the Viceroy, who then patted him on his little diamond-covered turban. After that the Marquis stretched out his hand a few times to grasp the dark hands of various native Highnesses.

In order to have a better view of the procession on elephants and camels, which reminded me of a scene in *Cinderella*, where they sing about:

“ Un cortège magnifique
Composé d’beaucoup d’chameaux ”,

we left our bridge and went to the old tower by the station-gate. From there we could see the road stretching before us into the city, dotted with triumphal arches, decorated on both sides with banners and flags, and framed by 10,000 troops. The procession consisted of fifty-nine elephants. At the head, on the largest of them all, rode the Viceroy. Behind him, two by two, followed elephants that were a little smaller, and had been found worthy of carrying such precious burdens as the Governor-General and the Commander-in-Chief, the

¹ The railway building in Lahore, as in many other Indian cities, is also an *armed fortress*.

aged General Haines, the retinue and the higher officials of Lahore. In the rear, *three by three*, and decidedly smaller in size than those in the first two rows, came the elephants which carried the Mahârâjâs and nawâbs. . . .

Having reached this page of my faithful narrative, I apologize in advance to those Anglo-Indian authorities who should happen to read these lines.¹ But truth compels me to confess the following fact, perhaps not too flattering to them; as handsome and magnificent as a real Indian in his picturesque costume looks in the howdah on an elephant's back, just as ridiculous does a Britisher in uniform and a three-cornered hat appear. . . . From a distance one would fancy them to be monkeys in red Generals' uniforms and three-cornered hats with plumes, mounted on large poodles covered with horse-cloths! . . . For a complete resemblance they lacked merely a barrel-organ, but this was fully compensated for by three military bands which with remarkable unanimity pealed forth *Rule Britannia* and *God Save the Queen*, each in its own key. . . .

Suddenly the strange news spread with the speed of lightning, that the Mahârâjâ of Kashmîr had refused to take part in the viceregal procession. "He went home to his camp!" . . . Scandal and general confusion. Some said he had feigned indisposition; others, that he took offense because, as a general of the English army, his place was among the European generals, beside the Commander-in-Chief, and not in the rear with the secondary râjâs; others, that he was in disgrace and

¹ There is no doubt, and it flatters me, that many among them actually read, in translation of course, my letters to the *Moscow Herald*. The *Bombay Gazette* recently quoted whole sentences, somewhat twisted, from "*The Caves and Jungles of Hindustan*." This paper, as well as the *Times of India*, which persecutes me *because of my nationality*, did me the honor of denouncing me to the public. "Under the pseudonym of Radda-Bay," commencing with No. 305, November 30, 1879, of the *Moscow Gazette*, I am alleged to have written on India, "in the most *anti-English* organ of Russia, the *Moscow Gazette*" . . . (See *Bombay Gazette*, November 6, 1880.)

the Viceroy had not even shaken hands with him at the railway station, etc. We did not find out the whys and wherefores, and as for the newspapers, they did not say a word about it. The local reporters are very discreet people, and act in complete harmony with the rulers of India. . . .

The procession, however, moved on without the capricious Mahârâjâ.

"Imagine," a young man who came running up the tower communicated to us, "the Mahârâjâ insisted that his elephant be brought to the main entrance where, at the time, the procession was being formed and where the Viceroy was already mounting a ladder to his mammoth! What remarkable rudeness and tactlessness. . . ."

"Well, and did they let him?"

"Of course not. Either you take the place designated to you in the procession, or else vanish through the back entrance."

"But he will feel more insulted than ever. . . ."

"Decidedly! He deserves a bigger lesson than that. . . . Our administrators are too tender-hearted with these darkies!"

"Are they indeed!" I could not help blurting out. "In that case you should hang them all together without further ado," I added, constantly forgetting my delicate position in India.

The youth looked at me askance, and I bit my lip. Fortunately Mrs. U. created a diversion, which was lucky for me, by asking him what had finally become of the Mahârâjâ. . . .

"Nothing in particular. He mounted a horse and galloped off home to his camp with his sardârs . . . after leaving his elephant in the procession."

"How strange! Did the elephant walk off without a rider?"

"Oh no! Somebody made use of him. . . . I believe it was our old Bishop. . . ."

At last the procession was organized. The last elephant lumbered out through the gates, and the long file of these tamed forest giants moved forward, gleaming in the last glowing rays of the setting sun with gold, purple and precious stones. . . . The Viceroy was in the lead, behind him followed the Europeans, and at the tail-end came the rājās, subdued and tamed no less than their elephants, albeit at one time the world's high representatives of the dying dynasties of the Orient. The elephants totalled, as shown above, over fifty, and compared to these colossi the largest horses in the cavalry and those of the capering sardārs seemed in the distance and from the height of our tower like small dogs. And now the motley procession approached the triumphal arch of green branches and turned on to the road leading to the city, between two dense walls of soldiers. The royal salute sounded again, the music pealed forth the national anthem anew, and then there was again a deep silence! No shout of welcome, not a *hurrah!* Not the least expression of joy, as though these crowds had been struck dumb. A funeral procession is often more animated.

What could be the meaning of this, we wondered, naturally expecting at least an artificially-rapturous welcome, but not a frosty one like this. The mystery is partly explained in the outspoken editorial that appeared some days later in a native paper. With the change of Cabinet, the Hindus summoned their courage, hastening to take advantage of the short interval of respite which the victorious party had guaranteed to them. I shall let the natives speak for themselves in my stead, while attempting to preserve in translation their original mode of speech.

“The frogs reproached the boys who were throwing stones at them, saying: ‘To you it means amusement, to us—death!’ The inhabitants of Pañjāb have every right to say the same about the durbār in Lahore. Without a doubt these

festivities offered great amusement to the Indian authorities, from the Viceroy to the lowest official. But for the natives in general, and especially for those unfortunate ruling princes and Mahârâjâs who were commanded to come and pay homage, the durbâr proved to be an inexhaustible source of suffering. So as not to be humiliated before others, many a râjâ, half ruined if not entirely so, was forced to spend enormous sums of money which he did not have, and which he had to borrow, to go and pay homage with his suite and his camp, sometimes many hundreds of miles. The purpose of such durbârs is, of course, known to all. Our rulers seek to produce the strongest possible impression on us natives, to overcome us with the greatness of the British nation. Do they take us for stupid asses? Do they really hope to captivate us with glass beads and shining brass buttons, as the Spaniards once captivated the redskin Indians in the days of their invasion of South America? We may be Indians, but we are not redskins. . . . It is difficult to win the hearts of our people with appeals to the imagination alone, and the magnificence of the English can never compare with the magnificence and splendor of the courts of our former rulers. Such tactics can only succeed with savages, and not always with these either, as even savages soon realize that an empty stomach cannot be filled with mere imagination and the display of another's riches. The English have sufficiently astounded the imagination of our ignorant masses. We now expect something more substantial from their representatives, if only the alleviation of our most immediate needs. Nothing can be further from the truth than the idea that the Hindus are avid for pomp and superficial glitter. A highly intelligent and gifted nation, the Indians, as a race, have always, from the days of old, distinguished themselves by extreme abstemiousness in their mode of life. It is hard to find people simpler than we are in food, clothing and all that concerns our daily habits. The Mohammedans love pomp

and glitter, but the Hindus are as simple and abstemious today as they were thirty centuries ago. Our highest caste, the Brâhmaņas, who outnumber all the other castes, are almost ascetics. The Râjputs are present-day Spartans, and our rulers will possibly succeed in attracting the Mohammedans alone with their durbârs. . . . Away then, with tinsel and empty amusement! Their railways, their telegraphs, the splendid army discipline, these are the things that have inspired us with respect for the English nation, but never these stupid displays of pomp, this futile expenditure of capital from the ever-draining treasury of our country.”

(To be continued)

The Universe is worked and *guided*, from *within outwards*. As above so it is below, as in heaven so on earth; and man, the microcosm and miniature copy of the macrocosm, is the living witness to this Universal Law, and to the mode of its action. We see that every *external* motion, act, gesture, whether voluntary or mechanical, organic or mental, is produced and preceded by *internal* feeling or emotion, will or volition, and thought or mind. As no outward motion or change, when normal, in man's external body, can take place unless provoked by an inward impulse, given through one of the three functions named, so with the external or manifested Universe.

H. P. BLAVATSKY

THE DURBAR IN LAHORE

By H. P. BLAVATSKY

(Continued from p. 245)

VI

The Shâlimâr gardens and the forget-me-nots from the banks of the Rhine.—Antediluvian carriages.—The declining hierarchies of the rājās and the rising hierarchy of their conquerors.—British ideas about the Russians.—What do the Anglo-Indians consider as the *ne plus ultra* “bon ton”?—Olympus and the absence of ambrosia.—The fortunate rājās and the starving coolies.—Whom should England fear?—The dinner of the Scottish heroes.—The William Tell of Kashmir.—The lanky Major in the trap.—The truth hurts even the heroes!

THE Viceroy remained in Lahore until November 17th, and the entire week of his stay was marked by daily festivities. The “Great Durbâr” for the general public was set for the 15th, after which he was to leave on his “official tour,” with the intention of travelling through almost all of India. Consequently there were spectacles and “exhibitions of pomp” in abundance, and we barely managed to see all the different processions, parades and entertainment, with and without elephants, but always including the Mahârājās as indispensable parts of these “exhibitions” which displayed the greatness of the victorious British.

The most interesting of all the entertainments were three: walking in the illuminated Shâlimâr gardens; a subscription dinner given by the city in honor of the Scottish regiment; and a “general Durbâr”. The parade—which did not number

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10,000, as the newspapers stated,¹ but only about six thousand men, as most of the others were in hospital—did not impress me as anything out of the ordinary. One who has seen the St. Petersburg maneuvers and the reviews in Paris, in the days of Napoleon III, would have missed nothing by remaining at home during the Lahore review. But the other two entertainments deserve brief mention, especially the Shâlimâr gardens. These wonderful gardens, about four miles out of town, owe their existence to the Mogul emperor Shâh Jahân, the unfortunate builder of the Tâj-Mahal and the still more unfortunate father of his son, Aurangzib, who incarcerated his parent in a fortress where he was detained until his death. Translated, Shâlimâr means “the abode of joy”. The park is almost a mile long and is laid out on three terraces which rise one above the other; it has 450 fountains which spout water with great regularity, and as many marble basins into which the water—transparent as a tear and cold in any season of the year—overflows with a more or less poetical purling, depending on the mood of the visitor.

What remarkable horticulturists were the Mohammedans! The European Turks, with their gardens laid out according to the Western style, cannot give even an approximate idea of the gardens of the Indian Moguls. Tourists who visit Alhambra can judge of the beauty of the gardens of India by the ruins of the Moorish pavilions, fountains and avenues, now overgrown and tangled like a labyrinth. Shâlimâr, it is true, as a garden, though not inferior to the park of the Mahârâja of Patiâla near Kalka, lacks the setting of the latter—the magnificent panorama of the endless range of old *Himavat*.² But

¹ The native regiments of the independent Mahârâjâs were not present at the review, and cannot therefore be included.

² Himavat is a compound Sanskrit term which means “crowned with snow” from the word *hima*—snow, and *vat*—covered, while Himâlaya, literally translated, means “abode of eternal snow,” *âlaya* meaning “abode”.

nothing can compare with its marvellous vegetation, in which all the flowers of the world are brought together. It is as though even the plant kingdom had gathered for the Durbâr in Shâlimâr. We will long remember the feeling of unfeigned joy when, at the foot of a huge old mango tree, wrapped like a victim of gout in the cactus that embraced it, we found a small bed of violets and forget-me-nots! The latter grew on the edge of an old ditch, and were planted, so we were told, by the wife of a German missionary. Imagine the Rhine at the foot of the Himâlayas, the far-off North wandering off on a visit to its Southern brother, almost in the very tropics! . . . I plucked a few of the flowers which I had never dreamed of seeing in the scorching valleys of Hindustân. . . .

On the evening of November 12th we went to see the illuminations in the Lahore park. Our way lay across endless, dense avenues which transform all the main cities of India into a Fontainebleau wood. The age-old trees were already casting oblique, elongated shadows on the old, half-ruined mosques and Moslem cemeteries, which lay on both sides of the road. Neither in Lahore itself nor in its vicinity is there any Mogul monument entirely preserved. The hatred of the last king of Lahore for all that was Mohammedan ruined all that could possibly be ruined until, caught in a trap, both the vandal and his kingdom perished. . . .

The wide avenues were literally thronged with carriages hastening to the festival, with horsemen and runners of the British and native notables. Between the wheels of the aristocratic coaches and *barouches*, the tiny *ekkas* of the natives glided by like lightning, thus producing a most curious contrast to the rest of the carriages. . . .

The *ekka* consists of a bare board placed on two large wheels. Over this board there is a kind of canopy, sometimes made of velvet and costly materials, but more often of ordinary chintz; this is fastened to four poles which are

stuck at the four corners of the planking. To this primitive carriage, which is mentioned in the oldest writings of India, a tiny bull of the species of Himâlayan mountain dwarf-bull, is harnessed, or else a pony of a similar dwarf-family, no larger than a big Newfoundland dog.¹ Both animals, possessing remarkable strength and endurance, considering their size, move, especially the bulls, faster than many a horse. In such a carriage, where one European would hardly find room, sometimes up to four natives, five including the driver, manage to squat! . . . And such an *ekka* speeds like the wind over a field, deafening the passers-by with the rattles and bells which cover the little bull from his gilded horns to his tail; and the *ekka's* main charm is that it cannot be upset. . . . And now, on the road to Shâlimâr, such antediluvian vehicles sped along, insolently outstripping the full-blooded chargers of the *râjâs*, who were setting out to do homage to the Viceroy, this time in a more European style, in modern carriages and minus the elephants. . . . Their regal setting, their runners and other contrivances notwithstanding, their Highnesses were, as usual, forced to pull to the side for any English clerk who passed by in a hired *gharri* (coach).

In the distance, through the golden haze of the rapidly dying day, the pineapple-shaped domes of the pagodas and temples were still aglow, but their bases had already grown dark and seemed to float in the bluish mists that rose over the river, as we approached the park. Most beautiful was all this huge, dark-green, now almost black mass of vegetation which appeared to vanish with its terraces into the dark-blue sky, already sprinkled with stars. Lights appeared here and there, but when, after numerous stops and careful maneuvering through the dense bulk of people, our carriage stopped before

¹ In India these little horses are sold for 5 to 10 rupees; but there are some among them of an equally small species which run so fast they are sold at a high price for racing purposes.

a wide avenue that led to the main entrance, the black mass had long since been transformed into a fiery one, extending in great waves of flame on our right, on our left and behind us. . . . Not wishing to enter with the aristocratic crowd, where we would have been obliged to give way to every English sergeant, as there were several natives among us, we decided to wait. Remaining in our carriage, we gave instructions to be pulled to one side, and to stop under a group of spreading banyan-trees, where once more we had the opportunity to admire the continuously arriving rājās.

At all these political festivities, as in the Kingdom of Heaven, "many are called, but few are chosen". Only those who had tickets were allowed to enter the park for the illuminations, but even there, as during the procession, everyone had to know his place. Of the natives, only the rājās with their retinue and the highest Hindu and Moslem notables were in the park. Only three thousand tickets had been issued, and there were over one hundred thousand onlookers.

The avenue which led to the garden-gate was lit on both sides with thousands of Chinese lanterns. On the high walls extended in a fiery line lighted wicks in shallow containers, strangely shaped in the likeness, so favorite in India, of the attributes of goddesses like *Durgā*, the female reproductive force in Nature. Whimsical designs in Oriental style blazed above countless gleaming panels displaying the monogram and coat-of-arms of the Marquis of Ripon. In the park, inside the gate, an open pavilion, a complete palace in Moorish style with a wide arch in place of a door and with minarets on the sides, glowed as though it were covered from top to bottom with flaming glass-beads, appearing to the imagination as some fire-exhaling dragon guarding an enchanted garden. This large building hid from view the whole interior of the park. Further off, a truly magical panorama worthy of the *Arabian*

Nights unrolled before our eyes. In the foreground was an extensive flower garden crossed, like a labyrinth, by tiled paths of colored flagstones. Between these, like knots holding together this net-work of paths, white marble basins rose, each in the form of a geometrical figure, some round and some star-shaped with high-spouting fountains among the most exotic flowers. And above all this, suspended over the baskets and the fountains like the roof of a tent, were garlands of multicolored lights, gleaming with all the rainbow hues of opals in the jets of the forty fountains! . . .

Above this magic square rose the first terrace of the gardens, and on it a second pavilion, smaller however, with a large balcony in front. It almost hung from the edge over the heads of the distinguished natives who had gained the *high privilege* of being admitted to the park where the Viceroy and the English officials were to be found.¹ Waterfalls and basins separated the guests from the crowd of less distinguished, though not ordinary, but nevertheless *common* people, who had been permitted to breathe the same air as their white rulers. The balcony, or rather the parapet-platform, was covered with expensive rugs and furnished with thrones and easy-chairs on which sat the gods and goddesses of Olympus themselves, with Jupiter at their head. The gods probably missed their ambrosia, as the non-drinking sons of India and the municipality had forgotten the refreshments, and, faithfully reflecting their gloomy countenances, even the faces of the "distinguished natives" were unusually long. . . . In the garden as on the platform, in spite of a crowd that numbered thousands, a solemn silence reigned. This added a greater solemnity to the picture, the general impression of which was somewhat spoiled by the black tail-coats, the top hats and white ties of the *gods*. But this false note, as it were, in the complete body

¹ See the *Civil and Military Gazette*, November 14th, 1880.

of harmony, was only detected by us squeamish Europeans. In the eyes of the superstitious natives who are accustomed to representing their principal goddess, Kâlî, as a jet-black figure with a necklace of white human skulls on her breast and neck, the black suits of their conquerors appeared of even greater significance. . . .

However, to compensate, the costumes of the natives were so original and elaborate, that it was easy to forget we were in the land of the sacred cow and to imagine that we were attending a royal *bal costume*. Whether made of silk, velvet, or the finest cashmere, they were embroidered with gold, pearls and rubies; the outer clothing, turbans and sashes, were each one richer than the other, yet always preserving a remarkable harmony, an unusual blending of colors. We must remember that over three hundred shades, unattainable by European manufacturers, are known in Kashmîr. Our eyes were overpowered by such an unaccustomed display of colors and sparkling gems. Even the handles of the switches made from the tails of Tibetan *yaks*, with which the attendants drive away the persistent flies and mosquitos from their masters' noses, were in many cases made of gold and covered, like the *porte-bouquet* of a modern beauty, with inlaid precious stones!

The silence was at last broken by the roar and explosion of fire-works. Rockets and other pyrotechnical devices rose beneath the dark-blue sky. Outstanding among the latter were aerial texts with greetings and good wishes to the Viceroy in two languages, English and Hindustani. The Viceroy of India rose; the whole assembly of gods jumped to their feet. The guns fired a salute on his departure as they did on his arrival in the park, and the Shâlîmâr fête was over.

Another interesting celebration, but of a different kind, was the public dinner given in honor of two Scottish regiments. According to the programme, the dinner was followed by

Olympic games, Scottish reels accompanied by national music, songs, athletic contests, etc. The carrying out of the program was crowned with "complete success," to quote the Lahore organ of the Anglo-Indians. . . . "Especially the athletic triumphs which, *without any doubt*, convinced the natives once again of the invincibility of the British nation, and gave them practical proof of the extent of the superiority possessed by the people that rule over them, as regards muscular power, when compared to the power in their own feeble bodies." The newspaper could have added to this interesting anatomical information another, purely physiological fact, but failed to do so: the superior expansive power of the well-fed British stomach as compared with the same capacity of the starved stomach of the Hindu. The late Gargantua would in all likelihood have died of over-eating, had he wished to compete with the honored Celts on this occasion! . . .

Whole mountains of roast beef and roast lamb; hecatombs of hams and suckling-pigs, at the sight of which the Moham-medans hastened to depart, spitting behind the first corner that hid them from sight; pyramids of plum pudding and fruit, and an overflowing sea of beer and brandy! All this served under two canopies, beneath which two tables were set for six hundred each. In front of the canopies, embellished with the field-colors of the regiments, was a triumphal arch with greetings to "the conquerors of Afghânistân" upon it. Patriotic poems and the names of Afghân localities where both the Highland regiments had distinguished themselves, shone in bright colors on a dark background of palm-leaves.

Having eaten, drunk and smoked to their satisfaction, the barelegged army directed its steps to a field prepared for the exhibition of national sports. The legs of many of the heroes, which as a result of exposure to the sun of Kâbul were the color of raw beef, trembled and swayed after such assiduous

libations to Bacchus, but on the whole the Scottish gladiators emerged with honor from the contest. Having listened to the singing of minstrels and the music of bagpipes and flutes, and having seen enough of the regimental clowns and athletes, we parted from both the vanquished and the victors, leaving the former snoring loudly in deep, drunken sleep on the dusty arena, and the latter receiving a prize of 300 rupees from the dainty hands of Mrs. R., the wife of the Chief Stewart of the Scots, and would have gone home, had we not been detained on the road by a sight which later developed into something very remarkable. . . .

Under a shady, green mango tree, surrounded by half a dozen naked boys, two *native* athletes, street-performers, were, in their turn, giving a performance of their own. Catching sight of us and anticipating the rare luck of earning a few coppers, they offered to show us their skill, among other things the "dance of the swords," famous in India and better known as the "dance of death". We agreed. . . .

There were only two actors, one active and the other passive. The first was a tall Kashmîrî, thin as a rod, with the movements of his nude, brown body reminding one of the supple and graceful leaping of an Arabian steed; the other was an equally nude Hindu, a boy of fifteen, shaggy and dirty, but with eyes that gleamed like those of a wild-cat. The main actor, whose entire costume consisted of a belt made of defunct *inexpressibles* and of a shining sword, brought the latter to us and asked us to examine its quality. We found the blade so sharp that one of our company, having barely touched it, cut himself; the sword was like a razor. Our amazement commenced when the Kashmîrî, noticing the copiously flowing blood from the finger, darted silent as a shadow towards a small bag and extracting from it what looked like a rag (a piece of bright yellow leather, apparently dyed), applied it with the same agility, or rather touched the

Sikh's injured finger with it, and in a moment the bleeding stopped."¹

While the British, a quarter of a mile away, were receiving prizes of 300 rupees each for their demonstration of "muscular" strength, which was intended to instil in the natives such fear and respect for their "invincibility," our nude performer displayed such unheard-of feats of super-human dexterity in fencing, that we could only gape and regret that the "invincibles" could not see him at that moment. I will give only two examples.

Having placed the boy immovably stretched out on the ground with fingers and toes slightly apart, the Kashmîrî, sword in hand and standing about a foot away from the boy's head, with his back constantly turned towards him, began to dance, using steps that we had never seen before. Faster and faster grew his movements, and he began to throw his sword high up, grasping it and catching it in the air with his bare hand, indiscriminately by the blade or the hilt, until finally, without interrupting his movements, he asked us to "command" him between which particular fingers or toes of the boy he should throw his sword. At first we did not understand, and when we did, we were horrified and refused to indicate our preference. But the eyes of our Sikhs were seen to gleam, and they began to name and point to different parts of the body stretched out before them. "Between the thumb and the index finger of the right hand!" cried one of the Sikhs.

And the sword, sharp as a razor, cut through the air, and turning over and over in its fall to the ground hit with the

¹ We offered him as much as one hundred rupees for a similar piece, but the starving Kashmîrî, poor as a beggar, merely shook his head in refusal. "This talisman was given to me as heritage by my *dead* father, who obtained it at the risk of his life, and I made a vow that I would *return it to him before I die*," he reiterated. We could not find out from him, however, just exactly by what means he hoped to return this precious thing to his deceased parent.

blunt edge against the membrane between the fingers named, *behind the back* of the one who threw it. At the same instant, the boy, without moving a muscle of his face or body, in his turn threw the sword high up in the air, with an almost invisible motion of his right wrist. The Kashmîrî, still dancing with his back towards him, caught it in its flight and again demanded that a choice be made. This time the left foot was chosen, between the fourth and the little toe, and the obedient sword descended from the sky straight upon the spot indicated; and the left foot, with a movement of the ankle, again sent it up, and again it returned to the nimble hand of the old Hindu. Then a spot between the crown of the boy's head and a blade of grass which grew a few inches from it was chosen, and the sword buried its sharp end deep into the ground, an inch away from the head, and the hilt was caught by the dancer's hand, reaching out behind his back. Then other dangerous spots on the boy's body were chosen. In ten minutes the sword rose in the air about thirty times. When it fell, it struck with the blade literally in the centre line of the haphazardly chosen spot; it landed between all the fingers and all the toes, and always without fail, as though brought down by the accurate and careful hand of some kind of invisible accomplice!

It seemed as though the mere weight of the sword, intensified by the speed of its fall, would be sufficient to break all the boy's joints. Not at all. At the end of the performance he rose gaily, jumping and kicking his legs in the air, and squatted on the ground awaiting further orders.

The Kashmîrî then asked one of the Sikhs for an orange, and having obtained it made a sign to the boy, who immediately did what was required of him and lay down on the ground again, this time face down, placing his chin on the orange, which was rolled up to him by the foot of his master. Then the older Hindu started again the "dance of death,"

turning his back, as before, to the one on the ground. His movements grew even more rapid, the leaps higher and more astonishing, and were finally transformed into a furious gallop on one spot. He no longer threw the sword up, but, twisting like a snake, now thrusting his entire body forward, now bending back until his head almost touched the ground, he waved the sharp blade over the ground, as though he were *shaving it*, and actually moved down the yellow grass in the process. I grew dizzy as I watched these serpentine, lightning-quick movements. For a few seconds he drew a semi-circle round himself with his terrible weapon, but suddenly, without turning, threw his hand behind him and with one quick movement, while he fixed his burning eyes on the Sikh who stood beside me, cut in half, with a single stroke, the orange under the boy's chin! . . . The stroke passed exactly through the centre, and a razor blade could not have done it more neatly. . . .

The Sikhs howled with joy while I myself, I must admit, grew pale. How insignificant seemed to be the feat of William Tell with the apple, and as to the barelegged Scots whose cries of triumph reached us from their field, they seemed no better than dancing bears in a village.¹ Compared with the supernatural skill of this mendicant Kashmîrî, the feats of jugglers, including Japanese seen by me, paled and vanished in an abyss of contempt.

He repeated these tricks not once, or twice, but twenty times on the same and the following days. He severed with his magic sword everything we gave him: apples, nuts, even eggs, and invariably either in the boy's hand or under his chin. We invited all our friends and acquaintances to watch this phenomenon—among them a few English people, as well as my lanky friend, the Major. This is what happened to the latter:

¹ [A common sight in Russian villages.—*Translator.*]

Having observed that the performer invariably severed all objects with the help of his boy, and so swiftly it was almost impossible to follow the lightning-like movement of the blade, the Major grew suspicious.

"Perhaps," he said, "the boy substitutes apples and oranges that have already been cut open in advance . . . who knows?"

"Well, and what about the egg?" I objected. "Do you think it possible to substitute for one that is whole, an egg that has been cut in half? It would ooze out at the slightest movement! . . ."

"It is easier to imagine the latter, however difficult it might seem, than to believe that the juggler, having turned his back to you, will divide an apple in half while you hold it between your fingers, as he has just done. . . ."

"If you wish I am prepared to hold an apple picked out by you, at this very moment and under your supervision, Major Sâhib," one of the young Sikhs suggested to him. "I have complete faith in the Kashmîrî's skill. . . ."

"No doubt, no doubt, *my good friend*," said the Major patronizingly, in answer to the Hindu, who was the son of a wealthy judge, uttering the word "friend" as though he had said "block-head". "You natives are all eager to believe in the supernatural. . . ."

"But there is nothing supernatural in this, except this man's phenomenal dexterity. . . ."

"And have you known him long?" interrupted the Major contemptuously, as though suspecting the Sikh of being the juggler's accomplice.

"I saw him yesterday for the first time in my life!" replied the insulted native with dignity.

"Wait a moment!" I broke in, "If you think, Major, that this feat is merely a clever trick and that the sword misses the egg without touching it, then it should remain whole in

your hand and there can be no risk for you . . . why not make a personal experiment? . . . Here are a few dozen eggs in this basket . . . Choose one and take the required position!"

The Major flushed and evidently grew confused.

"Surely you are not afraid?" I continued. "Come on! I am a woman and yet I am ready to make the experiment!" I teased him.

And taking an egg between my thumb and index finger I approached the Hindu and stood behind him, while he continued to dance and shake the sharp sword during our argument.

The Hindus stared with their mouths open, and the Major took advantage of the occasion to create a diversion.

"I hope that you will not do anything so rash!" he exclaimed, moving quickly towards me with affected haste and taking the egg from my hand.

"Well, then, hold it yourself!"

"Pardon me," calmly remarked the son of the judge, "the egg in your hand is entirely whole, Major, is it not?"

"Oh well, *this* one is whole! But how do I know that there isn't another one ready, in the boy's *dhoti*?"¹ answered the Major, realizing that he was in an awkward situation.

"Then, would you mind taking the trouble of placing it under my chin . . ." said the Sikh, throwing himself on the ground, face down, and clasping his hands on his back. "I must ask you not to take your eyes from the egg until the Kashmîrî has cut it in half. . . ."

The Major laughed with rancor, but did as he was told. With his own hands he placed the egg under the beardless chin of the young Sikh.

"And now," he said, addressing the Kashmîrî sternly, as, having proclaimed his superiority it was best to hide one's

¹ A kind of girdle.

confusion under the guise of added severity, "if you either miss or cut the face of the *sâhib*, I will see to it that you rot in prison!"

At that moment, as I was annoyed with the Major for his quibbling, a vengeful thought was born in my mind. I knew of his extreme miserliness and knew also why he, an undoubtedly courageous man, refused to make a personal experiment.

"Wait a moment, all of you! I want to make a suggestion. . . . You, Major, have insulted the juggler for no reason at all, and have spoken harshly to him and frightened him perhaps without any justification. . . . Now, supposing he neither misses nor wounds the *sâhib*? How will you reward him? Will you promise that if he succeeds you will give him twenty-five rupees, or else personally submit to a similar experiment?"

"Why do you want to force me to pay this impostor such a sum?" flared up the miserly Major.

"Only in the event of his proving himself not to be an impostor. . . . And if not, then hold an egg or an apple in your own hand and thus bring him great fame and reputation. That would be as good as money."

"I won't do that either! . . . All my friends would laugh at me! . . ."

"And if you won't do it, people will laugh at you even more," I said, taking him aside, "because in that case I will take this *risk* myself, I promise you. . . . And tomorrow the whole town will know, Mrs. R. among others, that where a woman did not fear the danger, the hero of Transvaal and Afghânistân, Major * * *, took pains to avoid it and showed himself a coward!"

At this, his nerves grew tense.

"You would not do anything of the kind. It is a silly whim of yours!"

"Yes, I will. And you know Mrs. R.'s opinion about nervous men, and what she said yesterday about. . ."

The Major grew pale. Mrs. R. was a wealthy young widow, and my lanky friend was deeply in love with her . . . dowry. He hastily interrupted me.

"Stop joking! Perhaps I'll give this dolt, say, five rupees, for the sake of your whim."

"Twenty-five! Not a *peis* less, or else I will lead my William Tell to Mrs. R. tomorrow and make fun of you before her."

"You are vindictive. Very well, then, I give in!"

"Friends!" I announced loudly, "our worthy Major, having admitted that he may have unnecessarily hurt the feelings of the *jādūwāllāh* (juggler), has promised him twenty-five rupees if he performs successfully. Let us begin."

We were in the hotel garden and the *tamāshā* (performance) had attracted many onlookers. The Kashmîrî tested the blade with his finger and assumed his position, in other words, turned his back to the volunteer lying on the ground. My heart sank. What if he should miss somehow or other! It would be the end of our poor Sikh! . . .

With a profound sigh the Major, once again squatting on the ground, held up the egg and for the last time sought to convince himself that it had not been exchanged for another during our conversation. He carried his cautiousness so far as to mark it with a pencil. Then he quietly placed it under the Sikh's chin, and standing aside, motioned to the Kashmîrî to begin.

This time, contrary to his usual procedure, the latter did not even *mow down the grass*. Leaping into the air three times, he bent back like a bow and with one movement of his powerful arm performed the usual *glissade* with the blade a quarter of an inch away from the Sikh's throat. The steel flashed by and a few dry blades of grass went flying. But the egg did not fall apart.

“He missed! He missed!” exclaimed the Major with malicious joy. “What did I tell you?”

“Your joy is in vain. . . . Lie quietly, Rattan Chand! Don’t move for a moment. . . . Look, all of you!”

And without permitting anybody to touch the egg, I took the Major nearer to it . . . Exactly in the centre of the oval white ball appeared a yellow streak, as though somebody had tied a thread of that color around it. Here and there from under this streak oozed drops of white liquid. The egg was cut in half, as with a razor.

It was a complete triumph. Even the miserly Major did not frown excessively as he turned out his pockets searching for twenty-five rupees, and finally cheated the Kashmîrî out of four rupees with the promise that he would give them to him *later*, under the excuse that he did not have enough money on him.

But the “later” opportunity never presented itself. The Kashmîrî vanished from that day, and neither the Major nor we met him again . . . When he was about to leave, the lanky Britisher wished to examine his miraculous sword with closer attention. Feeling and stroking the blade he muttered under his breath:

“I have never seen such steel! . . . Where could this beggar have found it? Say, you, will you sell this . . . thing to me?”

The *tamâshâwâllâh* merely shook his head in refusal, remarking that it was his father’s sword and that he could not sell it. . . .

(*To be concluded*)

THE DURBAR IN LAHORE

BY H. P. BLAVATSKY

(Concluded from p. 302)

VII

The Great Durbâr.—The rājās prepare themselves.—The Tribunal of Osiris-Amenti.—Osiris, Typhon, and the souls in judgment.—“The Russian intrigue.”—The 500 temptations.—How the secret of a “*Russian intrigue*” can sometimes be solved in India.—The *dengue*.—I am treated by astrologers.—The popularity of the Marquis of Ripon.—Homer and I.—I am saved in Benares.—The finale.

THE hearts of the Mahârājās who were preparing for the great *durbâr* on the morning of November 15th, 1880, were filled with anxiety. Their astrologers, after spending the whole night observing the stars, nodded their sleepy heads, having vainly questioned the sky which was overcast with clouds, and received only a few drops of rain on their shaved heads in answer. . . . The stomachs of the poor coolies, who had been working day and night on the construction of the viceregal camp and the *durbâr* tent, ached with hunger. Thousands of clerks, one of the highest positions attainable by the natives in the service of the Crown, bent their puny chests over additional work in their little offices long after midnight. The *syces* darted by, swift as birds, distributing written invitations. . . .

Without invitations—*point de salut!* Admittance to the sacred political *adytum*, where the priests were that day

preparing the chosen sacrifice for the chief idol of the temple, was forbidden without them. Exactly sixteen years from the day of Lord Lawrence's last durbâr in 1864, Lahore had been asleep, forgotten during the celebrations of the succeeding Viceroys. Happy city! For it the long procession of Viceroys—white ones, black ones, red ones, multi-colored ones, of all shades of Whigs and Tories—passed swiftly like a nightmare. It fell asleep in the days of Lord Lawrence, the most beloved of all the Viceroys of India, he who so loved the country that he always continued to defend its interests after his return to England, even when they directly opposed any advantages to Manchester; and now Lahore has again wakened under Lord Ripon, who promises to become a second Lawrence, a worthy successor of India's most righteous ruler. . . .

But the Mahârâjâs do not know their Viceroy yet. In their still recent memories of Lord Lytton, the Marquis appears as an equally smooth-tongued "Lât-sâhib," who strove for theatrical effects as their former Viceroy, the famous Owen Meredith,¹ whose promises had been as foggy as the skies of his native country, as changeable as the Indian Ocean, and whose innovations and reforms were as deadly as the breath of the *Nâg*² . . .

The stars had no opportunity of reassuring them concerning the events of the approaching durbâr. Even the normally clear sky of their country was exceptionally overcast with clouds on the preceding day, and so left the poor râjâs in complete ignorance of the future. . . . That is why they dreaded the approaching durbâr with its "salaams," "nazars" and stern commissioner-sâhib,³ as a dying Egyptian

¹ Owen Meredith—the literary pseudonym of Lord Lytton.

² The *Nâg* is a god in the shape of a snake, which latter is held sacred in India.

³ "Commissioner-mister." In India everything is reversed.

once dreaded the judgment of Osiris . . . Even the costly gifts awaiting them, to be distributed in the name of the Queen-Empress, did not tempt them, for, having long ago realized the vanity and danger attendant upon these, they are, even now, in the bitterness of their souls, ready to exclaim with the ancient sages: *Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes!*

The durbâr was held on a field beside the public park. A wide road, framed on both sides by rows of lamp-posts, led to the viceregal pavilion. These lamp-posts were not there before and with their lanterns had been placed especially for the occasion. Grouped about the main tent, like tiny mushrooms about a stately toadstool, were other, smaller tents intended for the suite; each with a similar road leading to its entrance, but even more disconcerting than the wide one. I say "disconcerting" because it was macadamized with a fresh layer of pitch (even tar, I suspect): mortals hastening to the durbâr either slid and all but fell on its hardened patches, or their soles adhered like flies to fly-paper where the surface was still quite soft. Whether this was or was not allegorically representative of the English capacity to ensnare other nations, I do not know, and I dared not inquire.

Immediately in front of the entrance to the viceregal tent, where the durbâr was to be held, was an artillery park, the guns of which saluted each arriving guest according to his rank and merit. Thus, for instance, a Mahârâjâ of the highest rank was entitled to twenty-one shots; lesser râjâs to 18, 12, 7; and some only to three.

One after another the râjâs and Mahârâjâs, odorous with Eastern amber, passed with a guard of honor escort of British soldiers along the avenue of lamp-posts, between double rows of Scots and two battalions of the native army. This curious blending of Oriental dress and European uniforms, and especially the preoccupied, solemnly-dour physiognomies of the Himâlayan potentates, who looked as though they were on their

way to be executed, reminded me of Gavarni's well-known cartoons from the scenes of a Parisian operatic ball. Like Parisians dressed up as sultâns and nawâbs, and taken in custody by inexorable police-sergeants for over-indulgence in *cancan*—the potentates, *au violon*, went up to the canopy, one by one, took off their slippers, waited meekly until the salute appointed for each was over, and then vanished, like humming-birds swallowed up in the gaping jaws of a striped boa constrictor, through the wide-open door behind the canopy that led into the tent.

But I suggest the reader slip behind me into the interior of the audience hall arranged in the tent, or, rather in two tents, as the exterior one merges into the interior or, as it is here called, the "shâmiyânâ." Everything here is calculated to produce a political effect; everything is planned, and the actors, having learned well their parts, are ready. I will describe the effect produced on me, in addition to that produced on the native public.

The general setting reminded me of a picture which may be found in Luxor, as well as on the walls of many other Egyptian ruins, representing "The Judgment of Osiris" on the souls brought before him in the realm of *Amenti*. Even the walls and the ceiling of the first tent, covered with a material in all the shades of ochre, so beloved by the Egyptians, appeared to be copied from the "Hall of Judgment," as we find it represented on the sarcophagi and monuments of Egypt. As you looked, you saw on both sides, from the entrance to the interior of the second or inner tent, two long rows of seats: those on the left being for the natives, and those on the right for the Europeans. On the left are seated, under the guise of *râjâs*, *sardârs*, and *divâns*, the sinful, accused souls in *Amenti*, awaiting the decision as to their future fate. Soon their hearts and thoughts will be weighed in the balance of hell, and they will then either be exiled into

utter darkness or receive the gift of a colorful morning-gown. But on the right, where the entire front row is occupied by officials, are seated, not the European "sâhibs," not the collectors or commissioners, but the "forty-two assessors". By their faces which had seemingly turned to stone, and by their impassible expressions, one could surmise they were inexorable judges. And here is Typhon, the accuser of the impeached. Today he wears the military uniform of the Chief of Police, the chief *secret* overseer of the conduct of all the great and small rājās in India.

Further on, behind the square tent, the viceregal "shâm-iyânâ" is shining in blue colors, like the depths of the starry sky; it is round, with a cupola-shaped ceiling, and is covered with dark-blue silk. On its spiral pillars and its cupolas, golden candelabras, lamps and various sparkling decorations are gleaming like stars. And at the heart of it, on a dais covered with gold brocade, rises a silver throne with gilt-silver British lions at the sides, a large emblem of England on the back of the throne, a footstool, likewise of silver, with a red velvet cushion covering it, and behind the throne the royal banner of Great Britain! Under the canopy of this gigantic banner sits the Marquis of Ripon, the Osiris of the day. Both his hands are resting on the heads of the British lions, as though to check their lionine ferocity. . . . To the right of the Viceroy is a military group interspersed with some high officials of the civic administration. This is a select nosegay, sent by Mars and Themis; they are the most noteworthy personages in India, under the leadership of Sir Donald Stewart. The Commander in Chief of the Indian army,¹ recently awarded the Order of the Bath, stood like Anubis, the sentinel of the gods, guarding the Viceroy according to the program.

¹ He was awarded this high office for the Afghânistân war, and was appointed during the durbâr in place of the decrepit Haynes.

Behind Anubis thronged a whole swarm of bare-footed native servants in a royal livery of red and gold. Some of them, with the fly-switches of yak's tails that never vanish from the Indian horizon, flayed the air around the viceregal head with so much fervor that his hair flew about in all directions, and soon formed an aureole about the brow of the noble Lord; others stood motionless, like bronze caryatids, lifting with both hands the *golden horns* of plenty! . . . Alas, golden but empty! Is that not a hint regarding the draining of the Indian treasury?

Yes, the treasury is empty, but the rājās and Mahārājās are still glistening, as though they had immersed themselves in water, diving head and all into the fountain of Golconda, and had not yet dried. When, amid the firing of guns and the strains of the national anthem, the Viceroy stepped forward from the side-door near the dais, it was as though a diamond stream rolled towards the silver throne. Backs were bent low, brocade-robos rustled, clusters of strung diamonds, rubies and pearls which hung *by the pound* on the dusky brows tinkled a little crystal song. Who said that India is poor? . . .

Once again the stream glittered as it receded from the throne, and now, when the moment of silence before the commencement of the ceremony had arrived, it became easier to look at these gleaming rows of crowned Hindus and Moguls. Each of them had been solemnly ushered in before the appearance of the Marquis, and conducted to the place which had been assigned to him in advance, in accordance with his rank, to the left of the viceregal dais. The Secretary for Foreign Affairs brought in the chief rājās; a less important official brought in the secondary rājās; and merely a clerk brought in those of the third, or last category.

The Viceroy wore full court dress, a velvet robe or coat (if I am not mistaken), white satin trousers and waistcoat to match, silk stockings, pompons and shoes with diamond

buckles, and a sword; he looked the picture of a genuine Marquis of King George's time—the only thing lacking was the powder. To make up for that, the wide blue ribbon of the Order of the Bath over his shoulder, the Order of the Garter with a diamond clasp, and a lot of other Orders and stars, permitted him to vie even with some of the rājās, where radiance and glitter were concerned.

The Princes were seated according to rank. Thus, the ruler of Kashmīr sat nearest the throne; beside him, barely reaching to the Mahārājā's elbow, sat the infant-ruler of Patiāla, swinging his tiny bare foot with the *chand*-painted¹ nails and folding his other foot under him. The handsome child was pouting. Understanding nothing of the solemn occasion, he frequently raised his enormous, tear-filled eyes to his tutor, and from time to time made obvious efforts to leave his place. But the tutor who stood behind his chair stopped him with a quick movement of his eyes and lips and the poor child began again to swing his foot in despair. The "Old Jīnd" who sat on his other side, wrapped from head to foot in gold brocade, seemed from afar, in his immovable solemnity and with hands crossed on his chest, like a corpse with head emerging from the pall of a coffin. But this immobility was unnatural. Looking more carefully, one could easily see that he was craftily and stealthily watching his rival, the Mahārājā of Nābha. The latter turned his head away, making a desperate effort not to look towards the fortunate owner of the silver carriage. . . . All in vain! Were the head of His Nābhic Highness filled with old nails and were a strong magnet held in the hand of the Jīnd, the latter would not have attracted the Mahārājā of Nābha's head more than did his empty hands. The mystery was soon cleared up: the old eccentric was wearing gloves of gold net,

¹ A yellow-red dye, a kind of quinine, used also in Persia.

generously embroidered with clusters of diamonds and colorful precious stones! In order to satisfy his vanity and make another opportunity to crush his rival, he did not mind ruining a whole handful of superb, valuable emeralds, sapphires and rubies! These stones were pierced like beads, and thus lost two-thirds of their value.

At last the guns grew quiet, the music ceased, and there came a moment of silence. Not a native in the tent but whose heart beat more rapidly, either with fear of the unknown or with sheer and highly stimulated curiosity, as a consequence of the highly significant rumors of the last few days. All eyes were focussed on the Mahârâjâ of Kashmîr. The scandalous behavior of which he had been guilty at the railway station had been interpreted by many newspapers as an insult to England planned in advance. This, in addition to Ranbir Singh's correspondence with Russia, could also cause the unfortunate Mahârâjâ to face a direct accusation of *lèse-majesté*. During the former Ministry, under the inexorably severe influence of the Tory spirit and its practical application of the Mosaic law, "a tooth for a tooth" and "an eye for an eye," reprisals would have followed immediately.

Now, however, in spite of rumors and gossip, probably no one, even among the highest officials, knew the *exact* intentions of the Viceroy regarding the Mahârâjâ of Kashmîr. The policy of the Marquis of Ripon in India had not yet been clearly revealed. Therefore, when the moment had arrived for such to be outlined for the first time, the whole durbâr-public became greatly agitated.

"It would be interesting to know what will happen to the Mahârâjâ!"

"Something is bound to happen now! Have you heard the rumors?"

"Yes, yes, hush! A letter from St. Petersburg—with an authentic signature. . . . This is a fact!"

"Really? . . . And then what? Will he be banished?"

"Annexation would be the right thing. . . . It would end the incident once and for all!"

"They say a public announcement of displeasure from the Viceroy is inevitable. . . ."

"And what do you think," I addressed a stout man next to me whom I had met at the hotel, lowering my voice, "has the rājâ anything to fear?"

"His prank at the station is *sure* to bring him trouble," bluntly answered the corpulent man.

"But I heard from Captain M—that costly and magnificent gifts from the Queen are ready for the Mahârâjâ, a crystal table, among other things."

"What of it? Gifts are gifts, while the reprimand is quite another thing. But wait and see; he will probably even refuse the gifts!"

The hero of all these discussions, in the meantime, sat immovable, somewhat pale but quite calm. On his dark, bronzed face two large, almost black circles were visible under his eyes, and occasionally he shrank almost imperceptibly and trembled slightly as though he were cold. But even this trembling could be detected rather by the rustling of the high diamond aigrette on his turban than by his impassive features. The Mahârâjâ's boldly dyed whiskers curled as bravely as ever and his eyes, black as coals, gazed more lazily around, but no more morosely than usual; he looked through half-lowered lids more as though he were ill than perturbed.

A voice, loud and evidently in the process of communicating some official order, was now heard.

The durbâr has opened! Their Highnesses, the Mahârâjâs and the rājâs who have the honor to be present, are invited to prepare themselves for presentation to His Excellency, the Viceroy, who has been elected, etc., etc.

The clock has struck. . . . In a few moments the fate of the Mahârâjâ will be decided! Mother Russia, take a look at the innocent victim of your political snares! . . . The poor Mahârâjâ, did he not run away from the procession! As a Russian, somehow I suddenly felt guilty, on behalf of Russia. I dared not look at him. . . . It seemed to me as though I had caused the Mahârâjâ's ruin myself.

The Secretary for the foreign department of Indian affairs approaches him, and the prince rises slowly. A moment of such sepulchral silence ensues in the tent that I seem to hear the buzzing of a mosquito, dancing in the air above the nose of the "Old Jînd". I watch the Mahârâjâ being taken to the Viceroy. Against the dark-blue background of the *shâmiyânâ*, the Kashmîr prince shines like Saturn surrounded by its rings, seen through a telescope, dazzling the eyes like a long-tailed comet! . . . His white satin mantle, that of "the Grand Commander of the Star of India," covers the brocaded steps like a waterfall glittering in the sunlight, sparkling and scattering diamond dust, while his hands, tanned, and embellished with gems to the value of a whole capital, humbly offer an embroidered napkin with a *nazar*—a heavy heap of gold mohurs. Thrice both hands and *nazar* are raised to the Mahârâjâ's forehead in a *salaam*, and thrice they are extended to the Viceroy with the offering. The Marquis rises, bows with a courteous smile, and raising his hand to the *nazar* lightly touches the gold with his fingers, then immediately withdraws them . . . The sun has repulsed the substance of the comet, according to the nature of things and also according to the program of the durbâr. . . . What will happen next? . . .

Watching breathlessly I see how the comet, convinced of the futility of its efforts to bribe the sun with its substance, begins clumsily to back in retreat to its chair, in order to avoid, according to etiquette, turning its back on the representative of the Empress of India, and vainly trying to control

its commander's tail. Both the tail bestowed on him by England and the diamond Star of India on his chest prove at this moment to be instruments of torture sent by that same England.

A few more kicks of the foot from beneath the entangled train, and His Highness falls into the embrace of, luckily, his own chair. Scene one is over . . . all went well.

Everyone exchanged glances, and a few of the *râjâs* looked down. The public was perplexed. Is it possible that the "public reprimand" expected by all died in embryo? . . .

But the ceremonial is by no means over. Possibly the "reprimand" is postponed until its end, when the gifts are to be distributed. I am worried again, especially as the magnificent Ranbir Singh, "Fellow of the Indian Empire," likewise begins to frown heavily and to fidget uneasily in his chair. Next the "infant," whose little hands held the *nazar* with difficulty, is led forward and then lifted up. In following the instructions of his tutor, he makes an effort to *salaam*, drops a few gold coins on the floor, betrays a dangerous desire to burst into tears, and is hastily carried away. . . . The *Jînd* follows the infant; to his disappointment, he is forced to conceal his striking gloves under the napkin. After the *Jînd* follows a fourth *râjâ*, then a fifth, a sixth, a seventh . . . Each one of them approaches, led forward by this or that British dignitary, according to rank, hears his name spoken in a loud voice and mispronounced by English lips, makes obeisance, offers his *nazar*, is given a sign of refusal, bows again, backs away from the Viceroy, sometimes sitting in the lap of a near-by *râjâ*, instead of in his own chair, and having successfully reached port sinks into his place with a sigh of relief!

There were about five hundred presentations! *Thrice* five hundred times the Viceroy's hand was extended towards the *nazar*, and as often resisted the temptation. I suspect the

Viceroy hid his own hand and substituted for it an artificial one. Many of the onlookers dozed. But time conquers all things and dispatches them to Lethe, even viceregal durbârs, and Viceroys themselves. About two o'clock (the performance began at 11:30 A.M.), the last sardâr was presented and the last divân backed down to his seat.

A pause—and an immediate silence. Only the heavy breathing of officials and the puffing of the weary Mahârâjâs is heard.

“Gifts for His Highness, the Mahârâjâ of Kashmîr!” announces the squeaky tenor of Typhon.

Everyone pricks up his ears again, and the eyes of the public follow the crowd of liveried sepoy who carry in from the adjoining tent pile after pile of costly gifts.

Imagine the items among them! Indian shawls and strings of large pearls; bracelets and anklets, and costly sabres and swords; robes of honor and boxes of musical instruments; ornaments of precious stones and golden idols; a crystal table and a shield made of rhinoceros hide; pistols, guns, silver goblets, etc. Instead of the expected rebuke, the Mahârâjâ of Kashmîr received gifts worth 50,000 rupees from his Empress!

After placing the gifts they had brought down in a heap at the foot of the viceregal throne, the attendants bow to the ground and disappear. The Marquis of Ripon utters the name of the Mahârâjâ of Kashmîr, and invites him to come forward, while pointing to the gifts. The Mahârâjâ bows, presses his hands to his forehead and heart, and with an effort returns to his place. Those present interpret this weakness as nervousness and a powerful reaction from fear to joy, and are satisfied with their own explanation. The Mahârâjâ's attendants come up, and taking the gifts in their arms, vanish. . . . Thus ends the second and last scene.

Hurrah! The Viceroy is a Whig! Hurrah for Gladstone and his policy!

For the third time everything becomes quiet. Gifts are distributed to all the Mahârâjâs and sardârs according to their rank and merit, and everybody sits down again ready to listen to the viceregal speech. I feel a faint anxiety again, but now hope has the upper hand.

The speech proved to be a real political manifesto. It gave the key to the discretion shown by the Viceroy and, in the opinion of many dissatisfied Conservatives, the almost criminal indulgence towards the offence of which the ruler of Kashmîr was guilty. The Marquis openly announced that he, Lord Ripon, with all his soul and intent would follow the political system of Lord Lawrence, since he shared his views and had firmly decided to follow in his steps without the slightest divergence. Addressing the princes and leaders of the Pañjâb tribes, Lord Ripon, at one and the same time, tickled their pride by deservedly praising their "martial instincts" but threw cold water on their patriotic ardor. "In spite of thirty years of peace under the British government," he told them, "I know that your courage on the field of battle would be as remarkable now, as it was in those stormy days when war to you was the rule rather than the exception. But," he added, "I believe that the true greatness of a country does not consist in perpetual wars but rather in peace with all." He reminded them that the Central Government depended on them, on their wisdom and sincere desire to raise their country by introducing urgent reforms as speedily as possible, and improving their own "independent dominions". As for him, he *believed* in their (the princes') *honor and loyal allegiance*. He (Lord Ripon) depended on them and expected them to make the welfare of their subjects their first and main concern, and to make every effort to save the people from the dreadful results of ignorance which awaits them in the midst of the civilization of the rest of the world: namely, death by starvation through their own fault . . . He ended by expressing the

hope that from that moment on "India will be for a long time, if not for ever, purged of *treachery* and the terrible phantom of both civil and frontier wars . . ."

The orchestra played *God Save the Queen*, the trumpets boomed, the kettledrums rumbled, the bagpipes squealed, and the Mahârâjâs and râjâs, the sardârs and nawâbs began to disappear, one after another, from the tent, to the accompaniment of the guns saluting their Highnesses, the roaring of camels, the neighing of horses, and all the indescribable hubbub which always accompanies the native multitudes in India.

One of the first to leave was the Mahârâjâ of Kashmîr, who left with such haste that his departure was more like the flight of an exile than the return home of a mighty prince who had received presents from the Empress of India. Those who stood near the entrance, at the end of the "avenue of lanterns," heard, and later repeated to others, how hastily and with what a "wild light in his eyes" he ordered his attendants to drive him home with all possible speed, as though he were escaping from some danger. . . .

You may imagine how these rumors intrigued the public which was not initiated into the mysteries of "secret" or backstage politics. There was no end to the guesses and surmises. Some openly accused the Viceroy of "dangerous negligence" and lack of all "political instinct".

"He is not yet familiar with the actual state of affairs in India," said someone.

"Yes, he has yet to fathom the deep, almost bottomless craftiness of the Asiatics, towards any European who has recently arrived in the country," shouted another who was an old Anglo-Indian and an eye-witness of the scenes of the year 1857.

"These Liberals will ruin our 'prestige' in India," complained a third one.

“Such an act is simply not consistent with anything! . . . It is going directly against all the traditions of the former Government. But hush! Here comes the Second Secretary . . .”

“Oh . . . oh . . . that was foolish! . . . terribly careless!” whispered Tories of varying shades.

Among the many Europeans who stood waiting for their carriages, there was hardly a group where similar remarks could not be heard. Complete perplexity and even, to some extent, confusion overcame the Anglo-Indian colony. Some alarmists finally went so far as to definitely hint at the possibility of “an unexpected and immediate attack by the armies of Generals Kaufmann and Skobelev”. The Kashmîr prince, encouraged by the impunity guaranteed by the Viceroy during the durbâr, had now only to whistle; the Russians had good hearing. . . . Who knows? Perhaps they were ambushed somewhere nearby on the border, in one of the hundreds of yet uncultivated valleys of the dense Himâlayan forests . . .

True to my task as an accurate and faithful chronicler of the durbâr of 1880, I feel it my duty to state that such nonsense did not come from official lips. The last-mentioned views and assumptions were expressed almost entirely by the pessimists of the lovely but credulous sex, and also by the very young fledgelings who had but recently grown feathers and flown forth from their native fogs. But it was likewise true, nevertheless, that even those hoary with age, in view of such an “untraditional” line in Indian politics, shook their heads and foresaw all kinds of complications in the dim future, if not in the immediate present.

“Did you hear the Viceroy tell the princes that he ‘believes in their loyal allegiance,’ trusts their honor . . . One may as well trust wasps upon plunging one’s hand into their nest!” contemptuously snorted a railway functionary.

“Yes, indeed! Fancy looking through one’s fingers at such unseemly pranks! . . . An obviously intentional insult to all England through its representative, the Viceroy! It is a bit too forceful a way of proclaiming oneself a Liberal!”

“It simply means a slap in the face to Anglo-Indian opinion!” said one of the fledgelings sharply.

“Only one who feels the support of a powerful and to us inimical hand would venture to turn his back on His Excellency and the highest rulers of the country, at the very moment of the solemn procession and the entry of one who here represents Her Majesty,” thoughtfully remarked my neighbor, a stout Englishman.

I dropped my eyes, feeling the ground under my feet, which had been firm, shake slightly again.

“Hey! Sâhib!” the stout man suddenly called out to a Kashmîrî who was leading a horse past us. “Moti-Sahai! Come here a moment! I want to say a few words to you . . . This here *nigger* . . . will, perhaps, give us an explanation. . . . He is of the râjâ’s suite. . . .” added the observant diplomat, addressing us.

Separated from our carriage by the enormous crowd of the departing râjâs and lofty officialdom, we stood on a lawn, a few steps from the road.

The Kashmîrî, a powerful fellow with a reddish beard, camp up to our group, after throwing the reins to the servant running behind him. He bowed humbly to the stout man and to the other white sâhibs.

“Well, pundit,”¹ circuitously and in English the fleshy diplomat addressed him: “And how is astrology?”

“The stars are unfavorable to us, sâhib . . . there are only bad omens!” quite seriously answered the pundit in very fluent English.

¹ In India all erudite linguists are called “pundits,” especially those who know the Sanskrit language and study astrology.

"The devil they are! Is that so? Your Mahârâjâ has just carried off gifts from Her Majesty to the tune of 50,000 rupees, and suddenly the stars are unfavorable to him! What more does he want?"

"Not in material respects, sir . . . with those His Highness is most satisfied, but he is suffering from ill health all the time, and the astrologers have long predicted that Lahore will sometime be harmful to His Highness. That is why the Mahârâjâ has so long refused to come to the durbâr. . . .

"Hm . . . m . . . m!" muttered the Englishman: "Is that the reason, eh? Well, and now that he is in Lahore, have the stars prophesied misfortune to him here also, eh? Did the planets prevent him from taking his appointed place in the procession and force him to run home to his camp, counter to the orders of the authorities?"

"No, sir. But His Highness was forced, against his wishes, to do so."

"Forced against his wishes . . ." the Englishman mimicked him: "What rot! Who could have forced him to do that?"

"Circumstances and . . . the fact that His Highness was at the time in a European building, in an English railway station. . . . The Mahârâjâ is very pious!"

"What the devil. . . . I don't understand a thing! What connection can his flight from the railway station have with . . . his piety?"

"Our religious observances are very strict in this respect, sir; the *śâstras*¹ prescribe a special sacred ceremony for each act, for the smallest function in the life of a man, sir . . . and our Mahârâjâ could not . . . without risking loss of caste, be guilty of the heavy sin of remaining a single

¹ The sacred *śâstras* are Brahmanical works on religious observances and instruction for the daily use of the Hindus. From birth to death the latter must eat, drink, sleep and live entirely according to the *śâstras*.

moment longer among the English authorities in the building belonging to them."

"But what happened, then? Who forced him to go against his religion . . . his *śāstras*? He wasn't forced to ride astride a cow, you know!"

The pundit glanced askance at the group of ladies, avidly listening to him, and remained silent.

"Answer, then, pundit!" the Englishman impatiently urged the Kashmîrî. "What was it that frightened your Mahârâjâ? What happened?"

"For several weeks already His Highness has entrusted himself to the full care of the most learned *hakîm*¹ in Kashmîr."

"Well? Did the *hakîm* forbid him to travel? . . ."

"N-no," answered the Kashmîrî with seeming reluctance, as if feeling himself with his back against a wall, "not the *hakîm*, *sâhib*—but the results of his treatment. *That morning, as on every following morning, His Highness had taken a strong cathartic . . .*"

The English ladies almost fainted.

The effect produced was magnificent! The inquisitor himself grew very embarrassed and hastened to help the ladies into the carriages. The Kashmîrî, of whom all had forgotten to take leave, except myself, mounted his horse and calmly left for "the camp of the Mahârâjâs".

In this simple way, prosaically and unexpectedly, the formidable cloud that had hung suspended over the political horizon was dissolved, solving the mystery that had stirred the Anglo-Indian colony, the mystery of the "Russian intrigue," and the "unprecedented" impertinence resulting from it, displayed by the Mahârâjâ of Kashmîr.

¹ A *hakîm* is a native doctor.

The great durbâr was over! . . . On the following day Lahore was empty; its guests had left, the Mahârâjâs dispersed, each going his own way. Some left with truly royal gifts among their bales; others, after spending thousands on their journey and receiving a silver-plated goblet in return. We were likewise preparing to leave, but eventually remained. I was visited that very night by the *dengue*, the most malignant fever in India. This interesting native lady confined me for many days in the solitude of a dâk-bungalow, to which I was transferred from the damp hotel-rooms, all the while threatening to get the better of me, but in the end freeing me somewhat unexpectedly from her rapacious clutches.

I learned much during my grave illness that was strange, amazingly strange, but also much that was good. For instance, that which the English of course do not suspect, and still less deserve. Their treatment of the natives had led the latter to regard them with such exaggerated suspicion, that not one but twenty natives, of whom many were educated, solid people, implored me in all seriousness not to send for an English doctor for fear that *he would deliberately kill me* through maltreatment, not because I was a Russian but chiefly because I "did not despise but loved the Hindus"! I had difficulty in reassuring them regarding this absurd suspicion, but perhaps, after all, I did not really succeed; they ceased, however, opposing my wishes.

But the European doctor did help me. He admitted himself that his art was powerless against the ferocious native *dengue*.¹ When two English physicians refused to treat me any further, having tried all their remedies, the natives claimed

¹ For the information of Russian medical circles I will say that, according to English physicians, this type of fever is not known anywhere else except in India. It is rather similar to typhoid fever and to the most painful rheumatism in every part of the body. The only hours of relief from pain are those spent in an unconscious state or delirium. There are no curative remedies for the *dengue*.

their right and began to treat me in their own way. And then, during those days of terrible agony, I came to know and appreciate this nation fully. I shall never forget the inexhaustible kindness of these poor, enigmatic natives, their patient manner towards me, and their devotion. That they saved my life is the truth, and only he can justly appreciate this race, who, like myself, has experienced this devotion expressed in acts and not in mere words. And I am convinced that anyone, were he English a hundred times over, would find in them what I found, if he would only take the trouble to learn to know the Hindus more intimately, make friends of them and treat them not as dogs but as his equals! Dozens of *Ārya-Samājists*¹ and *Brahmoists*² together with Fellows of the Theosophical Society, after consulting with their fathers and mothers, some even interrupting their attendance at university courses for the duration of my illness, guarded me day and night, some from a supposed "evil eye" and others from taking cold during the paroxysm, which in the case of the *dengue* leads to certain death.

While their fathers daily supplied my apartment with some two dozen dinners consisting of all kinds of native delicacies which, of course, I could not even touch, and which were immediately distributed among *casteless* beggars,³ their sons covered the town and its surroundings, gathering all the known *hakîms*, astrologers and Brâhmaṇa-exorcists. The *hakîms* ordered me to sprinkle some kind of pepper on my head, to stare, from sunrise to sundown, without moving my eyes, at a piece of paper with a verse from a *śâstra*, and then, after crumpling the paper into a ball and tucking it into a

¹ Monotheist members of a reformatory religious society (See "From the Caves and Jungles of Hindostan").

² Members of the Bengal Brahmo-Samâja and followers of Babu Keshub-Chunder-Sen.

³ Beggars belonging to a caste will not eat anything that comes from the house of a European, even if it is untouched.

lump of dough made with coconut oil and sugar, *to give it to a black dog to eat*. The Brâhmaṇa-exorcists were expelling the *dengue* from me by insulting it and all its kindred in the manner most outrageous to it, while the astrologers (whom my friends probably paid very liberally, on account of my being a European who temporarily polluted them) could not, however much they tried, discover the constellation under which I had been born in my *previous* form. As for myself, I could do nothing to help them in their difficulty: my memory refused to recall the metempsychoses of both my soul and my body. At last, one astrologer, the oldest and most learned among them, decided that I had probably once been some *kuśa* grass, as the *dengue* is very fond of that and is always strongly attracted to the place where it grows. They decided to obtain some of this grass and to scatter it in a corner of bare ground in the garden, thus hoping to entice the *dengue* from my tormented body to the barren area . . . But alas! they could not find a black dog to suit the capricious *dengue*; it was not affected by the name of Feringhee (a Frenchwoman, a foreigner) and had no desire to go to the barren ground where she "would have been devoured by yellow-legged vultures". Nevertheless I shall remain eternally grateful to my devoted, kind-hearted Hindus to whom my illness meant much effort as well as expenditure. I finally reached Allâhâbâd, taking advantage of the brief intervals between paroxysms, but I did so as contraband goods, as the *dengue* is highly contagious, and had the railway officials recognized my symptoms they would not have given me a ticket. There, in the home of my best English friends, I finally convalesced. I was cured of this Egyptian scourge by a native *bâbu* from Bengal, a recently fledged student of medicine, and not by a European. . . .

I spent only a few days in Allâhâbâd. In spite of the warm friendship between my hosts and myself and their

efforts to persuade me to remain, I found I had not the strength to live any longer in that atmosphere of politics. Heavens! How boring are the English, and how suspicious! In India, they positively fall from one hallucination into another. Having freed myself from their *idée fixe* regarding the "Russian intrigue" in Kashmîr, I came upon another similar "cock and bull story" in Allâhâbâd! They now doted on Merve. I tried to talk about my *dengue*, and they talked about Merve; impossible for us to sing in unison! This wretched Merve did not leave their tongues, and etiquette demanded that the English in India, having come together, must not speak about anything but politics and especially about the "evil of the day," as our papers now express it. And what better "evil" was there than Merve? During these few days I felt that only the *dengue* saved me from madness caused by softening of the brain. During the nights and while the paroxysms lasted, it seemed to me I marched alone on Merve, and with the aid of my faithful *dengue* reduced the town to ashes, so that the English would stop talking about it and calm their nerves. I finally suggested the publication of a new Anglo-Indian political lexicon wherein the word "merve" would be substituted for "nerve" and "mervousness" for "nervousness". They were almost offended. I then took advantage of the gracious invitation of the Mahârâjâ of Benares to stay with him, and thus was rid at one stroke of both the *dengue* and Merve. . . .

Three months have already passed since the day of the great durbâr, and the Marquis of Ripon is growing more popular daily. When, on returning a month ago from Bombay on his way to Calcutta, he fell seriously ill (the *dengue* took hold of him also!) and was in bed at Allâhâbâd—where he remained bed-ridden for about seven weeks hovering between life and death—all India sincerely regretted his serious condition. May I be forgiven an involuntary sin,

if mistaken, but it seems to me that *native* India sympathized with him more than the Anglo-Indians themselves! The heart of a people is as the heart and instincts of a child. The masses unconsciously, instinctively, feel who wishes them well and who is their enemy, and even who is indifferent to them. The simple and sincere speeches of the new Viceroy, warm-hearted but never seeking to produce an effect, like the speeches of his predecessor, Lord Lytton, produced from the beginning and continue to produce an irresistible influence on the natives. Underneath the reserve of the eminent statesman is discernible a warm, sincere feeling of sympathy for this frightened, repressed people, for this almost beggarly land ruined by his predecessors. "I would like to do much for you!" say his kind eyes, and even more than his eyes, his sympathetic voice steals into the soul of the listener. . . . Yes, the Marquis of Ripon is a kindly and well-meaning man. He is an utterly straightforward soul, and in choosing him particularly and not someone else, despite strong opposition, to go and heal the sores of India, if not too late, Gladstone proved once more that he has the true wisdom of a statesman.

Here ends my Anglo-Indian *Iliad*. I feel that if I have anything in common with Homer, it is, perhaps, his blindness, and so I ask in advance to be forgiven if I have in any way sinned in regard to Anglo-Indian politics. May the Russian public, therefore, have no doubt either about the sincerity of my wish to remain true to the facts as much as lies in my power, or about the veracity of my simple tale. Having succeeded, during these past two years, in covering some 12,000 miles while criss-crossing this unusual country, so attractive to all Europeans and yet so little known, and having spent the greater part of my time with the Hindus, I hope I can relate many an interesting fact about them. Their religion, their immemorial customs, as well as

they themselves, are an inexhaustible source of interest to the observer.

After spending last December as a guest of the Mahârâjâ of Benares, whose invitation came at such an opportune moment, I found a better opportunity than ever before for such observations. There, far away from the society and the etiquette of the English, which makes a mummy of man, I at last breathed freely. After almost five months spent in the social circles of Simla and Allâhâbâd, where the very air appears to be infected with 'politicophilism,' and the foliage of the trees in the avenues of the "cantonments" whispers to the passing Briton of "Russian designs," I succeeded for the first time in resting and in getting down to work.

The kind old Prince proved to be a most cordial and amiable host. He gave us a grand reception, completely turning over to us the use of his carriages, elephants and boat on the Ganges, thus affording us every opportunity to familiarize ourselves with the religion and the antiquities in which famous Benares abounds. A quantity of material for my *Diary* has been collected. In the near future I hope (with the permission of the *dengue*) to share with the Russian public my impressions of Benares. It was there, far from city noises, in the ever-green *Râmbâgh*, the garden of the God *Râma*, in the Mahârâjâ's palace, that I began writing these reminiscences of the *Durbâr of Lahore*, now famous in the annals of India.
