THE STEEL FRAME AND I

Life in the I.C.S.

S. K. Chettur

FOR various obvious reasons civil servants do not produce readable memoirs. There are happy exceptions, of course, and one such is Mr. S. K. Chettur. Thirty-two years ago he entered the Indian Civil Service and it is evident that a lifetime as a civil servant has not made him crusty, cynical or old. His career has yielded him a lot of fun and excitement; it has landed him in a number of interesting situations—all these are described in this volume of reminiscences, in crisp and breezy prose, with the accent always on the lighter side of things.

Mr. Chettur's account covers his own early experiences as Sub-Collector and Collector, his period of apprenticeship under severe taskmasters and contains delightful sketches of contemporaries who stood out by virtue of their being colourful, complex or just eccentric.

As he proceeds, Mr. Chettur, engagingly candid and informal (and always with a merry twinkle in his eye), tells all without reserve, relates many charming anecdotes in the manner of the born *raconteur* and succeeds in giving the reader much more than an excellent idea of the Indian Civil Service and the men that manned it.

(*See also back flap*)

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S K. CHETTUR

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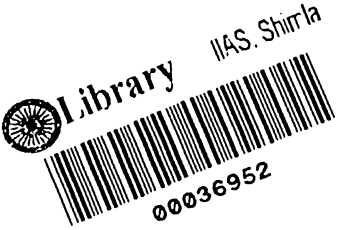

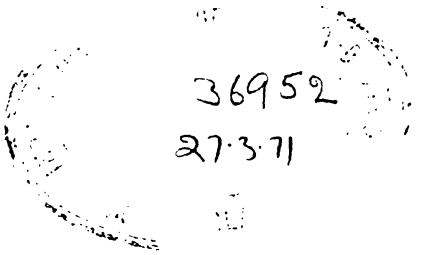

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TO

MY YOUNG COLLEAGUES OF
THE INDIAN ADMINISTRATIVE
SERVICE

THOUGH THIS BOOK IS CONCERNED WITH THE I.C.S. and myself in relation thereto and though I could trace events up to the date of writing, I have purposely given my study of the Steel Frame up to 1947 only, that being the year in which the European half of the Service was liquidated and sent home. The I.C.S., after 1947, consisted of only half its strength with purely Indian members and these are all my colleagues and much too close to me, for me to be able to write about them without embarrassment either to them or to myself. However, I have incidentally referred to those senior Indian I.C.S. officers who have since retired from the Service, because, without some reference to them, my story would not have been quite complete. In this narrative I have tried as far as possible to be objective and to avoid treading on other people's toes. If unwittingly I have given offence to any of my colleagues he may take it that it was accidental and that my apology to him is tendered herewith.

I have also to mention that it has not been possible for me to refer to many I.C.S. officers by name simply because there was nothing extraordinary or exceptional or of story-value to narrate about them. I have naturally singled out the more striking characters among them and recorded the more picturesque and humorous incidents. But that does not mean that these other officers did not make their own signal contribution. Also many may differ from me and think that my choice of incident is haphazard. Be that as it may be, the effect aimed at is to give the reader some idea of the many-sided achievements of the Service and of the various complex characters who adorned it and in doing this some amount of critical selection is inevitable. That the selection should be conditioned by my own personal preferences is also inevitable.

S. K. CHETTUR

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LIFE AS AN ASSISTANT COLLECTOR

TO WRITE A BOOK ABOUT THE I.C.S., IS NOT AN EASY TASK and to write a book about the I.C.S., covering 32 years of my direct knowledge of the Service is even more difficult. But I am assured by my friends that it is worth doing, and this thought will sustain me in my narrative. For the I.C.S., life begins when they report to the Chief Secretary on their arrival in India.

This is quite a ritual; you wear a dark lounge suit and send in your visiting card through the bearded duffadar at the door. Then you are summoned into the Presence and depending on the character of the Chief Secretary, you are asked certain stock questions. If he is a genial man, these are pleasant, easy to answer and mostly related to the University where you did your training. If he was a crusty old gentleman (as he often was) they could be very searching and unpleasant. A probationer was once asked, "How did you occupy your spare time in London ?"

"I was keenly interested in the Stage."

"Ah ! At the stage door, I presume ?" came the unexpected and pungent rejoinder. Another little point was that one did not sit down until one was offered a chair. This invitation usually came in the first half minute of the interview. It was considered a blackmark against the probationer if he sat down before being invited to do so.

The next important official act was the visit to the Board of Revenue to call on the Members thereof who were the most senior British officers of the I.C.S. next to the Chief Secretary. The Board has a delightful office in Chepauk with large, cool, spacious rooms and an approach nave with stained

glass windows resembling a Cathedral. The Members of the Board were extremely affable to the new probationer and usually treated him with much more cordiality than the Chief Secretary. Though we didn't know it then, we were being carefully appraised by these officials. Some of the English probationers (who naturally had no friends or relatives in Madras) were invited by the Board Members to stay with them till they left for their respective stations for training.

As Assistant Collector, I was first assigned to Thanjavur (Tanjore) district. My first Collector was no less a person than Sir John Thorne who afterwards became Home Member of the Viceroy's Council.

Mr. Thorne, as he was in those days, was extremely kind and good to me. He took me out touring with him for nearly a fortnight, Mrs. Thorne being away at the time in England. I had the opportunity of watching a senior collector's life at close quarters and of trying to model myself on his fine example. Mr. Thorne had a rigid programme each day getting up at 6 a.m. and coming down ready for the day at 7-30 a.m. and spending half an hour bird-watching. After a quick breakfast at 8 o'clock he would settle down at 8-30 a.m. in his office room and work continuously till 1 p.m. when lunch was served; half an hour's rest after lunch and again from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. he was at his desk until the file-work for the day was finished. Tea at 4-15 p.m. and out at 4-30 with me for an hour and a half's local inspection work. Back about 6-30 p.m. to the Travellers' Bungalow where long arm-chairs and books were ready for us with a petromax light arranged in the background, far enough to keep away insects and near enough to give us light to read.

We had some amusing encounters in the district. One was when we visited Tiruvadamarudur which is a village some miles away from Kumbakonam. Here the local dignitary was the famous Pandara Sannadhi of the Mutt. We were conducted to his bungalow and he received us in a room which had a couple of settee chairs and a small table in the middle

with legs reminiscent of the 18th century. After we had sat down and the usual polite exchanges were over, the Pandara Sannadhi suddenly pointed to a small rectangular box on the centre of the table and he leant forward and touched the button on the box. Immediately it played a tune which sounded like "It's a Long Way to Tipperary". The incongruity was perfect and the Pandara Sannadhi seemed entirely happy at the musical feast that he was treating us to. He invited us to be present at 5 p.m. that afternoon when the temple car would be pulled in his immediate presence. We thanked him and at the appropriate hour we turned up to find a vast concourse gathered in front of the temple car, which was richly decorated. A few minutes after our arrival there was a stir and the Pandara Sannadhi arrived, clad in a leopard skin and adorned with a rich red turban. In his hand he had a crocodile skin whip, the lash of which was full 18 feet long. The devotees lining the ropes set up a chant and the Pandara Sannadhi cracked his whip over his head and suddenly lashed out at the pilgrims standing nearest to him.

With involuntary moans these leapt to the ropes which they picked up and with much shouting and chanting the pulling began. It was a magnificent spectacle and the Pandara Sannadhi looked most picturesque as he stood there plying the whip across the backs of more and more devotees (I understood later that any one who was thus touched with the whip would go straight to Heaven in due course). This of course would account for the religious frenzy that was created in the audience. Thorne and I stood at a discreet distance and watched and we made no attempt to improve our prospects of reaching Heaven.

The most important training I received with Mr. Thorne was twofold. The first was when I watched him for about ten days conducting Jama-Bandhi, the annual settlement of revenue assessment on the lands in the district at which opportunity was taken of dealing then and there with the patta transfers and with appeals regarding encroachments,

water rates, assignments of land and what not. The ryots of this area are not only literate, but very legalistic and would invoke every point in their favour in any dispute. Mr. Thorne had an excellent Huzur Sheristadar (Chief Ministerial Officer) and this gentleman would put up all the complicated problems to him for settlement, and was ready with chapter and verse of the Board's Standing Orders whenever a knotty point arose. During these discussions I learnt quite a lot about the revenue administration of the district. This helped me later when I answered a departmental test in the Board's Standing Orders. The other useful training was when I was placed on special duty in connection with floods that year. I had to go out and make a local inspection of lands which had been ruined by the floods with a view to assessing their fitness for remission of assessment. This was very practical and very hard work and I did a large amount of touring in this connection independent of Thorne and learnt for the first time how to identify revenue fields with of course the help of the ever present village officers.

On my return to Thanjavur after nearly a month's touring with Mr. Thorne, I was busy settling down in my small house in Ganapathinagar for which I was paying the princely rent of Rs. 50 per mensem. My mother arrived from Madras in order to settle me in the house and stayed with me for a month making the domestic staff learn their duties. I had a small Plymouth 4-cylinder car which I had driven out from Madras with the assistance of my driver Krishnan. My mother and I used to go out in the car for a drive each evening along the celebrated Vallam road linking up Thanjavur with the Collector's residence at Vallam and it was beautifully maintained by the P.W.D. Here, after I had walked a mile or so along the open scrub on the right side of the road I returned and sat in the car talking with her till it was time to return. We invited Mr. Thorne to tea with us and I could see that both of them took an instantaneous liking to each other. About a week later before she left for Madras, Mr. Thorne

returned the compliment and we went over to Vallam and after tea he showed us the beautiful garden of the Collectorate. Later on as this house was rather small, I moved to a much larger house in Manambuchavadi and here the somewhat unscrupulous houseowner got me unwittingly into a scrape with the Collector. He came to me and suggested that he was an Inamdar and that a certain file in which his property was discussed was being grossly mishandled in the Collector's office and that I, as Assistant Collector, could do him a good turn if I could re-examine that file and see that justice was done to him, poor person that he was. In complete and utter ingenuousness I swallowed this hook, line and sinker and sent a note to the Huzur Sheristadar asking him to put up this file for my perusal. It had already been disposed of by the Collector with an order turning down this man's request, as his claim to the Inam had been examined and found to be untenable. Nevertheless with complete disregard of the rules regarding disposals I studied the file and put up a new comprehensive note seeking to show that there was a mistake in the earlier noting in the appreciation of the Law relating to the Inam in question and that on merits he deserved an order in his favour. I then requested the Huzur Sheristadar to recirculate the file to the Collector with my note. The Huzur Sheristadar could have done one of two things. He could have explained to me how improper my procedure was and that I would get a rocket from the Collector or he could submit the file to the Collector and leave me to face the music. Being a wise man, he chose the latter of the two alternatives and sent up the file with my note. Mr. Thorne dealt with it next morning and the file came back the next day with the Collector's following laconic order:

I have read the A.C.'s note. No case for re-opening this.
J.A.T.

I felt like a fool but I knew exactly when I was beaten and wisely refrained from saying anything more about it. A month or two later, of his own accord, Mr. Thorne told me that the particular house-owner of mine had a most discreditable character in Thanjavur and that he was notorious for attempting to get his way by illicit means and that I should watch out and verify the antecedents of people who approached me for special favours before I undertook to intercede on their behalf. This naturally taught me a very valuable lesson in discretion. I was also very pleased at the extremely gentle way in which he had taught me a well-deserved lesson in official ethics.

BUT THE LIFE OF AN ASSISTANT COLLECTOR WAS NOT all work. Even with a strict task-master like Mr. Thorne, both he and I were equally keen on sea-bathing and we took every opportunity that we could find to bathe on the littoral of the district. I remember we bathed both at Negapatam and at Tranquebar. At Negapatam the sea was rather shallow, but the breakers provided all the fun as usual. At Tranquebar while we were inspecting the old Dutch Fort I learnt for the first time about vertigo. From the upper terrace of the Fort there is a narrow ladder leading up to a hexagonal platform on which there is a flag-staff. To get a better view I proposed to Thorne that we should climb up to the flag-staff base. Thorne objected, saying he had no use for monkey tricks, but he was quite willing to let me perform. I took him at his word and went up the narrow steps and got on the platform and admired the view and waved to him standing about 20 feet below. He looked pleased at my achievement and when I came down he told me later that evening that he had no head for heights and that he got vertigo if he climbed a steep ladder. Later in life I found that my ability to climb was not so good and that vertigo is also possibly related to one's youth and mental rashness. Another episode in which Thorne and I were concerned, but in which he shone to great advantage over me was during one of our inspections. The route lay across one of the numerous irrigation channels of the district and I was horrified to find that the only pathway provided was a single palmyrah trunk. This was round and about 10 feet long, the width of the channel being about 8 feet. The width of

the log was nine inches. The village officers pranced across this merrily leaving Thorne and me on the bank looking at each other and at the log with dismay.

"Well, here goes," said Thorne deciding to take the bull by the horns and he stepped across the trunk quickly and nimbly and practically ran across it without giving himself any time to think about falling in. I was left alone on the bank* and I am 6 feet 1 inch tall and my physics had taught me that the centre of gravity of a tall object is much less stable than that of a short one. I stepped across the log gingerly and with considerable hesitation which almost led to my undoing, because half way across I began to sway and it looked as if a watery disposal was awaiting me. I made one desperate effort and leapt across the remaining part of the tree trunk and just made it. Thorne was standing on the other side watching me with a most quizzical smile.

"What happens if I fall in?" I asked him.

"Oh! It's only 6 feet deep and you will get a good ducking. That's all. In fact you almost got it," he added, somewhat unkindly.

The only other episode worth recording was when Thorne took me out snipe-shooting. This is a simple sport. One walks among the paddy-fields along the field ridges and when the snipe take wing, one fires at them. As they are remarkably small birds and quick on the wing, it requires a good shot to account for them. The first evening we went out, the birds rose as per *mamool*, and Thorne fired, but never a bird fell to his gun. At last, tired and exhausted we re-traced our steps at dusk, empty-handed. Thorne's chagrin was great as he had told the butler he was bringing home some snipe for dinner.

Next evening, Thorne told me to go for a walk in the opposite direction and set out alone. I did as I was told and returned at dusk. A few minutes later a jubilant Thorne returned with no less than six brace of snipe. I congratulated

* "Tendentem que manu, ripae ulterioris amore".

him and said his luck was no doubt in.

He said, "It was not luck: it was your flat feet giving the birds warning every time!"

I said, somewhat nettled, "It wasn't my feet, but my head!"

"What do you mean?" asked Thorne.

"Well, I am a believer in *ahimsa* (non-killing of living things) and so my thought threw a protective aura around the snipe!"

"But, why didn't you tell me? I wouldn't have taken you out at all."

"You never asked me if I wanted to see you shoot snipe! I was merely told to come and like a good Assistant I obeyed orders."

Thorne laughed and turned to hand the snipe to the waiting butler. I need hardly say that these birds are most delicious and our butler did them to a turn. At dinner Thorne ragged me about my *ahimsa* views and asked how could I reconcile them with my being a non-vegetarian.

I said, "Once they are killed by some one else what harm is there in eating them?"

"So you are prepared to profit by the fruits of somebody else's crime?" he countered, and to this I had no ready rejoinder.

Thorne was very anxious to teach me the correct forms of etiquette as between service men. I remember we took Mr. Souter, First Member of the Board of Revenue out for an inspection tour to assess the flood situation. Thorne insisted on always addressing Souter as "Sir" and this even though the difference of seniority between them was not very considerable. However, when we stopped for a brief sandwich lunch in the shade of some trees on a village natham,* Thorne improved the occasion for my benefit by turning to Souter and saying, "Well, Souter, did you have a good trip coming out here?" indicating that in the social set up and at meals, every I.C.S. man was as good as another.

* Open ground common to the villagers and intended for house-sites.

Both Thorne and I were equally fond of reading and both of us shared a common interest in doing a bit of writing in our spare moments. I wrote serious verse and he wrote light verse. That was the only difference. In fact, along with Mr. Justice Jackson, Thorne was one of the original contributors to *Madras Occasional Verse* which contained very snappy light verse about the Indian scene. One poem made fun of the resounding vernacular names for various offices and places, and concluded with the remarkable lines, that one hears,

beyond the bar,
The Surge of the thundering Tahsildar.

(Tahsildar is the name for a revenue officer in charge of a taluk roughly one-ninth or one-tenth of the whole district.) My own favourite was the skit on the Governor, I think Mr. Justice Jackson was responsible for it:

I like H.E.,
He's always been good to me.
But I hide my spoons
When I see his peons!

This pointed reference to the rapacity of Government House peons when H.E. went on tour in the districts was naturally hailed with shouts of laughter by the I.C.S. wives, many of whom had depleted crockery and silver after a gubernatorial visit in the district.

SUB-COLLECTORING AT SIVAKASI AND RAJAHMUNDRY

ON FINISHING MY TRAINING AT THANJAVUR, I WAS POSTED to the Ramnad district, Sivakasi division. My new Collector was Mr. Gray and I found him a very pleasant man to work with. Later he was succeeded by Mr. F. W. Stewart who was my Collector till I left the district.

I have happy recollections of Sivakasi because the loneliness there was so great in a huge rambling bungalow that it expedited my plans for marriage and in April, 1932, I went up by road with my wife, Sitadevi, from Madras to Sivakasi, via Madurai and Virudhunagar and landed up at the bungalow at the peculiar hour of 1 a.m.

Sivakasi taught me a lot of work. So far I knew the Estates Land Act only as a bulky book. What was my surprise when at the close of a heavy magisterial day after I had tried a number of cases, the suits clerk turned up at my table in court with about 180 files. He produced them like a conjuror producing a rabbit out of a hat and said that they were all posted for that day. Most of them were execution petitions which had to be kept alive by renewing the application in time and only a formal endorsement on the docket was necessary. Several were suits for rent due from the ryots filed by the Zamindars, and in the early stages only an endorsement was necessary. Trial of suits was very rare because the party paid up just in time before the trial stage and so the volume of work was indeed deceptively large.

Sivakasi taught me that sheer volume of work should not frighten anybody. The division was an unusual one in that the headquarters was comparatively an unimportant town

as the chief centre of trade was Virudhunagar, 28 miles away. But both the Sub-Collector and the Assistant Superintendent of Police were stationed here because in 1899 there was a serious riot between the Nadars and the Maravas. But a full contingent of 100 of the armed reserve was also stationed at Sivakasi continuously from that date.

The only relaxation available at Sivakasi was tennis in the court of the bungalow of the Assistant Superintendent of Police. Parthasarathi (the Assistant Superintendent of Police) and I met for tennis almost every evening when we were not in camp. My chief camps for touring were Srivilliputhur to the south-west and Sattur and Aruppukottai to the east. The camp difficult to reach lay north of Srivilliputhur and had the lovely name of "Vartarayarippu". The genius of British phonetics had altered this name to "Watrap" and it is a bleak spot close to the hills, which the Sub-Collector had to visit at least once a year.

Another place is Rajapalayam, the home of the famous breed of dogs of that name, which taught me my first lesson in local etiquette. I was met on arrival there by the Tahsildar and Revenue Inspector and in five minutes I was told the Village Munsiff wished to call on me. This formal announcement of a Village Munsiff surprised me. I was further surprised when the duffadar promptly pulled out a chair and put it in front of my camp office table. In a minute or two a very stately old gentleman with a venerable white moustache and a very dignified presence was ushered in. He belonged to the aristocratic family of the Rajus of the place and was the hereditary Village Munsiff and had property worth a lakh of rupees. I waved him to the chair and he sat down with easy dignity and conversed with me in Tamil for about ten minutes and expressed his pleasure at my coming to the division. Behind the Rajapalayam Travellers' Bungalow was a most desolate hill. It was also a reserve forest handed over to the local Panchayat for maintenance. As Sub-Collector, it was my duty to climb this hill and inspect the

forest. This, I promptly did and though the hill itself was barren I got a lovely view of the green fields on one side and the Western Ghats stretching away continuously on the other. The whole inspection took me an hour and a half, but was well worth the trouble. I remember that, by a stroke of luck, the full moon rose as I was half way down the hill. So I lingered a little and took in the scenery again, transfigured by the moonlight. Ever since, I have always enjoyed inspecting "panchayat forests", as apart from the fun of climbing, I was always richly rewarded by the view that I got as a result of a half hour's strenuous climb.

Sivakasi was considered a heavy division because of the criminal work. Nearly every case of rioting in the district involved the use of dangerous weapons and was, therefore, triable only by a First Class Magistrate. In addition there was plenty of land acquisition work on the revenue side, and above all as it was my first division, I was anxious to do everything correctly. Incidentally after six months of my stay, Gandhiji launched the famous 1931 Civil Disobedience Movement, and soon I had my hands full dealing with political cases which sprang up both in Sivakasi and Rajapalayam and to a lesser extent in the other areas of my division. Two famous Congressmen, both of whom afterwards became the Chief Ministers of Madras, namely, Sri P. S. Kumaraswamy Raja and Sri K. Kamaraj offered Civil Disobedience in my area, and I had the honour of trying and convicting each one of them; the first under a security section of the Cr. P. C. to one year's rigorous imprisonment and the second under a political section to two years' rigorous imprisonment.

After a spell of leave, my next division Rajahmundry was also comparatively a heavy one and it was at the other end of the world — what is now part of the Andhra State. Here the Sub-Collector's house was a small bungalow on the top of the Bommur Hill, three miles outside the town of Rajahmundry. As both the Sub-Collector's Court and the Officers' Club were at Godavari five miles away, I had to take a

change with me, change in the office, get my two sets of tennis, and then return home to the bungalow.

Rajahmundry was important for me because it gave me my first taste of Agency work. The taluk of Rampa-Chodavaram in my division was directly administered by the Collector of East Godavari in his capacity as Government Agent, as being a backward area. The only hill tribe in it, the Koyas were small and primitive, and were addicted to drinking toddy at the times when they were not burning down the forest and cultivating the hill-side with hill-cholam. The tract was also heavily malarial and in certain areas there was the dreaded black-water fever.* I paid two or three visits both to Chodavaram and to Devipatnam, the latter of which was accessible by river from Rajahmundry and by road from Chodavaram.

* So called, because the products of micturition were black in colour.

Chapter 4

THE AGENCY AND ITS WILD LIFE

THE ROAD TO CHODAVARAM WAS 34 MILES FROM Rajahmundry and of the last 22 miles from Gokavaram four lay in the plains and eighteen in the Agency proper. This was the only road then available to Chodavaram and was motorable. At Chodavaram was a single-room rest-house with two bath-rooms one on each wing, and a small front verandah. Panthers would come down at night and prowl around the rest-house in the hope of picking up a stray dog or two. So it was advisable to sleep inside the main hall with the doors bolted. The peons slept in the small spare bath-room also behind closed doors. From Chodavaram a single road to the North led up to a place called Maredumilli, where it stopped. Beyond this was virgin forest, traversed only by the Koyas on foot. I went up by car to Maredumilli and from there I got half a dozen Koyas to carry my humble suitcase and a light Swiss Cottage tent into the forest and started out with a real safari in the true African fashion. I walked nine miles into the forest to visit a Koya village, hitherto unvisited by any Sub-Collector. I reached the outskirts of the village about 4 p.m., having left Maredumilli at 1 o'clock and marching single file behind the Koyas in thick forest. I had a Winchester rifle with me and a few cartridges. We pitched our camp in dense forest about 100 yards away from the village on one side of a stream which separated me from it. The Deputy Tahsildar of Chodavaram had accompanied me and he took his camp cot and elected to sleep behind the 9-foot-high palisade of the Koya village (the palisade is 9-feet-high to prevent panthers and tigers from getting in). Myself and the two peons were left alone

in the forest and with their help my tent was soon up, a small patch of civilization in the midst of the jungle. Soon my cook was busy preparing the evening meal on some stones with which he had improvised a hearth about 20 yards away from the tent and I must say he gave me a very nice cup of tea by 5 o'clock and quite a tasty dinner at 8 p.m.

I have read a bit about the habits of tigers and panthers, and about their drinking habits. The fact that barely 20 yards away from my tent was a well-defined path leading to the stream from the thick forest, was not very encouraging as it was obvious that animals coming down to drink would use that path. However, there was no other clear space in which I could pitch my tent and so I put my camp cot in the entrance of the tent on the northern side, put my gun on a small bench close to me and retired to sleep. The peons were sleeping together on one side of the tent under the outer-fly of the tent. A hurricane lantern was kept burning inside the tent to scarce away wild beasts. Through the mosquito curtain I could see one or two bright stars glittering between the tree tops. I fell into an uneasy slumber. About an hour later, I woke with the hair pringling on the back of my hand, conscious of danger. I peeped to the north towards where the path lay and there I could see faintly a slim and sinuous form moving into the jungle. It was either a panther or a hyena returning after a drink. I waited to see no more but called the peons and had my cot conveyed into the inside of the tent and closed my tent door *kannath*. This was a poor defence against the entry of a wild animal but still it was better than nothing and much better than sleeping at the open entrance of the tent. I asked the peons to shout and we also made some noise by beating on tin cans to scare away the wild beast. We were not disturbed for the rest of the night. But I need hardly add that I did not sleep very well.

Next day I visited the Koya village, listened to some private complaints and decided the cases then and there after a kind of summary trial sitting on a charpoy in the shade of

a tree. I returned at 1 p.m. to my tent for lunch and told the Deputy Tahsildar, that at night I wanted him to come into the tent and sleep there, as two guns were better than one in case I was visited again by a nocturnal prowler.

So the Deputy Tahsildar brought his camp-cot along and joined me inside the tent. But that night as luck would have it nothing turned up to disturb our sleep.

From this camp, I walked five miles further north into the forest next day and returned in time for lunch but I saw nothing of importance except jungle trees and remarkable creepers and lianas. In this area we had lost a Government elephant many years before. The beast had gone "must" and run away after killing its keeper. Ever after it was said to be roaming in these parts. As a result, a Koya village, Chavala, had been abandoned. It was as well I did not meet it, as I would not have known how to deal with it. On the third day, we struck camp after lunch and returned about 5 o'clock to Maredumilli where my pre-arranged car took me back to Chodavaram within an hour.

While I am discussing the Agency, I may mention here that when a couple of years later I was a Sub-Collector of Chicacole in the old Ganjam district, I had to deal with the Agency known as the Parlakimedi Malliahs. From Parlakimedi I motored 11 miles and then did a trip on foot to a very steep little mountain village called Gumma. Here the Agency headman of the Savara tribe came to see me with the customary offering of a cone of loaf-sugar, a measure of rice, some dates and some hill fruits. He stood beaming at me while I surveyed these offerings. But I had been reading up my District Gazetteer and knew the most important thing was missing, namely the tribute of an entire sheep or goat. So I asked the Tahsildar to tell him I was not satisfied and where was the goat? (This was important because without it there would not be meat for my followers to take with them into the agency forest). The chief murmured something about times being hard and sheep being scarce but I overruled him and

said the sheep must appear within an hour and put on a very stern countenance and indicated the interview was over. The chief retreated and turned up an hour later with the missing sheep and there was great jubilation and feasting in my camp that night particularly among my retainers. From Gumma I went further into a very wild bit of Agency forest. Here as in Koya-land there were no Travellers' Bungalows and I depended only on tents. I climbed to the top of the eight-thousand-foot-high hill of Mahendragiri and as I reached there at 4 p.m. one afternoon I stood there and looked towards Serango and saw beneath me row upon row of peaks fading away towards the west and north in a blue haze. I imagined to myself how wonderful the Himalayan landscapes could be. From Mahendragiri I had to turn back, and returned to my base camp at Parlakimedi where the Maharaja received me with his customary hospitality and put me up at his guest-house. But my account of the Agency will not be complete without some mention of the Savaras, the hill tribe that is found on the Malliahs. The men are medium in height and medium-fair in colour. The women are very fair, well-built and with very elegant figures. The men are strong and vigorous and they hunt wild animals with spear and with bow and arrow. Some of them are said to use poisoned arrows. They are a stalwart and handsome tribe in sharp contrast to the somewhat soporific Koyas.

But I cannot close the account of the Koyas without some description of their extremely effective tribal dance. For this the men wear gorgeous head-dresses made of bison-horns and peacock plumes, and the women wear anklets and nose-rings and ear-screws. The drummers have long drums with a characteristic deep note and when they beat the rhythm together, the sound is most effective and so is the dance. I staged a Koya dance at Chodavaram for the Governor, Lord Erskine and Lady Marjorie and their party and they were delighted with the spectacular show I improvised. During the dance, one of the enterprising Koyas circled towards the Governor's

dais and presented to an A.D.C., who hastily rose, not knowing what to expect, a scroll of paper containing a petition accusing the Agency forest officers of not paying them correct wages for work done! The Governor asked the Collector and Agent and me to look into it, and we had our work cut out to deal with a problem which had been current in the Agency for over 60 years.

Chapter 5

MORE SUB-COLLECTORING : FROM CHICACOLE TO COONDAPUR

WHILE IN CHICACOLE THERE WAS AN EXTREMELY amusing if somewhat tragic incident that occurred in my headquarters town. The local missionary lived in a house which was on the edge of the river that ran through the town and for many months during summer the river-bed was a huge waste of sand. People from the out-skirts of the town were accustomed to use the river-bed for committing nuisances therein and this was a source of constant irritation to the missionary. At last, desperate, he asked for assistance from the Police and the Circle Inspector stationed a couple of constables both early morning and late in the evening to prevent people from committing a nuisance. Unfortunately after a month or so there was a spate of house-breaking crimes in the neighbourhood and the Inspector had to withdraw his constables for more urgent detective duties. As a result, one fine morning when the missionary had thrown open a window looking towards the river he was horrified to find a youth squatting in the river-bed hardly 25 yards away. The poor missionary saw red, sprang into the bed-room and came out with a gun which he loaded and, without pausing to think about the consequences of his action, fired at the offending figure. The noise of the gun was followed by the springing up of the youth with a loud scream as the pellets from the gun had got him in the nether regions. He ran away to town and complained to the Circle Inspector that he had been shot by the missionary, showing his bleeding injuries as proof of his story.

The Inspector consulted me as to what to do and I told him

to charge the missionary under the appropriate section of the Indian Penal Code for committing a rash and negligent act. The charge was accordingly filed and excitement in the town ran high. Just then it so happened that Mr. E. C. Wood, I.C.S., who was the Collector and District Magistrate of the Vizagapatam district came to camp in Chicacole. Naturally I called on him at the Travellers' Bungalow to discuss official matters. After half an hour's chat, Wood turned to me and said, "By the way, there is a somewhat delicate and important matter I want to discuss". I waited without speaking as I guessed what was coming.

"It's about the missionary," continued Wood, "who fired at the boy who was committing the nuisance."

"Yes. I know," I said, "we are charging him under Sec. 337 I.P.C."

"This incident," said Wood "will have serious repercussions on the missionary effort in the country and moreover there was a lot of grave and sudden provocation."

I considered the latter statement with a smile and said, "I expect the Magistrate trying the case will take that into account."

"But I don't want any Magistrate to try the case. It will merely create bad blood and lead us nowhere. I had a talk with the missionary this morning and he tells me he is willing to give the boy a compensation of Rs. 100."

"The offence is not compoundable," I murmured.

"I know," said E. C. Wood without turning a hair, "but it can be withdrawn by the District Magistrate using his powers under Sec. 494. What do you say?"

"Oh! Well, if you have made up your mind as District Magistrate to withdraw the case there is nothing more to be said except that I am glad he is at least paying up Rs. 100 blood-money."

Wood the impassive came as near to a smile as was possible for him.

"Yes, the money will be useful to the boy. I hear they were

only small pellets and he did not bleed much."

And so the affair was amicably settled and the case with drawn.

My life in Chicacole was remarkable for one thing. That was the lightness of the work. I would go to court at 11 a.m., do the hearing work till 1 p.m., dictate most of the short judgments then and there and come back to lunch about 1-30 p.m. The longer judgments would be posted for orders next day and done by me at home in the early morning before court hours. From 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. I would work at revenue files in the bungalow. Any files left over would be cleared next morning. At 4-30 p.m. I would reach the tennis court of the Chicacole club because the climate was so delightful that one could start tennis about 4 o'clock. The standard of the tennis was very high. We had two Vizag champions in our court and I used to play at least three or four sets daily before returning home at dusk. While at Chicacole I was put in charge as an Estate Collector of the Mandasa Estate, as the heir was a young man of 12. This was my first experience of running a large estate and I learnt how to draft the estate budget. But when I submitted it to E. C. Wood, the Collector, he wrote to me to come up to Vizag and discuss it with him and he went over it with me hammer and tongs for a couple of hours and helped me to recast and reshape it. Till then I had not realised how thorough the I.C.S. senior Collectors were in their method of dealing with work.

The Chicacole division, especially towards the northern taluks was rich in its wild life, and in this approximated to the Agency tracts. Returning from Mandasa late one evening, at 50 yards distance, I saw a panther in the open leaping across the road and then lope along the red loam soil to the right and disappear in a patch of scrub jungle. The movements of a panther in the wild are most graceful to watch and I was deeply impressed both by its grace and by its speed. One other factor about Chicacole has to be mentioned. I took charge there under gloomy circumstances as my

predecessor Hannington had died under tragic circumstances when a boil on his nose became septic and he developed Cellulitis and died very suddenly. To me fell the sad and unpleasant duty of auctioning poor Hannington's personal effects and I did so and sent the proceeds on to Mrs. Hannington in Madras.

From Chicacole I got a break being posted for a brief month as Collector of West Godavari. From here, I went again by a stroke of luck as Collector of Guntur for four months. As I do not regard either of these periods as part of my regular Collector days I shall refer briefly to my experiences now. At West Godavari, the work was light even to me, a beginner, but my predecessor-in-office had left me a legacy of nearly 400 files which resembled a popular baby's milk-food in that they were "untouched by hand". I did not like the look of my office-room cluttered up as it was by these files and so I set to work at 15 to 25 files per day over and above the day's work and just managed to clear the lot within my one month. Thus I left a clean slate for my successor.

From here, I was first posted as Sub-Collector, Narasapur, but this was suddenly altered to Collectorship of Guntur as the acting Collector was called away to Rangoon to look after a sick relative and bring her home. At Guntur I had to take charge of both District Boards, North and South, and was not only Collector but *two* District Board Presidents all in one. There was serious labour trouble at Chirala between the European-owned Indian Leaf Tobacco Development Co., and its labourers, and I camped at Vadrevu, a small bungalow on the sea 12 miles from Chirala and conducted an enquiry as a result of which, with the aid of the Commissioner of Labour, Mr. S. V. Ramamurthi, I brought about an amicable settlement. It was hard work but worth doing as on an earlier occasion there had been a shooting incident by the Police at Chirala and people had been killed.

Social life at Guntur was very pleasant, as the Officers'

Club was within a stone's throw of the Collector's house. Here, the tennis was of a high order as R. R. Savur had come to stay with his father and gave us his terrific services and forehand drives. I learnt to meet his service correctly once in a way. This was no mean achievement. Here, in this club, I also learnt the fine art of playing poker and this card-game attracted me every evening for an hour after tennis and a change. Touring in the district was pleasant, but I soon learnt that one had to beware in the evenings of the blister-beetle, a small beetle with a red head, to be found in Vinukonda taluk and at Macherla, which left a blister full of fluid behind wherever it bit one. A petromax light attracted them powerfully: so one had to use a hurricane lantern and read inside. However, the fine scenery of the upland taluks was a compensation for blister-beetle bites. In both these periods, at West Godavari and Guntur, I acted out of turn and after the second spell as Collector I was posted to Tirupattur and then to Palghat as Sub-Collector. At Palghat I stayed only six months, as I got involved in an incident with the public where the question was whether my smoking a cigarette just outside the pandal where a Thyagaraja festival was being conducted was intended to affront the feelings of the Hindu community or not. Being a Hindu myself, my defence was that nothing was further from my thoughts. In any case, the Government thought that I was better removed from the place and transferred me to Ramnad. The I.C.S. as a body, however, showed considerable awareness of the complications I had roused for myself by my innocent act of smoking because at the I.C.S. annual dinner which I attended a few weeks later, the President, F. W. Stewart, the then First Member of the Board of Revenue and a former Collector of mine, brought the house down by a simple remark. After the King's toast had been proposed he rose and said, "Gentlemen, I call upon Mr. Chettur to smoke". Needless to say the laugh was at my expense and I had to grin and bear it.

At Ramnad I had plenty of trouble dealing with the vari-

ous factions in the division each of which was concerned with the right of way to take processions on important festival days through the other man's street. Unless these processions were attended by the Magistracy serious rioting would follow. Thus for an important procession at Kamuthi I had to dash up 40 miles from Ramnad and attend the procession for half an hour while it traversed the disputed area and then dash back 40 miles to my headquarters to do my regular work. After the procession went through peacefully I felt that the whole thing was an enormous waste of time. In fact, a big calendar of important festivals and processions was always on my desk showing me on which date I had to dash where. But the division had its compensations. Four miles away was a very small beach called Tirupallani where the bathing was excellent and the family and I used to go there twice or thrice a week to bathe in the sea. Also I had a good camping spot at Mandapam in one of the English Company's bungalows but the bathing here was not as good as at Tirupallani as there were small pointed sea-shells under foot. These were so painful that I used to wear tennis shoes and enter the sea!

From Ramnad I was suddenly transferred after a year to Coondapur, the only I.C.S. division in the South Kanara district. I took charge there on June 10, exactly four days before the monsoon burst. I had never seen rain of that kind before and do not wish to again. However, when by August 15 it became a bit drier, Coondapur was a lovely division to work in. Work itself was extremely light, lighter even than in Chicacole and the camping places, Udipi and Karkal were both pleasant. The former taluk had some of the best looking women in the State of Madras and the latter had a huge 60-foot Jain statue of the Gomata which was the admiration of tourists. The bungalow on the river bank commanding a lovely view of the river was an elegant residence and I was sorry to leave it when late in November, 1940, I was promoted and posted as Collector of Chingleput. Coondapur

was my last Sub-Collectorate and it was part of the irony of official life that it was my lightest station whereas Sivakasi when I was a raw Sub-Collector had been the heaviest of divisions. Also, my transition from the north-easternmost division of Chicacole on the east coast to the north-western-most division of Coondapur on the west coast will give the reader some idea of the variety of climates and scenery I had come across. It was my proud boast that I had faced 13 transfers in 12 years. But on the whole I took all these in my stride, and enjoyed it!

Chapter 6

I LEARN SETTLEMENT WORK

I THINK I HAVE MENTIONED EARLIER THAT FROM CHICACOLE, after the two short spells of Collectoring, I went again as Sub-Collector to Tiruppattur in the North Arcot district. My tenure of office at Tiruppattur was not remarkable for any special events except one which is described in another chapter. From here, I was selected by the Government for settlement work. Actually I understood I owed this to Mr. C. A. Souter, then Commissioner for Land Revenue and Settlement, who had taken a liking for me and who felt that a spell of settlement work would make me a marked man and help me forward in my career. In those days the Settlement Officer who actually wrote a scheme report and settled a district after the usual interval of 30 years from the previous settlement, was considered by Government to be in a special class by himself. For one thing, he became an expert in Revenue matters and for another, the scheme report itself would reveal the nature of his many-sided ability. In fact Mr. B. G. Holdsworth, now, alas, no more, made his name by the very able scheme report he wrote for the re-settlement of the two Godavaris and the Krishna district. We young Settlement Officers were told to study this particular report as being an excellent model to copy.

Be that as it may, I was posted to Nellore to be a Special Assistant Settlement Officer in Party No. 1 which had no Settlement Officer but only another Special Assistant in charge, a Muslim gentleman, Deputy Collector in rank. I was supposed to learn Settlement from him for six months, at the end of which I was to take over a section of the Party and proceed to Tirunelveli to start re-settlement work there.

Again after he had finished the scheme report for Nellore district on which he was engaged he was to hand over charge of the entire Party to me and proceed on leave and when this happened I would be appointed as a Special Settlement Officer in my own right, in full charge of Party No. 1. In the first six months I did some preliminary work in Nellore itself and then being tired of being attached to the Special Assistant Settlement Officer's apron-strings, I offered to do the "remnants work" of Settlement in the Guntur district. This he gladly handed over to me as the area is a tough one and quite inaccessible by car. I took my camp staff and proceeded to Vinukonda taluk and there with Vinukonda Travellers' Bungalow as the base, I proceeded to inspect villages where there was any balance of settlement work to be finished. Incidentally, I paid a visit out of curiosity to Vinukonda cemetery and there did honour to the memory of a former Sub-Collector whose tomb-stone had on it the melancholy legend (I give it as far as I can remember it).

1888
THIS SUB-COLLECTOR
WAS KILLED BY A TIGER
IN THE FORESTS OF VINUKONDA
WHEN HE WENT OUT ON SHIKAR
AETATE 34

I remember reflecting gloomily that a Sub-Collector's life seemed to have been in greater danger in those days and proceeded to camp in Macherla in the wild western portion of the district. Here, some of the villages close to Macherla I inspected on horseback, borrowing a horse from a local dignitary for the occasion. Thus I had occasion to visit a village called Tadutla which was eleven miles away from the nearest village to which there was a road. Not even the Deputy Tahsildar, Macherla had been to this place. So, I went in a jutka up to that village and borrowed a horse and rode the eleven miles to Tadutla having sent my settlement staff of

chain-men, karnam and field-supervisors on a day ahead. I arrived on the ground close to some black rocks at about 10 a.m. and straightaway traversed the fields, testing the soil-classification till noon. There was no large tree with shade of any kind within miles. So, at noon I had to shelter under a cactus-like thorn-bush exactly 5 feet high, in the restricted shade of which I crouched for half an hour eating my sandwiches and half-boiled eggs and following this up with a couple of oranges. After this princely repast I sat in the shade, resting till 1-30 p.m. and then put in another gruelling two hours of work till I had finished the entire block. Returning the same way as I came, I got back to Macherla Travellers' Bungalow tired, dusty, spent and woebegone at 7 p.m. Here a hot bath and change refreshed me, and the long cool drink after that worked wonders. Those were the days when there was no Prohibition and from my Chicacole days I had cultivated the habit of taking a mild amount of alcohol in the evenings, and I can say without reserve that taken in this way a peg of whisky after a long and tiring day is the best pick-me-up that ever was invented for the benefit of toiling mankind. It kept me very fit and put new energy into me when energy was at its lowest ebb.

During some of my trips to the fields close to Macherla Travellers' Bungalow itself, I used to ride on horseback to the inspection spot and after the work was over, ride back to the Travellers' Bungalow. Sometimes, amidst the cholam stalks, which stood as high as 10 feet, I would come across buxom Andhra girls doing their bit watching the crops. They always used to wave to me and laugh and one or two used to shout an invitation to me to alight and become better acquainted. But I had no time for this type of amorous dalliance, though I sometimes put to myself the question :

> Were it not better done, as others use,
> To sport with Amaryllis in the shade,
> Or with the tangles of Nacera's hair ?

But the hard practical man in me told me that sporting with local Amaryllises in the shade of a cholam crop would only lead to complications, and, moreover, it is always a mistake to combine work with play. So I waved cheerily back to Narasamma or Jogamma and went on my way blithely. . .

Two months later in December I took about 30 members of the Party with me and we entrained for Tirunelveli. There, I stayed for a couple of days with my friend, V. Ramakrishna, Collector, in his cool spacious bungalow at Tirunelveli proper. I soon secured for myself a house in the high ground of Palamcottah on a somewhat steep rental, but it was clean and neat and had all the accommodation I wanted. Soon, my family rejoined me and all of us benefited by the healthy Palamcottah air. With this as a base I toured in nearly every taluk of the district and personally inspected the fields and irrigation sources of 102 villages. At the end of this period, I received a wire from the Board of Revenue that the new interim Ministry which had succeeded the Adviser administration had decided to scrap all re-settlements and I was directed to take my Party back with me to Nellore and disband them there. This I faithfully did and I was very sorry to see the last of them, though I was not sorry to see the last of re-settlement work because during these five months in Tirunelveli I had lost ten pounds of weight and become as dark as a Nubian with the constant exposure to the sun. On receiving a posting as Sub-Collector, Palghat, I proceeded there without delay and what happened there is described in an earlier chapter.

But I may conveniently mention here that before selecting me for Settlement, Souter had made me a much finer proposition. He asked me to go and see him in Ooty where he was staying at the Club and when I called he gave me a glass of beer and then discussed the question of whether I was willing to go to Jeypore as Dewan. He told me that the term of O. Pulla Reddi, I.C.S. was just over and the Dewan had asked for another I.C.S. officer to take his place. The

selection was in his gift and he thought that I could fill it adequately. I was overwhelmed by his kindness and thanked him for the offer and said I would be happy to try my hand at the Dewanship. This was one of the plums of office for a Sub-Collector, as there was a beautiful house in Vizagapatam, rent-free, thrown in and another house at Jeypore. We discussed the pros and cons of the new job and Souter gave me a number of hints as to how to conduct myself as a Dewan pointing out that it would be very different from my normal work as Sub-Collector. I went back to my division with my head up, conscious that the ladder of fame and fortune stood waiting before me. Events, however, moved rather rapidly after this. The Government communicated Souter's choice of me to the Collector of Vizagapatam, Mr. E. C. Wood, I.C.S., who duly wrote a D.O. letter to the Maharaja of Vizianagaram asking if he would be pleased to appoint me as his Dewan. The Maharaja at the time was faced with a very strong pro-Oriya movement in the Estate, the adherents of which had raised the slogan "Orissa for the Oriyas" and demanded that the new Dewan should be an Oriya gentleman, and they were not particular about getting the services of a non-Oriya I.C.S. officer from Madras. The Maharaja heard that Mr. E. C. Wood's letter about me was on the way (by that bush-telegraph which is so wonderful a feature of the Indian landscape) and hastily got into a train and dashed all the way to Madras by the Calcutta Mail to interview H.E. the Governor. He saw H.E. and told him that personally he liked me a lot and that he had heard many good things about me and my work as Sub-Collector but that he had no choice except to ask for an Oriya officer as his Dewan and as there was no Oriya I.C.S. officer available he would be very pleased if Mr. Mahanti, an Oriya Deputy Collector working in Madras, was given to him instead of my humble self. The Governor tried to talk him out of it but the Maharaja was adamant. The net result was that I got a very nice private letter from Souter

informing me of what had happened and Souter's little plan about appointing me misfired as a result of the Oriya agitation against a non-Oriya Dewan. I expect these things are controlled by destiny, and Mr. O. Pulla Reddi who was the last I.C.S. Dewan there afterwards told me that it was touch-and-go. I did of course hear a nasty rumour that Pulla Reddi himself had advised the Maharaja to go in for an Oriya Dewan as he wanted no I.C.S. officer to succeed him and tarnish the lustre of his own administration. But I am afraid this was an unkind rumour at Pulla Reddi's expense. We afterwards became good friends and I have no reason to believe that he had stabbed me in the back in this way. However, I had the melancholy satisfaction that a senior Member of the Board of Revenue had thought well enough of me to recommend me for the post and it was on the rebound of this disappointment that Souter decided to mark me out for Settlement.

Talking of Settlement, it will be appropriate in this chapter to refer to our first Survey and Settlement camp when we were Assistant Collectors. The Survey camp was at Poonamallee and we lived in tents and went out every morning with our survey instruments, ten-foot chain, and theodolite complete and learnt the intricacies of the triangular survey method. After this camp was over we were posted to a small village called Thalaivasal in Salem district to do settlement work. Here again, all of us pitched our tents and a Special Assistant Settlement Officer, Mr. Humayun, was in charge of us. Mr. Souter who was then the Settlement Commissioner in the Board of Revenue paid us a two-day visit and watched Mr. Humayun putting us through our paces. The most important part of our settlement work was to learn to classify the soils. For this we went into the field with a village servant carrying a pot of water and a crow-bar. With the crow-bar a hole was dug 9 inches deep and the soil found there was taken, mixed with water and crushed in the palm to bring it to a fine consistency. Thereafter, by the

mere feel one decided whether it was pure clay or pure sand or the admixture of both sand and clay known as loam. The colour again determined whether it was black clay or red clay, black loam or red loam. The loam was further classifiable into five different sorts but this differentiation into sorts was a more highly technical matter and required heaps of practice. As a full Settlement Officer I learnt to do this correctly but as a settlement trainee I could just differentiate the clay, loam and sand. To show our appreciation of Souter's presence, Mr. Humayun and we 14 Assistant Collectors organised a dinner party in his honour. He was staying in the local Travellers' Bungalow and the drive from the road into the pleasant meadow where our camp was pitched was decorated by us with a number of torch light flares to indicate the drive. It looked somewhat like an aerodrome runway. The dinner was laid out in Mr. Humayun's large tent and he had secured some marvellous cutlery and crockery by pooling all our resources and supplying any deficiency from the Club at Salem. It was a lovely five-course dinner that was served and Souter was greatly pleased at the fine show that we put up.

Our Survey camp, I regret to state, had a terrible catastrophe. One of our men, T. Viraraghavan, son of Sir T. Vijayaraghavacharya, a former Dewan of Cochin, borrowed a horse from a well-known race-horse trainer in Madras for the purpose of having a morning ride in the camp as the doctor had told him he needed more exercise. Unfortunately, the horse was very fresh and restive and Viraraghavan was a poor rider. The moment he got on its back the horse bolted with him and Viraraghavan clung on desperately with his arms around the horse's neck. Unfortunately after going straight along the edge of a field with coconut trees the horse swerved suddenly to the right and threw Viraraghavan heavily forward on to the nearest coconut tree smashing his skull against the tree. He wore no hat or other protection on his head and he was conveyed to the General Hospital

in an unconscious condition. It was a Sunday morning and I was staying that day on casual leave with my parents in Mylapore and I heard of the accident casually from my doctor brother* who was a House Surgeon then in the General Hospital and I dashed in my car towards the hospital only to learn that Viraraghavan had died a few minutes earlier despite the best medical attention. All of us Assistant Collectors attended the funeral that evening in the Otteri cemetery. Naturally his death cast a very heavy gloom over our camp. His father turned up the next day but one from Delhi and he made searching enquiries in the camp from all of us in order to make sure that there was no suspicion of foul play of any kind. I am happy to say that no such untoward incident marred the Settlement camp.

The Survey and Settlement camps revealed to the inspecting officers the tendencies and attitudes of the young Assistant Collectors. I remember our going out one morning with Souter, the Settlement Commissioner and it was 8 a.m. About 8-30 a.m. we came to the edge of a field and a puddle of water about 5 feet wide stood between us and the other side where we could enter a gap in the fence of the next field. Souter took one good look at the puddle, judged it exactly and jumped neatly across with 6 inches to spare. All of us followed suit, I mean Souter, landing at the edge of the puddle, some clearing it completely, more or less according to our long-jump ability. But one of our members who for obvious reasons I shall not name, made a weak jump and landed flat on his bottom in the middle of the puddle and had to retire and go back to the camp to change his clothes. I remember this particular member made himself somewhat obnoxious to Souter by insisting on discussing the ethics of khaddar with him. At that time, any talk of khaddar to a British civilian was like holding a red rag to a bull and I could see that Souter was not at all pleased at this colleague's attempt to discuss controversial topics with him while we were out on inspection work.

*Lt.-Col. R. K. Chettur, F.I.C.S.

Chapter 7

LIFE AS COLLECTOR : CHINGLEPUT AND TRICHY

IT WAS ANOTHER IRONY OF FATE THAT WHEN I TOOK over as Collector of Chingleput from Mr. J. B. Brown, I.C.S., I was taking over from a very senior Collector who was himself going to the Board of Revenue on promotion as Member and Commissioner of Excise. The Chingleput Collector has his office at Saidapet and he is allowed to live at Madras. The district lies with its nine taluks spread around Madras and is a very well-balanced one, having both dry and wet taluks. It has one of the largest irrigation tanks, Chembarambakkam and some of the richest reserve forest, Vandalur. Apart from this there is the attraction of the tourist resort, Mahabalipuram and this was really one of the head-aches of the Collector as he was constantly inundated with requests for reservation of the Travellers' Bungalow there for very high personalities. Some of the senior I.C.S. wives were very autocratic in their behaviour and I remember Mrs. Hood, wife of the Adviser, Mr. H. M. Hood, ringing up one afternoon and asking me at 12 hours' notice to see that the bungalow was reserved for her as she had a picnic party going there. By a stroke of luck it happened to be vacant at the time, so I was able to meet her wishes, but I still wonder what would have happened if I had told her that it was already reserved for somebody else. I presume she would have rushed to Mr. Hood and complained. Sir Hugh (as he was later) was noted in the Service for his remarkable temper and was consequently dreaded by the over-timid type of official. While at Chingleput I never came to grips with him but when I was Collector of Trichy I was

summoned to attend a conference at Madurai in which the requisitioning of rice from surplus districts was the chief subject for discussion. The other three Collectors were all Englishmen and Sir Hugh attempted in his usual manner to bully me. One of his questions was, "Why is the price of rice in Trichy town Rs. 2 higher than it is in Thanjavur?"

I gave him a perfectly sensible economic reply and to this his unexpected remark was, "Don't teach your grand-mother to suck eggs".

I was furious at his rudeness and retorted that that would be a futile process. He growled, "What?"

"Because my grandmother was a vegetarian," I riposted.

This, coming from a young acting Collector was too much for the noble knight and he fixed me with his steely blue eyes and stared at me as if I was something the cat had brought into the room. Not to be outdone I stared at him and there was, as the journalists say, 'pin-drop silence'. After this contest in glaring went on for some time he finally turned away and he never forgave me for this minor victory. His first official act, when three months later he became Adviser One in charge of I.C.S. was to transfer me from Trichy to Cuddapah. Cuddapah was one of the hottest districts in the Presidency at that time and was considered to be a punishment station. The ostensible reason given for my sudden transfer after two years of hard work at Trichy was to teach me the difficulties of people in a district deficit of rice.

Stories about Mr. Hood and his bullying tactics were legion. The most famous one was that of the Assistant Secretary at whom he swore calling him "a bloody fool". The Assistant Secretary, like the proverbial worm turned and said "You are making a slight mistake, Sir".

"What is that?" snapped Hood.

"You are the bloody fool, not I," said the Assistant Secretary, retreated to the door, and promptly fell down there and fainted at the enormity of what he had done. To Hood's

credit it must be said that when the Assistant Secretary recovered, he sent for him and apologised handsomely.

But the best story about Hood that I have in my collection is when he was Collector of Madurai and shared the magnificent office building with the Collector of Ramnad. A central stair case divided the building into two halves and Hood's office-room was on the left-hand side upstairs, and the Ramnad Collector's on the right-hand side. Each Treasury Deputy Collector's room was at the end of the ground-floor wing on their respective sides. One day while working in his room, Mr. Hood heard a tremendous racket coming from the room of the T.D.C., Ramnad. Unable to work because of the din he walked down the stairs and along the verandah to the open door of the Ramnad T.D.C.'s room and a singular scene met his gaze.

A number of stamp cases from Nasik were being opened up and the T.D.C. was sitting on a chair with his legs drawn up scratching himself in an intimate portion of his anatomy. Hood swore at him in his usual classic manner, "What is all this damned noise going on and what are you doing there scratching yourself like that?" The T.D.C. rose to his feet stammering, "But you see, Sir, I can't get anybody else to do this for me!"

"What? What?" repeated Hood completely defeated by this reply and staring angrily and muttering he returned to his own room. The T.D.C. was of course referring to the Resource Manual rule that stamp-cases had to be opened up in the immediate presence of the T.D.C.

I remember my year at Chingleput very vividly because I was asked to work out an Air Raid Precaution scheme for the district similar to the one that was going to be enforced in Madras City and this gave me my first taste of war work. In addition to this, every Collector was expected to do his best in raising contributions for the War Fund, and the district did quite well in this regard. The only unfortunate incident I remember was the one where a villager returning

home near the Air Force Dump at Meenambakkam foolishly clambered over the wires and was immediately challenged by an up-country Gurkha sentry in Hindustani. Being a villager, he merely ran for the wires and tried to climb over that again and get away. The sentry promptly opened fire and shot him dead, spread-eagled as he was over the wires. As District Magistrate I had to make the usual enquiry and it was quite clear the sentry was only carrying out orders as there was a big ammunition dump of the R.A.F. close to this spot. However, I wrote up to Government making a strong recommendation that the young wife and two children of the deceased villager should be given some compensation. As I had some matters to discuss at the Secretariat, I followed this up by a personal call on Adviser, Sir George Boag, and when I raised the matter, Sir George turned to me cynically and said, "So you really expect the Government to pay a thousand rupees to every one who trespasses on an ammunition dump and gets shot in the process." I pointed out that the villager was ignorant, that the route taken by him was a well-known short-cut to his village and that he could not possibly have understood the words of challenge which were uttered in Hindustani. His reply was that all the same, it was a bad precedent and would only encourage others to trespass. I refrained from pointing out that people would hardly care to get shot for a miserable thousand rupees, but held my peace. I said that I would leave the decision to the boundless generosity of Government. My arguments and concluding remark seem to have borne some fruit because a sum of Rs. 500 was granted as an ex-gratia payment to the wife.

Some months later, when I was transferred to Trichy I went to say "Good Bye" to Sir George Boag and in the course of the interview (which was as near cordial as was possible to one of Boag's phlegmatic temperament) I rather unwisely expressed the hope that my administration of the district during that year had been satisfactory. I did not

realise that I was stretching my neck out and asking for trouble. Sir George came back with the unkind rejoinder, "Nothing to your detriment has come to notice *as yet*". This implied that it would only be a question of time before all kinds of illegalities and irregularities would spring to light in the district as having been committed by me. I thanked him for nothing and withdrew, and next night I left for Trichy.

Some of my happiest memories of Collectoring are associated with Trichy. My younger son was a baby hardly two months old when the family and I travelled down by train to the new headquarters. Being war time, Trichy was surrounded by troops of all descriptions as it was an important strategic town. In addition, close to the Collector's bungalow was a contingent of the Indian Air Force at Kimber-gardens. Every type of work connected with the war effort came my way and it was a great and exciting time in which to be a Collector. War propaganda was of the utmost importance and I organised it with special zest within the district and conducted a number of meetings myself in the town-hall. At least four thousand people used to turn out for these meetings and the speeches in English were transacted also into Tamil. I found that my training in public speaking in the Oxford Union was standing me in good stead as I was not in the least nervous in addressing these large audiences.

In Trichy I went once or twice at the invitation of the Rector to address the students of the St. Joseph's College on literary and other topics and was thus known to them. This perhaps accounts for an incident which took place towards the middle of my stay in Trichy and for which I received a considerable amount of lavish and somewhat unexpected praise. Mahatma Gandhi had decided to launch his Civil Disobedience Movement in Bombay and was promptly arrested before the date fixed by him for launching the movement. The news reached Trichy and I expected a very large public meeting. But even before that, at 11 a.m.

a crowd of about 2,000 students of the St. Joseph's College left the class-rooms and congregated in the road opposite their college because the cautious Rector declined to allow them to hold the meeting within the College precincts. Here, they held up all traffic and formed a solid phalanx of shouting and excited students. The District Superintendent of Police, Martin, came rushing up to me with a police Black Maria containing 20 to 30 constables and two head-constables fully armed. He requested me to come at once with him to deal with this situation. I went there and stopped the Black Maria about 100 yards away in an adjacent street. I walked with Martin alone towards the excited mob. Some of them greeted me as I came up, some shouted, "Make way for the Collector", all of the rest shouted various cries concerning the arrest of Gandhiji. I could not control them unless I had an opportunity of talking to them. So, I chose the wall 6 feet high, close to the main gate of the College and clambered up it and from there, climbed higher up to the main cornice of the gate from the top of which I was about 12 feet above my audience. From this coign of vantage, I addressed them, pointed out that I fully appreciated the warmth of their reaction at the arrest of their revered leader, but that it did not justify their leaving their class-rooms and congregating in the road. Moreover, I pointed out that they were holding up the traffic. Many of them shouted at me, that they wanted to hold a meeting to express their views and to pass resolutions about the arrest. I said that the reverend Principal and his colleagues would not allow such a meeting inside the college but that I would permit the meeting provided it was held in an orderly fashion. They did not believe me at first, but I said I would agree to the meeting being held in the town-hall square and would see that they were not interfered with if they marched to it peacefully and vacated the road. Behind these students were assembled a vast mass of townsmen ready to back up the students in any demonstration of violence. The student-leaders took me at my word,

got their men marching into a procession four abreast and in about fifteen minutes they had left the road and walked away to the square. They shouted there for nearly an hour by which time the heat of the midday sun had somewhat lessened their ardour and it was also time for lunch, so they broke up the meeting and returned peacefully to the college hostels for their midday meal.

As I said at the outset on the one hand, I was told that the Government would strongly disapprove of my action in permitting the meeting; on the other hand, the grateful public who had a son or other relative among those students were glad that I did not let loose the Police party on those young men. I was myself very pleased at the successful result of my intervention and look back with considerable pleasure on the incident. For many months thereafter, I received grateful letters from fathers and uncles, brothers and cousins congratulating me on the gate-climbing incident and thanking me for saving their sons or other relatives from blows or may be even bullets.

Social life in Trichy was very brisk. We gave a few parties in our house to meet the officers in the Indian Air Force and the officers in other units in Trichy and these parties were invariably very gay ones. Commanding the I.A.F. group was Group Captain Mukherji who later became Air Marshal Mukherji and Chief of Air Staff of India who died last year at Tokyo. Also in the group of officers was Flt. Lt. Arjan Singh, who is now Air Vice Marshal of the Defence Command. Later on came Sqd. Leader Goyal who is also now an Air Vice Marshal. All these were my good friends and we were invited often to the Air Force mess at Kimbergardens. When the Air Force wanted to select an air-to-air firing range and air-to-ground bombing range, it was at my suggestion that Flt. Lt. Arjan Singh took me up in the air over Trichy in an open Tiger-Moth plane from which we reconnoitred the whole district and I finally selected the two most suitable places that I could observe from the air

and localised them on the ground, to the satisfaction of the Air Force people.

In Trichy I broke the convention which had been permitted by previous Collectors, of visitors coming to call to see the Collector on business on a Sunday morning. I was shocked to find that on a Sunday, soon after 9 o'clock, many people who should rightly have come to see me in the office on a week day, had chosen that day to worry me with their particular problems and deprive me of my one day of rest. To meet the situation, I organised a Swimming Club of seven or eight persons. We used to leave our bungalows about 9-30 a.m. and proceed to the bank of the Cauvery, six miles away, at the Municipal Water Works. Here, there was some lovely bathing with firm sand under foot and there was also a small shady grove adjacent to the river, where after the swimming we could relax and have our short eats and drink hot coffee. This was a most delightful form of relaxation for a Sunday morning and as we used to sit around there with our wives and children and talk and play games till nearly 12 or 12-30, we invariably returned home only about 1 p.m. just in time for lunch. This defeated all the callers as they were told by the duffadar, "Master gone out, will return only for lunch". And of course nobody would be rash enough to disturb the Collector during the Sunday afternoon *siesta*. And the vigorous swimming in the morning and the heavy Sunday lunch invariably justified a couple of hours' rest till 4 o'clock. One individual, who should have known better, an official of the Civil Supplies Department from Madras rashly phoned me at 2-30 p.m. one Sunday afternoon and attempted to see me to discuss Civil Supplies work and when I suggested 9 a.m. next morning pleading a headache that afternoon he quietly went back to Madras and complained that I had declined to see him. No official notice was taken of this rather childish complaint. But the Commissioner of Civil Supplies, Mr. W. Scott-Brown mentioned it to me on his next camp in Trichy and merely remarked that

it was war time. But he did not pursue the matter when I pointed out that the official in question had been in Trichy both on Friday and Saturday and did not care to call and meet me on those two working days.

Swimming at the Water Works became more dangerous when the June-July flood waters came in and we had to suspend it for about a couple of months at that time.

An episode connected with the presence of the Indian Air Force at Kajamalai may conveniently be recorded here. One morning in my office a railway official sent in his card and desired an interview. He represented that he had powerful enemies among his brother-officers though he would not disclose any reason for their enmity. On that ground, he asked for a revolver licence for personal protection. I was not impressed by his arguments but about a week later he sent in his card again and this time he seemed to be in a somewhat excited and desperate mood. He alleged that at about 11 p.m. the previous night a small black car looking like a Morris-Cowley or Austin had swung into the lane where his house was situated in a suburb of Trichy and that the two desperadoes inside it threw a bomb at his front verandah. This bomb exploded with considerable force and noise and all the neighbours had come running. Meanwhile the miscreants had bolted in their car. On asking for the number of the car he alleged that no number plate was visible. He said that this was definitely an attempt on his life and therefore wanted a revolver licence as quickly as possible.

I pointed out that the incident of the bomb had to be investigated first and the reasons for its being thrown looked into before I could sanction a revolver licence. I asked him to see me again after a week. I sent for the Town Deputy Superintendent of Police, gave him the facts and asked him to investigate the case quickly. That was on a Saturday. On Sunday, at about 10 o'clock I was in my bungalow just getting ready to leave for a swim when the Dy. S. P. turned up and requested an urgent two-minute interview. I saw him

and he told me that he had traced the offenders and that they were two young railway officers and that the bomb used was a paper practice bomb which they had borrowed for the occasion from some I.A.F. Officer in Kajamalai. He gave me their names and I told him not to proceed further until I had a talk with them.

I sent for the two young men in question, one of whom was very well known to me. Both put on an air of complete innocence when I asked them why they were playing about with bombs. They first pretended ignorance but I told them that the game was up and that I wanted a full confession. Thereupon, they told me that the individual in question had been grossly ill-treating his wife, that he had locked her up for the last three months ever since she had arrived in Trichy and not allowed her to visit even other ladies of the place, not even the wives of his colleagues, and that she had appealed for help to some of the other womenfolk. They wrote in a couple of threatening letters advising him to mend his ways but he had done nothing of the kind. Hence in desperation, to teach him a lesson, they had secured a paper bomb from the I.A.F. at Kajamalai, removed the number plate of their car and thrown the bomb at him on Friday night. I pointed out that they had committed a number of offences and that this kind of thing could not go on and it was my duty really to prosecute them but that as their motives were pure I would on this occasion hold my hand provided they gave me their solemn word of honour not to try and take the law into their own hands in this fashion. They gave me the required pledges and with that the incident came to a close. The lady in question got help from some of her relatives in the North and went away from Trichy. However, the two young Galahads had behaved in a very spirited fashion and attempted to teach the husband the error of his ways. I sent for the husband and assured him there would be no recurrence of bombs or threats to his life and that he was better off without a revolver as in

his present state of mind he was quite likely to use it on the wrong people!

Chapter 8

SOME I.C.S. PERSONALITIES

BEING A COMPOSITE BODY OF MEN, THE ENGLISH HALF OF which was drawn mainly from the Universities, the I.C.S. included in its ranks almost every type of man.

Let me now describe a few outstanding personalities that I came across in my service. Among the Chief Secretaries there was the well-known A. Y. G. Campbell, better known as "X. Y. Z." because of his initials. Then there was Sir Hugh Hood whom I have already mentioned. As for Mr. G. T. H. Bracken, Collector of East Godavari, known to dismay even forest officers by walking right round the periphery of a reserve forest an amusing story is told about his appointment as Chief Secretary. This had hung fire about six weeks while the young Under-Secretary, C. F. V. Williams held charge and when Bracken was finally appointed, he went up to the Chief Secretary's room, got hold of the acting incumbent who was reported to have put on incredible airs as acting Chief Secretary firmly by the shoulders, propelled him out of the room with the words "Out you go!" A lovely story, I think it is apocryphal and was invented by people who disliked Williams. Then there was C. F. Brackenbury, who looked exactly like an elderly Oxford Don, who was the only Chief Secretary who accepted a suit length of khaddar from Chief Minister Rajaji and what is more, made a suit of it and wore it to Rajaji's unconcealed delight. Last, but not least, I remember D. N. Strathie with his fine singing voice who after being Chief Secretary for three or four years, later gave up the service and retired because he said there was such a block for promotion for the younger men. I recall that as Adviser he had come to Trichy and

stayed with me when I was Collector there and one evening when I had to go out to face a riotous mob in the heart of the city market Strathie sportingly offered to accompany me. I declined saying that this was a Collector's job and not the Adviser's and that I hoped I would be able to manage all right. He waited up for me and listened eagerly to my account of how it all went and how we held our own with an adequate Police force, without having to resort to any violence, until unfortunately my Deputy Superintendent of Police, Bhujanga Rao lifted his helmet to wipe his forehead. At that moment, a piece of road-metal accurately flung by one of the mob, got him there, the blood spurted from the red gash, and his men without even waiting for the Sub-Inspector's order went out in a *lathi* charge on their own account and beat them back, and routed the rioters in double-quick time. The rest saw this, broke and fled. Strathie afterwards, while in retirement in London, was sought out by the Home Office and selected as Commissioner to go out to Palestine in order to collect income-tax there. It became a good joke in the Service how the Home Office sent a canny Scotsman to collect income-tax from the Jews.

Among the Board Members, I had heard tell of C. B. Cotterell. A charming story is told of him that, having worked for several years in South Kanara and Coondapur, he was well versed in the Tulu language. When as Board Member he was touring near Karkal and was walking along a field-bund for his evening exercise, two girls from the locality were standing about 50 yards away discussing the advancing stranger as country-girls will do. This is what they were saying in Tulu:

First girl: "See the handsome Englishman approaching?"
Second girl: "Of course, I do. How tall he is!"
First girl: "And what large shoulders?"
Second girl: "And how would you like?"
First girl: "Like what?"
Second girl: "To sleep with him tonight."

First girl: "Well, I saw him first."

Cotterell in the meanwhile came within ten yards of these two girls, having heard every word of this. Pausing for a moment, he looked at them and said aloud in Tulu, "I am ready for you. I don't care which one it is I sleep with, but make up your minds quick or perhaps it had better be both!"

On hearing these words spoken in their own language from the white stranger, the girls broke up with cries of alarm, turned and fled and Cotterell resumed his walk, laughing at their discomfiture.

Another Board Member of repute was Mr. J. F. Hall who, when he was appointed Commissioner of Excise, did a tremendous job of work dealing with corruption which ran rife throughout that Department. I remember his first visit to Rajahmundry when I was Sub-Collector there. I met him on the Calcutta Mail at Godavari station, and we came out of the station and I took him in my car to the English Club where he was staying. But the cars of the other officers who had arrived to meet him followed and drew up behind us. Hall got out from my car and proceeded systematically to enquire to whom exactly the other cars belonged and what their status was, their pay, and whether they could afford it. This scrutiny revealed that one Assistant Inspector of Excise had come there in a car of his own, which he could not possibly afford on his meagre salary. Hall took effective action against corrupt officers and during his regime he was much dreaded by them. He was a man of strong likes and dislikes. For some obscure reason, he seemed to think well of me and when one Sunday I called on him in Madras, having been invited by him to do so, he was most affable and knowing that I had been up at Oxford he produced some excellent beer and we chatted for over an hour over our beer. I was sorry to read the news of his death reported from London last year. Another Board Member who became Chief Secretary and Adviser to Government was my former Collector of East Godavari, G. W. Priestley. Priestley was also

a man of strong likes and prejudices and he created something of a sensation in East Godavari by his action in the famous Arunachalam assault case. This was a matter which roused considerable feeling in the district. Sub-Collector N. S. Arunachalam of Bhadrachalam was camping in Polavaram and at the close of the day's Jama-bandhi he called the duffadar upstairs to pump up a petromax light. The duffadar who had gone off duty, removed his turban and settled down to a drink of arrack did not wish to appear again in that shape before the Sub-Collector. On Arunachalam shouting at him for not coming he reluctantly went up the stairs and when Arunachalam used an abusive word, he assaulted the Sub-Collector. Arunachalam rather unwisely filed a criminal complaint against the duffadar before his own Sub-Magistrate at Polavaram. Priestley, as District Magistrate, heard the transfer application of the duffadar and as it was obvious the complaint could not be heard by one of Arunachalam's subordinates transferred the case to me at Rajahmundry for disposal. I tried the case, heard the evidence and wrote a judgment convicting the duffadar for one month's R.I. for his assault on the Sub-Collector. The duffadar went up and appealed from my court to that of the Government Agent, East Godavari, namely, Priestley, and Priestley after hearing the appeal, acquitted the duffadar holding that the staircase in question which figured so largely in the evidence could not possibly have a landing as he knew the bungalow well and it was only a straight ladder. This shows the dangers of importing extra-judicial knowledge into a case because Priestley was thinking of a very different bungalow and a very different staircase. However, the acquittal created quite a stir in the district as it was clear that the I.C.S. officer's complaint had been disbelieved by his own District Magistrate.

Priestley was also a great stickler for correctness of form in dress. I remember there was a Sub-Collectors' conference at Cocanada and Priestley asked both Arunachalam and me

for lunch to meet his wife. I turned up in a lounge suit wearing a tie. Arunachalam turned up in an office-suit with an open-necked collar. Priestley threw up his hands in horror and took Arunachalam away to the guest bed-room and equipped him with a new shirt and collar and tie. It was a convention, well honoured in European India that a tie must be worn at lunch-time unless your hostess asked you to dispense with it. I had heard of this and had gone prepared. Arunachalam, living in the backwoods of Bhadrachalam, was no doubt not quite *au fait* with such circles or conventions.

I had found from personal experience that Priestley was also somewhat unpredictable in his actions. When the Superintendent of the Central Jail, Rajahmundry, submitted his weapons for magisterial check and I pointed out that he had not a valid licence for his rifle and that as per rules he should deposit the weapon in the nearest Police station, the Superintendent replied scornfully, "Catch me depositing my weapon to please anybody! *I am going out shooting this Saturday with it!*"

To which my retort was, "No, you are not, that weapon is now confiscated" and I took over the weapon, handed it to my clerk and told him to make out a receipt to the Superintendent of the Jail for it. When Priestley heard about this incident, far from supporting me, the Joint Magistrate, for having done the right thing, he merely took over the rifle from me and restored it to the Superintendent and asked him to pay up the usual licence fees. I felt that he had let me down badly. However, as Adviser, he became much more mellow and always had a special smile for me as I had been his Sub-Collector in the old days in East Godavari.

Turning to the younger set most of whom were my colleagues, I have plenty to say. My greatest friend among them was Humphrey Trevelyan, now Sir Humphrey, an Ambassador of Her Majesty abroad. Humphrey was a Cambridge man and a nephew of the famous historian George Trevelyan and we

got to know each other very well in the Survey and Settlement camps. From the Survey camp at Poonamallee we went out sea-bathing together in Humphrey's small Morris-Cowley car with Humphrey at the wheel. On the way to Elliot Beach, there is a sharp hidden curve near the Theosophical Society and Humphrey came on this curve without warning at 40 miles per hour. Taking the curve at that speed in a small car was not a joke and it was sheer luck that we survived without a nasty spill. Humphrey afterwards congratulated me on my calmness throughout and said that if any one had interfered with him then, we would have been in the 6 foot ditch by the side of the road without fail. He was Sub-Collector, Dindigul, when I was at Rajahmundry and we met occasionally at Madras. He tired soon of Sub-Collectoring in Madras State and using his influence at home wangled a transfer to the Political Department and went off to Delhi. We kept up a desultory correspondence. When we were doing Settlement training in a village called Thalaivasal in Salem district, he accompanied me when I was invited to deliver a lecture on Onam day to the Malayalee Association at Trichy. The lecture was timed for 5-30 and S. Ranganathan, Collector of Trichy presided. In my speech I lamented that the well-known courage of the Nairs of Malabar seemed to be a thing of the past and that they had not been true to their heritage, for example during the recent Moplah rebellion. Humphrey told me later that angry glances were being hurled at me from the audience and he, as my friend, gauging the situation, felt that we would both be beaten up before the evening was out. Luckily we had to catch the Trivandrum Express at 7 for Madras and we made a hasty and strategic exit at 6-45. According to Humphrey, this saved our lives. After we left, the Collector, Ranganathan, I heard, placated the audience by criticising and contradicting most of the things I had said and undoing all the good I had done. Humphrey in later life married the daughter of a General and as I have said earlier is now one of Her Majesty's Ambassadors. Know-

ing I was fond of poetry, he once wrote out in his own handwriting the first four lines given below and asked me to trace the rest.

> Margaret, are you grieving
> Over Golden-grove unleafing?
> Nay, when the heart grows older
> It will come to such sights colder....

He gave me one week's time and I discovered it in Robert Bridges' Anthology The Spirit of Man*. I wonder if he remembers this now.

Another delightful Englishman whom I greatly liked was W. T. Bryant, son of J. C. Bryant, I.C.S., (Retd.) who had been Collector of Malabar for some time. W. T. Bryant was a charming young man with delightful manners and very clear bluish-grey eyes. We became friendly in the Survey and Settlement camps and later on I visited him once when he was Sub-Collector, Tuticorin. I have lost touch with him when he, among others, left in the exodus of 1947. W. T. Bryant was posted as Sub-Collector of Malappuram soon after his training and was soon quite at ease there, having taken Malayalam as his main language. He got on very well with the local public and was extremely popular wherever he went. Men like W.T. certainly raised the stock of the British in India and strengthened the rivets of the Steel Frame greatly.

Two other remarkable Englishmen in the Service have to be mentioned. One was Sydney Gordon Roberts, the retired District and Sessions Judge who taught me Tamil in a small room in Oxford and his great friend H. S. Shield who retired as Collector of Madurai. Shield was himself a good Tamil scholar and one day he was sitting in S.G.'s room in Oxford and Mr. Roberts introduced him with a flourish to us, I.C.S. probationers, and expressed the hope that both we and our

* The poem was by Gerard Hopkins, "Spring and Fall: To a Young Child".

studies would benefit by the presence of so distinguished a Civilian and scholar as Mr. Shield in our midst. Shield merely grunted but made no overt remarks. I remember being present at Madurai at his last Durbar at which he was to represent the Governor and give away the sanads of titles to the recipients. The elite of the City were present. Shield was dressed correctly in a morning coat and top hat for the function. After inspecting the guard of honour, in the course of his speech, Shield, who was then a portly gentleman, weighing nearly 200 lbs., stood up and said that when he began life in this very district as Assistant Collector of Madurai, he had a terrific idea of his own importance in the scheme of things. But now he had come back, "the very shadow of his former self", as Collector of the district. This raised a big laugh as he, very significantly, touched the front of his waistcoat as he spoke these words. He got a tremendous ovation for his carefully prepared and scholarly speech. S. G. Roberts had retired prematurely from the Civil Service because being a bit outspoken, he had once written a judgment in which he had handsomely criticised the views of the High Court in an earlier murder case and when these insubordinate remarks were brought to their notice, the Hon'ble Judges passed somewhat severe strictures on Mr. Roberts and Mr. Roberts resigned and went home and settled down to teach Tamil at Oxford.

C.W.E. Cotton, H.M. Hood, J.F. Hall, H.R. Pate, J.A. Thorne, were all hard workers and wherever they served as Collectors they left their mark on the district. Thus, both Hood and Hall were famous in Madurai and Cotton, Thorne and Pate were famous in Malabar. In fact the standard of hard work established by the I.C.S. was so high that any Collector who did not work hard was always pointed out to as being the lazy one or the light-hearted one. For obvious reasons, I will not specify these black sheep by name.

THE I.C.S. AT WORK AND PLAY

THE FIRST TIME I CALLED TO SEE E. C. WOOD AT Vizagapatam I was shown into his large airy office-room. On the left was a long bench and I noted with some surprise that there were as many as 100 files awaiting his attention. They were his quota for the day as he was very prompt in dealing with work as and when it came. At that time Vizag in the North and Madurai in the South were the heaviest districts and E.C. Wood in addition to several plains-taluks had three agency-taluks. In addition, he had several large estates to deal with. A Collector's life was a very full one and the mere file work alone in a large district was stupendous. In addition to this the Collector found time for presiding over a large number of functions and also for doing a number of inspections. One of the main recreations in Vizag district was outdoor shikar. Both panther and tiger were available and some times tragedy followed. Somewhat before my time, was the incident in which J.W. Prichard, the Sub-Collector when camping with A.C. Duff, the Collector, called Duff away from his files to deal with a tiger that had killed a buffalo in a village nearby. They went out into the thick jungle near the village and sat up in a machan over the dead animal. About dusk the tiger returned to the kill and Duff fired and succeeded in wounding the animal which sprang away into the bushes. The villagers came and took them back to the 'Travellers' Bungalow and the next morning when they examined the place, they found clear blood-marks from the wounded beast. It being a point of honour that the wounded animal must be pursued and given the *coup de grace*, Duff and Prichard with a couple of retainers followed the animal into

the jungle. Unfortunately they had only one gun between them and that was carried by Duff. They went into a clearing amidst dense bushes and trees on all sides when suddenly without warning the tiger charged out of the bushes and made straight for Duff. Duff lifted his gun and fired at point blank range, but missed. The leaping tiger in a moment was on him, knocked him down, and began clawing him. The gun fell to one side. Prichard made one attempt to get at the gun when the tiger turned snarling at him. Prichard promptly gave up the idea and rushed for the nearest tree and began shinning up it. The tiger pursued him and clawed him and ripped away half of his left calf muscle. Prichard continued to climb and reached a fork 10 feet high. The tiger returned to Duff, by this time mercifully unconscious, and proceeded to maul him afresh. Prichard screamed and shouted for help but the two retainers had fled. When they returned with reinforcements beating drums and making noises with tin cans, the tiger left Duff and fled into the bushes. Duff was taken back to the Travellers' Bungalow and rushed by car to the hospital in Vizag where he died of his injuries. Prichard recovered from his injuries in the leg and for a long time discussion went on in the clubs as to whether Prichard's behaviour had or had not been courageous enough. I was in Oxford at the time, and I remember reading a paragraph in *The Times,* announcing Duff's tragic death.

While at Rajahmundry I did two trips up the river Godavari One was work and the other was play. The first was done when the river Godavari was in floods. As a consequence, there were huge whirlpools formed in the Godavari, making the motor-boat services lead a precarious existence. News soon reached me that near the village Manturu a few miles away from Devipatnam a motor-launch with 34 passengers had sunk and 22 men and women were drowned within sight of land. As Sub-Collector it was my business to go up and hold an enquiry. So I got a houseboat lashed to the old steam-boat the *Victoria* and I proceeded 36 miles by river up

the Godavari to Manturu. The experienced serang in charge of the *Victoria* took me skilfully through the swollen river with its muddy water and huge whirlpools safely to within one mile of Manturu. Because of whirlpools the serang said it was not safe for us to go further by steamer. Here I tied up on the right bank, walked one mile along the bank to the accident spot. A launch intended to carry 22 persons had been over-loaded to 36 and when it threatened to get into a whirlpool all the passengers rushed to one side and the launch capsized. The serang of the launch and his crew threw a number of empty kerosene tins into the water and jumped in with them and swam ashore safely. So did some other passengers who were lucky enough to seize a tin. It was a pure accident, but there was a case for prosecuting the serang for over-loading the launch. I stayed only a couple of hours and at about 4 p.m. I retraced my steps to the steamer. I stayed the night there in the houseboat and returned next morning in the same manner to Rajahmundry. The other trip was to satisfy the religious instincts of my wife who wanted to visit the sacred shrine at Bhadrachalam. The Manturu trip and also my touring in the Ramachandrapuram taluk had shown me how comfortable a houseboat was. So I got permission to take the steamer and the houseboat to Rajahmundry paying for the fuel myself and we sailed up the river, passed Devipatnam and passed Kunnavaram and reached Bhadrachalam 36 hours later. The views of the Godavari on both sides were marvellous and particularly exciting were the views when we passed through the gorge. Here the Godavari flows right through two hills, and the steep side of the hills comes up to the water's edge. The passage through is awe-inspiring. We stayed a full day at Bhadrachalam and worshipped at the famous temple. Next day we returned in the same fashion. I remember the trip vividly because on the first day out, my son Pratap fooling around the kitchen, a mere two-year-old, pulled the grinding stone down on his foot and smashed up his big toe. He howled

"blue murder" and I produced my medicine chest and sealed the injury with some cotton dipped in benzoin and he howled all the more with pain. Luckily the injury healed nicely in a week or two and he got a new nail after some months.

Apart from bathing in the sea, bathing in a large river like the Godavari was equally exciting. The Godavari is a mighty river and within 25 yards from the bank it becomes more than 6 feet deep except in summer time. I did some very good bathing in the Godavari at a place called Kotipalli where the river splits up into a number of streams between sandy banks. A lot of the reed called *nanal* grows on these banks and altogether the place is most picturesque. From the Kotipalli bungalow one had to walk three-fourths of a mile to reach a place deep enough to bathe in. Owing to the clear sand under foot the water was delightfully clean and the bath was most refreshing. In fact bathing in the Godavari was equalled later on only by the swimming in the Cauveri that I have described earlier.

The only two games that I played seriously during my Sub-Collectoring days were hockey and tennis. I found that tennis was available at most Divisional headquarters and much more rarely at Taluk headquarters. The standard was rarely up to the level of the Chicacole club except in Trichy where the members of the Town Club included some really good players. On the whole, tennis was a very satisfying game because one got all the exercise one needed in an hour and a half at the end of a day spent in inspections and files.

The I.C.S., as a body, were careful not to get entangled with the women in their jurisdiction. There were of course one or two who were noted for their romantic exploits but, for obvious reasons, I am not dwelling on this aspect of their prowess. But a certain incident took place in Madras which had repercussions and a lot of whispering went on that some very senior European gentlemen were involved, including one I.C.S. officer. The story was that three leading gentlemen in three of the Commercial houses and one senior I.C.S.

officer got together in the house of one of them at Adyar for a party. The Tahsildar or some other Revenue Officer known to the I.C.S. officer was requested to arrange a dancing girl to give a *Bharatha-natyam* performance at about 10 p.m. after the dinner was over. The girl was brought to the bungalow unfortunately a little early, at 8 p.m., by which time the party was quite merry having had a few drinks. They asked for the girl to be sent up saying they wished to offer her some hospitality before her dance and one member of the company pressed her to join them in a drink. As they were drinking whisky and soda she demurred and said that she could not drink it. But the man was insistent and forced half a tumbler of whisky and soda on her. She still politely declined. Then the story has it that one of them held her and the other tried to pour whisky down her throat which was of course an extremely stupid thing to do. Unfortunately for all the four of them she choked and before long the four men came to realise with a shock that they had suffocated her to death with their well-meaning hospitality. Thus faced with the corpse on their hands they sent hurriedly for the original Revenue Officer who had arranged for the girl and requested that he should make arrangements to get rid of the corpse. The Tahsildar deputed the local village officer, who had brought the girl in a jutka, to convey the body secretly at night to Karunguzhi railway station in the Chingleput district. Here in the village he secured a tin trunk, put the body into it and booked it to Tuticorin. Here, in due course, the body's stench caused investigation and the horrible contents of the trunk were disclosed. Ultimately, the Village officer who had booked the parcel was duly apprehended and tried for a capital offence.

The four gentlemen were now faced with the problem of how to allow an innocent man to go to the gallows when they knew the real truth. But the course of the Law vindicated itself and an able lawyer was able to prove that the karnam could not have had any hand in the murder though he was

clearly an accessory after the fact and got him off with a sentence of two years. The I.C.S. officer thereafter did not indulge in such questionable parties.

COLLECTORING AT CUDDAPAH

MY FIRST IMPRESSION OF THE COLLECTOR'S BUNGALOW at Cuddapah was favourable. Even though the towers at each corner of the building behind were most peculiar and lent a faint touch of Caranarvon Castle to the facade, the spacious grounds 6½ acres in extent made the place imposing. In addition it had two of the handsomest gates I have ever seen for a Collector's residence; and the house itself had a large central drawing-room and dining-room and a complete guest's wing on the left-hand side and on the right-hand side the Collector's office-room, camp clerk's room, and visitors' ante-room. The living rooms were upstairs. There were two wings on both the sides of the central hall, and each of the large bed-rooms had a spacious dressing-room and a bath-room attached. In front of the central hall was a large curved open terrace with a magnificent view to the north of an irrigation tank and to the east and the west of the chain of encircling hills in the middle of which Cuddapah town nestles as in a bowl. The result of this was that in summer the terrific heat was radiated back on to the town from this encircling chain of hills and gave Cuddapah its reputation of great and continuous heat during summer.

My memories of Cuddapah range chiefly round the activities concerning war propaganda. We had a District Organiser for the war effort, and, as an innovation suggested by me, it had been decided to appoint two lady lecturers to speak in the villages in Telugu on the war effort. One was an elderly matron and the other was a very young and charming person whose personality was attractive and made the crowds gather wherever she went in order to see her if not to hear her.

When Sir Arthur Hope, the Governor paid a visit to us and addressed a mass meeting of about ten thousand persons in Cuddapah town, this young lady, Lakshmidevi, was the only one selected by the War Committee to speak to the audience, before the Governor actually spoke and she made an elegant five minutes speech which had been carefully written out and prepared by her.

Cuddapah has some very pleasant camping places, notably, Rayachoti in the south with its dependent Deputy Tahsildar at a town called Lakki Reddi Palli; then to the north there was Prodattur in a wet area fed by the Cuddapah-Kurnool canal (known as the K.C. Canal). Towards the east the town of Rajampet and midway the large village of Siddhavattam with its ruined fort. This was called Sidhout for short. On the way to Rayachoti at 14 miles was the famous Guvvala-cheruvu Ghat, where one climbed by a ghat road three miles long to the top of a hill which had a thick reserve forest known to contain both tiger and panther. There was a neat one-room forest bungalow to the left of the road at the top of the ghat with a small bath-room attached which was a favourite picnic spot for people in Cuddapah. As it was difficult to get water here and as it was so close to Cuddapah, I never actually camped there. But I spent the entire afternoon with a picnic party of my family and a few friends there and with the members of the party I had wandered about 100 yards from the bungalow looking fearfully in every direction for a tiger or panther to materialise. But fortunately they did not choose to appear. But staying there after dusk without a gun was definitely dangerous and we left for Cuddapah at about 6-30 when the shades of dusk were falling.

In Cuddapah, the heat was so great and forms of amusement so limited that in summer I invented a new hobby, namely, that of bathing in the clear irrigation wells to be found all over the district. These had delightfully cold water and they were 6 to 10 feet deep. Some of them were 20 yards long and

about 5 yards in width. To dive into a cool irrigation well in the heat of a summer afternoon was a most enjoyable experience and I must have bathed in at least 50 wells of the district. I cannot help recalling my Browning:

> Oh the wild joys of living, the leaping
> from rock up to rock....
> The cool silver shock of the plunge in a
> pool's living water!....

I also went down the steps of a circular well where the water was at least 60 feet below the ground level and bathed in the cool water at the very bottom and looked up to test a theory that if one is at the bottom of a deep well, one could see the stars by daylight. I regret to state that I failed to see any stars. Possibly the well was not deep enough. So one theory at least has been exploded. The ancients say that one finds Truth at the bottom of a well: I found coolness and quiet and calmness and peace of mind. It was indeed a strange experience being all alone at the bottom of a well. I have never repeated this practice in any other district however hot it may have been.

Two other facts about Cuddapah I remember vividly: one was the fact that owing to the excess of rain during the first year of my stay a wave of malaria followed the rains. My wife and children were the first to go down with it and after four weeks I also succumbed to the attacks of the malarial mosquitoes. And this, despite the fact that we took all the usual precautions—boiling of drinking water, sleeping under the mosquito-nets and using Citronella oil on our hands and feet in the evenings. The other fact was that I attempted to regulate the drinking water supply for Cuddapah by getting the local Council to accept a suitable scheme for canalising the water in the local river, Bugga, I think it was called. This is the most ambitious scheme I undertook for the place and I got a good Assistant Engineer to work out careful plans. The

canalising would also have the effect of cleaning up the stagnant stretches of the river which nourished the malarial parasite. Two years after I left Cuddapah I learnt that the Municipal Council had at last sanctioned the scheme. I presume that by now it has been duly executed and Cuddapah town rid once and for all of malaria.

No mention of Cuddapah will be complete without some reference to the famous Jammalamadugu taluk noted for its black cotton soil. This taluk was equally notorious for the number of deadly murders that were committed in it. I went up to taluk headquarters to Jammalamadugu town itself and camped in a small Missionary bungalow close to the local Travellers' Bungalow and visited the local Tuberculosis hospital among other engagements there. In this hospital I endowed a bed in honour of the memory of my late mother. A great quantity of the well-known Cuddapah slabs are available in this taluk and even all the houseroofs are paved with these stones. The place is also notorious for a very deadly type of scorpion and altogether I was not sorry to leave black cotton soil and murders and scorpions and return to headquarters. One of my colleagues had a fascinating theory that there is some connection between black cotton soil and the incidence of murder. There was some truth in this theory because in the Coimbatore district the greatest number of murders are committed in the black cotton soil area there. Be that as it may, Jammalamadugu gave plenty of work to the Deputy Superintendent of Police stationed there and in addition to individual murder cases he had his hands full periodically with rioting cases accompanied with murder on a big scale by the rival factions in the villages.

The Cuddapah district contains a lot of rich forest and towards its eastern border it adjoins the very rich Mamandur forest of the Chittoor district. I was told that at Balupalle, where the Bombay line enters the ghat section and climbs into the Cuddapah plateau, tigers were easy to find. I took the trouble of going up there by the difficult forest road and I

camped one day and one night in the bungalow with a skeleton staff. But no tiger or panther came to disturb my repose and there was no news of fresh kills in the vicinity to enable me to sit up in a machan and watch the fun. On my way back to Kodur, the base camp, I made an inspection at Settigunta Reserve forest. This was designed to formulate plans for a co-operative colony for ex-servicemen. There was some rich soil here between the railway line and the adjacent hills and my scheme was to dig for the colonists deep wells costing Rs. 3,000 each and grant them each half an acre on which to grow oranges. The latter thrive in this climate and Kodur is famous for its batavian oranges. I left the district long before the scheme was implemented, but I sent up full details of it before I left.

Another project which I investigated with great enthusiasm and some difficulty was the famous Gandi-Kota Project. I had to travel seven miles by bullock cart in the sandy bed of the river in order to reach the point at which the river Gandi-Kota flows through a rocky gorge. The engineering plan was to build a dam at this point so as to dam up the waters of that river in a large reservoir. I formulated a very detailed plan having got all the necessary particulars from the Executive Engineer who accompanied me and sent it up to Government. Here again I left the district on transfer as Secretary of the Local Administration Department at Madras before I could get orders sanctioning it. However, I understood later from some of my colleagues in the new Andhra State after 1947 that the Gandi-Kota Project was finally executed and made a very considerable addition to the water resources of the Cuddapah district.

Before leaving that district, I should like to record the experience of a former Collector in the Guvvalacheruvu Ghat. Having been informed that a tiger had killed a buffalo in the forest three miles away from the bungalow on the hill-top, this Collector at 4 o'clock in the afternoon proceeded to this spot, had a machan built into a

convenient tree and sat up there from 5 o'clock onwards with a thermos flask and some sandwiches. At about 7 p.m. when it was just dusk, the tiger appeared and made one attempt to reach the kill. The Collector fired prematurely, missed the tiger and succeeded in scaring it away and then he sat up all night bitten by mosquitoes and hungry and lonely, on this tree top. No tiger turned up to recompense him for his long vigil. But it had an amusing sequel. A Missionary gentleman was camping in his tent on the other side of the road to this ghat, on the plains portion on the Rayachoti side, and early that morning at 6 o'clock he was just drinking his morning cup of tea when he glanced idly through the open doorway of the tent and then his heart missed a beat. For, there hardly 20 yards away in the dim mist of the morning was walking at the end of the tamarind tope in which he had pitched his tent, a magnificent tiger. It was strolling along as if it had no care in the world and was only 50 yards away from him. This Missionary was fond of shooting and always carried a gun with him. He rushed for his gun and took a pot-shot at the tiger at 50 yards range and got the animal straightaway with his first lucky shot.

About half an hour later the entire village turned up to admire this fine piece of marksmanship and the Missionary took the opportunity to explain how God had sent the tiger to him early that morning to be killed. Either way, the laugh was on the Collector who had returned at 7 a.m. dishevelled, hungry and disappointed only to hear at the Travellers' Bungalow about the phenomenal success of the rival shikari.

SOME MORE I.C.S. PERSONALITIES

AN ACCOUNT OF I.C.S. PERSONALITIES WILL NOT BE COMplete without a reference to Mr. A. R. C. Westlake who was my Collector at Ramnad and afterwards came to Madras as Revenue Secretary. Westlake was a pleasant man to work with and was a good, thoughtful, hard-working Collector. He was somewhat argumentative and was once caught out because he left the Ramnad district and visited the enclave of Pudukottah without getting the previous permission of Government to do so. There was a Government order that no I.C.S. officer could leave the territory of the Province of Madras without previous permission. Westlake's defence was that the State of Pudukottah was surrounded on all sides by the Province of Madras and that though he had gone into the State, he was still physically not outside the Province of Madras. Ingenious, but not convincing. Government were not impressed by this argument and merely told him that in future he must obey the rule more strictly. Westlake, when he was Revenue Secretary, broke away from accepted tradition and attempted to make a local inspection of a site in dispute, of which one of the Members of the Board had already made a local inspection and submitted a report to the Government. The Board hotly contested this inspection-right of the Revenue Secretary and maintained that there were also orders of the Government to the effect that such inspections were otiose and that Westlake, as a good Secretary, had only to submit the papers to Government for orders with such remarks as he chose to make, but without the right of making any inspection of his own. The point raised was very interesting and I am not sure how exactly the final

decision went. But the fact remains that in the Government of India, the Secretaries to Government very often run down to remote parts of the country in order to study at first hand the problems that come to their notice in New Delhi. Both Mr. and Mrs. Westlake were very hospitable and socially they were extremely pleasant.

One of the interesting personalities who had preceded me at Coondapur was a Sub-Collector named Doig. The stories I heard there about Doig's activities were many and sensational. One was that he told the local Tahsildar to come at 2 o'clock one afternoon as they were going out for an inspection. The Tahsildar, a portly gentleman of 45, with a turban, coat and dhoti, turned up at the appointed hour. Doig took him out for a walk in the direction of a mango tope close to the bungalow and suddenly without warning Doig shinned up a mango tree until he was about 10 feet from the ground. From this eminence, he shouted down to the Tahsildar, "Tahsildar, do you know to climb trees?"

The Tahsildar who was in the running for a Deputy Collectorship, having passed all the usual tests, promptly replied, "Yes, Sir".

"Well," shouted Doig, "come up, man. What are you waiting for?"

The Tahsildar taken aback by this order was yet unwilling to give up his chances of promotion and so with great difficulty he climbed up the tree to the first fork about 6 feet high.

"Come higher, come higher," exhorted Doig.

The Tahsildar then pleaded that the branches higher up would not bear his weight. Soon he got tired of this and Doig scrambled out of the tree and so did the Tahsildar. They resumed their walk and he went to the bank of the river where someone had tied up a boat. Doig promptly stepped into the boat with his duffadar and asked the Tahsildar to follow suit. He rowed out to the mid-stream and then asked the Tahsildar, "Tahsildar, do you know to

swim ? "

The poor man replied shakily, " Yes ".

Immediately Doig took off his coat and his trousers and jumped into the water and swam around the boat keeping on shouting to the Tahsildar, " Come in man, come in ". Finally, the Tahsildar in desperation took off his coat and shoes and plunged in and promptly sank as he did not know how to swim a stroke. Seeing the unfortunate man struggling and gurgling, Doig swam up, got him by the neck and with the duffadar's help thrust him back into the boat. They rowed back to the shore in order to change their clothes. The Tahsildar took his leave of the Sub-Collector, went home and promptly applied for two months' leave.

Some of the other stories about Doig I refuse to believe. One was that he kept a dark-coloured bottle on his magisterial table from which he used to pour liberally a glassful and drink it while he was holding court. As it was a colourless liquid, people said it was some form of alcohol like gin. I think it was only water as no Sub-Collector worth the name would drink gin openly in the court like that. Doig also was supposed to have invented the method of counting flies on the ceiling in difficult cases ; if they were odd in number he gave a verdict in favour of the complainant ; if they were even, accused were acquitted. This again was a story which has been ascribed at different times to different judges and I am not sure that Doig was himself given to this dubious practice.

Among the strange personalities in the I.C.S. was A. M. A. C. Galletti whose episode with the erring Tahsildar is a classic. The Tahsildar had a cook who had served him a curry that was burnt. The Tahsildar directed that the unfortunate man should immediately be put behind the bars in the lock-up of the Sub-jail. Being the Taluk Magistrate, this was immediately done and the cook spent a night in jail, a most high-handed act on the part of the Tahsildar. On being released the cook ran all the way to Galletti's bungalow

and saw the Collector as he sat reading his morning paper. On hearing this tale of woe, Galletti sent for the Tahsildar and said briefly, "Tahsildar, you are a donkey".

"Yes, sir," acquiesced the Tahsildar.

"Well," said the Collector, "go at once to the local pound, admit yourself as a donkey and come back within one hour and show me the receipt!"

The Tahsildar bowed and withdrew and rushed straight-away to the pound-keeper and paid a rupee and got a receipt from the pound-keeper for Re. 1 as paid for releasing an impounded donkey. This with great fear and trembling he produced before the Collector. Galletti looked at it and then remarked unkindly, "Now, I have proof, Tahsildar, that you are a donkey!" and Galletti chased the Tahsildar away after warning him never to repeat this kind of high-handedness any more. Other stories about Galletti are perhaps apocryphal but perhaps the one that gained the greatest currency in my time was the rumour that when he could not convince the Provincial Government about certain measures necessary to combat famine in his district he complained to the Government of India against the Madras Government. Frankly I do not believe this story, but the fact remains that Galletti who was a very able Collector never became a Member of the Board. His son, R. Galletti came out in the Service a couple of years after me and was sent for training as Assistant Collector to his father. The junior Galletti edited an English-Telugu dictionary and was indeed a very erudite scholar. In this dictionary I found the word "lanjam" correctly given as equivalent for "bribe", and the Telugu example given to illustrate this was, when rendered into English, as follows: "It is the duty of Government officers to take bribes!"

Let me turn now to the younger generation. Among my own colleagues must be mentioned my friend J. E. Maher who chose the Judicial line when I chose the Executive in the seventh year of our service. Maher had a delightfully

casual manner and a typical Oxford drawl. On one occasion when he was interviewing the Chief Secretary, Maher slouched well back in his chair and lifted one of his long legs on to a corner of the Chief Secretary's table. The Chief Secretary darted two or three fierce glances at the offending leg, but with no effect. Finally the Chief Secretary said in a cold clear voice, "Peon, bring another chair for Mr. Maher's legs!" On hearing this, Maher realised what was wrong and removed the offending leg, saying, "I beg your pardon, sir. I did not notice where my leg had got to". This is a true story and I can vouch for it.

During the half-yearly examination, Maher would invariably turn up not at 10 a.m. but at 10-25 a.m. and then wander around the rows of the other candidates and come and say "Hallo" to me and to his other cronies. Finally he would wander up to the Superintendent's desk, collect the question paper from him and settle down to the serious business of answering it. If leisureliness is the hall-mark of any gentleman, then Maher was the perfect example of one.

Joe Pare, an Oxford graduate, also a contemporary of mine, stayed four years after 1947 and went away in 1951 to Malaya. But I shall always remember Joe for an incident at the Board's lunch-table. I was narrating the story of the meeting of Kudva and A. S. P. Ayyar, two of our senior members, after four years and how they had exchanged polite enquiries about their respective healths.

"How is your family, Kudva?" asked A. S. P.

"I have three children now, one boy and two girls," said Kudva.

And not to be out-done in courtesy, Kudva asked, "And how is your family now, A. S. P.?"

"Four children. Two girls and two boys, the more the merrier to drive away the foreigner!" chortled A. S. P.

This story was greeted with shouts of laughter by the others present. I had forgotten we had one Englishman, Joe Pare, in our midst. A slow flush spread on his face from his

neck upwards and Joe came back with the entirely unexpected repartee, "I expect A. S. P. Ayyar cried *Jai Hind* every time he did the creative act!"

As I have pointed out in the preface, this book is not really about my contemporaries or about the Indian half of the Steel Frame. Therefore many familiar I.C.S. personalities who figured in the years after 1947 will not make their appearance here. But among the Britishers who left in 1947 were Aubrey Morris and Andrew Southorn. Morris and I were very friendly when he was Sub-Collector, Shermadevi, and I was Settlement Officer in Tirunelveli and he used to come up about once a week and spend the evening with me at Palamcottah. Southorn was a very efficient Deputy Secretary, Public Department, and made his mark in war-time by close attention to his duties. So did Joe Pare though he did not catch the eye as much as Andrew did.

Turning now to my Indian colleagues, the most interesting of them all was of course T. S. Ramachandran, son of a distinguished High Court Judge, and blessed with a phenomenal memory and a gun-throat; Ramachandran's actions were never predictable. When I was Sub-Collector, Coondapur, I was walking up the Light-house hill one very hot summer afternoon towards the end of May, when I came across Ramachandran, the District Judge, walking up the hill from another road, clad in white tennis trousers and white shirt over which he was sporting a heavy white sweater and a rain-coat. Held high over his head was a palm-leaf umbrella. When I asked him the reasons for his singular attire, shouted Ramachandran at the top of his voice, "My dear boy, did you ever read your District Gazetteer? If not, turn to page 189 where it says in the district of South Kanara in the months of May and June the South West Monsoon may break at any moment. So, be prepared." I said that explained the umbrella and the mackintosh, but why the sweater? Ramachandran then replied to me, "I'm over-weight, man. I'm trying to reduce a bit by sweating it out". So I laughed

and said his actions were highly logical and hoped that the monsoon would give him early relief from his self-appointed mackintosh-cum-umbrella vigil. Since then, Ramachandran and I have been good friends over nearly quarter of a century and the sum total of his episodes would almost fill a book. He had a fruity scheme in Anantapur that the best way of dealing with water shortage in that district was to harness wind power and raise water from the wells by putting up huge wind-mills. In Madras he wrote to the Commissioner of Police and suggested that the signs in bus-stops should have pictures of buses, a reform that the then Commissioner refused to accept but which is now ordinarily displayed on all our bus-stops. His best repartee was to an American lady working in the Consulate, Miss Helen Sexton, who was introduced to him at a party.

"What a peculiar name you have, Mr. Ramachandran," said Miss Sexton incautiously.

"Peculiar?" retorted Ramachandran. "Look who's talking! When your own name signifies 20 cwt. of the commodity most priced on earth."

"What? What?" asked Miss Sexton. "What are you talking about?"

"Why? Your name of course," said Ramachandran, "20 cwt. or one ton, and sex the most desirable commodity on earth, thus Sexton!"

Miss Sexton joined heartily in the laugh against herself and went round telling everybody she had met a most extraordinary man from the Indian Civil Service, in which she was not far from the truth.

When a visiting Inspector General of Police, L. B. Gasson paid his courtesy call on Ramachandran when he was Collector of Anantapur, Ramachandran asked him, "You know, Mr. Gasson, that your name signifies Hanuman?" *

"No, I do not," said Gasson completely puzzled by this

*The famous Monkey-God of Hindu Mythology, faithful Servant of God Rama.

observation.

"Well, you see it's like this," pursued T. S. R. "You are Gas-son, that is son of Gas, and what is gas in Sanskrit is Vayu and Hanuman, the Monkey-God, is the son of Vayu and therefore you are Hanuman!"

"I see, I see!" said Gasson smiling a watery smile, "I was never told that before."

The conversation then proceeded to more ordinary official matters.

Though this book is mainly about the British I.C.S. and my contacts with them, I shall refer briefly to a few Indian I.C.S. officers since retired whom it was my privilege to know or have heard of in those years before 1947. First comes Sir S. V. Ramamurthi, our first Indian Chief Secretary who brought a fine mathematical brain to bear upon all his work. Then there was S. Ranganathan who retired as First Member of the Board who, in his youth, took so many rewards of Rs. 1,000 from Government for learning new Indian languages other than the two he was bound to take the Government in despair cancelled the G.O. granting such money-rewards to Civilians. A very gentle kind of man, Ranganathan made an excellent First Member. Then there was Mc. G. Tampoe, the Ceylonese of whom there were several good stories. The best was about when as Collector of Tirunelveli, his Assistant rashly signed a bit of poramboke land to a designing land-grabber who took advantage of the Assistant Collector's brashness to present a "petition" for assignment to the Assistant Collector who had no such powers. When at Jamabandhi the land-grabber asked for the cancellation of 'B' Memo charges for his encroachment on the ground of valid assignment and produced the Assistant Collector's order, Mc. G. Tampoe "honoured" the assignment without batting an eye-lid, in order not to let down the Assistant Collector, but sent for him privately and rebuked him in these remarkable terms: "By all means assign away any part of the district you have a mind to, but for Heaven's sake when

you've done it, kindly let me know, so that I may know what parcels of the district are still left in my charge!" The Assistant Collector, Sivaramakrishnan,* apologised profusely and learnt how effective sarcasm can be!

Among the senior Indian Civilians who rose to the rank of Chief Secretary after Ramamurthi was K. Ramunni Menon. Ramunni Menon came back to Madras after a spell of being Deputy High Commissioner at London and held the Chief Secretaryship for eleven years, I think. As it falls in the post-1947 period, it does not strictly fall in the purview of this book. It is unlikely that this record will ever be beaten in the near future!

I have referred to his successor in office, W. R. S. Satthianathan, in another connection, but "Bill" as he was popularly called by his colleagues was a very likeable kind of man. Bill had all kinds of tall stories in connection with his shikari exploits, and it was fun to draw him out in connection with these. He used to be a tennis player in his youth, and after being a bachelor for several years of his service, he ultimately married a lady with a tennis reputation, Miss Appachoo. And this happened just when every one had given him up as being a confirmed bachelor!

As for the younger ones like R. A. Gopalaswami, T. Sivasankar, Lobo Prabhu, Govindan Nair and others of their ilk, they are too close to my own times for me to record anything here and they will come in for mention if the second half of my book dealing with my Indian colleagues ever gets written or sees the light of the day. For one thing I have not half the number of picturesque stories about them as I have of the "Steel half" of the Service. Be that as it may, they were all good men and true and somebody must do for them what I have tried to do here for the British "half" of the Service.

A book on the I.C.S. with special reference to the Madras cadre can hardly be complete without mention of Mr. Hilton

*Who died prematurely while he was Sessions Judge, West Tanjore.

Brown, the well-known author of *Dictator's Limited* and of *Potter's Clay*. When I was a Sub-Collector, Hilton Brown was Secretary of the Local Administration Department and I remember one day I called at the Secretariat at 12-45 p.m. and sent in my card to see him. Unfortunately Hilton Brown had a lunch engagement and talked to me for hardly a minute before dashing off to keep it. Hilton Brown or "H. B." as he was known to the readers of *Punch* did not seem to take kindly to official routine and retired prematurely from the I.C.S. to join the staff of *Punch*. In later years he returned to India and settled down in Kotagiri in the Nilgiris from where he continued to write articles, light verse and novels until he died last year. It is too early to assess his work but there is not the slightest doubt that his short stories will long be remembered for his vignettes of European life in South India.

Another well-known Madras civilian was Mr. Conran Smith who made history as the first I.C.S. Commissioner of the Madras Corporation. He was justly popular and set right many things that needed to be set right in our fair city Afterwards he was transferred to the Government of India and held several high posts there, and became Sir Conran Smith, K.C.I.E. (if I remember right). Our paths never crossed officially and the first time I met him was at a party when after retirement he was paying a flying visit to Madras. A marriage which united two I.C.S. families however took place when a daughter of the Conran Smiths married a son of Sir Hugh and Lady Hood, and the young couple are at present living happily in Madras.

And though this list of personalities is probably tedious I must find place for a tough representative of the Steel Frame, Mr. T. G. Rutherford.

Hailing from New Zealand, Rutherford had something of the Australian ruggedness in his character and was a strong supporter of the Steel Frame idea. I remember when I was Settlement Officer, Tirunelveli, I was invited by V. Rama-

krishna, the Collector, to a dinner given in Rutherford's honour. At this dinner the talk turned to secret agents and I criticised rather severely the treacherous nature of a certain Indian "Quisling" who while pretending to be loyal to his country was actually supplying secret information to the opposite side. This greatly offended Rutherford who a little later became Home Secretary and when my name was suggested for Joint Secretary, Home Department, I understood he turned it down. I was not sorry. Rutherford created a furore by his famous speech at Trichinopoly in which he sharply criticised the Congress, saying that at the very moment when the British Lion was engaged in a life-and-death struggle with its enemies, the Congress were busy biting the Lion in its hind-flanks (he used a very indelicate expression indeed!). This speech was deeply resented and in 1947 Rutherford retired to New Zealand and settled down to a life of Agriculture and Dairy Farming (so we were informed).

LIFE IN THE SECRETARIAT

I HAVE MENTIONED AT THE OUTSET THAT THIS BOOK will deal only with the I.C.S. and me up to the year 1947. Any references to incidents after 1947 will be accidental. For obvious reasons it will be embarrassing for me to write about the period subsequent to 1947 as I am too close to the events of the last 15 years and to my numerous colleagues still in office. But my first spell of life in the Secretariat took place when in April, 1945, I was selected by Mr. D. N. Strathie, then Chief Adviser to Government, as Secretary in the Local Administration Department in succession to the late Mr. V. N. Kudva. The Local Administration Secretary was reputed to have the lightest charge of any of the Secretaries. I can confidently assert this is correct. My room was a small neat one, three rooms away from that of the Chief Secretary in the same wing and in my room was an easy-chair about which we used to tease Mr. Kudva a lot in the lunch-room. I was lucky to get a house in the Victoria Crescent which had just been vacated by Pulla Reddi and I straightaway joined the Presidency Club where I dashed each evening at 5-30 to have a couple of sets of tennis.

Secretariat hours were 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. and the lunch interval 2-15 p.m. to 3 p.m. We Secretaries used to lunch together and W. Scott Brown and J. B. Brown were both Chief Secretaries in my time there, presiding at the head of the lunch-table. Ramunni Menon, later Chief Secretary was then Secretary, Public Works Department.

Life in the Secretariat is naturally very different from a Collector's life. Everything is done for you and the file reaches you in a finished shape and all you have to do is

either to write a summarising note and push it up to your Adviser for orders or you have to pass final orders yourself on matters which are within your own competence. Most of my work consisted of reading the administration reports of the various Municipalities, assessing their work, reviewing their budgets and writing confidential reports about their Commissioners. My Adviser was Mr. T. Austin, a very pleasant man to work with, who had two types of smiles for anybody who went to see him. The first was more a grimace than a smile and was achieved by lifting the upper lip towards the nose, keeping the lower part of the face absolutely fixed, and the other was a genuine smile when Austin was amused, which was rare. I used to see him about once a week or so with a file marked by him for discussion and the interviews usually lasted two to five minutes. His was a nice room in the new block facing the sea and two doors away was Adviser Priestley with whom I had little to do.

On the whole I liked the Secretariat work. The files that came to you were not too complicated, the tempo of the work was light and smooth and I had the additional kudos of being the youngest Secretary to the Government at the time. I remember that the scheme to which I really applied my mind with considerable zest was a scheme which many people had touched and left unfinished, namely, the proposal to build three over-bridges over the railway line for traffic at the Chetput, Periamet and Beach level-crossings. The public had been crying out for a long time at the consistent delays to traffic at these three points. I myself had been held up at the Chetput level-crossing for fifteen to twenty-minutes on several days owing to a succession of steam-driven trains and electric trains coming one after the other, making it impossible for the gate-man with the best will in the world to open the gates. Meanwhile on each side traffic had accumulated for nearly half a mile. Having studied the file I walked over to the room of Mr. Ramunni Menon, Secretary, P.W.D., and asked him whether Government would give the Corporation

one-third of the sum required as loan and another one-third as grant and the Corporation would then find one-third from its own funds. The Secretary, P.W.D., would not commit himself to this formula, but I went back to my room and wrote a note pointing out the absolute necessity of these three over-bridges and indicating that the cost which was considerable might be met by the formula that I had proposed to Mr. Ramunni Menon. Finally just before I left the Secretariat I understood that the matter had been referred to the Corporation for its agreement to bear one-third of the cost from its funds and one-third by way of loan. I am glad to add that though the matter hung fire for several years after I left, it was taken up by my successors in office and finally one of the three over-bridges, namely, the one at Chetput, the worst of the lot, was completed two years ago and triumphantly opened by the Governor. The opening day was a proud day for me because of this small but not negligible part I had played in my attempt to get the scheme sanctioned.

During the later part of my Secretaryship, Mr. J. B. Brown whom I relieved at Chingleput five years earlier became the Chief Secretary and I have described elsewhere * the manner in which he walked into my room one fine morning and asked me point blank whether I would like to go to Malaya and how I accepted that offer, bringing my first tenure of office in the Secretariat in Madras to an unexpected early closure about a month later, when Mr. Brown's recommendation of my name to the Government of India had borne fruit. I now see having been Revenue Secretary from 1950 onwards for nearly six years and P.W.D. Secretary for two years and Home Secretary for one year, that the Secretariat as I knew it in 1945 was a much quieter place than it is now. Perhaps it will be useful for me to explain why this was so. It must be remembered that in 1945 I was working under an Adviser regime and only people strictly with business to

**Malayan Adventure*, published in 1950.

attend to would endeavour to come to the Secretariat in order to pursue their particular interests. After 1947 with the influx of the popular Government many more people from the districts used to come up to the Secretariat to see some Minister or other who was known to them in order to grind their particular axe. Thus, during my three later spells as Secretary, I would always find the corridors of the Secretariat crowded with people, many of them with the typical rustic look about them, indicating they had come up from the districts of set purpose. This is of course understandable and is the necessary concomitant in a democratic regime. It did of course mean a considerable addition to one's work as Secretary, because invariably the man who had a matter to push, after seeing the Minister would follow this up by a visit to the Secretary concerned so that no stone might be left unturned in his attempts to get what he wanted. Thus much more time was spent over interviews than before. Again with a popular Ministry in power, whenever the Legislative Assembly was in session after 1947 several of the M.L.As. who were acquainted with me used to drop in to discuss various matters pertaining to their Constituency. I remember that when I was Revenue Secretary an M.L.A. who is now a Minister in the Kerala Government used to drop in at least once a month in order to discuss with me the complicated sections of the Malabar Tenancy Bill and suggest alterations to the wording of the Bill that could be made use of in the Joint Select Committee Meetings. All these interviews made heavy inroads into one's time and naturally much more file work had to be taken home and done in the early morning before coming back to work at the Secretariat. This necessity to take files home was never felt by me while I was Secretary, Local Administration.

The common lunch-room that we Secretaries shared was a good opportunity for us to meet every day and discuss everything under the sun. The Chief Secretary usually came in about 2-15 p.m. and presided at the head of the table. By

common consent talking " shop " was taboo and general topics were the order of the day. Each member of the lunch-room brought his own lunch, mostly in a " hot-case ", as several of us went in for a curry and rice meal. After 2-45 p.m. smoking-room stories were not barred, and the Chief Secretary usually left us younger ones about that time. So there was little or no constraint about the proceedings. We had some very animated discussions during lunch and it became the unwritten law that nothing said in the lunch-room should find its way outside. This rule was faithfully kept by me and indeed by all the other members. Perhaps the happiest part of Secretariat life was the good fun and *camaraderie* of the lunch-room. The Board's office too had a good lunch-room adjacent to the Secretary's room, but I was never able to find in it the happy-go-lucky spirit of the Secretariat lunch-room. Perhaps the difference in seniority between the Members and the Secretaries of the Board was partly responsible for this. But even here, some good fun could be had.

LAW AND ORDER PROBLEMS

DURING HIS EARLIER YEARS, THE I.C.S. OFFICER IS A Joint Magistrate with only First Class powers, that is, the imposing of rigorous imprisonment up to two years or fine up to Rs. 1,000, and his jurisdiction is limited to roughly one-third of the district. In his later years when he becomes a full Collector he becomes also the District Magistrate with the same First Class powers but with a much wider jurisdiction. What is more, revision petitions from the orders of Sub-Magistrates go to the District Magistrate as often as to the District Judge. The District Magistrate usually does not waste his time trying cases. All that is done by the Joint Magistrates who are also appellate courts for the Second and Third Class Magistrates working under them.

The most interesting part of this magisterial work is that dealing with the Security sections, those sections in the Cr.P.C. which are specifically enacted to enable the Magistrate to deal effectively with law and order problems. Sec. 107, Cr.P.C., deals with the breaches of the peace and Sec. 109 with how to deal with vagrants who have no ostensible means of subsistence. Where there is a breach of peace anticipated as regards any dispute over possession of land, Sec. 145, Cr.P.C., enables the Magistrate to attach the subject-matter of the dispute and issue notices to both sides to present their claims before him so that he can adjudicate on the question of possession. But in spite of these sections, from time to time the Magistrates have to deal with law and order situations involving grave personal risk to themselves. Many of these situations arose during the Civil Disobedience Campaign. Others as in a district like Ramnad

arose from the ordinary clashes between communities over a disputed right of way in taking religious or marriage processions; sometimes a clash might occur between rival factions in villages leading to a fight in the agricultural off-season.

When I was Joint Magistrate, Tirupattur, a very interesting law and order situation arose over the conduct of the Moharrum festival. The procession with Tazias was to start at the centre of the town, pass through the various public streets, then turn at a certain point and pass through a narrow street in most of which the houses belonged to the Hindus and then open out again into a broad thoroughfare leading to a well-known tank into which the Tazias would be immersed. Three years before I took charge, the Moharrum procession created some mischief while passing through the Hindu street as at the height of their excitement over the breast-beating ceremony some of the Muslims threw lighted torches into the Hindu houses and one or two fires were started which were luckily put out in time and the conflagration brought under control. Ever since, it was the practice for the Joint Magistrate to pass a 144-order three days before the Moharrum festival directing that nobody in the procession should carry knives or torches. The Circle Inspector reported the facts to me and I at once passed the usual 144-order. On this a strong deputation of Muslim leaders waited on me at 2 p.m. on the Moharrum day and represented that they would guarantee the good behaviour of the crowd during the procession, that knives were needed for the devotees to slash themselves during the ceremonial and that the torches would only be used to light up the way and not for incendiary purposes. I pointed out that knives and torches were obviously dangerous in a procession where their feelings were so worked up and that a 144-order which was passed after due consideration must be obeyed. Some of the hot heads in the deputation thereupon left my bungalow tossing their heads and muttering dark threats and saying

that they "would see to it" at the time of the procession. I instructed the Deputy Superintendent of Police and the Circle Inspector to have a strong force of men ready to accompany the procession when it started at 10 p.m. at the central point and that I would come there at 10 o'clock sharp to conduct the procession personally (that was, I understood, also the *mamool*). I arrived at the spot at 10 p.m. (not without misgivings) but having studied the plan of the roads I realised that the only point at which a strong contingent of rioters could join the procession with knives and torches was where a certain road from the Muslim quarters impinged on the main road taken by the procession. Having foreseen this, like a good strategist I placed a European sergeant with 20 picked men armed with carbines at that spot, facing the direction of the Muslim street and with their backs to the main thoroughfare. As I anticipated, just about the time that we started we had news that a contingent of 200 Muslims with knives and torches were intending to join the procession through that street. I sent word to them through an intermediary that they did so at their own risk as I would certainly disperse them by use of the force that was necessary. On hearing this cryptic message, they abandoned their knives and torches but about 200 strong they came on. The sergeant had orders that if anybody came along without knives or torches he was at liberty to search them and then he could let them pass. He did this and many of them joined the procession and the most incredible thing followed. Most of the time they created confusion by pushing back the Tazias in the wrong direction. This was soon put a stop to. But in the resultant *melee* I got separated from the Police striking party and was alone by myself for about five minutes in the midst of an excited mob of processionists. However, as luck would have it they did not recognise me despite my height and I finally rejoined the party. Thus, after a lot of fun and games we reached the Hindu street. Here I put one section of the party at the head of the procession and the other section

consisting of the sergeant and his men at the tail and thus in good order we proceeded through the street without any trouble. Once it turned and entered the broad thoroughfare and was well on its way to the tank, the Deputy Superintendent of Police whispered to me that my presence was no longer necessary and I could go home. I looked at my watch. It was then 12-40 a.m. and I got home just before 1 a.m. My anxious wife and children were awake waiting to hear that I was back safe and sound. I have described this incident in some detail because it has always struck me that the presence of a constituted authority at the scene of disturbance is usually helpful in avoiding serious trouble. I expect the presence of the Joint Magistrate has a psychological effect on the crowd and makes them realise that trouble is in store for them if they misbehave. In the presence of the Sub-Magistrate the possibility of a riot taking place is much greater because the authority of the Sub-Magistrate is correspondingly less. That is why as explained in another chapter it is always necessary for the Sub-Collector, Ramnad, to attend the various processions in Kamuthi leaving all his normal work behind.

The last question which is relevant to this chapter is a painful one about the necessity of opening fire in order to save the Police and oneself from grave bodily harm, possibly death. There is no doubt that situations sometimes develop in which if one holds one's hand too long the angry mob can easily overpower the small police force which is there to control them. At such moments where the mob is obviously bent on mischief it is the duty of the Magistrate after giving the usual warnings to open fire both in the exercise of self-defence and in order to save the police party under him from annihilation. Luckily for me, though I had to deal with a number of law and order situations during my 30 years of service I have not had the misfortune to order the opening of fire on my fellow-citizens. For this I thank all the Gods there be as it must be a most painful sight to watch the police

firing into a dense crowd of human beings. This is clearly the most painful part of the District Magistrate's official duties. I remember once I had a discussion with Mr. Thorne, my Tanjore Collector, about whether one should hesitate to go out in such situations. He said the element of fear and the element of personal courage are obviously an individual equation. "What would make me go out and face the music," he said, "is not because I am particularly brave but the shame of not having faced it would drive me to do so." These words were spoken with great modesty and considerable frankness but I must confess that whatever considerations may be that impel a man to do his duty an element of personal courage is clearly involved and the best proverb on which the Magistrate when placed in such difficult positions can rely on is: "A coward dies a hundred deaths. A brave man dies but once." As for me, the quotation that I rely on to carry me through such a crisis is Browning's famous line: "Time and the hour run through the roughest day."

The portion of my magisterial work that was most irksome to me was the trial of the unfortunate vagrants who were put up by the Police under Sec. 109, Cr.P.C. Evidence was very stereotyped, always to the effect that in the dark night, as a head-constable was moving about in a particular town or village he found a man prowling along, viz., the counter petitioner present in the court, and on seizing him and searching him they found the house-breaking tool (material object No. I produced in the court) and the box of matches (material object No. II) on his person. He had no satisfactory account for his being there. My friend, S. Parthasarathi, who recently retired as Inspector General of Police, Railways, always used to say with a laugh that in every police-station there would be a nail on the wall, on which they would hang material object No. I, namely, the house-breaking tool used against these unfortunate men. The fact remains that with these poor persons, the only way of taking preventive action was by a Security section and they usually got about

six months or a year in jail because they were unable to furnish the bond for good behaviour that was asked for from them.

Even more pitiable was the case of those who had committed a petty theft or house-breaking after having once been convicted of the same offence earlier by a Magistrate. Sec. 75, I.P.C. required that a more deterrent sentence should be imposed on such offenders and the trial was, therefore, invariably put before the First Class Magistrate. Very often I had grave suspicions that they had not committed any subsequent offence but that the Police had charged them for getting credit for such convictions and for "statistical purposes". Whenever the facts were at all in doubt I used to acquit them. But later when I was District Magistrate of Trichinopoly I was horrified to find that one of my Joint Magistrates had detained several of these Sec. 75, I.P.C. under-trials for months together, thereby defeating the ends of justice and punishing these poor people without bringing them to trial. Needless to say that he got into very serious trouble for this and other omissions and it was Mr. E. M. Gawne who investigated the matter further, at the request of Government and booked the offender. The fact remains that the section itself is not one which any Judiciary should keep on a statute book since to punish a person twice as severely for the same offence, merely on the ground that he did such an offence earlier, is in my humble opinion an utterly indefensible proposition of law.

Chapter 14

THE I.C.S. AND WAR WORK

IN THE CHAPTER RELATING TO MY WORK AS COLLECTOR of Trichy, I have not stressed the tremendous tempo at which work was done owing to the War. For one thing, Trichy was a very strategic place, it was the most important junction for the Southern Railway and it had the lovely broadcasting station of All India Radio at Tiruverambur, sixteen miles away. So it was not unnatural that the military authorities should place a number of important units of troops in and around Trichy town. Nearly every bit of reserve forest land had its encampment of troops and problems soon arose in the Civil and Military relations. For example, hardly three miles away from my bungalow, just beyond Khajamalai, three village women had gone down the step-well to draw water in their pots. Two *javans* from a military unit close by saw them go down and thought this was an excellent opportunity to follow them and molest them. The women when they were released rushed to the civil Police and gave a complaint of rape. I sent them to Colonel Gain who was the seniormost officer commanding at Trichy and he agreed with me that it was necessary to punish these men if the account of the women was found to be true. At the same time, he showed me a section of the Army Act under which he could claim that the entire trial should be under court-martial according to military procedure and law. I found that he was correct and the District Superintendent of Police instructed the Police Inspector to lay a charge-sheet before me and I transferred this charge-sheet to Colonel Gain for further action against the *javans*. They were duly identified by the women at a parade held by the military and the case

was proceeded with and each of them, I learnt, got one year's imprisonment. But the prompt action taken in this matter inspired plenty of local confidence that the military would not be allowed to run riot in the district, and the news of the manner in which these men were tried and convicted spread throughout the district and had a very salutary effect in curbing the sexual ardour of the *javans*.

The next problem was the serious situation that arose on April 13th and 14th of 1942 when news was sent to us from Madras that a section of the Japanese invasion fleet could be expected shortly on the coast of Thanjavur and that they would try to land troops on the Thanjavur coast and from there to infiltrate into the interior, particularly my district. Colonel Gain was in touch with C. K. Vijayaraghavan, then Collector of Thanjavur and special patrols of village menials were appointed by the Collector to watch the sea-coast and to report the landing by boat of any suspicious-looking foreigners. Be that as it may, it is now a matter of history that the celebrated invasion never took place; and there was no landing at all of hostile Japanese forces on the littoral of Thanjavur district.

Colonel Gain and I became very good friends. Apart from being a good soldier he was a remarkable man in that he had no colour complex of any kind. This is more than I can say for some of his subordinates particularly the young English Captains who disliked having to salute an Indian District Magistrate.

On one occasion one of these young fellows purposely left his military cap on the verandah table and came into my office-room bare-headed in order to avoid having to salute. I declined to see him until he was properly dressed. He tried to argue the point and said that there was nothing wrong with his attire. I said, "Go get your hat and then enter this room correctly!" He hesitated, then went back to the verandah, fetched his hat, stood smartly to attention and saluted whereupon I rose to my feet and greeted him with a

hand-shake and offered him a chair. Apart from this colour complex, the trouble was that many of these officers thought that the District Magistrate was some minor tax-collector. Finally, the Army issued a booklet giving equivalent ranks between Civil and Military with the consent of Government and in this the District Magistrates in their own districts were given the rank of Major-General. This put the matter beyond any doubt and even apart from this it is a military convention that when an officer in uniform enters some other office, he is bound to salute the head of the office. However, on the whole, despite these little tiffs, there was plenty of co-operation between us and the Military ; and as for the Air Force, they became very great friends of mine. Incidentally, I forgot to mention that my experience of devising an A.R.P. scheme in Chingleput district came in useful and I worked out a comprehensive A.R.P. scheme for Trichy town. I did this quickly and we had a first class organisation with six depots, a number of fire-engines and fire-hydrants and a complete A.R.P. warning system by which we could enforce black-out at night at very short notice. As Government wished to associate non-officials with the A.R.P. movement I invited Mr. V. Seshasayee to join the A.R.P. organisation. I remember now all these various items of work gave me a very full day and it is not surprising that I wrote up to Government and told them that the rule requiring the Collector to waste two weeks of his time doing Jama-bandhi (annual settlement of land revenue) during war-time was unsound and that for the duration of the War the Jama-bandhi need not be conducted by the Collector, but might be delegated to one of the Divisional Officers. This suggestion was adopted at once by Government and orders issued accordingly. This was a great relief and enabled me to devote my time to the various items of war work that I have described earlier.

Elsewhere I have referred to the various war meetings that I addressed both in Town-hall square as well as in the

various meetings throughout the district. In addition to this one of the most important items of war work for the Collector was to collect funds for the Governor's War Fund. Naturally to do this the Tahsildar and the other Revenue officials had to go around with a kind of begging bowl and get money from both the ryots and the merchants. In one district, I think it was East Godavari, the Collector was so busy collecting contributions to the War Fund that he completely forgot to collect the land revenue and a Member of the Board was hastily deputed by Government to go down to Kakinada and find out what was the cause of this. In Trichy district, I had only three or four Zamindari estates and the biggest of them was the Zamindar of Udayarpalayam. I wrote to him that I would arrive at 3 p.m. one afternoon from a nearby camp to visit him. I set down here in detail the formal ceremonies that attended that visit as an example of life in feudal India.

One mile from the palace-gate the Zamindar and his son were waiting for me in their open car. I was received with *namaskarams* and I shook hands with them and was then put into their open car; they got in along with me and we had hardly gone half a mile before we came across a double row of first camels and then caparisoned horses and then finally a couple of elephants with full regalia on. Between these specimens of the Noah's Ark we drove in state to the Naubatkhana at the main gate where a roll of drums was beaten as we passed through. The car drew up at the steps of the Durbar hall and I was conducted into a long cool gloomy building where on a "jarokha"-like structure there was a central gold gilt chair and two similar gilt chairs on either side. The Zamindar sat in the centre and put me on his right-hand side and his son on his left and his retinue crowded in the hall and stood before us on the ground-floor level in various attitudes of humility and submission. I was greatly tickled by all this but with difficulty managed to keep a straight face. The Zamindar spoke a few words wel-

coming me to Udayarpalayam and saying how much he appreciated the honour of having the Collector under his humble roof. I responded in terms equally vainglorious and said that the connection between the Raj and the Zamindari was an ancient and honourable one and that it was the Collector's duty to perpetuate these bonds of friendship and goodwill. Then coming down to tin tacks, I pointed out that the British Government along with some other nations were engaged in a life-and-death struggle with certain totalitarian countries under the control of Hitler and that everything depended on the result of the fight. Therefore, I had come to make a personal request to the Zamindar to contribute generously towards the War Fund. The Zamindar parried this by saying that he was deeply conscious not only of his obligations to the State but of the demands of friendship in a crisis but that the season had been desperately bad and his ryots paid him so little of the rent due that he could hardly pay the *peshcush* (lump sum land revenue due from the Zamindar to Government, roughly one-third of the rent-roll). I pretended not to consider this a very serious argument and stated that we expected Rs. 10,000 from him for the War Fund. He threw up his hands in dismay and said that he would have to sell his camels and elephants to pay up such a sum in such a bad season of the year. He offered me after some more parrying Rs. 1,000. I of course was not going to accept this and I reduced my bid to Rs. 5,000 and finally after much more discussion he agreed to give Rs. 3,000.

As soon as this was over and the Zamindar clapped his hands, some refreshments appeared on a silver tray, mostly some kind of sticky-looking sweet like *halva* and cool glasses of some liquid like sherbet. I forced myself to eat some of the sweet and drink the sherbet to oblige him and the interview was over and I was conducted out of the hall by the Zamindar and outside to the central gate to which he escorted me. I was ceremoniously put into my car and given a send off by him and his son. The whole interview had lasted a

couple of hours and I went back to the Travellers' Bungalow in time for a hot cup of tea and some toast and cake to refresh myself after my arduous labours of that evening. Begging for money is no joke: and successful begging calls for much skill.

The other two Zamindaris of consequence were Marungapuri and Kadavur. In the latter, the Zamindar was a boy and my ward and I was administering the estate and precious little surplus in the "till" was there to give to any War Fund. In Marungapuri again the ward was under eighteen, a young man under my care, and the three wives of the late Zamindar, all styling themselves as Ranis were living on pensions given to each one of them from the estate revenue. Here again there was no scope to collect anything for the War Fund. In fact each one of these Ranis interviewed me each time I camped at Marungapuri pressing their claims either for a new house or for a new car and neither of these was the estate capable of giving them. But despite the poor response of the Zamindars, my Divisional officers and Tahsildars were very successful in raising money from the general public and the district as a whole stood, I think, fourth or fifth, for its War Fund collections which was pretty good, considering how small we were as a district.

In this connection I remember that when I was Sub-Collector, Coondapur, the District of South Kanara as a whole had made a very poor contribution to the War Fund and I remember that with the permission of the Collector, I organised a variety entertainment at Mangalore with the intention of selling tickets and making money for the War Fund. In this effort I obtained the co-operation of a most energetic lady, Mrs. Sreshta, the Honorary Secretary of the Mangalore Ladies' Club and she helped me to secure a number of good items for the entertainment. There was plenty of talent among the younger generation of the best Mangalore families and they were quite willing to perform at a public entertainment. I remember with some pride that though there was

considerable agitation from a certain section of the community against the entertainment we succeeded in collecting about Rs. 1,500 by sale of tickets leaving us a net Rs. 1,000 for the War Fund after deducting all expenses. Moreover, the entertainment was an unqualified artistic success. This effort came in very handy because the Government, alarmed at the poor response shown from the district, had sent one of the Advisers down to look into it and we had a visit from Sir George Boag —I think it was — and he stayed for two days in Mangalore and had conferences with the Collector, Mr. M. V. Subramanian. It was then that Boag learnt how an entire community were pro-Congress-minded and that, therefore, they had declined to have anything to do with the war effort. As that community contained the richest sections of the mercantile world it was not surprising that South Kanara had made a poor response. Anyway he exhorted us to do our best and was particularly interested in the success of my little entertainment. The members of the Canara Club — the officers' club of Mangalore — made a joke at my expense that as a result of my successful co-operation with Mrs. Sreshta, the Ladies' Club had resolved to make me an Honorary member of the Club. This I need hardly add was an unhandsome quip and the Ladies' Club did no such thing though if I remember right they gave a tea party to which they invited my wife and myself, to celebrate the success of the entertainment.

Before leaving the topic of the problems created by the War, I will narrate a small incident to show how much of opportunism there existed during war-time. I was returning one evening at 5 p.m. from my office to the bungalow in Trichy and coming along the straight stretch of road leading to Khajamalai when I noticed three sepoys under a tree on the right-hand side of the road busily engaged in surrounding a girl and talking to her. Immediately they saw my car, the three of them scattered and pretended they had nothing to do with her. In fact two of them walked away very quickly

across the fields and the third along the road. I stopped my car and went up and found it was a small girl hardly eleven years old. I asked her what the matter was. She spun a story that the sepoys were offering her Re. 1 each to go with them for immoral purposes. I asked her if she had any relatives and she pretended that she was all alone. I took her with me to my bungalow, handed her over to my wife and said that till I could make a few enquiries about her she had better stay in the house and we asked the elderly ayah who was looking after our youngest child to take good care of her and to make her sleep with her that night. Meanwhile, I sent word to the Police and asked them to investigate the background of the girl. The next morning the Circle Inspector turned up with a woman whom he had traced as her mother. Both the mother and the child had come from Trivandrum. The mother had learnt that much money was to be had for the asking from the *javans* in Trichy. I remember having read in Caesar's *Gallic Wars* that one of Caesar's chief problems was the question of camp-followers and he insisted on allowing an army on the march certain normal physical outlets for their energy. But I had not realised that the kind of prostitution this involved could go so far down as to affect immature girls, eleven years old. Of course the fact that a "nymphet" like her was the subject of male attacks would be no surprise to the hero of Nabokov's novel *Lolita*, but to a normal person like me it was, to say the least, revolting. I told the Circle Inspector to produce the mother and the girl that morning before the appropriate Magistrate at Trichy town and see that they were given free railway passes back to Trivandrum and personally to see that both the mother and child were sent out of Trichy by train that very day. And these orders were duly carried out, though I was told later the girl protested and said that we were preventing her from making an "honest living". A true Lolita! . . .

THE I.C.S. AT PLAY

MANY OF THE DETRACTORS OF THE I.C.S. HAVE BEEN trying to make out that they are a very over-rated service and that they were more concerned with having a good time in this country than in keeping their noses to the grinding stone and turning out hard solid work. Such an estimate is, in my view, grossly unfair. It is perfectly true that the I.C.S. man like every other healthy mortal on earth valued his spare time and took good care to get the most out of it. I have already stated that one of my Collectors, Mr. Thorne, devoted a half-hour each morning to bird-watching and was in fact an authority on Indian birds. Equally so, some of my other Collectors were keen, one or two on golf. others like myself on hockey and tennis and yet a few were bent on the delights of shikar. As regards hockey, the only kind of hockey one could get in the mofussil was a game with or against the Reserve Police and in one or two stations I have been able to organise a so-called friendly match between the "town" team and the Reserve Police side. I must straightaway set down that the Reserve Police in addition to playing a very fast game were also very rough-and-ready in their methods. I have played hockey for several years with glasses on but the only time that I got my glasses dislodged was when playing against the Reserve Police at Sivakasi. The last time I played against the Reserve Police was when I was the Collector of Cuddapah. I captained the side and I think we succeeded in making the score a draw of one goal each. In the first half I had enough wind to play in my usual position of inside-left but in the second half I fell back to the full-back position and sent the full-

back to centre-half and the latter to replace me at inside-left.

The most exciting adventures befell those of the I.C.S. who took to shikar. In an earlier chapter I have described the unfortunate fate of Mr. A. C. Duff, Collector of Vizagapatam. My good friend, W. R. S. Satthianathan, who was very keen on getting both tiger and panther and sat up several times over a kill in the Agency tracts has told me of a breath-taking experience of his in which when his gun had slipped and fallen down he had found the prowling tiger was right under his machan and that is why though he knew it was somewhere around he could not really see it and there he was in the ticklish position of not being able to shoot at it and not knowing at what moment it was going to spring and land on the machan. However, he had a narrow escape, and lived to sit up on many more occasions.

I have also narrated elsewhere the tale of the Collector of Cuddapah who sat up on Guvvalacheruvu ghat and after a fruitless night saw the fruits of his long vigil go to the missionary camping on the other side of the road. Both in Parlakimedi and in Mandasa, the Maharaja and the Raja respectively on hearing that I was keen on seeing animals in their natural habitat at night insisted on taking me out. The Maharaja took me to his favourite row of shooting boxes set near what looked like a minor irrigation tank full of scrub jungle about six miles away from Parlakimedi. We sat up for an hour or two but nothing exciting happened. The Raja of Mandasa took me out in a car with a spotlight and we drove eight miles out of Mandasa along the road and on two occasions the spotlight picked up a pair of gleaming green eyes by the side of the road and we dashed forward with high hopes but on the first occasion it was only a civet cat. On the second occasion also it turned out to be another civet cat. At last disappointed and dejected we turned the car and retraced our steps and when we were within one and a half miles of Mandasa were richly rewarded by the

sight of a huge brown bear practically sitting on the edge of the road. We dashed forward but by the time we covered the intervening 100 yards the bear with a remarkable agility had rolled down the gradient of the road and was making its way up the opposite gradient into the tree-trunks of the forest. Before the Raja could adjust his gun from within the car to the required level the bear had made the slope and vanished from our sight. But my most exciting experience sitting up for big game was with the Raja of Venkatagiri and his two sons. Their reserve forest lies about 25 miles away from Venkatagiri proper and we formed a party and proceeded by car and jeep to the thick forests on the slope of a high hill where we were told black bear were to be had for the mere asking. The Raja Saheb has a tradition in his family of never shooting from a machan on a tree and his shooting boxes are sited at ground level. In this case, the shooting boxes consisted of a small trench a foot deep dug into the earth and in front of the ditch was piled a small mound of rocks and stones about 2 feet high with small embrasures. Over and above these little fortifications would be a mass of green leaves and twigs so as to camouflage the existence of the ditch. The men who shot sat in the shallow trench. Like this there were eight shooting boxes situated about 100 yards from each other in a line up the hill. I sat with the Yuvaraja in the topmost box and my son Pratap sat in the next box with the Rajkumar. In front of us in the thick jungle the branches had been cut away forming a kind of approach grooves through which the animal would be forced to advance on the brow of the hill-side when stirred out of its lair by the noise made by the beaters. At about 12 noon when we were all in position, the Yuvaraja who was the seniormost member of the family first checked that all the shooting boxes were in order and that each one of his guests had been instructed about the rules to be observed and then gave a signal by blowing on a whistle. Immediately far down the valley the beaters started banging on their

tin-cans and blowing trumpets and beating drums and started advancing from a mile away towards us. It was a very thrilling moment and excitement mounted as the noise of the drums steadily came nearer and nearer. I was keeping my eyes steady watching through a small windscreen of leaves that had been left for the hunter to aim at his prey. Suddenly without warning along one of the grooves in the thick forest came a round black figure advancing along the hillside at an incredible speed at about 50 yards' distance. As it approached it was a most impressive sight to see its shaggy head and powerful hairy body. The Yuvaraja remained entirely calm and immediately took aim and fired. The bullet got the animal on the shoulder. It gave a squeal, turned and rolled down the hill-side at an angle giving a broadside view to the Rajkumar who was sitting in the box below. He too fired. There was a further squeal and the bear dropped into some under-growth 50 yards away and vanished from our sight. No other bear came within our range of vision. So after half an hour, after other desultory shots had been heard from the boxes below us, we went down. We found the bear that had been shot at twice by the Rajkumar and the Yuvaraja lying dead in a small pit in the forest at an equal distance from the two shooting boxes. At the fourth shooting box below us was a Captain of the Indian Territorial Army who was a good shot. In his case a bear advanced at 10 yards' range and seeing the gleam of his barrel charged right at him. He stood his ground inside the shooting box and fired at almost point blank range killing it dead on the spot. Thus the shooting ended in the bag of two black bears. Afterwards I felt a feeling of revulsion that two such magnificent animals should have lost their lives in this somewhat inglorious fashion. However, it is very clear that the black bear is a most dangerous animal to encounter in forests as unlike both tiger and panther it attacks at sight or more correctly on any smell within the range of its notice.

I have said enough to indicate that the I.C.S. did use their

spare time to indulge their love of sport in the various ways which appealed to them but that they did not deviate from what came first and foremost, namely, work. I don't think any one will blame them for combining hard work with a certain amount of relaxation for there is not the slightest doubt that this had very favourable repercussions on the quality of the work turned out.

Before I leave this topic I should like to comment on the risks we ran in the various forests owing largely to ignorance of the danger. For example I remember going by a house-boat lashed to the old steamer *Victoria* on tour to Devi-patnam up the Godavari river. This place is in Chodavaram taluk and being on the riverside is accessible from Rajah-mundry by boat. There is a one-room bungalow with a bath-room but as there are no sweepers available in the Agency one went out into the open for all the necessary purposes of life. I remember here that one afternoon at about 3 p.m. I walked out into the forest immediately adjacent to the bungalow and climbed up some loose rocks and scrub growth for about 20 minutes until I was half way up the hill and commanded a fine view of the Godavari river below me wandering away in a curve amidst dense forest towards the north. I sat there on a rock and rested for fifteen minutes before climbing downwards. Later my Revenue Inspector there told me that the particular hill was infested with pan-thers and that only two days earlier a panther had lifted a cow in the vicinity. I just smiled and said that possibly it was a day off for the panther and that I would be more careful in future not to go without a gun. Similarly when the family and I visited Bhadrachalam by steamer we took a drive along a nineteen-mile road, part of which ran through a dense reserve forest, to visit a place* celebrated in the his-tory of the Rama legend. My wife wanted very much to get down and walk but I dissuaded her from this as I had made some enquiries and learnt that wild elephants were to be

*Parnasala.

found in this particular forest and to meet a wild elephant face to face on the ground level is not an amusing experience. We reached the Travellers' Bungalow all right where a local Forest Officer told us that the bungalow where we were staying to have our picnic tea was noted for the periodic visits of wild animals particularly at nights. We stayed there only for an hour and left at about 5 p.m. and got back through the forest in good order without seeing any elephants or panthers in spite of the curiosity of every member of the party to see something of wild life on the road. Finally while we were at Chicacole I remember our learning about a hyena living within half a mile behind our bungalow and I remember how one night at about 1 a.m. I heard the insistent screaming of this animal coming nearer and nearer. My wife woke me up and told me we must do something about this as our servant-boy Latchudu was in the habit of sleeping in the open verandah outside the kitchen and hyenas have been known to attack sleeping persons. I seized a stick and a lantern and we rushed to the back of the verandah outside the kitchen and woke up Latchudu and told him to go inside and I am pretty sure we did save him from an attack because when we had retreated in good order back to the house we heard the animal's cry in the back of the house close to the kitchen from which we had just removed our cook-boy. We did not, however, actually see the animal as it was a dark night.

Finally let me comment on the various picnic parties that were organised in the districts to which the Collector and his family were invited. My first experience of this was in Guntur. I had hardly taken charge as Collector of this district when the Chief Conservator of Forests, Mr. D. D. Sathe, turned up to call on me — we knew each other already — and suggested that my family and I should join a farewell picnic party being given to the District Forest Officer. I remember we went by car up to some place from where we came to the sea-side and after an excellent picnic tea those

of us who felt inclined bathed in the sea. Sathe had a cine-camera and with this he took a number of shots of the energetic swimmers and one of these shows me practically dragging an unwilling member of the party into the surf. This excellent habit of making officers mix at picnic parties was kept up by me at Trichy. I remember a group of us officers went twice or thrice for picnics both to Upper Anicut and to Grand Anicut. Each officer in the party was to contribute a special dish for the occasion and the result was we had plenty of good things to eat, as each one tried to see that his contribution was the tastiest. These picnics did a great deal to break down the reserve between the Collector and his brother-officers. Both the Assistant Commissioner of Income-tax, Mr. Arumuga Mudaliar and the Assistant Commissioner of Excise, Mr. Tharayan, and their families were regular members in these picnics. Mr. R. Parthasarathi of the Southern Railway Co-operative Society and his family also joined us as often as possible. Altogether we were a very gay and sociable crowd.

This chapter will not be complete without a reference to the delights of sea-bathing. Thorne and I both bathed at Negapatam and at Tranquebar and when I was Sub-Collector at Ramnad I bathed systematically at Tirupullani. Later on when I was Local Administration Secretary in Madras I joined the Madras Bathers' Protection Association in 1945 and I used to bathe three mornings in a week in the sea opposite the office of the Inspector General of Police. At that time there had been one or two unfortunate shark incidents. The worst was of a party of school-boys who were bathing opposite the Ice House beach when two of their number were attacked by a shark. One got out by swimming but the shark bit the other on the thigh severing the thigh-bone and the poor boy just reached the shore and died in a few minutes of shock and haemorrhage. In spite of this some twenty of us used to bathe regularly on Sunday mornings keeping a sharp lookout for the fin of the approaching shark. None,

however, troubled us but the watchmen of the Association were most useful in preventing some of us from being taken away by the current. One of my friends, a very good swimmer, was Mr. K. S. Iyer of the H. M. V. Gramophone Company and he and a colleague of mine of the Service, C. A. Ramakrishnan and another went out into the sea one day. Ramakrishnan went out of his depth and like the other man was soon floundering. Iyer at once went to help the second man who was nearer to him and Ramakrishnan, according to his own version, just signalled gently by his hand to the watchman (all of us teased him and said that he must have shouted out wildly for help). Anyway, the prompt watchman swam out with a cork life-float, fastened it around him and he was brought in by the winding apparatus. Meanwhile, Iyer had saved the second man and brought him in and all was well. On another occasion on a Sunday morning when we were all standing in more or less waist-deep water and playing around, two young ladies were close to my friend, Minoo Belgamwala, and neither of these was a good swimmer. Without warning a ten-foot breaker formed about 50 yards out and suddenly descended on us and soon people who were only waist deep were up to their necks and heads, struggling in deep water for their lives. Both these young ladies being close to Minoo pounced upon him for help and seized him by the shoulder and started dragging him under in their excitement. Poor Minoo shouted for help and I being a swimmer told him, "Hold on. I am coming," and started swimming towards them. Meanwhile the wave suddenly receded and just by the time I got to Minoo, we were all back at waist deep level and it was a very comical sight to see Minoo Belgamwala with the two young women still desperately clinging to him. We ragged them a lot and said that they had taken the first opportunity they could find to cling on to Minoo.

Talking of unexpected accidents reminds me of a dinner party given by the Maharani of Vizianagaram at Vizag in

1936 to which I was invited as I was then there holidaying on a month's leave. I attended this party alone and the guests included Mr. Satthianadhan, the Estate Collector, and a Ceylonese Civilian who was visiting Vizag at that time. In the course of the dinner the Maharani made some very flattering remarks about the I.C.S. and I gallantly rose in my place and acknowledged the bouquet on behalf of the Service, bowing, and then sat down. What followed afterwards was very dramatic. I simply vanished completely under the table with a huge clatter of a falling chair. The reason was that the chair on which I had been sitting was a camp chair with fastening hooks that kept it in position. Some stupid servant had forgotten to clip the hooks together with the result, when I sat down, my weight made the entire chair give way. The rest of the guests laughed thinking that this was a kind of parlour trick. Only the Ceylonese Civilian with great presence of mind came to my rescue and fished me out from under the table. Luckily I had fallen limply and none of my fingers was crushed by any part of the collapsing chair. The Maharani joined in the laugh against me and I have since learnt never to trust myself to that type of camp chair without first verifying whether the hooks were properly secured.

THE I.C.S. AND PUBLIC FUNCTIONS

A GOOD DEAL OF THE TIME OF THE COLLECTOR AND TO A lesser extent of the Sub-Collector is spent in attending various public functions where he is usually requested to preside because of his status in the district. Usually these include prize distributions, annual days of important colleges in his jurisdiction and various quasi-Governmental functions connected with his work. One of the most distressing parts of the functions would be the usual introductory remarks of the organisers in which some fulsome praise would be bestowed on the head of the district. Another disturbing factor was the number of rose garlands showered on him. These would usually be kept fresh by being constantly sprinkled with cold water and the usual result was that when it was put round your neck your collar and tie and the upper half of your coat looked as if you had just escaped from a deluge. But these were inevitable perquisites of office and one had to take them all right and make the usual speech congratulating the organisers of the function on their remarkable prowess in whatever branch of human endeavour it was that the function related to. I remember one or two amusing incidents at these functions. I remember the case where being at Cuddapah I received a very flattering letter from the Principal of the Ceded Districts College at Anantapur asking me to be the Chief Guest on the occasion of their College Day and deliver the address. I was also told that the Collector of the district, Mr. T. S. Ramachandran, would preside on the occasion. As it was in another man's district I at once wrote to Ramachandran and asked him whether he

would consent to my coming over to his district as the Chief Guest on the occasion. He wrote me a warm but brief characteristic letter saying that he had no objection, what objection could he possibly have and that he looked forward to my visit with keen anticipation. I went there and in his opening remarks the Principal of the College rather unwisely said that certain schemes for the improvement of his hostel for the students which he had referred to in detail had not come to fruition mainly because of delays in the Collector's office in forwarding some estimates. I did not anticipate what followed. Mr. Ramachandran who was presiding jumped to his feet immediately and flatly contradicted the Principal. He said, "Nothing can be farther from truth than what has just been said to you, ladies and gentlemen, that the Collector's office has been responsible for the holding up of these estimates. The estimates were fully scrutinised by the Executive Engineer and were submitted to Government long ago and the Principal is quite ill advised in attributing delay to us when in fact no delay exists. He would spend his time more usefully if he made his remarks to somebody in Madras who is holding up the whole thing." The introduction of an inter-departmental wrangle into a pleasant annual function intended as a stimulus for the outgoing students was new to me. However, when I got up to make my speech I tried to throw oil on troubled waters by remarking that because of his great enthusiasm for the amelioration of the condition of the students the Principal had perhaps attributed delay to a quarter where none lay. This seemed to have the desired effect because the Collector, who was visibly squirming in his seat and looking daggers at the Principal, gradually subsided, making a noise somewhat like a cat that is stroked and finally I delivered my speech and was able to get away after the usual garden party was over.

In addition to this type of function the Collector had the right to hold a formal durbar in which he represented the King Emperor for presenting sanads of the various titles to

the persons who had been honoured with them in the New Year Honours list. A very formal dress was worn of a morning coat, striped trousers and instead of a black top-hat a white polo-hat was used. I have turned out in this full regalia and presided over the Collector's durbars in all the three districts. The District Superintendent of Police received the Collector on arrival at the Collector's office and requested the Collector to inspect a guard of honour which he did. The royal salute was presented by the guard and then the Collector went inside and read out the citations of the award and gave the medals and sanads of the titles to the recipients. The entire elite of the town were invited to be present and the function was supposed to be the highlight of the Collector's duties as representative of the King in the district. I remember that at Trichy the Agent of the Railway was dissatisfied at his being given a place only in the audience and suggested to me and wrote also to the Government demanding that he should be placed in a chair on the dais because of his supremely important position as Agent. The Government referred this to me for remarks and communicated their decision that the only person who was entitled to a place on the dais besides the Collector was the District Judge and that they could see no reason why the Agent, important though he was in the life of Trichy, should be on the dais and with this polite refusal he had to be content. Lastly, at the various war meetings that I organised throughout the districts of Trichy and Cuddapah we took pains to gather a large audience in order that the effect of the war propaganda might reach the largest possible number. To effect this, in Cuddapah I remember we got the younger of our two lady lecturers who had a good singing voice to sing the well-known war songs for about ten or fifteen minutes before the meeting proper. These war songs were intensely popular and the charm of our lady lecturer, added to the music, invariably attracted a large crowd and the success of the meeting was more or less assured. Whatever speeches

I made in English were carefully and painstakingly translated into Telugu so that the public were posted with the latest developments in the war situation and then exhorted to do their bit in various ways towards the war-effort.

One good point about having a multiplicity of engagements was the split-second punctuality that was necessary in order to keep them all correctly. Sometimes it has led to ludicrous results. For example I remember that Priestley and I were to meet H. E. the Governor, Lord Erskine, at 8 a.m. at Rajahmundry railway station to receive him formally, even though the Governor's train had arrived about midnight the previous night. Priestley impressed upon me the supreme necessity of being punctual and said that it was as a special favour I was also included in those going to receive the Governor and that I should meet him at 7-45 a.m. outside the Rajahmundry railway station. I turned up at 7-45 a.m. to the second. Priestley had already arrived at 7-30 a.m. and was fretting and fuming at not seeing me. However, he brightened up on actually finding me there and we walked up and down on the platform waiting for the magic hour of 8 a.m. The Governor's saloon was drawn up about 100 yards away under the shade of a structure specially designed for the purpose. At one minute to eight we went up to the door of the saloon which opened and then the Private Secretary, I think it was A. D. Crombie, popped out and said H.E. would appear in a minute or two. A minute later the Governor correctly dressed in a full lounge suit came out of the door and shook hands with Priestley. Then Priestley said that this was so and so, Sub-Collector, and he shook hands with me. He did not say a word to either of us beyond the usual "How do you do?" and after these hand-shakes were over he promptly retreated into the compartment and Crombie signified to us that the reception of the Governor was over and that Priestley could turn up at 8-45 a.m. to take him to the Municipal reception which was timed for 9 a.m. Looking back on this incident I cannot help laughing

at the stupendous waste of the Collector's time that this business involved.

THE I.C.S. AND ETIQUETTE

IN AN EARLIER CHAPTER I HAVE DESCRIBED AN INCIDENT in which Mr. Thorne tried to convey to me by example rather than by precept the correct etiquette between officers of the I.C.S. Some of my colleagues not being so well trained got into difficulties owing to various assumptions. One of these was that everybody in the I.C.S. was equal. For example. one of my colleagues, an Assistant Collector whom I shall for convenience call Periasami, wrote to the then Chief Secretary, Mr. A. Y. G. Campbell, I.C.S. as follows:

My dear Campbell,

I shall be glad if you will let me take ten days' casual leave from September 3rd onwards.

Yours sincerely,

.....

He addressed the letter correctly at the foot to A. Y. G. Campbell Esq., C.I.E., I.C.S., etc. Within a couple of days he had the Chief Secretary's reply as follows:

Dear Mr. Periasami,

You may certainly have the casual leave that you have asked for.

Yours sincerely,
A. Y. G. C.

To
A. B. C. Periasami Esq., I.C.S.,
Assistant Collector,
.....

Periasami, however, saw the point of his being addressed as *Mr*. Periasami by the Chief Secretary. He wrote back at once and apologised to Mr. Campbell for having used his name without the proper prefix of "Mr.". Thereafter he understood that in the Service it was usual for one to address an officer very senior to him as "Mr." and then leave it to him to tell him not to use it in future correspondence if he felt so inclined. Any way this story got around and all of us learnt a very useful lesson in etiquette.

I remember how when Mr. Gawne as Board Member was camping in Trichy he had a number of things to discuss with me and one of the matters discussed required a reply then and there: so later that day I sent him a D.O. letter giving him the information and in this I addressed him as "Dear Mr. Gawne". In his D.O. acknowledgement of my letter, Gawne added a post-script, "Why not drop the 'Mr.' in future correspondence: it is a needless barrier between friends!"

The official forms of address and for ending a letter were rather pompous and old-fashioned. Thus in the old days the I.C.S. man used to end up his letters, even when addressing a non-official gentleman outside the Secretariat as "I have the honour to be, Sir, Your most obedient servant". A new British Civilian joined a certain State (happily not that of Madras) and he seemed to have been greatly disturbed by the use of these words which, according to him, implied not only servility but also obsequiousness. So, he dashed off a letter to the Chief Secretary pointing out that this form of words was obsolete and that when he wrote to a minor non-official who had sent him a letter about something or other he did not in the least feel inclined to subscribe himself as that gentleman's servant nor was he particularly obedient to him. The then Chief Secretary had a keen sense of humour and he wrote back to the objecting Civil Servant as follows:

My dear Ramsbottom, (of course Ramsbottom was not his

real name)

When I use the form of words "My dear" with which this letter begins I am not animated by any particular sentiment of affection towards you *and, thank Heaven, you are not mine!*

Yours sincerely,
X Y Z.

This was rather devastating, but Mr. Ramsbottom or whatever his name was, deserved all he got.

It was a convention that while one was a Sub-Collector he should address the Chief Secretary only through the Collector of the district. On one occasion when I was Sub-Collector, Chicacole, I received a posting order as Special Assistant Settlement Officer, Nellore. I had heard that there was a Settlement party working in Salem and everybody knew Salem was a much better district. So rather incautiously I dashed off a letter to the Chief Secretary direct pointing out that my higher standard language was Tamil and my second language Malayalam and that, therefore, I would be at a loss to do Settlement work in a Telugu district like Nellore and would therefore Government be kind enough to consider posting me to the party in Salem instead. Within 24 hours I received the following barbed reply:

My dear Chettur,

Government are aware of your linguistic qualifications, but they do not propose to alter your posting from Nellore to Salem on that account.

2. I am also to point out that you should have addressed this communication through the Collector of your district.

Yours sincerely,

.....

At that time I was quite taken aback at the terms of this letter but now I chuckle at the two distinct rockets that the

Chief Secretary was able to work into one small D.O. letter. It will be interesting to note that the letter was from Mr. H. M. Hood who was the Chief Secretary at that time. Any way, I learnt my lesson the hard way and have since then refrained from writing unnecessary letters to the Chief Secretary.

Another interesting question of etiquette arose from a term in our Covenant that we should not leave the Province in which we served without the previous permission of Government. This created some problems for me while I was Sub-Collector, Palghat, as the road from Palghat to Ponnani lay through two bits of the former Cochin State. Luckily there was a general dispensation available by an order of Government permitting the Sub-Collector, Palghat, to leave the Province and pass through these two enclaves during his tours to Ponnani and Chowghat but there was no general permission for the Sub-Collector, Hosur, who was within 25 miles from the Mysore border to go to Bangalore and return. For each such trip strictly speaking permission of Government should have been taken. However, the Sub-Collectors usually contented themselves with writing in to the Collector of Salem asking for the permission which was not strictly regular. I have mentioned elsewhere how Mr. A. R. C. Westlake got into trouble when he visited Pudukottah without prior permission when he was Collector of Ramnad.

Even more interesting questions of etiquette arose in connection with one's behaviour at the Government House. When in Madras one is usually invited to the Governor's garden parties and it was the unwritten law that nobody should leave the garden until H.E. had left, that is after "God save the King" was played. At some of these garden parties formal presentations were made and the guests had to line up two by two with small bits of paper with their names typed on them to be given to the A.D.C. who handed them on ahead to one of the Private Secretaries who read out the name just as one got abreast of H.E. By this means one was supposed

to be formally introduced to the Governor as he shook hands and was thus supposed to know who he was shaking hands with. An amusing story is told about the Collector of Malabar. During the visit of H.E. the Governor to Calicut, the Collector was suddenly told by the Private Secretary that H.E. wished to meet twenty of the leading Moplah citizens of the town. The Collector hastily sent for his Revenue Divisional Officer, the late Diwan Bahadur C. Gopalan Nair who incidentally happens to have been an uncle of mine. He instructed him to produce twenty of the Moplah citizens at 5 p.m. that day at the garden party and warned him that he, Gopalan Nair, should introduce them by name to H.E. My uncle faithfully promised to do this and soon collected these worthies bringing them up to the dais, one by one. My uncle reeled off in quick succession a list of twenty Moplah names, Abubucker, Haji Kutti, Mohideen Kutti, Mari Kutti, Moosa Kutti and so on. Each of these went up to H.E., shook hands with the great man and moved on to the other side of the audience hall. Soon an excited crowd of twenty of them gathered frowning and looking daggers at my uncle because though he had got most of the names right he had got the order completely mixed up but my uncle rose to the occasion, went over to them and told them in Malayalam, " What is the matter ? Is the great man going to remember your names for one moment after this evening ? The important thing is that you have shaken hands with him and with that you must be well content ". The Moplah gentlemen were much impressed by the force of this argument and soon smiles replaced their frowns. After the reception was over the Collector congratulated my uncle and remarked, " What a remarkable memory you have, Gopalan Nair, to have their names so correctly ". " Ah," said my uncle with a smile, " I have known Moplahs and their names for well nigh thirty years now and they come naturally to me," accepting the praise unblushingly. This incident also reminds me that in those days the distinction between Deputy Collectors and the I.C.S. was very sharp.

A good story is told how the same I.C.S. Collector once told my uncle, the Revenue Divisional Officer, "Tomorrow morning at 8 a.m. I want to inspect the encroachment at 'X' village, twelve miles away. Please be present at the spot with the village officers and the Tahsildar. I propose to ride over early morning." My venerable uncle happened to be an excellent horseman and in fact maintained a horse of his own. But he said nothing to the Collector, merely instructed the Tahsildar and the village officers to be present at the spot at 8 a.m. and at 7 a.m. he swung on to his horse and rode out the twelve miles to the village arriving at the spot a few minutes before 8 a.m. He alighted from his mount and was patting his horse on the neck for its splendid performance when the Collector showed up all right on his horse. The Collector took one look at my uncle standing by his horse and asked him, "Is that yours?" My uncle acknowledged the steed as his own.

"But why didn't you tell me?" said the Collector, "We could have ridden out together."

"You never asked me," replied my uncle bluntly, "and in any case it was my job to get here ahead of you and receive you, not to ride along with you."

The Collector took due note of the subtle criticism implied in this reply, laughed it off and then proceeded to the inspection, but I need hardly add that his estimation of the Deputy Collector rose immensely from that day onwards.

I PREPARE FOR MALAYA : LIFE IN THE DELHI SECRETARIAT

ELSEWHERE * I HAVE DESCRIBED HOW THE CHIEF SECRETARY, Mr. J. B. Brown, offered me the post of Representative of the Government of India in Malaya. On my signifying my willingness to take the job, I was duly informed by Government that I should immediately proceed to Delhi to be instructed in my new duties and to be given the necessary background for my trip to Malaya. I was told at very short notice that I should contact the Air Booking Centre on Mount Road and get my seat booked on the R.A.F. Dakota flight to Delhi. I did so and was assured of a seat four days later. So I packed a solitary but stout suit-case made of tough leather and a small air travelling bag and thus with all my worldly goods compactly arranged I was taken by R.A.F. transport to Meenambakkam and put on the Dakota. It was my first long flight and I thoroughly enjoyed it. The seats ran along the side of the Dakota in the shape of a long bench and on my left was seated a pleasant young woman, a Miss Watsa, who was going up to join a WAC (I) post there. I was thrilled at the take-off and pleasantly surprised when we reached Nagpur after exactly three hours' flight. Here at Nagpur we were given a small piece of paper which entitled us to a very rough and ready three-course R.A.F. lunch. The interval was only half an hour and we emplaned again at 1-30 p.m. The rest was one steady flight from Nagpur to Delhi. All this is now simple, as the Indian Airlines Corporation covers the ground daily and nightly with its services ; but at that

* In my book, *Malayan Adventure*, published in 1950 by Basel Mission.

time in 1945 there was no such service on the civilian side.

At Delhi I was met by my brother, K. K. Chettur, afterwards Ambassador to Japan and Burma and Belgium, who was then a Joint Secretary to the Ministry of Commerce. We motored from Palam airfield to his lovely house at 2, Tuglak Road, and for the next two months I was a citizen of Delhi. In the Delhi Secretariat most of my work was connected with the Ministry of Commonwealth Relations and my chief instructors there were the Joint Secretary, A. Vittal Pai, I.C.S., a Madras Civilian and Mr. R. N. Bannerjee, I.C.S., Secretary, Commonwealth Relations Department. As Sub-Collector, Kumbakonam, Vittal Pai had given me some training when I was Assistant Collector. So we knew each other quite well. There was no separate room for me, so a chair and a table were placed for me in the room of the Minister of Commonwealth Relations and I was told I could safely use it every day as the Minister rarely attended office but was dealing with official papers in his own house. This room was luxurious and had a lovely telephone on the Minister's table from which I was able to ring up everybody of importance in New Delhi.

I was given several books on Malaya and straightaway began making a thorough study not only of its geography but also its history and recent political background. Many of the books dealt with the condition of our Indian labourers there and with the Rubber plantations and Tin mines of Malaya. I visited several rooms in the Imperial Secretariat both to meet my friends and to discuss matters connected with Malaya with those who were concerned with it. And the first thing that struck me was the extraordinary amount of *talking* that everybody did in Delhi. I appreciate the fact that some amount of talk is necessary in a Secretariat; but here I found the talking greatly exceeded the actual work done. Again there was a habit of trying to get everything done by discussions between different departments. This is an excellent idea provided the parties who discuss would

stand by their decisions. What I missed most in Delhi was the common lunch-room of the Madras Secretariat. Here, all the Secretaries ate their lunches in the solitude of their own rooms; or else they went home to lunch about 1 p.m. and returned about 3 p.m. and then sat up till 6 p.m. or 7 p.m.

I found that most people working in the Delhi Secretariat were very nervous about the duration of their stay there and that jockeying for position went on as a continuous process. One Joint Secretary made a joke, that he hardly dared to leave his seat to go to the bath-room for fear that he would find somebody else seated in his place by the time he returned!

New Delhi was an impressive place and soon I got to know my route there from Tuglak Road to the Secretariat. As my brother's hours were very early I used to borrow a bicycle from his house and go up and down to work on cycle. My formal interviews with senior Secretaries were few. But I was particularly asked to meet the then Defence Secretary, Sir R. Tottenham, on the phone and fixed an engagement and called at 3 p.m. one afternoon. After some hesitation on his part, he offered me a chair. True to I.C.S. traditions I had waited standing until he did so, though I had measured for myself in my own mind the number of seconds I would wait. He talked to me very learnedly about the military situation and told me that I should keep on good terms with SACSEA (Supreme Allied Command, South East Asia). This last bit was very good advice as one could get nothing done in Malaya without co-operation from SACSEA. At least not for the first year of the British re-occupation. The interview lasted twenty minutes, and at the conclusion he seemed to have thawed a bit because he rose from his chair, shook hands, wished me luck and asked me to meet him again when I came back to Delhi after my first hurricane tour. He also told me to meet one Colonel Thomas who was the SACSEA Liaison Officer in New Delhi. I found Col. Thomas also in the Defence Department wing and he gave me the informa-

tion that Malaya was a forward area and that my wife and children would certainly not be allowed to go there for some months to come. This was grim news and I was somewhat taken aback by it. He also told me that living conditions were very bad in Malaya for there was very little food except tinned food and it was important that I should somehow ship out a car as motor transport was in very short supply in Malaya. I mention all these only to show the importance of making the right contacts in an executive diplomatic job like the one that I was engaged on.

During these two months I saw very little of the social side of New Delhi. For one thing my brother and sister-in-law led a very quiet life, for another it was too soon after the War. Any organised entertainments at cocktail party level had not sprung up and above all alcoholic liquor was in very short supply throughout the area. However, I did the usual sights and I invited a lady friend of mine who was a good dancer to go with me to a small night club in the Maidens Hotel, Old Delhi. Here we sat down in a room where all the hangings were red and I ordered a whisky and soda for myself and for my partner. I incautiously omitted to say that we wanted small pegs and what was my horror when the waiter promptly produced large pegs in two glasses and a bottle of soda and a bill for Rs. 10-8-0. Any way it was a cold evening and the drink was welcome and a very pleasant band struck up a jazzy tune and my partner and I were soon on the floor. She was a very good dancer indeed and I greatly enjoyed the dance. The dance-floor was exquisite. When we returned and finished our drinks, the waiter turned up with a smile and asked, " Would master like to repeat ? " and I nodded my head, following the proverb " In for a penny in for a pound ". Another Rs. 10 worth of whisky showed up : the only good point in the transaction was that the price of our dinner was limited to Rs. 4-8-0 per head, and owing to war restrictions we could only have any three courses we liked out of a five-course menu. Thus we had to have

"A" and one of "B" and one of "C". Where "B" and "C" each specified two different items of the meal, "A" of course was a soup. We dined, danced till 1 a.m. and then as I had a long drive back we got into my brother's car and I drove my "date" to her house in Old Delhi before returning to Tuglak Road. But such evenings were few and far between and before I could repeat such a charming evening I had got my marching orders and was on my way to Malaya. I cannot resist recounting the singular experience I had with my one and the only invitation to a "drinks" party in Delhi. They were friends of my brother, a married couple of whom the man was a citizen of ours and the lady of Continental extraction. They had come to call at Tuglak Road and I was introduced; they asked me whether I would care to go over for a drink with them next Tuesday. I was quite pleased at this unexpected invitation and accepted with pleasure. My brother very kindly promised to drop me there at 7 p.m. on the appointed day and he did so leaving me outside the gate of the court in which their flat was situated. I walked in, passed the ornamental fountain in the garden and went up to the entrance of the flat, located their number and walked up the stairs to their door. On my pressing the bell a turbaned butler asked me my business and I said I had come to see Master and Madam. The butler looked surprised and said both of them were out. I said, "I expect them soon to come in; they asked me to come over for a drink". The butler looked puzzled and then told me, "That's not possible, Madam and Master gone out for dinner". I was of course shocked beyond words at this kind of hospitality and what is more I hardly knew my way back to Tuglak Road from this place and I walked out of the court looking for a taxi. None such was available and I had to walk the four miles back home, tired, dusty and thirsty and I took a vow never again to accept hospitality from strangers when the casualness of the invitation indicated there was no heart behind it.

It may be convenient to set down here my experience of

the difficulty in securing air passage to Malaya at that time, even though the Government of India had described my mission to Malaya as one of the highest importance and that I was given priority two for air travel. I understood from my brother who had a contact in the R.A.F. air-booking section, that the flight to Malaya could not be arranged direct from Delhi but that I must fly only up to Calcutta and from there try my luck at the air-booking centre to get the flight continued to Rangoon and Singapore. Even for this ticket to Calcutta I had to present myself in three or four different offices, get myself weighed in one, checked for health in another and then given necessary inoculations in a third and finally the air-booking centre found that all my papers were in order and then said my case would be considered from day to day until a seat could be found for me in a Calcutta-bound plane. Finally this too was achieved and D-Day was struck for 8 p.m. on October 24, 1945, at Palam Airport. The rest of the story, what happened there, from that date onwards, has already been recounted by me in my book, *Malayan Adventure* and is in no way connected with the Steel Frame Service of India, except that the qualities I had acquired by continuous contact with the Steel Frame stood me in good stead throughout my difficult sojourn in Malaya.

Chapter 19

THE STEEL-FRAME COMPLEX

I HAVE OFTEN WONDERED WHETHER THE FACT THAT I belonged to the Indian Civil Service has not coloured my attitude to men and things and whether the well-known and oft-alleged superiority-complex of the Civil Service has not consciously or unconsciously affected my behaviour to other people. First of all let me disabuse the reader of certain popular misconceptions about the Indian Civil Service. In the pre-1947 era, the I.C.S. has often been cynically described as the Steel Frame of the British Administration in the country. The suggestion by that phrase was obvious and was that the I.C.S. were the main bulwark of the British in India and that they were more important to the British than even the presence of the so-called British army of occupation which was scattered over various cantonments in India and which could during their Raj be mobilised in any place at short notice. There is of course a certain element of truth in this. The British Civilian often considered that he was a dedicated man — dedicated to the task of keeping the British flag flying in India and he achieved this object for his Government and the King Emperor by setting for himself very high standards of work and duty. It has been well said that once the mental objective is clear the physical carrying out of measures to achieve that objective would become fairly simple. With the British Civilian the object of the administration was two-fold. The first was to concert all such measures as would consolidate the British Raj and keep their power in the country at a high pitch of strength and secondly the objective was by good administration to keep the peoples governed in India quiet and submissive because they had all

the benefits they could hope to get under British rule. The first consideration made it necessary for them not only to have the strong army of occupation I have referred to already, but to see that a very efficient Police force was always there to maintain law and order. In addition to this, the British were clever enough to see that they must have certain parts of the body politic permanently wedded to their interest. They did this very effectively by retaining a ruling class of Maharajas and Zamindars and encouraging them by giving them powers and privileges above the ordinary run of the public and by ensuring the personal loyalty of these Rajas and Zamindars to the Crown by effecting social relationships between the Governor General and Governors and these titular persons.

Now, as regards a superiority complex, the British I.C.S. officer realised from the very beginning that in India he was always in an extremely privileged position. If he was Collector of a district, it was his business to see not only that the land revenue and the other taxes were correctly collected and accounted for, but that law and order throughout the district was maintained with the help of his District Superintendent of Police and his subordinates. He virtually ruled the district. If he was working in the Secretariat, he had direct access, as Secretary to the Government, to the Governor who was the head of the Cabinet of Executive Councillors and his advice as a Secretary in the Department was not likely to be disregarded. Most Secretaries were appointed both because of their seniority and because they had records of very efficient service in the districts as Collectors. The net result was that the I.C.S. man's claim to recognition was based not on his merely belonging to a distinguished service but on his continuing to give service of a high order to the Government of the day. The fact that there was plenty of adulation from the public to the I.C.S. Collector of the district was really one of the perquisites of office. Power and flattery went to the heads of a few and they possibly behaved in an

autocratic manner and earned reputations for snobbishness for themselves and for the Service. But on the whole there were a well-balanced body of men who did not get their heads turned so easily and who stood fast by the traditions of the Service that I have described earlier.

Next I will deal with a popular assumption that the I.C.S. officer in India did little work on his own and that everything was done for him by his subordinates and he got all the credit for it. Nothing can be a graver distortion of the truth than this. While there were certain notable exceptions like a one-time Collector of East Godavari who spent most of his time hammering iron nails into a steel boat that he was building in his bungalow, the I.C.S. officer was either busy at his desk getting through the voluminous file-work each day, solving the multitudinous civil and magisterial problems of the district, or he was out in the fields inspecting the crops or looking at encroachments or at plots for assignment. There were of course one or two so-called War veterans. These had suffered damage in the 1914-1918 War and Government were, therefore, very kind to them. One of them was a well-known Collector who had a habit of receiving important references from Government and the Board of Revenue and stuffing them into the left-hand drawer of his office-table and forgetting all about them. While this was a very quick disposal, matters did not rest there because irate reminders would come to him from both Government and the Board. The Huzur Sherishtadar would take these reminders to Mrs. Collector and beg for her help in tracing the papers. Mrs. Collector thereupon went straight to the Collector's left-hand drawer and fished out the reference in question and further action was of course then taken by the harassed but experienced Sherishtadar. A rumour I heard was that most of the initials of this Collector were also set down in files by his clever wife. This case can be forgiven because it was well known that the Collector in question was suffering from shell-shock. The boat-building Collector had no such excuse, be-

cause he seemed to be in reasonably good health. But, by and large, the I.C.S. officer set a very high standard of work for himself. I remember that a Collector whom I relieved and who went on promotion to the Board of Revenue as Commissioner of Excise came back to my district and spent two mornings with me studying the Excise registers with which he was not familiar, only because he wanted to know at first hand how exactly Excise revenue was being accounted for in the district treasuries. This same officer while Collector used to write all the orders, in village officers' appeals and other proceedings in his own handwriting and did not depend on dictation to a camp clerk. Another Collector I knew insisted that the periodical reviews of work done by subordinate officers, say, in minor irrigation tank repairs or inspecting encroachments should be written out by the officers in their own hand and that they should not accept the draft review put up to them by the office. I mention these only to give an idea of the meticulous detail into which these officers went in their desire to achieve maximum efficiency in their work.

Lastly it has been suggested that the British I.C.S. officers interfered too much in policy-making, and guided the destinies of the country through their hold over the Governors and the Governor General. This of course is an exaggeration. It is clear that in the old days both at the Centre and in the Province, the Governor General and the Governors relied for advice on all important matters on their I.C.S. councillors, and this was natural because while the Governor was fresh out in India his Civilian Executive Council had been steeped in the traditions of the country and knew the background intimately of every problem. That such seasoned wisdom and mature experience should have been fully exploited by the Governor General and the Governors is understandable. Of course as a result of this demand for their advice the I.C.S. were in an impregnable position as far as their importance in the scheme of things went. It would indeed be a rash Governor or a rash Governor Gene-

ral who would fly in the teeth of the advice given to him by his I.C.S. councillors.

In the result it may justly be said that the Steel Frame certainly behaved like the Steel Frame during the pre-1947 era. It will of course be asked, "What of the I.C.S. in the years after Independence?" We are of course too near to these years to be able to assess in proper perspective the contribution that the Indian I.C.S. has made towards the Government of his own country in the era of political freedom that began in 1947. But even the most severe critics will concede that both at the Centre and in the States these officers have made a remarkable contribution already. They have fallen in line with the progressive policies outlined by the governing political party and they have whole-heartedly supported the implementation of the various Five Year Plans. It was Sri Vallabhai Patel who recognised that these officers were invaluable to a Free India and with the full support of the Prime Minister Sri Jawaharlal Nehru he sternly resisted the suggestion from the opposition group that they should be liquidated and sent home. Whether they will achieve a position in history comparable with that which was attained by their predecessors in office during the British regime is a question that I must leave to the verdict of the historian. But in any event I have a feeling that on the whole they took up the torch firmly from the point where it was handed over to them by their British predecessors. It is not for me to say how well the race has been run from that point onwards.