

Narcotics in India and South Asia

By H. G. ALEXANDER

"An admirable study of the question of opium and similar drugs. A better examination of the case we have not read, and the book may be commended to all who may have occasion or interest to investigate the Asiatic opium question."—*Times Literary Supplement*.

2s. 6d. net

The Indian Ferment

A Traveller's Tale by H. G. ALEXANDER

Introduction by C. F. ANDREWS

"Lively and illuminating."—*The Christian World*.

"A vivid record of the impact upon a trained and sympathetic mind of Young India's unsatisfied soul."—*Methodist Recorder*.

"High above the common level of books about India."—*Manchester Guardian*.

7s. 6d. net

Small Scale Production in India

By W. G. RAMAKRISHNA AYAR

An account of the system of "small-holdings" in India and of the conditions of their workers.

3s. 6d. net

Oude in 1857

Some Memories of the

By COL. JOHN BO

"A stark simplicity of style imparting grandeur of Greek tragedy. One has the feeling of the Mutiny, but none more intense."—*Dundee Advertiser*.

5s. net



Library

IAS, Shimla

G 923.254 P 591 B



00014402

WILLIAMS & NORGATE LTD., LONDON, W.C.1

BAPU GANDHI

A. B. PIDDINGTON

(Mr. Justice Piddington)

G 923.254
P591B

BAPU GANDHI

By A. B. PIDDINGTON

(*Mr. Justice Piddington*)

A SYMPATHETIC account of this outstanding personality by one who knows him intimately. We see him not only as a politician and teacher, but as a simple, courteous gentleman of high ideals in the midst of his family and friends, while, to all interested in the problems of India to-day, the able sketches of native life and industry contained in this volume afford a valuable insight.

2s. 6d.

NET

Abdul Majid Khan.

DATA ENTERED



CATALOGUED

BAPU GANDHI

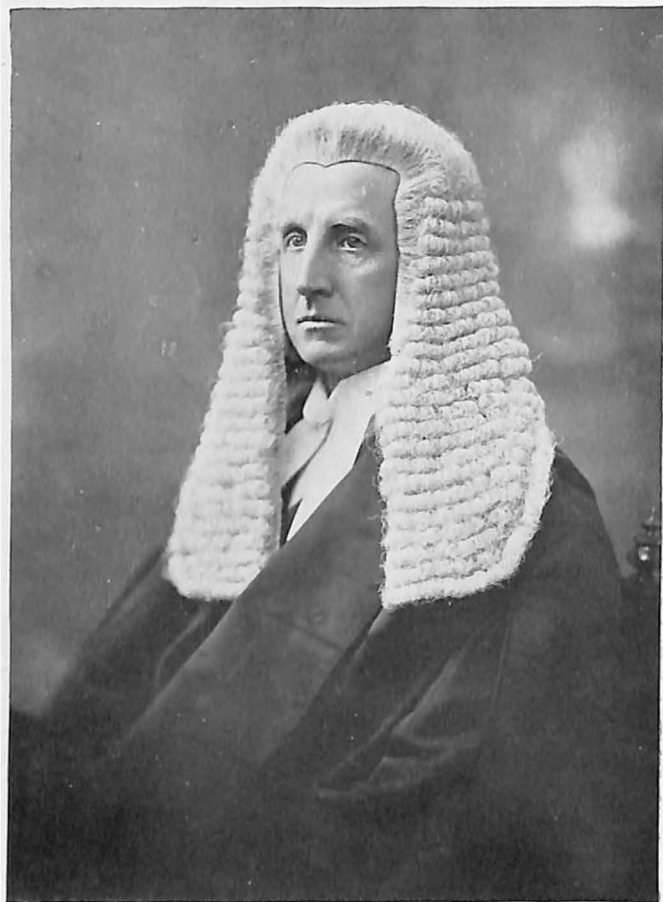
By the same Author

SPANISH SKETCHES

YOUNG ITALY

THE NEXT STEP

etc.



MR. JUSTICE PIDDINGTON

BAPU GANDHI

BY

A. B. PIDDINGTON

Mr. Justice Piddington

.

LONDON

WILLIAMS & NORGATE LTD

1930



Library

IAS, Shimla

G 923.254 P 591 B



00014402

G 923 254
P 591 B



PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY
UNWIN BROTHERS LIMITED, LONDON AND WOKING

ILLUSTRATIONS

MR. JUSTICE PIDDINGTON	<i>frontispiece</i>
DR. CORNELIA SORABJI	<i>facing page</i> 16
MISS KATHERINE MAYO	19
BAPU GANDHI	48

BAPU GANDHI

“Here is Gandhi speaking to you!”

I turned to see the outstretched hand and quizzical smile of the Mahatma who had with a disciple or two come up behind me and was as amused as a schoolboy to think he had joined me unawares while I was looking for him to arrive from the opposite direction.

I had been told by that charming and famous Indian, Dr. Cornelia Sorabji, that Gandhi's smile would captivate me. I cannot say that this was its effect, for in all that I saw of Gandhi there was nothing but the easy transparent kindness of an ordinary gentleman, English or Indian; never any effort to impress or captivate, still less any self-consciousness or pose. Gandhi is a member of the English bar—he was called in 1891—and is just a plain and sociable man like the rest of his profession. He rather suffers than rejoices in the title of Mahatma or Sage given to him universally in India.

Our meeting was at the Satyagraha Ashram. The word Ashram—pronounced *asaram*, the *h* being merely a suggestion of separation—means

docks of Flemington. I took the pinjrapol to be a sort of superior trucking yard or ante-chamber to the abattoirs, but the Hindus never eat beef and retain to an inconvenient degree that reverent attitude to the cow which has its basis in her tremendous service to man. Thus in Calcutta I have seen at the very portals of the majestic Law Courts (built as a doubled facsimile of the Cloth Hall at Ypres), Brahmin cows lying comfortably in the fairway. Not even for the High Court judges are they disturbed. They stroll about the streets with more than the assurance of the dairy cows at Blackheath in earlier days. There, one morning, that very learned man, the late Chief Judge in Equity, Mr. Justice A. H. Simpson, was at work in his garden wearing his oldest clothes when the local Sergeant passed. The Judge complained of his flowers having been damaged by straying cattle, and asked the Sergeant why he didn't impound them. The Sergeant, who saw not a judge but only an untidy and unkempt householder before him, put his hand kindly on the questioner's shoulder and said: "My good man! If you knew as much about law as I do, you'd know that we can't impound in Blackheath, because it isn't a municipality!"

In Calcutta the Brahmin cows are so sure of their immunity that they not only block traffic, which has to wait for them or go round them, but on the footpaths they gently but firmly shoulder you out of their way. To resent this would be like treading on a soldier-ant's nest. But the same consideration is not shown to the water-buffaloes who drag heavy traffic about. These often have broken tails where the cruel practice of screwing them has gone too far.

In her *Mother India* Miss Katherine Mayo recounts many instances of cruelty among a people whose "Light of Asia," Gautama, expounds the doctrine, wide as the animal kingdom—

Slay not for pity's sake and lest ye stay
The meanest creature on its upward way.

But *Mother India* is all in one colour—black. It was widely said that the writer was helped in her work by Dr. Sorabji, the noble gentlewoman who for years forsook a good practice at the Bar to labour in many languages for the betterment of purdah-nishin women—the "sitters" in purdah—and is the only woman barrister in India, and probably the only woman anywhere, with a D.C.L. degree of Oxford, having received it as

a special distinction long before women were admitted to degrees. I asked Dr. Sorabji about the rumour, and she denied it completely, but added that it was no use saying anything about it in public though it had hurt her greatly among her Indian friends. She told me that Miss Mayo's statements and statistics were authentic but were presented only from one point of view. "The facts are all right, but the focus is all wrong." This neat epigram is better in form than Gandhi's comment that "in India Miss Mayo saw nothing but the drains, and India is not all drains."

At any rate, in and around Ahmedabad I saw none of the cruelty to animals denounced by Miss Mayo, though there was evidence enough of cruelty to man in the cripples, so made while babies that they might earn a living as beggars—if they survived. One case was almost incredible. In the Manik Chauk, the main street, there was a man whose legs from the waist had been bent up so that they grew along his back, his feet being spread, palms up, at the level of his shoulders, as if in an attitude of supplication. He worked his way through the mud and filth using his hands and his buttocks for propulsion, the hands thus



Cornelia Smalley

becoming huge and sprawling like the paws of a saurian.

The road to Sabarmati is a pleasant drive, with monkeys scampering across the road or dashing up into the trees that line both sides like an avenue. Parrots flit about or dash towards the grounds of the handsome bungalows, or of Indian shrines on a small scale, which are passed from time to time. When we reached the gate of the Ashram I was met by two initiates, intellectual-looking men in spotless white *khadi* (pronounced *kuddee* or more often *kudder*). This cotton fabric has a national import, for to encourage its local production Gandhi has tried to school his nation into reviving the cottage industry of hand-spinning and hand-weaving.

It is a singular thing, but I had no sooner entered the Ashram grounds than I felt myself in an atmosphere of peace and friendliness very different from the restless crowding and shoving of the Indian cities. The garden itself, glowing with fertility of vegetables and flowers, has every beauty to offer of order without primness. Little children, babies in bronze rather, potter about with tiny watering-pots and show you, with the laughter of gleaming teeth, their skill in planting

seedlings and smoothing off with their natty fingers the circular mounds of soil.

I was first shown the workers making *khadi* and also coarse carpets or mats into which plain patterns in primary colours are allowed to enter. The spinning-wheel was in full career, and, instead of the vast revolving drums studded with bent hooks which are to be seen in the carding-machines of Ahmedabad's cotton-mills, there was hand-carding carried out by striking at the raw cotton with a light steel-stringed bow which gave out a curious musical singing swish as it swung to its work. Here there was plenty of room and light and air—a marked contrast to the cotton-fluff-laden atmosphere where the factory workers, crowded in mills without appreciable ventilation, push their way about amid the clanging and clattering of huge and multiple machinery. No wonder a man of Gandhi's naturalism feels, as Ruskin felt, that machinery has defaced the beauty and healthfulness of labour, though neither Gandhi nor Ruskin saw the solution-point of the service that machinery may one day render to labour itself, by releasing the energy of the worker from its fierce absorption in material production to take part in higher forms of human activity.



MISS KATHERINE MAYO
Author of "Mother India"

From the weavery, where every inmate must, under the rules of the institution, go through a prescribed cycle of training, I was taken to the carpentry, where apprentices were learning how to make spinning-wheels or mend them. The spinning-wheel is almost Gandhi's emblem, and when he reads attacks like Miss Mayo's on his people he says very simply, "I go on with my spinning and speak my message in the whirring music of the wheel." He has made it a point of national loyalty to avoid using imported cloth, and in Calcutta a month ago¹ he was convicted and fined eighteenpence for "being concerned"—the cables did not explain the full depth of his felony—in a foolish burning of some Manchester tweeds in a bonfire at Calcutta. I have met some Manchester men, and am sure they will readily sell their cloth to India, whether it is used there for bonfires or for human warmth.

Nor is it likely that the rough austere white *khadi*, or, as it is sometimes called, *swadeshi* (i.e. home-made) clothing will ever conquer the Indian's intense love of colour in clothing. For the traveller this is a perennial delight. The dress of women, even the poorest, has not only a grace

¹ Written in June 1929.

and artistry in shape, but, whether it is of cotton or of silk, a wonderful felicity in the harmonizing of the most brilliant hues. All through India there is this racial instinct for capturing the rainbow. In the south, at Madura, a principal seat of silk manufacture, the train-stop is enlivened by pedlars of silk shawls and other pieces, in which the shot colouring makes a feast of iridescence as the wares are unfolded. Wine-colour drifts or flakes off into peacock green or blue, and what looks one moment like sheer cloth-of-gold, blazing divinely like the Shekinah of the Ark of the Covenant, becomes, with a little manœuvring into folds, a petty sea of undulating indigo wavelets crested with a sunset phosphorescence. The *sari*, or single garment worn by women, is more often uniform in colour and is put on in graceful swathes, sometimes being shaped on the head into a hood, sometimes into a shallow turban, and sometimes leaving the smooth hair untouched. It can be arranged in all kinds of layers or pleats, sometimes leaving the back bare between waist and shoulders, sometimes the breasts covered and then nothing till the waist-line. But the beauty of the *sari* and the impeccable modesty with which it is worn make it one of the noblest of national costumes, and it is not surpris-

ing that, when that high priestess of human grace, Madame Pavlova, was in Calcutta, she gave Indian women an earnest warning never to abandon their native dress for European fashions.

The men, too, in India delight in colour, man being (according to Charles Kingsley) "vainer than woman even as peacocks are vainer than peahens"—though obviously not for the same reason. It is the prince, not the princess, who wears the jewels of his principality. Speaking of ordinary folk, the turban they wear is handsomer than any European head-dress, and the bright shawl slung in folds round the shoulder and across the chest with a deep hem of some pattern in chromatic contrast, with a broad belt of some other colour glittering perhaps with gold or silver fringing, gives a gaiety to their carriage that makes a crowd in their gala clothing a feast for the eye of any artist or any traveller.

It was therefore with something like melancholy for virtue which is destined to failure that I left the weaving-room of Gandhi's institute, feeling that the campaign for *swadeshi* could not succeed, and that a wrong orientation was being given to a right ambition—viz., the cult of simplicity and plain living.

In the garden I met again one of my courteous guides, who invited me to rest till the time came for me to see Gandhi. It was then that I asked what was the proper way to address him. I knew that he was spoken and written of as Mahatma Gandhi; I had also heard him called Gandhiji, the suffix *ji* being a common way of expressing great respect, as "Esquire" was fifty years ago. (You can address a medical man, for example, as Dāktarji as well as Dāktar Sahib.) And of course there remained as possible the English "Mr. Gandhi."¹

The answer was that I might call him any of these; so I next asked what he was called by the adherents in the Ashram? "We call him Bāpu," was the answer. I said, "I suppose that is a more reverent form of Bāp (which means "Father")? "Not exactly," was the reply. "Well," I said, "is it more familiar?" "No," he said, "it is hard to explain, but it means something of strong affection." He would not have "dear Father" or "Father dear," as being too weak and too feminine. It meant something more, something of love but also of pride and trust. At last, therefore, I realized that for Gandhi's friends Bāpu means—Bāpu!

¹ Gandhi's full name is Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi.

My companion then took me to a room as severely monastic and primitive as a prison cell, but scrupulously clean. The bedstead was of logs neatly carpentered and solid. There was no mattress other than webbing, and no bed-clothes. The Ashram admits visitors as residents, but they must bring their own bedding. Indeed the Scriptural injunction "Take up thy bed and walk" is very widely honoured in India. The Indians themselves are great travellers in their own country, though it involves a violation of caste rule to cross the sea. Bapu Gandhi himself had to hold various councils with representatives of his caste before he could obtain a crippled sort of dispensation (for the Sheth or chief of the caste actually excommunicated him) to enable him to go to South Africa, where he received his first baptism of fire in fighting for the rights of his fellow-countrymen within the Empire, and did great service for humanity in succouring the British sick and wounded during the Boer War, when he organized and led an ambulance corps of eleven hundred Indians. It was this corps that bore the body of Lord Robert's son from the field.

In their travels in India the Indians always

carry their own bedding, and, as the trains have no bed equipment even where there are sleeping-berths, you must provide yourself with sheets, towels, blankets, and, except in winter, mosquito-nets, to which a valuable addition is a *rezai* or quilted cotton eiderdown with a gay cover. The *rezai* is thin enough to be an extra coverlet in cold weather and thick enough to serve as an under mattress at ordinary times. The *Wanderlust* of Indians is extraordinary. On all the principal lines the third-class carriages are packed in normal times as transport is with us on peak occasions. The travellers take with them all their household gods, pots and pans, sleeping-mats, food, and, above all, water. Swarming like hordes of gipsies, they squeeze into the carriages, and lucky is the early comer who can climb up into the long luggage racks (as they seem to be) running lengthwise of the carriage, and so have sleeping room. The others crowd or huddle or twist into any attitude, and sleep with complete unconsciousness of discomfort.

A remarkable thing about Indians is their bodily suppleness. This comes from many causes. One is that there is no loss of dignity in lying down or sitting down or squatting down in any

position at any hour of the day. Every man, woman, and child seems to have by nature the flexibility which a professional European dancer acquires by intense practise. On the fore-castle of a steamer you will see a mother with a child or two arrange the family limbs in any posture on a pocket-handkerchief allotment and doze off with all sorts of human and other packing material wedging them in. Women especially have this adaptability, which in both sexes is no doubt fostered by daily labour not confined to a set position or series of movements as in organized factory or office work. Especially does the carriage of burdens on the head contribute to this elasticity. From the train windows you see women in the fields with heavy bundles of grain or grass; on the roads, with bulky packages of household goods or of village fabrics such as pottery stacked in a column; on the way from the well or tank with glorious engraved brass or white metal pots full of water. All are carried on the head, and this habit, by throwing forward the bust and strengthening the neck to a columnar beauty, gives Indian women the figure and grace of walking caryatides. Indeed, the fancy often strikes one that, just as the caryatides of the classic buildings of Greece

support the edifice of religion or of palatial pleasure, so the Indian woman as she walks is the support of the Indian home and the Indian family.

I have mentioned the fact that the travelling Indian always carries water. The *lotah* is the vessel. It is a handsome brass pot carried by a handle and having a cup or beaker which fits the top when inverted and is used for drinking when taken off. The vessel itself may hold a quart or thereabouts. One striking custom throughout the country that makes the *lotah* necessary in travel is the invariable washing of the teeth and mouth at least every morning. In the dim dawn, outside every hut or bungalow and every hovel in the streets, the Indian plies his toothbrush as if his life depended on it, and, if he is too poor to have a toothbrush, uses a pointed stick or a fore-finger. Another universal rule, infringed only by the lowest of the low, is that, as a matter of religious observance, the body is washed from head to foot once every day. I do not know what Arhat, or Swami, or Yogi, or Sanu, or other inspired teacher launched this ritual which 350 millions of people follow, but it must have greatly contributed to the health of the race in such a

climate as that of India, just as the hygienic regulations of Moses have given the Jews their tenacious physique, and as those of Mahomed have done the same service for Arabs and Moors and Turks. Moreover, the Indian washes whenever he can in, or with, running water. He pours it over his body and hands and uses neither bath nor basin. Outside Madras I saw a sheet of water where clothes were being washed, as usual, by slapping them on flat stones. At the same time women were filling their water-pots. I asked my driver if this was for drinking-water. He said, "Yes, this is clean water." It was clean because it was moving, being part of a sluggish stream.

In Gandhi's Ashram, of course, all is truly hygienic, not merely superficially and ritually correct. They grow their own vegetables, and their water comes from wells sunk in the river-bank, which acts as a filter-bed, as indeed it does for the whole water-supply of Ahmedabad. Foreigners are told never to drink unboiled water in India. An exception is made for soda-water, which is the only form in which water is drunk on the trains, many Europeans using it even for washing the teeth—such is the taboo on mere

“water.” A big bottle of sodawater costs 4d. and is called “a Bombay.” The theory is that the soda-water factories, being under European management and subject to the possibility, at least, of municipal control, purify the water they use. Let us so believe if we can, and so hope in any event.

In Madras I mentioned to my host, the accomplished Chief Justice of the High Court, that I missed the numerous cases of elephantiasis I had seen in other parts. He told me that this affliction was almost obsolete there because the water-supply installed by Europeans flowed through leaden pipes. The filaria or thread-like parasite which causes elephantiasis cannot survive lead treatment and so perishes in contact with the slight impregnation of the Madras water with lead. This reminded me of an experiment shown in a chemistry lecture by Professor John Smith in my student days.

The Professor's experiments were not always successful, but he thoroughly proved his point one day when he set out to show that water drawn through leaden pipes would pick up a certain quantity of lead. “I have here,” he said (holding it up), “a beaker o' watter drawn from yon tap

in the wall, and I'll pour a small quantity of H_2SO_4 (i.e. sulphuric acid) into it, and if lead is present ye'll see a cloudiness indicating the presence of sulphate of lead in the solution, the sulphur and oxygen having combined with the lead." He poured in the acid and at once a dense mass of white precipitate began to sink to the bottom of the beaker. We applauded vigorously, and the old man, beaming with pride, took his spectacles off and, twirling them round, purred gently, "Yes, the result was entirely gratifyin', but a' may mention that in order to ensure the more complete success of the experiment I tuk the precaution of addin' a little acetate of lead to the watter before pourin' in the acid." This I have always remembered as an instance of meticulous scientific technique. To make sure that lead would be detected in the water, the trained man of science put it there and then found it.

Professor "Jock" Smith, by the way, was appointed by the Senate in preference to Huxley, who was a candidate but could not, in spite of the persuasions of the Macleays, win the chair. He retained a strong Scotch accent, and his pronunciation of "watter" brought back to mind the excellent retort of the famous John Clerk when

arguing a case as to riparian rights before the House of Lords. Summarizing his case he said, "The pursuer [i.e. the plaintiff, Clerk's client] has always exercised his rights over the water, and the water runs that way, and why shouldna the pursuer continue to use the water?" At this one of the Law Lords said, "Mr. Clerk! Do they spell water in Scotland with two t's?" to which Clerk replied, "Na! ma Lord! We dinna spell water with twa t's, but we spell *mainners* with twa n's!" What a droll apology for shortening the vowel before one consonant, to explain that you lengthen it before two!

Even judicial persons would be more judicious if they allowed imperfect grammar, or spelling, or pronunciation, to pass without comment, as did the Full Court in Sydney when the great Salomons was quoting a case in which a certain gift for a charity had been construed so as to carry out the testator's wishes as nearly as possible, though they could not be carried out literally. This is called the doctrine of "cy-près" (Law French for *ici près* or "near here"). Salomons looked up and said he did not know much about this "cypress doctrine"—no doubt their Honours would!

Gandhi himself is over-censorious in one passage of his Autobiography. He describes delightfully a lively Indian friend, Narayan Hemchandra, whom he knew in London and who was "innocent of grammar" and used "horse" as a verb and "run" as a noun. I suspect that Hemchandraji had seen, and Gandhiji had not seen, Dr. W. G. Grace getting "runs" at Lords, or that he had been, and Gandhiji had not been, to a London theatre where a play was having a long "run." Eton boys, again, would know quite well what it is to be "horsed" for a thrashing, while Shakespeare, almost as if with presentiment of the miracle of beam transmission (in which the message is "mounted" on the light-ray), speaks of a transmitting messenger of news being

. . . horsed
Upon the sightless¹ couriers of the air.

In making this citation I can only hope that the superstition of actors that it is unlucky to quote from Macbeth may not prove true, and that if the Mahatma should ever see these sentences he will forgive *quia multum amavi*.

His own greeting, which begins this sketch,

¹ Invisible.

was given to me at the foot of a staircase on the outer wall of the common dining-room (with a kitchen adjoining) where all the inmates of the Ashram take the first meal of the day at 10.30 a.m., having risen at 4.30 a.m. Shoes and sandals left behind, we mounted and took our places—in all about one hundred and fifty of us—in a long bare hall. Bapu Gandhi sat against the wall on the left of the door-way, I on the right. I was asked if I could squat legs akimbo as the others did, but though I was willing, courtesy spared me, and I had, as did Gandhi, a low stool. A long line of the fraternity stretched away from each of us (the door being in the middle of the wall), and facing us were two other files, the men being opposite my half of the hall, the women opposite that of Gandhi. A prayer was sung in soft beautiful tones quite different from the shrill and wailing noises in a minor key which are the feature of the harsh music of India, and which convince me that, when Shelley gave a title to the lovely song “I arise from dreams of thee,” he would never have called the poem “Lines to an Indian air” if he had heard the ordinary Indian tunes that grate on the European ear. Prayer finished, the meal was served by men and women, who all

take their turn at this and at cooking in the roomy communal kitchen at the southern end, in which at the time a big bearded brother was staring round at me, cooking-ladle in hand, in the very attitude of Vulcan at the Forge in Velasquez' picture.

The meal was, of course, purely vegetarian. The Ashram carries the conquest of appetite even to the length of banning the national drink—tea, though a whisper reached me that visitors (who must conform to all rules) sometimes infringe the order, and occasionally a regular inmate bestows upon himself a surreptitious dispensation. The meal was plentiful and varied. The breakfasters had plates and drinking-vessels before them, a tray being provided for Gandhi and his guest. Tomato broth was brought in big pots and ladled out; milk also was supplied, and the main solids were “double-bread” (i.e. wholemeal bread) and a fruit—called, I think, *jamu*—with a thick envelope tasting like turnip and a core rather like passion-fruit. There was also a large flat meal-cake eaten with *ghee* or melted butter, the latter being poured on the centre and then smeared round with the cleanly fingers. Gandhi ate well, but did not speak during the meal, being absorbed in

a newspaper which brought a stern and thoughtful look to his face now and then. The men opposite me did not strike me as having anything very spiritual or happy in their appearance, but amongst the women there was far more life and mirth. They chattered, and laughed, and ate, making in their bright *saris* and with their smoothly braided hair a pretty picture. I discovered presently that a good deal of the laughter was due to a dainty little blossom of about fifteen, who evidently had a touch of genius about her, for her companions craned their necks to catch the crisp little comments or stories or jests, whatever they were, which this born entertainer was pouring out with all kinds of natural gesticulations and play of the delicate hands. Presently she caught me looking at her, and, answering with a charming half-smile, she brought her hands together in the respectful *salaam* used when thanking, and added a naïve little bow like a young actress applauded during a speech. I could afford to be gladdened at this scene, when I reflected that one bright soul at least was being rescued from the hideous custom of child-marriage which hangs like a pall over Indian life and which patriotic Indians are doing their best to

abolish. A fortnight earlier I had been the guest of a high-caste Brahmin, a son of one of the first Indians appointed to a High Court Bench. He had sent for his little daughter of twelve to entertain me in her shy way with a recitation—one of the forest stories so common in India of a tiger cheated of its prey. When she had talked a little and then left us, the father said, with an unforgettable look of concern and fatalism—“She must be married soon.”

Bapu Gandhi's work as a Teacher is doing much beyond such isolated instances. He has called his autobiography *The Story of my Experiments with Truth*. “Experiences” would have been a happier word, and was probably what the translator meant, for Gandhi has never “experimented,” after Goethe's fashion, with right and wrong. He has followed right, as he saw it, from step to step, and he says very truly that such political influence as he has is derived from his experiences in spiritual life. These have led him to abjure every bodily enjoyment that clogs that aspiration of the soul to its Maker which Gandhi regards as the chief thing in life. He describes how in his young days he was tempted by a friend into eating meat because, according to a doggerel of Normad's

sung by schoolboys, this (and not the Bible) was the secret of England's greatness.

Behold the mighty Englishman,
He rules the Indian small,
Because being a meat-eater
He is five cubits tall.

But Gandhi gave up meat from a feeling that he was deceiving his parents. Later he gave up all condiments and all foods that foster the unruly appetite of sex or in any way make the body the ready instrument of any sort of unworthy impulse. Ultimately he reached a full belief in Ahimsa, literally "innocence," and so "non-violence." Most remarkable victory of all in view of his frank confessions as to earlier life, he took, twenty years ago, the vow of Brahmacharya—complete renunciation of sex and even of its desire.

The doctrine of Ahimsa he earnestly instils in his political teaching, and it is curious that in a dialogue in "Indian Home Rule" he calmly discusses an imaginary opponent's suggestion of assassination as a political weapon, and, after pointing out its practical folly, stakes his condemnation of it upon the duty of avoiding all forms of violence because they breed violence.

Quite recently he fasted for thirty days as a symbolic act of national contrition after an outburst of mob-rioting with many deaths in one Indian city. An army friend, on his way back to the North-West gate to India where the British Raj bars the descent of tribes and, perhaps, of nations upon the ever-tempting prize of India, told me that he saw Gandhi just after this month's fast, and that he seemed "quite an insignificant little chap," to which he added "you could pretty well see through his ribs." The photograph here printed was taken, I think, as he was recovering from this penance, which would have killed most men nearing sixty, as Gandhi then was. At Sabarmati this year he struck me as having the very essence of serviceable health. Though he is spare and was in light condition, his eye was bright, his fine, large, and well-shaped head was poised in easy strength, and his arms, the only part of his body uncovered in the winter, had the fine silky skin of the finished athlete, underneath which was a sinewy strength and ductility of muscle equal, one would think, to a good deal of enduring work. If I had been inclined to regard him as an enemy to the Empire instead of, in the last analysis (that of spiritual kinship in governmental ideals), one

of its friends, I should have felt as the Highlander sergeant did at St. Helena when he saw Napoleon land from the *Bellerophon*. "They tellt me he was a sick mon, but the mon has twenty battles yet in his belly—damn him!"

As with political violence, so with political self-government, Gandhi's work probes to the reality and heart of things. He is the soul of Indian Home Rule or Swaraj, but he never flatters his countrymen into thinking that, as they are, they would govern better than Britain does. On the contrary, his work on Home Rule insists on the truth that *swaraj* must begin in the personal life of the individuals of the nation. He spares his countrymen's vanity not at all. The day of my visit I read in an English paper published at Bombay that one of his co-workers in another part of India had written to him about the self-seeking and quarrelling of rivals eager to be delegates to the All-India Congress. There was nothing to be gained by this except the distinction, yet the struggle was fierce and ugly. Gandhi's reply was a stern rebuke. "If we fight like this over every small personal advantage while we are shut out of government, how can we ever hope to shoulder the tremendously heavy responsibilities and resist

great temptations when our time comes for governing the whole administration?" He has observed, no doubt, the fierce candidatures for Government posts which are such a feature among educated Indians, and is probably just as much alive as any English resident to the fact that University-educated lads resent continuing to belong to the humble ranks of trade and especially of agriculture. Their grievance is, at bottom, not that there is a British Raj, but that it is impossible for such numbers as are turned out from the universities to find places under the British Raj. Instead of hounding them on to rebel because they cannot be government servants, Gandhi practises as well as preaches indifference to all worldly advancement and wealth. In this he reproduces the spirit of the East in its loftiest manifestations, and there may be here a parallel, not yet completed in fruition, between the attitude of Gandhi and that of the saints and sages of the Orient when the Roman armies swept over it—

The East bow'd low before the blast
In patient, deep disdain ;
She let the legions thunder past,
Then plunged in thought again.

So well she mused, a morning broke
Across her spirit grey;
A conquering new-born joy awoke,
And fill'd her life with day.

This "morning" of which Matthew Arnold sings was the coming of Christianity.

But Gandhi, though perhaps more saint than statesman, is no mere dreamer. The Mill-hands' Union in Ahmedabad is the only union with much industrial influence in India, and it is all Gandhi's creation. So, too, his Swadeshi campaign, if it cannot win through as an economic movement, refreshes national energy as well as reviving national feeling. Again, Gandhi has been a successful mediator in industrial troubles. When I saw him, he had just succeeded with a joint arbitration in which he and a leading employer settled a strike at a cotton-mill when it was within an ace of becoming general, and in the forecourt of a handsome building of Ahmedabad I saw that morning a crowd of men and women ex-strikers who were being re-enrolled for duty. It seemed to me in India that the fundamental origin of dissatisfaction with British rule is not anything oppressive or partial as between two races, but the same economic cause—the struggle between the Haves and

the Have-nots—which is found in every modern population.

The plight of the masses in India is incredible. There are said to be six million recognized beggars, the beggar profession being respected because of its frequent association with the profession of holiness. India is not a country rich in natural resources. The staple of plenty, viz. richness of soil, is not there, and, while productivity of nature is niggardly, productivity of population is intense. This is checked by terrible epidemics, against which the masses, ill-nourished and smitten with the Indian fatalism inculcated by the Brahmin doctrine of reincarnation, have no resisting power. During the influenza visitation of 1918–19 whole villages (and an Indian village numbers many thousands) were desolated. The dead lay unburied. The cold winter synchronized with a high price of clothing. The recording of deaths ceased after $8\frac{1}{2}$ millions had been registered, and the Year Book gives from twelve to thirteen millions—twice Australia's population—as “a conservative estimate” of the losses in less than two years. In the inter-censal period 1911–21 the population was practically stationary, the increase for the ten years being only 1.2 per cent.

The cheapness of human life and therefore of labour astonishes an Australian. Yet, though the resident Englishman enjoys abundance of service, it is not because he is an Englishman, for the Indian anywhere above the coolie class has just as great a retinue. On my first visit to India I was the guest of a High Court Justice, who pointed out that there were compensations for the climate and for the toil of British functionaries. Speaking of his own household, he told me that he had twenty men-servants, four of whom, dazzling fellows in scarlet and gold, were provided by the Government. His children being at school in England, he lived in a stately house and grounds fit for, and probably built for, a nabob. He added that when his wife bought a turkey for Christmas one of his peons (pronounced *puons*) came to him and said, "I know the very man to be syce (i.e. groom) for your Lordship's turkey." The Judge thought it unnecessary, but the peon insisted that the turkey might stray out of the grounds and get dusty in the streets and need to be brushed, etc. A special groom for one turkey is a luxury hardly conceivable, but it shows how over-abundant is human labour that it could have been suggested.

The social question becomes more and more the

question in India, and of course it is made more difficult by the divisions of caste. Of the twenty men-servants just mentioned, fourteen were of different castes and therefore had to have fourteen separate messes and fourteen separate methods of preparing food. Poverty and over-crowding are rank in all the cities of India and Burma. An official Report last year of an Enquiry into the Standard and Cost of Living in Rangoon says: "It is not unusual in lodging-houses registered in the Municipal books to find a tenement room $12\frac{1}{2} \times 40$ feet. occupied by as many as forty or fifty people." This would give each tenant a "home" averaging four feet long by three feet wide. The diagonal of such a space would be five feet, so that a very short man could just lie down if he slept corner to corner. The Report continues—

The practice is for the room to be taken out by a maistry (i.e. a labour contractor) at a fixed rent, and, with a view to making as much profit as possible, he crams it with as many coolies as it will hold. In some rooms there are two sets of tenants, one set occupying it during the day and the other during the night. Families are often found in these lodging-houses, gunny-bag partitions being erected to secure a certain amount of privacy. In the dry season the men usually sleep on the footpaths and pavements and use the

rooms only for cooking food and for storing their belongings—usually a deal-wood box. But during the rains they crowd into these lodging-houses until there is hardly an inch of space left either inside the room or outside on the stairs. . . .

The wages of the unskilled labourer who is thus housed amount in the larger mills to 30 rupees (£2 15s. od.) if he works for twenty-five days in the month. He thus gets 1s. 5d. per day. “During the slack season there is no regular payment of wages to the coolies. They are given a rupee (1s. 6d.) or two now and then just to keep them from starving.”

Yet in 1925, 288,000 immigrants came from India to Rangoon to get a living, 240,000 returning during the same year.

To bring about the deplorable state of human life in India the British Raj has done nothing. On the contrary, it has done and is doing much to abolish it. For one thing, famine has been banished by irrigation works and railway construction. But when the masses are miserable, the government, whatever it is, of the country is blamed. Thus the British Raj is held up to detestation for causes which are to be found in century-old customs of caste with its dominants and its subjects, of land-tenure with its subjection

of the tillers of the soil, of early marriage and recklessness of procreation, of superstition which resists hygiene and modern medicine, of tribute paid to princes and above all to the Brahmin priesthood, and of obstinacy which clings to ancient tools. In the fields of India I never saw a spade or a wheelbarrow, or a steel plough. Nor is work in the city, except for growing factory production, any better furnished with modern implements, which, an English contractor told me, would not be used if provided. The city population, thus impoverished, is also a population of quick sensibilities and accustomed to giving and taking with the knife. No wonder they are, as a leading official described them to me, "very inflammable—for a short time."

My conversation with Gandhi was fixed for three in the afternoon. I found him seated on the ground with his spinning-wheel before him in a bright spot of the garden. A few pebbles marked off this modest throne or audience-hall. Before him were a couple of youths and a handsome old Rajput, looking like an old-world Paladin, in rich turban and costume with a silver-mounted scimitar in his belt. They said little, and Gandhi spoke to them in even conversational tones without the

slightest air of superiority or teaching *ex cathedrâ*. At one time in the afternoon two women approached and knelt touching the ground with their foreheads as an obeisance. They were consulting Gandhi on some personal or family matter, and the older woman, evidently the mother, seemed somewhat vexed, or at least disappointed, at the counsel given them, but the younger woman never varied in the happy look almost of adoration with which she regarded her Master. It was such a scene as might have had its setting in Palestine 2,000 years ago. When they had gone, Gandhi said, a little wearily: "There is some inconvenience about this Mahatma treatment, but it cannot be helped." I recalled this when I read in the Introduction to his Autobiography: "Often the title has deeply pained me; and there is not a moment I can recall when it may be said to have tickled me."

Our own talk was purely on labour questions, and Gandhi listened with close attention to what I said about the position in Australia and the universal spread here of industrial arbitration. His questions were quick and terse, and he was particularly alert in following the provision made in New South Wales for a living wage supple-

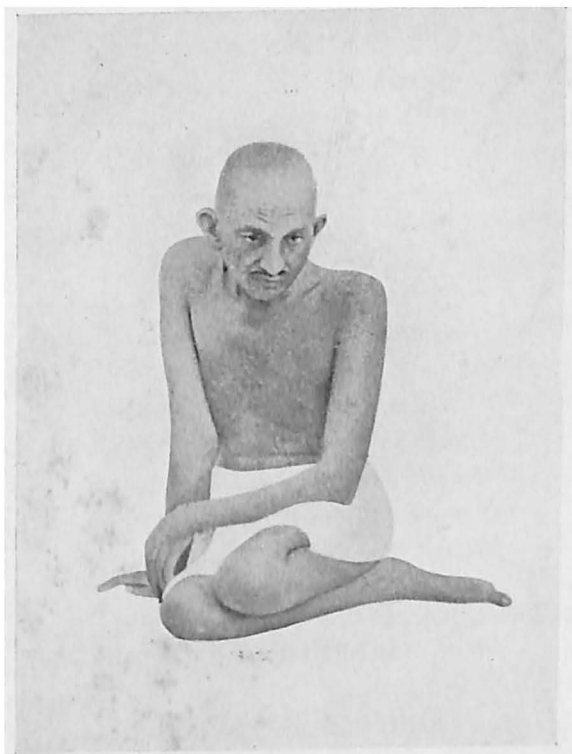
mented by endowment for children. He explained how they are only just beginning in India to bring the public conscience to examine law as it affects labour. "We have no strong unions here to make possible the organization of regular awards between employer and employed, or compulsory arbitration. But our people is intensely religious, its religion often bordering upon superstition. We are trying to work upon employers from the point of view of religious duty, but this takes time."

Our meeting at the time was ended by the courteous observation, "And you have come all the way from Calcutta to tell me all this interesting news about the methods of your country?" To which I could only say, knowing what a vast concern Gandhi handles, "Mahatma, you are a great Teacher, and I would not have wasted a great Teacher's time if I had not thought there were some facts from our country worth his considering."

I saw Gandhi again the same night, but by a misunderstanding I arrived when evening prayer had already begun. I entered the grounds and found my way, with no one to guide me, by the light of a series of hurricane-lamps set down at

points in the winding pathway. The scene was a solemn and yet a homely one. There is no chapel at Sabarmati; the place of worship had no walls but a few flowering bushes, no ceiling but the vault of heaven from which stars strange to me looked down on a mysterious congregation, no music but the scarcely audible hum of the city across the river. Nor were there any seats, except for women, who were in the front rows. All were without sandals (which were piled outside the clearing), and sat shrouded in spectral *khadi* while facing Gandhi, who, spectacles on nose, looked at them in his kindly way and expounded some scripture which he had just been reading. Then came questions and comment. Gandhi's very voice spoke peace; he answered in quiet tones and sometimes scored a little with raillery, to judge by the laughter that followed. The language was Gujarati and quite beyond me.

When the meeting was over Gandhi joined me. There was little time except for farewells, for it was my last night in India and I had to join my boat at Bombay. Gandhi said, as if after full reflection in the meantime—"I am greatly struck by the way the wage question is dealt with in Australia, and especially with that separate pro-



with kind regards
Sahermati nizor 12/11/29
31.1.29

vision for children of which you spoke. I approve of it thoroughly, and we must see what we can do, bearing in mind the figures you have given me about the local requirements in money." It was then that he wrote in his Autobiography, with an adherent holding up a lantern, the inscription here reproduced below his portrait. Since he wrote standing with the book held up for him, the unevenness of the script will be understood.

I asked if I might leave with him a greeting for his followers. He said "Willingly," and I repeated in Hindustani, with the white-robed listeners crowding upon us, the beatitude from Matthew's Gospel: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God." Gandhi made me repeat it, and then asked what language it was? I said it was Urdu (Hindustani), from the Bible Society's translation. At this he laughed heartily, as we all did, and he then repeated it to those around with a change in a word or two and very different pronunciation. So heard, the sentence received a murmured tribute of deeply felt and reverent acceptance. We have so larded over the simple precepts of this chapter that it has lost the plain meaning it still has to virgin minds. When I was studying Hindustani with the help of a Par-

see fellow-passenger, I one day brought the Bible (which is always one of the best aids in learning any language) to my kind Munshi (teacher). I read the Beatitudes, and was astonished at the result. I had expected only correction of my pronunciation or some remarks about the words or their forms, or the grammar. To my surprise all question of the language was forgotten, and the lady said in hushed and almost awe-stricken tones, "How beautiful! how wonderful!" over and over again. The elemental beauty of soul in these great edicts of our common humanity was something new, and for the first time my helper heard the real teaching of a religion whose missionaries have been in India for more than a century.

With Gandhi I avoided every political question, except that I told him that Australians as a self-governing people had much sympathy with Indians in their aim at Dominion status as soon as they were able to work with it. I added that from the broad point of view of humanity and its needs there was an immense value in the grouping under one government of the greatest possible number of consenting people, if only for this reason. While peoples are separated into wholly disconnected national entities, any topic of dis-

agreement tends to be fought out to the bitter end—involving, finally, physical war—as a matter of patriotic pride. We, for example, have at times had lively differences with New Zealand, with the South African Union, and with Canada. Such differences between countries separated as independent nations without any common allegiance may often be magnified and added to until the breaking-point is reached, whereas, simultaneously with complete local freedom of action, the common nationhood of members of the British Commonwealth of Nations secures the adjustment of such differences by peaceful political action. I concluded that total separation of India might easily be a step to international dissension, and without international peace there can be no social or other advancement for any race or country.

To this latter view Gandhi eagerly assented, saying, “Yes, international peace is indispensable for every one,” and his own unselfish life, and that loftiness of soul which makes him master of his thought and motive in a degree not excelled by any patriot in any country, give confidence that the sweetness and humility of his finished character will lead the millions to whom he is

light as well as leading towards the living waters of national redemption. If, as Browning wrote—

A nation is but the attempt of many
To rise to the completer life of one,

there is no man in India (in spite of some human failings of unconscious prejudice towards a race whose nationals have sometimes treated him cruelly as well as arrogantly) whom Indians could better take as their oriflamme. Aspiring to no mastery but only to service, and ignoring caste and social and religious severances, his thought is a slow but sure solvent of disunion and will ultimately effect the cohesion of All India in freedom, action, and progress, as the British Raj has secured it in obedience to law and civil peace.

In the Ashram none is higher or lower than another, and no labour is looked on as inferior, one of the Rules prescribing that each member in turn shall perform the sanitary service which is regarded as the province of "Untouchables." The Rule speaks of it as "an essential and sacred service." It is ranked as Activity No. 2, No. 1 being worship. With Gandhi, therefore, as with Wesley, cleanliness is next to godliness.

Gandhi speaks fearlessly against all Indian

institutions that hold the Indian soul in bondage. The practice of purdah, for example, is losing some of its ancient rigidity, and yet is regarded by millions as essential to married happiness for men and—what is a more subtle yet not less powerful persuasive—a mark of social dignity for both sexes. Thus a Calcutta friend of Parsee origin and therefore immune against the mind-dominating influence of the Brahmins, told me that her parents had a *māli* (gardener) and his wife working with them for years. Suddenly the wife disappeared. The *māli* explained that, thanks to their Honours' ever-generous treatment of them in regard to money, his wife could now afford to go into purdah.

Gandhi's protest against purdah has biological truth to back it.

“By seeking to-day,” he says, “to interfere with the free growth of the womanhood of India we are interfering with the growth of great, independent-spirited men. What we are doing to our women and what we are doing to the untouchables recoils upon our own heads with a force a thousand times multiplied. It partly accounts for our own weakness, indecision, narrowness, and helplessness. Let us then tear down the purdah with one mighty effort.”

His followers call him Bapu, as did his little

son when he had brought him out of the delirium of fever by his treatment and (as Bapu believed) by his prayers and faith in God. Millions of Indians speaking different tongues, sprung from different races, practising different religions, yet living in one undivided country, look upon him as the *parens patriae*—the Bapu of All India.

“Here is Gandhi speaking to you !”

Ram Rakhshaw Cottage,
Lakkar Bazar,
Simla.
17.9.'33.



